The Journal of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages, published annually by the Council, is dedicated to the issues and concerns related to the teaching and learning of Less Commonly Taught Languages. The Journal primarily seeks to address the interests of language teachers, administrators, and researchers. Articles that describe innovative and successful teaching methods that are relevant to the concerns or problems of the profession, or that report educational research or experimentation in Less Commonly Taught Languages are welcome. Papers presented at the Council’s annual conference will be considered for publication, but additional manuscripts from members of the profession are also welcome.

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- Accompanied by a 150 word (or less) abstract and a cover sheet containing the manuscript title, name, address, office and home telephone numbers, fax number, email address, and full names and institutions of each author. *(Because the manuscript will be blind reviewed, identifying information should be on the cover sheet only, and not appear in the manuscript).*

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<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Institutional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>U.S. $30</td>
<td>U.S. $60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Editor’s Introduction</strong> Danko Sipka</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stability and Change in Americans’ Foreign Language Policy Attitudes:</strong> 2000-2008 John P. Robinson, William P. Rivers, Paul Harwood</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Beliefs of International and Domestic Foreign Language Teachers</strong> Scott Kissau, Maria Yon, Bob Algozzine</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers’ Perceptions on the Use of African Languages in the Curriculum: A Case Study of Schools in Kenya, East Africa.</strong> Martin C. Njoroge &amp; Moses Gatambuki Gathigia</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multilingualism going nowhere slowly at one of the most demographically representative South African Universities</strong> Dianna Lynette Moodley</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capturing Students’ Target Language Exposure Collaboratively on Video – The Akan (Twi) Example</strong> Seth Antwi Ofori</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching and learning pragmatics in L2 Korean: Past, present, and future directions</strong> Sun Yung Song and Danielle Ooyoung Pyun</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Placement Test Development for Chinese Heritage Language Learners</strong> Jack Jinghui Liu</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Being a “professional” LCTL at a “professional” level: A call for the inclusion of multiple Chineses in “Chinese” language pedagogy</strong> Genevieve Y. Leung &amp; Ming-Hsuan Wu</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL)

NCOLCTL is an organization dedicated to the teaching and learning of Less Commonly Taught Languages. Membership is open to individuals and organizations that share this interest.

NCOLCTL Homepage
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NCOLCTL constitutes a national mechanism devoted to strengthening the less commonly taught language professions through enabling NCOLCTL members to work toward “shared solutions to common problems.” NCOLCTL principally directs its efforts toward building a national architecture for the LCTL field and in making the field’s resources easily accessible to language programs and individual learners around the United States.

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Since its establishment in 1990, the NCOLCTL has carried out a variety of activities to raise awareness about the importance of less commonly taught languages. NCOLCTL achieves its goals through the following activities:

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- Conducting research to promote and facilitate the learning and teaching of the LCTLs
- Planning for and establishing a national policy for building the national capacity for the study of the LCTLs
- Enhancing the capacity of existing LCTL national associations, and organizing new ones
- Establishing a system for networking and communication among member organizations, and facilitating their collective efforts to solve problems in the LCTL field
- Developing language learning frameworks to guide teacher training, curriculum design, materials development, and seek ways to address problems of articulation among different levels of the American educational system
- Working, on behalf of the members, with government agencies, foundations, and the general foreign language commun-
ity on policy issues and to seek funding to establish effective standards for the less commonly taught language field

- Fostering national and international linkages within and across the various language areas
- Online Teaching Courses designed primarily for new instructors of LCTLs at postsecondary level and a useful resource for experienced instructors.

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http://www.ncolctl.org/be-a-member
Editor’s Introduction

Danko Šipka
Arizona State University

The present volume is opened by a broad review of foreign policy attitudes in the United States by John P. Robinson, William P. Rivers, and Paul Harwood. The following two papers examine the teachers’ attitudes. Scott Kissau, Maria Yon, and Bob Algozzine address the beliefs of foreign and international teachers, while Martin C. Njoroge and Moses Gatambuki Gathigia discuss the attitudes toward the use of African languages. The next paper by Diana Moodley examines a concrete case of bilingualism in South Africa. In the following contribution to this volume Seth Antwi Ofori discusses a concrete classroom strategy of using visual technologies. Another concrete teaching problem, pragmatics in Korean, is explored by Sun Yung Song and Danielle Ooyoung Pyun. The present volume is concluded by two papers devoted to the Chinese language – Jack Jinghui Liu examines heritage language learner placement tests while Genevieve Y. Leung and Ming-Hsuan Wu advocate the inclusion of multiple Chinese in the Chinese language classroom.
Introduction

The last decade has seen unprecedented policy emphasis on the Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs) – whether broadly, as indicated by the regular publication of lists of languages critical to the national interest, such as that of the US Department of Education (2010), or in the particular languages included in the multiple new Federal programs that comprise the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), such as the National Language Service Corps, STAR-TALK, the Language Flagship, the English for Heritage Language Speakers program, or the NSLI for Youth, to cite several examples. The LCTLs predominate in these lists, reflecting a national level policy emphasis on the LCTLs. This emphasis derives from perceived and actual needs for specific LCTLs required for the common weal – for national security, economic well being, and social justice (Brecht et al., 2007; Brecht & Rivers, 2000). This emphasis, consisting in its entirety of programs promulgated, funded, and directed by the Federal government, stands in contrast to the ongoing perception in our professional fields that Foreign Languages (FLs), and the LCTLs among them, are under increasing and unprecedented stress in the educational system, and that furthermore, that the teaching of LCTLs lacks public support, or is even actively opposed in the broader US society (Wiley, 2007).

Since 2000, public discourse about US foreign language (FL) policy has focused on two significant, distinct and politically separate
issues: 1) promotion of foreign language learning for the national interest, especially since the events of 9/11, and 2) controversies centered around the role of language as an overt indicator of immigrant status. Policy makers and foreign language educators need to know about these attitudes as they attempt to formulate new policy options and recognize what proportions of Americans support or oppose them. These issues are of vital interest to the communities with equities in the teaching and expansion of foreign languages in the United States, including K-16 FL teachers and administrators, language policy researchers, and government officials responsible for FL programming, but especially to the NCOLCTL, given the extensive focus on LCTLs as noted above, and the dependence of many LCTL fields on Federal support. The 2006 National Security Language Initiative combines the efforts of the Departments of State, Education, and Defense in an attempt to improve national FL capacity in the United States. In the realm of national security, the Department of Defense and the components of Intelligence community have indicated immediate needs in a range of languages, such as Arabic, Chinese and Farsi, among other FLs. Policies and programs promulgated for foreign language development since 2001 include programs such as the Language Flagship, the National Language Service Corps, STARTALK, and other elements of the National Security Language Initiative.

The data we present here may inform the assessment of initiatives such as those listed above, or the development of further policies and programs -- in particular as political leaders gauge public receptivity to new initiatives in FL planning. To the extent that language is considered a particular form of human capital (Chiswick & Miller, 1995) or a common public good (Brecht & Rivers, 2000), subject to planning on behalf of the polity deriving benefit from language as a common good, public perception of the role FLs play in the US strongly influences the formulation and execution of new in-
itiatives. Wiley (2007) points out that FL policies in the US policies are contested:

Advocates of English-only policies have dichotomized the issue of U.S. language policy as a zero-sum game, as if there is a contest between English and other languages (Wiley, p253).

Simply put, our data show otherwise – that while related, the two issues are not independent, and that, in fact, public support in the US for FL education is broad.

The General Social Survey (GSS), conducted every two years since the early 1970s by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, is considered the premier monitor of trends in American public opinion and behavior. In 2000 and subsequent surveys, the GSS has included a series of questions on foreign language skills and attitudes towards language policy. These FL data shed light on the dichotomy named by Wiley, and are indicative of national sentiment and generally free of polemic, as the GSS is designed to be policy neutral. This allows us to avoid, to some degree, direct linkages of US FL policy to national security, economic competitiveness, social well-being (Brecht & Rivers, 2000), the more broadly conceptualized “national interest” (Parker, 1961), or the xenophobia cited above by Wiley (op cit). In other words, the FL data from the GSS are essentially presented on their own, rather than being framed in terms of the lines of argument that typically encompass FL policy discussion in the US.

At the same time, public opinion data provide only a rough picture of the state of FL and language policy attitudes, often not addressing issues or nuances of concern to FL scholars. Not only are there serious problems in capturing the reasons underlying their answers, these surveys offer only two snapshots rather than the continuous dynamics in opinions taking place between these two readings. Thus, one can only speculate on the factors underlying any changes in opinion. It is further the case that it is not possible with these sample sizes to appreciate how they may be affected by demo-
graphic shifts in the population, particularly as minorities and immigrants migrate or become more prominent in different communities across the country.

At the same time, these two snapshots represent the only generalizable empirical evidence on which to speculate on what appears to be some new trends in the nature of the general public’s positions on FL issues. It will be seen in Table 1 that the 2008 responses are within sampling error of the 2000 results for 5 of the 7 questions, supporting the conclusion that the two surveys are comparable across time.

Although asking different questions, that 2000 GSS served to update Eddy’s (1980) initial detailed national survey of American’s FL policy attitudes. Eddy reported 47% of 1979 survey adults thought learning a foreign language should be required in high schools (and 90% thought language courses should at least be offered in high school and about 75% in grammar schools). That contrasts with the 80% in 2008 (and 76% in the 2000 GSS) in Table 1 below who agreed that high school students “should learn a second language fluently”, higher support figures perhaps because the word “required” was not used.

There have been a number of state/local FL surveys, each focused on specific research questions, typically on English Only policies. Based on state-level exit poll and other interview data from California and other border states, Citrin et al. (1990) described the demographic and political backgrounds of supporters of the “official English” policies. Schmid (1992) found some similar correlates among supporters of English-only policies. Tatalovich (1995) found Reagan voters and less educated voters in five states to be most in favor of official English. Ricento (1998) found greater support for official English among Republican and non-Hispanic voters in Texas. Barker and Giles (2002) examined important demographic predictors of support for English-only policies in the Santa Barbara (CA) area. More recently, Palozzi (2006) developed a more comprehensive lan-
guage policy scale (LPAS) based on 12 items, six grounded in multiculturalism and six on assimilationalism in order to achieve a more nuanced picture of public opinion on these issues. When applied to a 2002 sample of 300 registered voters (out of 2749 contacted) in Colorado and a 2003 sample of 322 Indiana University students, Palozzi found most of these respondents supported both English-only policies and the public use of other languages as well. His LPAS scale was found to be highly predictive of whether his Colorado voters supported a restrictive language state Amendment, far more predictive than demographic predictors of vote intent. Here neither political party nor ideology was predictive, after the LPAS score was taken into account.

Survey Methodology

The 2008 data come from an October-November national omnibus survey conducted the Public Opinion Research Lab at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. This was a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) survey using Random-Digit-Dial (RDD) sampling, in which all US telephone numbers have an equal chance of selection. The interview took about 15 minutes to complete with this national probability sample of 1008 adult respondents aged 18 and older. In each selected household, one adult person was interviewed at random also using random selection procedures. The 2000 GSS was an in-home 90-minute personal survey that has been conducted at one-to-two year intervals since 1972 by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago.
The Import of Americans’ Attitudes towards FLs for the LCTLs

We begin with an overview of Americans’ attitudes towards FL, addressing through quantitative analyses questions:

1) **Change over time**: Have Americans’ attitudes towards FL policy become more restrictive during the Bush Administration? We examine this question in Tables 1 and 2, below.

With respect to the LCTLs, the wave of support for FL programming, and the resultant publicity and funding, have been critical to the growth and health of the LCTLs in the past decade. Changes in the level of support – in particular, any perception that support is declining – could be deleterious, especially in an era of severely constrained resources. On the other hand, increased support – even sustained support at prior levels – might serve as an indication of the permanence and public recognition of the importance of LCTLs to the common weal.

2) **Demographic predictors of support for FL**: We examine whether there are demographic predictors, such as age, political affiliation, minority status, or gender, which predict support for FL in the US. These analyses are presented in Tables 3 and 4 below.

The demographic predictors of support for FL contain two fundamental thrusts: the first set of independent variables we include under the rubric of demographics includes political affiliation, gender, and minority status; these have shown to be informative in our previous analyses (Robinson et al., 2006).

The second we test the near universal assumption that the changing demographics of immigrant languages in the US over the past 20 years influences FL policy attitudes, generally in a positive way, as FL speakers become more prevalent and accepted in the society at large, as the language service industry continues its rapid growth (Kelly & Stewart, 2011), and as the business community continues to expand its communications with those markets in the US.
that have resulted from the immigration of the past 20 years. Finally, as the children of immigrants enter the workforce and public life, and eventually send their children to school, one might reasonably posit that their familiarity with FLs would tend to increase support for FLs in general, and that this will increase over the next several decades. For the LCTLs, the import of this changing demographic could well be vital and transformative – that is, if FL becomes an expectation in the educational system and in public life. We will return to this question later, in the discussion section.

Results

As can be seen in Table 1, support for FL in the US remains remarkably stable, with the exception of increased opposition to bilingual ballots. Combining the strongly and less strongly positions in the Table 1 responses, close to or more than 70% agreed in both years that English should be the official US language (Q1), that high school students should become fluent in a foreign language (Q2b), and that FL is of equal educational value as math or science (Q2d); some 75% also agree and that English unites Americans (Q2c). In contrast, less than 25% agreed that bilingual education should be eliminated (Q2a) and 32-36% that immigrant use of FLs posed a threat to English (Q2e). However, the most significant change in Table 1 was the 18-point increase in the proportions opposing ballots in other languages (Q2f), from 34% in 2000 to 52% in 2008. This result stands out in relation to the relative stability or reliability found for the other six items in Table 6 (which provides further evidence of the comparability of the two surveys).
Table 1:
Percentages for Foreign Language Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you favor a law making English the official language of the United States, or do you oppose such a law?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000: Favor: 78%; Oppose: 22%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008: Favor: 72%; Oppose: 28%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now please tell us whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of these statements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Children in the U.S. should learn a second language fluently before they finish high school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000: Strongly agree: 27%; agree: 49%; disagree: 22%; Strongly disagree: 3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008: Strongly agree: 40%; agree: 40%; disagree: 15%; Strongly disagree: 6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Bilingual education programs should be eliminated in American public schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000: Strongly agree: 6%; agree: 16%; disagree: 50%; strongly disagree: 28%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008: Strongly agree: 10%; agree: 13%; disagree: 41%; strongly disagree: 36%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Speaking English as the common national language is what unites all Americans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000: Strongly agree: 26%; agree: 50%; disagree: 21%; strongly disagree: 3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008: Strongly agree: 39%; agree: 38%; disagree: 17%; strongly disagree: 6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Learning a foreign language is as valuable as learning math and science in school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000: Strongly agree: 21%; agree: 43%; disagree: 31%; strongly disagree: 5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008: Strongly agree: 32%; agree: 36%; disagree: 24%; strongly disagree: 8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. English will be threatened if other languages are frequently used in large immigrant communities in the U.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000: Strongly agree: 9%; agree: 24%; disagree: 51%; strongly disagree: 16%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008: Strongly agree: 16%; agree: 22%; disagree: 40%; strongly disagree: 22%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Election ballots should be printed in other languages in areas where lots of people don’t speak English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000: Strongly agree: 17%; agree: 49%; disagree: 22%; strongly disagree: 12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008: Strongly agree: 18%; agree: 30%; disagree: 27%; strongly disagree: 25%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of more interest in the current analysis, however, are the changes or trends in FL policy questions since 2000. These are shown directly for each question in Table 1. It can be seen that, despite the often combative FL events during the Bush administration, there was little dramatic change in opinion. The second largest change was the six-point decline (from 78% to 72%) in support for an official English policy (Q1). Otherwise, there are only very small percentage-point changes in the other five items, with both items (Q2a and Q2d in Table 1) on taking FL in high schools showing 4-point gains. At the same time, when examined on their own in Table 1, the six Likert-scale items do show an increase in using the “strongly” response options.

In order to translate the Table 1 results into more comparative terms, then, they have recalculated in Table 2 to show the basic shifts in the more “pro” or less restrictive direction (and with the strongly pro and simple pro responses combined). Thus, the -18 percentage-point entry in Table 2 for the final (election ballot) item reflects the decrease from 66% to 48% in the proportions agreeing with this item. Overall, it can be seen in Table 2 that this change is by far the largest found across the decade, and is responsible for an overall average of a 2-point decline in 2008 across the seven items (from 57% to 55% per item). When summed across the seven items into a FLT index or score, it results in an overall slight decline – from 3.97 in 2000 to 3.86 in 2008 (rounded to 4.0 and 3.9 in Tables 3 and 6).
Table 2: Overall Item 2000-2008 Changes in Pro-FL Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1* (English only)</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>+6 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2a (HS FL)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2b* (eliminate bilingual Ed)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2c* (English unites all Americans)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2d (FL as imp. as math &amp; science)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2e* (English threatened by FLs)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2f (English-only ballots)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>-0.11 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>2 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* After recoding in Pro-FL direction and Combining Strongly Agree and Agree Responses in Table 1

Demographic differences: Table 3 examines average differences on these FLT scores (of 4.0 in 2000 and to 3.9 in 2008) for the five basic demographic predictor variables of gender, age, race/ethnicity, education and family income. These differences are adjusted for the correlations of the other predictors by use of the MCA regression program of Andrews et al (1972), designed by these survey statisticians to provide adjusted figures for each category of these predictors, once the other predictors are taken into account. Basically, what the MCA program thus does is to “make other things equal”, so that differences between men and women, for example, are adjusted for
their differing age, race, education, and family income characteristics. In addition, the MCA program then summarizes these differences with the use of $\beta$ (Beta) correlation coefficients, which like other correlations varies between 0 (no difference) and 1.0 (maximum difference).

As can be seen in Table 3, the highest Betas among the five predictors in both years were for age (.21 in 2008 and .17 in 2000), education (.23 and .13), and ethnicity (.19 and .12). In neither year are either gender or income significant predictors. The higher Betas for 2008 reflect the higher scores for younger adults (4.6 for those 18-24 and 4.2 for those 25-34) vs. the 3.9 and 3.6 scores for those aged 55-64 and 65+, respectively. Further reflecting the polarization tendency noted above, the differences by age (and education) are larger in 2008 than 2000.

**Table 3: Differences in Foreign Language Policy Total (FLT) Score by Demographic Predictors: After MCA Adjustment the for Other Predictors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Predictors:</th>
<th>2008 FLT Score (mean=3.9)</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>2000 FLT score: (Mean=4.0)</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male ($n=439$)</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female ($n=422$)</td>
<td>4.0 (.06 NS)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.1 (.09 NS)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24 ($n=101$)</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 (176)</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44 ($n=181$)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54 ($n=169$)</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64 ($n=103$)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+ ($n=137$)</td>
<td>3.6 (.21 ***</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnic group:</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hisp (n=587)</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American (n=114) Hispanic (n=110)</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, other (n=50)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.19 *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education:</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some high school (n=104)</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school grad. (n=292)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college. (n=181)</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College grad (n=219)</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>.23 ***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad. school (n=871)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income:</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under $20K (104)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20-39.9K (240)</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40-59.9K (137)</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>.07 NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60-77.9K (98)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>.07 NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100+K (152)</td>
<td>Refused, DK (128)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Differences by the demographic factor of education in Table 3 are of about the same magnitude as for age, and they reflect the significantly more pro-FL stance of the college educated (4.4) in relation to those with a high school degree or less (3.5). That is also reflected in their Beta coefficients of .23 and .13. Differences by the factor of race/ethnicity are also significant, but it is ethnic (Hispanic) groups that are different in their FL support and not racial groups. Blacks and Asians score the on FLT at about the same level as Whites do in both 2000 and 2008. Unlike the differences for age and education, they are no larger for ethnicity in 2008 than in 2000. As noted above, both before and these three demographic factors are taken into account, the slightly higher FLT scores for women and the more affluent are not statistically higher from men or the less affluent.

Table 4: Differences in Language Policy Dimensions, Sociopolitical Predictors: (After MCA Adjustment for Other Predictors)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociopolitical Predictors:</th>
<th>2008 Flt score</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>2000 Flt score</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party ID: Strong Democrat(n=214)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.3@</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats (n=58)</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indep., Dem. (n=93)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents (n=133)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indep., Repub. (n=92)</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans (n=40)</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
@ Different question wording in 2008

From Table 4 we see that Independent Republicans score higher (4.1) than Independents (3.9) and “not-strong” Democrats score higher (4.3) than strong Democrats who were about average at 4.0. There are two tentative conclusions here: first, support for FL is broadly based, regardless of party; and second, that support is stronger on the left and in the center of the political spectrum.

Summary and Conclusions

In this analysis of changes in public FL attitudes since 2000, generally little change was apparent in the direction on six of the seven FLT items, indicating the overall stability of public opinion, as well as the comparability of the two surveys. Within specific questions there were some changes, but with the exception of increased opposition to bilingual ballots (driven by the older cohorts of respondents), the changes that did occur were in the positive direction. Moreover, these changes were most pronounced among the younger cohorts of respondents.

Previous research, including our own, has emphasized the multi-dimensional nature of FL policy attitudes, so that the finding that those who support English-only policies now also favor learning an FL in high school is something surprising; it may well be that the English-only issue, and its stalemate on the right, bilingual education (Wiley, op cit.), have become decoupled from the public perception of foreign language learning. One hesitates to advance too far out on any particular limb in offering hypotheses as to why this is the case, but nevertheless, it may be that language learning is not tied to immi-
gration (even in the case of Spanish, the most visible and largest immigrant language), or that Foreign Language learning in the public perception encompasses the breadth of FLs offered. Within the FL advocacy community, Spanish predominates, as it does in our K-12 and higher education enrollments; but this may not be evident to the public at large.

Of more concern in these policy deliberations, however, are the differences by age and cohort, because they signify that future generations may increasingly come to this debate with different assumptions and positions than their elders. It is not clear where these differences arose (or how strongly they are held compared to other issues), but it perhaps reflects their educational and cultural upbringing – being more exposed to teachers and fellow students from other cultures than previous generations. It may also reflect the increased exposure to these cultures via TV and the Internet. This indicates a potential and as yet latent groundswell of support for FL in the US, beyond current levels. If true, this opposes the binary formulation noted by Wiley (2007).

Most importantly, we see a clear break line for those born after 1975 who are more likely to support the teaching and learning of foreign languages, and less likely to support restrictive policies such as “English Only.” Further work is required to assess whether this “generation gap” correlates with the greater diversity of the younger population in the US, with changes in attitudes towards immigration among this generation, or with the potential for increased contacts with diverse elements of the population among this generation. In terms of language policy, we believe that this generation gap augurs well for a richer and more dynamic FL teaching and learning environment.

For LCTL policy, the signal result of the past decade, and perhaps the clearest indicator of progress in the LCTLS, has been the emphasis on LCTL programs for national well-being, and more concretely, language and national security (Brecht & Rivers, 2000, 2005).
This emphasis has met with apparent success in terms of establishing new Federal programs for supporting LCTLs in the nation’s educational system, although the programs are generally limited in scope and their impact thus far is at best diffused and attenuated. Other programs include the Language Flagship, which has demonstrated the feasibility of training Anglophones in a relatively short time to professional levels of proficiency in an array of languages, the English for Heritage Speakers program, which “tops off” the English skills of immigrants, to the same level of professionally useful proficiency, and the National Language Service Corps and the National Virtual Translation Center.

Nevertheless, the LCTLs exist in a larger FL context, where the evident and sustained political and public opinion support for FLs in the US and for FL programming in the US never seems to translate into real reform or significant funding. For example, analyses of the applications to the Department of Education for its “Race to the Top” by the Joint National Committee on Languages showed that not one of the forty-plus applications included FL as a subject for investment (Edwards, 2010). More recently, Title VI/Fulbright-Hays programs have seen a 40% cut in funding; even as these programs have been repeatedly shown to be vital to the national interest over the past 50 years (Parker, op cit., Brecht & Rivers, 2000; Brecht et al., 2007).

As to what might be done, the LCTLs have one inherent advantage over the CTLs, in terms of the real demand and stated requirements for a broad range of LCTLs for national security. This, in combination with the public support for FLs and the continued growth of the FL industry, argues that the number of groups with an interest in the expansion of LCTL programs may well be much larger than the professionally-based teacher and faculty oriented membership groups that have carried this message for the past decades. Other groups might be drawn from the translation and interpreting sector, the human language technology sector, the language testing and
language services sectors, to name a few. Each of these acknowledges that it is a beneficiary of the educational sector’s activities in promoting LCTLs in the US. Early attempts to organize more broadly include the Translation and Interpreting Summit, held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Translators Association, and the organization of an industry-wide national committee on language standards under the auspices of ASTM (Bassett, 2011). These larger, pan-sector attempts at organizing a broad base for language as an educational subject and profession in the US might well lead to the more crucial test: can the LCTL field catalyze grass roots support for FL and improve its position in the American educational enterprise?
References


The Beliefs Of International And Domestic Foreign Language Teachers

Scott Kissau
Maria Yon
Bob Algozzine
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Abstract

In response to the shortage of foreign language (L2) teachers in the United States, many school districts employ individuals from other countries. Despite the benefits offered by such teachers, there is growing concern that they may not be adequately prepared for teaching in American schools. In this mixed method study involving 222 L2 teachers and their supervisors, the teaching-related beliefs of domestic and international L2 teachers in the United States were compared. Survey results indicated that international L2 teachers hold many of the same core beliefs related to L2 teaching as do their American-born peers. Interview data, however, suggested the existence of differing beliefs among sub-groups of international L2 teachers that often lead to problems with classroom management. These problems seem to be aggravated by the extent of the cultural differences between the L2 teacher’s native land and the country where the instruction is taking place. Recommendations for improvement of practice include having international L2 teachers observe American-born L2 teachers, offering more professional development, and providing greater administrative support.

In this era of internationalization and multiculturalism, an increasing number of students in the United States have shown interest in foreign language (L2) learning (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2011; Furman, Goldberg & Lusin, 2007; Rhodes & Pufahl, 2009). While increasing L2 enrollment bodes well for the ability of American students to compete in a global economy and a multicultural society, there is concern among L2 stakeholders
that the growth of L2 enrollment in this country will outpace the number of qualified L2 teachers (Long, 2000; Modern Language Association of America, 2007; Rhodes & Pufahl, 2009).

In response to the shortage of L2 teachers, many school districts in the United States hire teachers from other countries. A report commissioned by the National Education Association (Barber, 2003) indicated that approximately 10,000 foreign teachers were working in K-12 public schools in the United States on non-immigrant work or cultural exchange visas (Barber, 2003). A more recent report has indicated that this number has almost tripled since the time of the NEA findings (Wolfe, September, 2007). While no records are kept specific to the number of teachers from other countries who are teaching an L2 in the United States, multiple reports indicate that they are being hired in growing numbers to address critical teacher shortages in a select few disciplines, including L2 education (Barber, 2003; Cook, 2000; Millman, May 24, 2010; Wolfe, September, 2007). As evidence of the high percentage of foreign teachers hired to fill vacancies in L2 classrooms, the largest single sponsor of non-immigrant teachers, Visiting International Faculty (VIF), has approximately 1500 teachers working in U.S. public schools, of which 30% are teaching foreign languages and an additional 17% are teaching English as a second language (Associated Press, September, 2008).

The presence of foreign-born teachers is particularly dramatic in the growing number of immersion schools in the United States. Due to the limited supply of American-born teachers who possess the necessary language skills to teach in immersion schools, human resource departments are often required to look outside of the United States to fill immersion teaching vacancies. In a recent article documenting the development of French immersion programs in Louisiana to revive its Cajun culture it was reported that dozens of French-speaking teachers from West Africa, have joined teachers
from Canada, Haiti, Belgium, and France to form “a veritable French Foreign Legion of imported educators” (Millman, May, 24, 2010).

The number of international teachers teaching in L2 classrooms in the United States becomes even more significant when considering the growing number of teachers who are American citizens, but who were born and raised in a foreign country. It is now quite common for American students studying an L2 to be taught by a fellow American citizen who was born in a foreign country.

**Cause for Concern**

Although this increase in the number of foreign teachers may serve to both alleviate the shortage of L2 teachers in the United States and to contribute to the internationalization of American classrooms, there is growing concern that many of these teachers may not be adequately prepared to teach in American schools. Amengual-Pizarro (2007) and Hutchinson and Jazzar (2007) reported that international teachers face a variety of unique challenges ranging from culture shock and communication gaps to differing understandings of assessment and student-teacher relations. More specific to L2 teaching, Chambers (2007) demonstrated how foreign-born L2 teachers with little exposure to schools in the host country can struggle to adjust to the behavior of their students and the teaching expectations. Similar concerns have been raised with respect to foreign teachers at the post-secondary level. McCalman (2007) questioned whether international faculty are equipped to work with university students and argued that it is essential to the success of foreign instructors to develop teaching beliefs that are compatible with those of the host country.

International L2 teachers have a great deal to offer L2 programs. They help fill vacant positions, bring with them native fluency in the language of instruction, have access to authentic cultural resources, and offer unique insights into the L2 culture. In light of all of the strengths that they bring to the classroom, more
needs to be done to support them in their transition to American classrooms. In order to provide such support L2 methodology instructors and individuals who oversee L2 programs need to have a better understanding of how the teaching beliefs of international L2 teachers differ in comparison with their American-born peers. Understanding the beliefs of international L2 teachers is important given that the beliefs of teachers have been found to relate to their classroom practices (Richardson, Anders, Tidwell & Lloyd, 1991). Teacher beliefs about L2 teaching and learning are also believed to be dynamic and malleable (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2003). It could thus, be hypothesized that professional development (PD) opportunities may modify teaching beliefs that are incompatible with effective L2 instruction in the United States. While researchers have investigated the challenges faced by international teachers (Amengual-Pizarro, 2007; Chalupa & Lair, 2000; Hutchinson & Jazzar, 2007), little research has focused on the teaching beliefs of international L2 teachers working in the United States. Hoping to fill this void in the related research, a study was conducted that compared the beliefs of both international and domestic L2 teachers. The purpose of this study was to investigate differences that may be contributing to the struggles of international L2 teachers and to better understand how these valuable resources can be further supported in their transition to American L2 classrooms.

**Method**

**Participants**

A diverse group of 222 L2 teachers employed by six different school districts in the southeastern United States completed a survey. While the majority of these teachers taught Spanish (63%), teachers of French, German, Chinese, Japanese, Latin, and Portuguese also participated. Of the 222 teachers, 47 were immersion teachers, and the remaining 175 were traditional L2 teachers. High school teachers accounted for 117 of the teacher-participants and 105 teachers taught
at the elementary or middle school level. The teachers represented 7 distinct regions of origin and had varying degrees of experience. One hundred and thirty-six were born and raised in the United States, and the remaining teachers came from Latin America (47), Europe (14), the Caribbean (13), Asia (7), Africa (4), and Canada (1). One hundred teachers had less than five years of teaching experience, 43 had between five and ten years of experience, and 79 had more than ten years of experience. Approximately 85% of the teachers were female, 15% were male, and slightly more than one quarter of the teachers (27%) had not yet completed an L2 teacher education program.

From the 222 teachers who completed the survey, a volunteer sample of 14 L2 teachers participated in follow-up interviews. To ensure that the interests and perspectives of all groups of L2 teachers represented in the quantitative phase of the study were also represented in the qualitative phase, teachers with varying degrees of experience, teachers from diverse origins, teachers of different languages, and teachers from both immersion and traditional L2 programs were selected (see Table 1).

Table 1: Participating Teacher Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Language Taught</th>
<th>L2 Program</th>
<th>Level of Instruction</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Years in USA</th>
<th>Years Training</th>
<th>Years Exp</th>
<th>Sex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Traditional K-5</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Traditional Secondary</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Traditional Secondary</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Traditional Secondary</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Immersion Elementary</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Immersion Elementary</td>
<td>Ivory Coast</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Immersion Elementary</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Immersion Elementary</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Traditional Secondary</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Traditional Secondary</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Traditional Secondary</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Female</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Traditional Secondary</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Traditional Middle</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Traditional Secondary</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the L2 teacher-participants, seven L2 supervisors were invited to participate in the interviews (see Table 2). Supervisors included five L2 specialists who oversee L2 education in the participating school districts and two principals of immersion schools.

Table 2: Participating Supervisor Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisor</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Number of Teachers Supervised</th>
<th>Former L2 Teacher</th>
<th>Years Experience</th>
<th>Home Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Language Coordinator (K-12)</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>World Language Specialist (9-12)</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Director of World Languages</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Foreign Language Program Specialist</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>World Language Specialist (K-5)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedure

The questionnaire was administered electronically in the fall of 2009. To facilitate comprehension the survey was first piloted on a group of L2 teachers whose first language is not English. The teachers were asked to provide feedback with respect to the items that they found challenging to understand. Subsequent revisions were made to the wording of some survey items. A copy of the complete survey is provided in Appendix A. In the spring of 2010, following the analysis of the survey data, qualitative data were gathered from L2 teachers and L2 supervisors by means of semi-structured interviews.
**Measures**

Quantitative data were collected using an adaptation of the questionnaire used by Bell (2005) to explore the beliefs of approximately 500 experienced L2 teachers about attitudes and behaviors associated with effective L2 teaching. The interview protocol included open-ended items focusing on key aspects of L2 teaching.

**Survey**

The first section of the survey sought background information about the teacher-participants (See Appendix A). In the second section teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they believe a variety of behaviors and beliefs contribute to effective L2 teaching. Of the 80 items listed in Bell’s questionnaire, only the 44 items agreed upon by approximately 500 experienced L2 teachers as being associated with effective L2 teaching were used in the survey. The items were organized under five subscales. Internal consistency estimates (i.e., coefficient alpha) reflecting reliability for the total scale, $r_{\infty} = .84$, and each scale (see below) were high.

The first subscale (Language and Culture: $r_{\infty} = .83$) contained nine items that relate to the use of the L2 in the L2 classroom and the integration of the L2 culture into instruction. In other words, the researchers wanted to know how important the teachers believe it is to speak consistently in the L2 during instruction and to expose the students to aspects of the L2 culture. The second subscale (Teaching Strategies: $r_{\infty} = .80$) consisted of eight items and targeted teacher beliefs about the use of a variety of teaching strategies, such as small group work, the use of technology, and physical movement. The third subscale (Individual Differences: $r_{\infty} = .85$) contained five items and addressed individual differences, such as interests and learning strategies. The fourth subscale (Assessment and Grammar: $r_{\infty} = .82$) contained six items and investigated teachers’ assessment practices.
and the extent to which they emphasized accuracy and the instruction of grammar. The fifth and final subscale (Second Language Acquisition Theory: $r_{xx} = .61$) contained 10 items and explored teachers’ beliefs related to L2 acquisition theory. This subscale measured teacher beliefs related to the correction of student errors and the importance of reducing anxiety in the classroom and making language learning meaningful.

**Interviews**

Each of the 21 participants was interviewed individually by the same researcher. During the interviews teacher-participants were asked to describe their experiences as L2 teachers. They were also asked what challenges they faced in their classrooms, if they noticed any differences in the challenges faced by different groups of L2 teachers, and in what areas they feel that they personally could use additional support. In the case of L2 supervisors, they were asked what challenges they believe are faced by L2 teachers, what unexpected difficulties these teachers encounter in their classrooms, if they noticed any differences in the challenges experienced by different groups of L2 teachers, and in what areas they feel many L2 teachers could use additional support. These questions were based on the seminal work of Borg that emphasized the influence of context and classroom realities on teacher beliefs (see Borg, 2003) and were intended to identify possible differences in teacher beliefs that were not detected in the survey.

**Data Analysis**

A series of $t$-tests was conducted to evaluate differences in beliefs between domestic and international L2 teachers with respect to each of the subscales in the survey. In all cases, the conventional level of .05 was used to evaluate statistical significance of observed differences and Cohen’s $d$ effect sizes (Cohen, 1988) as indicators of the practical significance of the observed differences.
In the summer of 2010 the data provided by the interviews were analyzed. The researchers followed qualitative data analysis procedures outlined by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) that included close reading, open and focused coding of interviews, and initial and integrative memo writing. In coding the data, the researchers read interview transcripts one line at time using the comment function in Microsoft Word to take notes.

**Results**

*Surveys*

Means and standard deviations reflecting perceptions of critical areas of effective L2 teaching for international and domestic teachers are presented in Table 3. Differences were not statistically significant for Language and Culture, Teaching Strategies, Individual Differences, and Assessment and Grammar (see Table 3). Perceptions regarding Second Language Acquisition Theory were statistically higher (p < .05) for teachers born in the United States. Effect sizes for all comparisons reflected no practical differences for teachers born inside or outside of the United States.
Pertaining to the first subscale (Language and Culture), the international and domestic L2 teachers expressed the belief that it is important for both L2 teachers and their students to speak in the target language. They also indicated agreement that L2 teachers should integrate L2 culture into instruction. Both groups also expressed very similar beliefs with respect to the second (Teaching Strategies) and third (Individual Differences) subscales. The teachers were in agreement that it is necessary to expose L2 learners to a variety of teaching strategies that are related to core content material and that involve the use of group work and technology. They also indicated the importance of aligning teaching strategies with the individual needs and interests of their students and the need to expose L2 learners to a variety of different learning strategies. The international and domestic L2 teachers also had very similar beliefs with respect to the fourth subscale (Assessment and Grammar). They agreed that L2 teachers should not focus on accuracy and grammar at the expense of student oral proficiency and participation.
Only in regard to the fifth subscale (Second Language Acquisition Theory) was a significant difference reported between the two groups. The international teachers believed less strongly than did their domestic counterparts in some of the theoretical aspects of L2 teaching, such as the need to reduce anxiety in the L2 classroom, the need to have students both listen to and speak the L2, and the importance of not overly correcting student errors.

**Interviews**

During the analysis of the qualitative data gathered from the L2 teachers and their supervisors, five main themes emerged. The 14 teachers and seven supervisors frequently mentioned differing beliefs between international and domestic L2 teachers with respect to expectations for student behavior, classroom management, instructional methods, parental involvement, and student promotion and assessment.

**Behavioral expectations**

The data collected in the interviews suggest that international L2 teachers tend to have higher behavioral expectations of their students than do their domestic counterparts. The data also suggest that these higher expectations are often not being met by students. Six of the seven international teachers interviewed mentioned that poor student behavior was an issue in their L2 classrooms. Behavioral issues were reported to involve students speaking out of turn, not completing homework, neglecting to pay attention, and failing to stay on task. Even the lone foreign-born teacher who did not report behavioral problems mentioned that she had to initially adjust her beliefs with respect to how students should behave in her American L2 classroom. In comparison, only two of the seven American-born teachers commented on their students’ poor behavior.
Cultural differences were thought to be at the root of this mismatch between international L2 teacher expectations and American student behavior. The general message conveyed by several participants is that both teachers and education, in general, are more valued and respected in other countries than they are in the United States. As a result, when teachers from these countries come to teach in the United States they are initially bewildered by the lack of respect they receive and the poor behavior of their students. Their beliefs about how students should behave in school do not align with the beliefs and expectations of their American students. According to Teacher#5, a Chinese immersion teacher from Taiwan, these cultural differences render student behavior problems particularly difficult for teachers from China:

It would be easier for you to teach in China because the social status of teacher is different than the status here. We feel we are high level blue collar workers here. But in China, teachers represent knowledge, and in the Oriental culture we respect knowledge. Whatever the teacher says, you follow, you listen (Teacher#5).

Comments from the principal of an immersion school with both Japanese and Chinese L2 programs (Supervisor#7) add credence to the notion that cultural differences experienced by teachers from Asia make behavior management in U.S. schools extremely challenging. “I would say the difference is most profound for teachers coming from Asia where the expectation and the reality is that students respect the teachers and essentially do what they are asked to do and also have a very strong work ethic.”

Similar cultural differences impacting upon student behavior were mentioned by teachers from Africa. Teacher#2, an international high school French teacher, who also taught English in Cameroon, stated that she never experienced the behavioral problems in her
homeland that she has encountered in the United States. She explained that education is costly in Cameroon and not all students have the opportunity to attend school. She went on to say that those who do attend are, as a result, more willing and ready to pay attention.

Having not encountered such behavioral problems in their native lands, international L2 teachers can be ill-prepared to deal with them when they arrive in the United States. This certainly seemed to be the case with the French-teacher from Cameroon. “Discipline was not an issue and it was not something that needed to be discussed in teacher preparation programs in my country. You just walked in and the students stood up and said ‘bonjour Madame’, and sat themselves down” (Teacher#2).

Classroom management

Given the attention paid to student behavior during the interviews, it is of little surprise that teacher beliefs related to classroom management represent another theme that emerged during analysis of the qualitative data. While acknowledging that accounts from teachers of their own effective teaching are highly subjective, it is still interesting to note that the L2 teachers who reported to have strong classroom management skills all emphasized the importance of establishing and enforcing classroom rules at the beginning of the semester. Once the rules were in place they could gradually relax them and have more fun with their students. According to Teacher#12, a high school teacher from the United States with 17 years experience, creating a relaxed and enjoyable class for both herself and her students is only possible by getting to know the students and developing a mutual relationship of respect.

On the other hand, several of the international L2 teachers, like Teacher#6 and Teacher#7, had stricter and more rigid beliefs with respect to classroom management. When asked to describe her classroom management Teacher#7 responded, “I want students to
follow my direction. I want you to do something, you do it. I want my classroom to be quiet.” It is also interesting to note that this authoritarian classroom management style, by her own admission, did not seem to be working well in her classroom. When asked in what area she felt she needed PD, Teacher#7 quickly and emphatically responded, “Oh yeah, yeah, classroom management. It is the most important part and also the hardest part for me”.

Based on conversations with L2 supervisors, Teacher#7 is not the only Chinese teacher to struggle with classroom management in her American L2 classroom. According to Supervisor#3, it appears as though cultural differences make classroom management an especially daunting task for L2 teachers from China. She commented, “It is definitely a bigger deal with Chinese teachers because they are used to just standing there lecturing and nobody moves a muscle and obviously we don’t work that way. So, they have struggled big time with classroom management” (Supervisor#3). Her comments were further supported by Supervisor#1 when describing a new Chinese language program established within her school district. “Some of our foreign-born teachers, that have almost no awareness of U.S. schools, as compared to some of the Chinese schools, were pretty disastrous with classroom management” (Supervisor#1).

While Teacher#12 believed that teachers must get to know their students in order to establish a positive classroom environment, the international L2 teachers’ beliefs about classroom management seemed to prevent them from establishing a relationship with their students. Having grown accustomed to teaching French to American students over the past 10 years, Teacher#2 reflected on her experience teaching English in Africa, “The room was nice and quiet, but …I really didn’t get to know my students in Cameroon. They were just people sitting in my classroom.”

Comments from L2 supervisors confirmed that many international L2 teachers struggle to adopt a more relaxed classroom atmosphere that allows them to get to know their students. Supervi-
The Beliefs Of International And Domestic

sor#1, who had developed a new Chinese language program, provided the following insight shortly after observing a new L2 teacher from China:

She can’t be goofy with them. She can’t relax with them. She can’t ask them about their private lives. But that really is a part of U.S. education that we get to know the kids. And I think she’s expecting respect at a distance, rather than anything that approaches knowing the students (Supervisor#1).

While also emphasizing the need to build relationships with her students, another American-born L2 teacher, who was the 2009 state Teacher of the Year, asserted that the key to her positive classroom management is keeping students actively involved in the lesson. “I don’t have a lot of behavior problems because my kids are so engaged in what’s going on. I mean they have to be so involved that they don’t have a chance to get bored and to act out” (Teacher#9).

**Instructional methods**

The student-centered approach described by Teacher#9 in which students were “so engaged” lies in sharp contrast to the description two paragraphs earlier of Teacher#2’s “nice and quiet” classroom in Cameroon. The traditional, teacher-centered beliefs prevalent in many other countries were found to influence the teaching methodology of teachers in the United States who originate from such countries. Consider the following statement from Teacher#6, a French immersion teacher from the Ivory Coast:

When I was in school there wasn’t any game involved in the instruction. There wasn’t a lot of moving involved in instruction. We would sit down from the beginning until the end and then when instruction was over, you closed your notebook and go to recess. I think I apply a little bit of that here
All but one L2 supervisor mentioned that foreign-born and educated L2 teachers tend to have more teacher-centered beliefs that involve relying heavily on the textbook, lecturing for long periods of time, and focusing on grammar and accuracy, all of which according to Supervisor#6 “is less American-friendly”. Supervisor#2, who oversees L2 instruction in one of the country’s largest school districts, reported that cultural differences with respect to the status of teachers and the value placed on education were at the root of these teacher-centered beliefs held by many international L2 teachers:

Some teachers who came from countries where education was valued highly and it was a privilege to be able to be formally educated are used to educational environments where the teacher lectures for the entire class period, and American students do not respond to this type of setting so…We’ve found that some of these teachers are not willing to bend on their expectations (Supervisor#2).

The notion of international teachers “not willing to bend” was mentioned on more than one occasion by different L2 teachers and L2 supervisors. The principal of an immersion school who supervises 14 teachers from Greece offered an interesting perspective on why some international L2 teachers seem resistant to change. She explained that her Greek teachers are very autonomous and accustomed to receiving great respect. She felt they would be insulted by the suggestion to observe other teachers in order to improve their instruction.

As made evident in the following quote from Supervisor#3, an unwillingness to accept feedback and to modify one’s teaching approach can have harmful effects on L2 programs: “I have one French teacher from the Ivory Coast…He’s not open to suggestions,
and he’s killing the French program at two different schools… He thinks he is doing just fine and is not willing to do anything to change” (Supervisor#3).

Parental involvement

In the interviews, international and domestic L2 teachers also reported differing beliefs with respect to parental involvement. The differences were once again most stark between Asian and American-born teachers. The teachers from Asia stressed the pressure Asian parents place on their children to excel in school. “The family only has one kid … and greatest population in China in the world. So not everyone has good future, if you don’t have good education. So daddy and mama push kids” (Teacher#7). In the United States, however, the two Chinese teachers (Teacher#5 and Teacher#7) and one Japanese teacher (Teacher#8) all believed the onus for student success is not placed on the student, but rather on the teacher. Teacher#5, a Chinese immersion teacher with experience teaching English in China, felt that U.S. parents place blame on the teacher and fail to hold their children responsible for their academic success. She commented:

And this is the challenge I can’t understand, when a child fail one little quiz, the reaction from the families is coming to the teaching [sic] to say I didn’t receive my vocabulary list. I have not seen this kind of reaction in China (Teacher#5).

This sentiment was shared by the principal of an immersion school with a Chinese language program. Having over 25 years of experience as an immersion principal, Supervisor#7 acknowledged that her international teachers are often unprepared to deal with American parents. She added, “There’s a sharp difference between, at
least how our international teachers view it, between the way parents behave towards teachers in other countries and the way they behave towards teachers here in the United States”.

The teachers from China also reported to have differing beliefs from their American colleagues when it comes to communication with parents. Supervisor#1, who spent time studying Chinese language programs in China, explained that teachers in China would “never” call the parent of a student because, “It looks like you can’t handle the students”. She acknowledged that this cultural difference raised a dilemma when teaching in U.S. schools. “But in the U.S. we’re saying, call the parents, call the parents. You’re the teacher, you call the parents, and they don’t want to do that” (Supervisor#1).

It is interesting to note that the domestic L2 teachers who professed to have strong classroom management skills all emphasized the importance of keeping in frequent contact with parents. An American-born Department Head with 17 years experience teaching Spanish stated in a matter-of-fact manner, “Well, I can tell you right now, they don't act up in my class. I've got 1-800 your mama” (Teacher#11).

**Student promotion and assessment**

A final interesting difference between the beliefs of international L2 teachers and their domestic peers that surfaced during interviews pertained to educational practices in American schools with respect to how students are promoted to the next grade level and how they are assessed by teachers. When asked what unexpected challenges they faced as L2 teachers, being unfamiliar with the student promotion system was a common topic discussed by international L2 teachers. When they initially started teaching in the United States both French teachers from Africa (Teacher#2 and Teacher#6) along with a teacher from China (Teacher#7) believed all of their students were working at the appropriate grade level. Being accustomed to students in their homelands moving to the next grade level
when they had reached the appropriate level of academic achieve-
ment, they did not initially realize that there were students in their
American L2 classrooms who were not all reading or writing at the
same grade level. A conversation with her Department Head about a
struggling student in her French class exemplifies how the initial be-
liefs of Teacher#2 with respect to student promotion did not align
with current practices in American schools. “What do you mean
reading level? This is 7th grade”. She explained to me that not eve-
ryone in the 7th grade reads at the 7th grade level, and my question
to her was, “Why are they in the 7th grade?” Having had little prior
experience with students who were not performing at the appropriate
grade level, these same teachers struggled to differentiate their in-
struction. When asked in what area she would like to receive addi-
tional training, Teacher#2 responded, “The concept of differentia-
tion is pretty new to me. Where I’m from you had a program and
that is what you taught. Your students just cope or they sink” (Teacher#2).

Both teachers from Africa also reported to struggle with what
they believe to be inflated grading practices in the U.S. Being used to
a more demanding assessment policy in Africa, these teachers met
with resistance from students, parents, and administrators when they
continued to grade with very high expectations in the United States.
Teacher#2 explained, “Where I’m from 18 out of 20 was as far as
you get… Even the world’s greatest genius didn’t get 20 out of 20.”
The argument that international L2 teachers have more demanding
and rigorous beliefs in regard to assessment was further bolstered by
the following comment from Supervisor#2: “They [international L2
teachers] tend to be very enthusiastic about their language … so they
really want the student to nail the spelling and the grammar perfectly”
(Supervisor#2).
Discussion

Although the survey results indicated that participating teachers reported similar opinions pertaining to Language and Culture, Teaching Strategies, Individual Differences, and Assessment and Grammar, interviews revealed differing beliefs between international and domestic L2 teachers. During the interview process, both L2 teachers and L2 supervisors reported international L2 teachers have more traditional and teacher-centered beliefs pertaining to teaching strategies they use in their classrooms. Furthermore, two of the six foreign-born L2 teachers freely acknowledged in the interviews that their beliefs regarding individual differences and differentiation did not initially align with expectations in American classrooms. The previously mentioned accounts of international L2 teachers being accustomed to more demanding grading practices in their native lands also suggest that their beliefs pertaining to assessment and grammar may be different from those of their American-born counterparts.

The interviews allowed for a more detailed analysis of subgroups of international teachers than was possible in the quantitative analysis. As documented above, there is little mention in the interviews of international L2 teachers from Europe, Latin America, or North America when discussing differing beliefs between international and domestic L2 teachers. The fact that these teachers represent 75 of the 86 international teachers involved in the study may explain why few differences were found between international and domestic L2 teachers in the quantitative analysis. Comments made by L2 teachers and L2 supervisors during the interview process suggest that differing beliefs between international and domestic teachers with respect to teaching strategies, individual differences, and assessment and grammar are more evident when comparing domestic L2 teachers with international L2 teachers from China and Africa. Being accustomed to great respect afforded to teachers, high value attached to education, more student accountability, and tradi-
tional approaches to teaching, the L2 teachers from China, in particular, appear to struggle more than their international peers from other regions in their transition to American L2 classrooms.

In addition to allowing for a more detailed and focused analysis of sub-groups of international L2 teachers, the interviews shed light on interesting differences that were not targeted in the survey between international and domestic L2 teachers related to classroom management beliefs. Cultural differences in regard to the value of education and the respect afforded to teachers, once again, appeared to be at the root of these differing beliefs. Experienced, American-born teachers who claimed to have established a positive classroom management system in their L2 classrooms believe teachers need to get to know their students and to develop a relationship of mutual respect and understanding. They stressed the importance of adopting a student-centered approach to teaching that got all students actively involved in the instruction, and they underscored the behavioral benefits of keeping in frequent contact with parents. It is noteworthy that these three critical elements of effective classroom management were the same three areas where many international L2 teachers were reported to struggle.

Classroom management issues in L2 classrooms seem to be particularly problematic among international teachers from China. This finding was supported by all six of the seven supervisors who have experience overseeing a Chinese L2 program. Take for example the comments of Supervisor#3, “…certainly the management piece has been a bigger deal with the Chinese teachers we have had than with the Latin American teachers.” Dramatic cultural differences between eastern and western cultures with respect to parental involvement, teaching methodology, and student-teacher relations made the transition to U.S. schools extremely challenging for many teachers from China.
Implications for Research and Practice

While the results of the study have illustrated some of the consequences of extreme cultural differences for international L2 teachers, L2 students may also be affected. Studies have demonstrated that when teacher expectations do not align with those of their students the consequence can be unmotivated students who decide to drop L2 studies from their schedules (Kern, 1995; Schulz, 1996). Teacher#7 exemplifies such a mismatch between student and teacher expectations. While this teacher from China held an authoritarian approach to classroom management, she freely admitted that her students did not respond well to her approach and that she needed help with classroom management.

During the interviews a number of recommendations were proposed by L2 teachers and their supervisors to ease the transition of international L2 teachers to American classrooms. The two international teachers who were not experiencing classroom management problems all emphasized the importance of time in adapting their teaching behaviors to better align with the needs of their American students. While school districts may have little control over the amount of time international L2 teachers have spent living in the United States prior to entering the classroom, they can attempt to increase the exposure these teachers have to other American L2 classrooms. Greater exposure to U.S. schools via the observation of other L2 teachers was mentioned by six of the seven supervisors and by two of the international L2 teachers as a means to familiarize foreign-born teachers with teaching strategies that meet the needs of students in American L2 classrooms. Supervisor#1, however, believed that in addition to observing another L2 teacher teach, international L2 teachers need to have someone sit down with them and explain exactly why a specific strategy was used or a certain decision was made. Due to the time such individualized attention would require of administrators and mentoring teachers, this same
The Beliefs Of International And Domestic

supervisor recommended the creation of instructional videos as a more realistic means of supporting international L2 teachers.

Building on the suggestion of observing other L2 teachers, L2 supervisors also stressed that international L2 teachers would benefit from greater collaboration and networking with American L2 teachers in order to broaden their perspective of what constitutes effective L2 teaching beyond what they experienced in their native land. Supervisor#2 made the following remark:

I have found that some of the international teachers who do attend [PD] stay with each other and are not comfortable networking with some of the other more experienced teachers who are American-born or who have been teaching long enough in the US and are adaptable and flexible with students (Supervisor#2).

This comment from Supervisor#2 leads to another frequent suggestion that came from international L2 teachers themselves. Several felt that they are, or were in need, of further PD when they started teaching. Teacher#2, who came to the United States ten years ago from Cameroon, felt that she could have benefitted from further training with respect to differentiation and assessment. She also wished that she had been better prepared for what to expect when she first started teaching. The need for greater PD for international L2 teachers was supported by Supervisor#1. She stressed that while there is PD available to international L2 teachers, it is often not specific to their challenges, and as a result is not effective. “You need personalized professional development that’s just for your specific problem, because if someone is going to teach you how to use technology, and you can’t even get kids to listen, it doesn’t matter if you use technology” (Supervisor#1).

Supervisors acknowledged that they too played a role in helping international L2 teachers adjust to teaching in the United States. Supervisor#7 mentioned that she would like to do more informal
observations of her international L2 teachers. She stated that while all her teachers must be formally observed three times per year, these pre-arranged observations were less informative than unannounced and informal “walk-thrus”. Supervisor#1 and Supervisor#7 also emphasized the need for administrative support in preparing international L2 teachers to work with American parents.

As made apparent in this study, PD and teacher training must do more than inform international L2 teachers about effective pedagogy. The survey results demonstrated that the participating international teachers are familiar with current beliefs in regard to best practices in L2 classrooms. What they need is to be shown how to put their knowledge and their beliefs into practice. To better meet the needs of their international L2 teachers and L2 teacher-candidates, teacher workshops and training programs should adopt a more hands-on and practical approach. In addition to informing international L2 teachers of current theories and methods of L2 teaching, PD should provide opportunities to experience first-hand the implementation of these theories and methods. Workshops and teacher training also need to incorporate further clinical experiences in which international L2 teachers get the chance to apply and practice what they have learned.

Limitations

There are limitations to consider when interpreting the results of the study. The study considers the international teacher-participants as one homogenous group, when in fact there are a number of differences among the international teachers that could potentially influence their beliefs. International L2 teachers at immersion schools, for example, may have different teaching-related beliefs than their international counterparts working in traditional L2 programs. Similarly, international L2 teachers working in elementary schools may have different beliefs from their international peers.
teaching in high schools. In the future, researchers should build upon the findings of this research by examining for differing beliefs among specific groups of international L2 teachers. For example, based on the results of this study, an investigation comparing the beliefs of international L2 teachers from Asia or Africa with the beliefs of colleagues from Europe or Latin America may reveal interesting results.

Treating the international L2 teachers as one homogenous group also prevented the researchers from making more meaningful comparisons between the quantitative and qualitative data. While the interview data suggested differences in beliefs between Asian L2 teachers and their American-born L2 colleagues, the quantitative analysis was unable to make such a comparison. The small number of Asian teachers who completed the survey did not allow for meaningful comparisons to be made between the Asian and American-born L2 teachers. As Chinese L2 programs continue to grow in the United States (see Rhodes & Pufahl, 2009), future related research should have greater opportunity to include more international L2 teachers from China and therefore make greater comparisons between Chinese and American-born L2 teachers.

Conclusion

Despite the above-mentioned limitations, the findings of this study are important and provide direction for future research. While it would be unfair and inaccurate to state that all international L2 teachers experience greater difficulties in their L2 classrooms than do their American-born peers, the results of this study help to confirm what many in the L2 education community instinctively already know. Many foreign-born L2 teachers face unique challenges in American L2 classrooms that can have a negative impact on instruction. Helping to fill a void in related research, the results of this unique study suggest that, when viewed as a homogenous group,
international L2 teachers appear to espouse many of the same fundamental beliefs related to L2 teaching as do their American-born peers. That being said, extreme cultural differences related to teaching methodology, parental involvement, and student-teacher relations may result in differing beliefs among some international L2 teachers that lead to problems with classroom management. Qualitative data suggest that these problems are most evident among L2 teachers originating from China, where expectations related to education and parenting are quite different from those commonly held in the United States. In light of a recent report by the Center for Applied Linguistics (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2009) demonstrating significant growth in student enrollment in Chinese L2 programs in the United States, L2 supervisors and L2 stakeholders need to take notice of the study’s findings. As Chinese language programs continue to grow, so too will the need to draw teachers from China to teach in the United States. Given the extent of the cultural differences between China and the United States, these teachers may experience many of the challenges described by the Chinese L2 teachers in this study.

International L2 teachers, including those from China, offer a wealth of benefits to American L2 classrooms. If we hope to take advantage of all that they have to offer, we must provide them with additional support in their transition to American L2 classrooms. Second language supervisors and L2 methodology instructors need to maximize the amount of exposure international L2 teachers have to L2 classrooms taught by American-born teachers and offer more practical, hands-on PD opportunities tailored to the challenges of the growing number of international L2 teachers in the United States. Furthermore, principals of schools with international L2 teachers need to offer greater administrative support and assistance to facilitate their transition to U.S. schools.

Notes.
1 For the purposes of this study teachers were considered international if they were born and educated in a foreign country.

2 Traditional L2 teachers teach L2 skills to K-12 students during 60-90 minute periods three to five times per week.

3 Responses on three of the six items were reversed to reflect similar qualitative perspectives across all items in the subscale.

4 Responses on ten of the sixteen items were reversed to reflect similar qualitative perspectives across all items in the subscale.
References


Appendix A

Foreign Language Teacher Belief Survey

Instructions: Please take your time to complete all sections to the best of your ability.

Section A: Background Information

Please provide the following information:
1. What is your gender?
   ______ Male ______ Female

2. What foreign language do you teach now or plan to teach in the future? (Check all that apply.)
   ___ Spanish ___ French ___ German ___ Chinese ___ Japanese ___ Latin ___ Other

3. In what type of school setting do you teach?
   ______ K-8 ______ high school

4. In what type of foreign language program do you currently teach?
   ______ Traditional (K-12) ________ Dual Language/Immersion

5. For how many years have you been teaching a foreign language in the United States?
   ______ less than 5 years ________ 5-10 years _________ more than 10 years

6. Have you ever completed a foreign language teacher training program?
   ______ Yes _________ No

7. In what country/area were you born?
   ______ USA ______ Canada ______ Europe ______ the Caribbean ______ Asia ______ Africa
   ______ Latin America (Mexico, Central or South America) ______ Other

8. If you were born outside of the United States, at what age did you come to this country?
   ______ 0-5 years old ________ 6-10 years old ________ 11-20 years old ______ 21-30 years old
Section B: Teacher Behaviors

Directions: Using the scale below, indicate your perceptions of the extent to which the following behaviors contribute to effective foreign language teaching. Click the response that best represents your answer.

SD = Strongly Disagree  D = Disagree  N = Neutral  A = Agree  SA = Strongly Agree

LANGUAGE & CULTURE

TL = Target Language / Foreign Language

The effective foreign language teacher.....

1. Is involved in and enthusiastic about the TL and the TL culture.  SD  D  N  A  SA
2. Has good oral and written skills in the TL.  SD  D  N  A  SA
3. Teaches familiar expressions (e.g., It’s raining cats and dogs) to help learners communicate successfully in the TL.  SD  D  N  A  SA
4. Often uses authentic materials (e.g., maps, pictures, clothing, food) to teach about the TL and culture.  SD  D  N  A  SA
5. Uses the TL as the main language of communication in the classroom.  SD  D  N  A  SA
6. Provides opportunities for students to use the TL in and outside of school.  SD  D  N  A  SA
7. Encourages foreign language learners to speak in the TL from the first day of instruction.  SD  D  N  A  SA
8. Gives examples of cultural differences between the student’s first language and the target language.  SD  D  N  A  SA
9. Selects materials that present viewpoints that are unique to the foreign language and its cultures (e.g., a text that shows how people greet each other differently in the target culture).  SD  D  N  A  SA

TEACHING STRATEGIES

TL = Target Language / Foreign Language

The effective foreign language teacher.....

1. Uses small groups so that more students are actively involved.  SD  D  N  A  SA
2. Gives learners a time limit to complete small group activities.  SD  D  N  A  SA
3. Gives learners tasks to complete (e.g., labeling a picture, filling in blanks) while reading or listening in the TL.  SD  D  N  A  SA
4. Provides opportunities for students to learn more about other  SD  D  N  A  SA
The Beliefs Of International And Domestic

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

TL = Target Language / Foreign Language

The effective foreign language teacher.....

1. Plans activities to meet the needs of foreign language students with a variety of interests.
2. Plans different teaching strategies and activities depending on the learners’ age.
3. Encourages students to explain why they are learning the TL and how they learn best.
4. Teaches foreign language students to use various strategies to improve their vocabulary learning (e.g., creating a mental picture of the word, memory aids).
5. Teaches foreign language students to use various learning strategies (e.g., self-evaluation, repetition, draw a picture).

ASSESSMENT AND GRAMMAR

TL = Target Language / Foreign Language

The effective foreign language teacher.....

1. Understands the basics of linguistic analysis (phonology, syntax) as they apply to the TL.
2. Uses activities and assignments that draw learners’ attention to grammatical points.
3. Bases at least part of students’ grades on completion of homework.
4. Grades written assignments mainly on the amount of errors in grammar.
5. Grades spoken language mainly on the amount of errors in grammar.

6. Bases at least some part of students’ grades on how well and how often they speak in the TL.

Section C: Second Language Theory

Directions: Using the scale below, indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. Click the response that best represents your answer.

SD = Strongly Disagree  D = Disagree  N = Neutral  A = Agree  SA = Strongly Agree

1. Foreign language learners should speak with native speakers of the TL as often as possible.


3. Foreign language learners do not always learn grammatical points by means of formal instruction.

4. Using small group activities helps to make students less nervous in the classroom.

5. Activities that focus on the exchange of meaningful information between two speakers are more important than activities that focus on the use of grammar.

6. The more intelligent a person is, the more likely he or she is to learn the TL well.

7. Foreign language teachers must correct most student errors.
5. Having students work in small groups is likely to result in them learning errors in the TL from each other.

9. It is not good to have beginning foreign language learners speak too much with native speakers because native speakers usually do all of the talking.

10. Foreign language learners can learn to use a foreign language well simply by exposing them to it (i.e., reading in or listening to the language).

11. Exposing learners to written and spoken language that is a little bit above their current level of understanding is necessary for TL learning.

12. Making students speak quickly in the TL improves TL use.

13. Adults learn a foreign language in a way similar to the way they learned their first language.

14. Teaching about the TL culture is not as important as teaching grammar and vocabulary.

15. Native or near-native language skills of the teacher are more important than his or her teaching skills.

16. Learners must understand every word of a spoken message to understand what is being said in the TL.
Teachers’ Perceptions on the Use of African Languages in the Curriculum: A Case Study of Schools in Kenya, East Africa

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Abstract

In order to revitalize African languages and advocate for their use as media of instruction in Kenyan schools, it is important to investigate and document the teachers’ attitude towards the use of these languages in teaching. The research on which this paper is based set forth to explore teachers’ perceptions on the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction in Kenya, East Africa. Six schools out of 54 public schools in the Gatundu district were randomly sampled. 32 teachers of Grades 1-3 were interviewed to find out the actual practices in their classrooms, the challenges they faced, and the perceptions they held in relation to the use of the mother tongue in their teaching. The data were qualitatively analyzed and the emergent findings support the claim that the use of learners’ mother tongue is beneficial to learners. In addition, the paper discusses the findings and proposes recommendations for pedagogy.

Keywords: Medium of instruction, mother tongue education, language of learning and teaching, perceptions
1. Introduction

The current educational curriculum in Kenya, commonly referred to as the 8-4-4 system, consists of eight years of primary education, four years of secondary, and four years of university education (Mbaabu, 1996). Since independence, various governments of Kenya have tried to address the challenges facing the education sector through commissions, committees and taskforces and in all these commissions, the question of which medium of instruction should be used has been one of the critical issues addressed. For instance, the Koech (1999: 284) report recommends that the medium of instruction in the lower primary (Grades 1-3) be the learners’ mother tongue or the dominant language within the school’s catchment’s area.

However, not all areas require the use of the vernacular languages for instruction due to the linguistically heterogeneous nature of Kenya’s community set-ups. For instance, within Nairobi, and other urban centres, where the population is made up of people from different ethnic groups, Kiswahili is the medium of instruction. In the upper primary (Grades 4-8), English is to be used as the medium of instruction throughout the country. However, despite the recommendations of the Koech Report, various Kenyan governments have only paid lip service to the role of African languages in terms of policy formulation and implementation.

Although Kenyans voted overwhelmingly for the passing of the new constitution in August, 2010, and that the constitution recognizes both English and Kiswahili as official languages, English has continued to overshadow Kiswahili and other African languages in most official communication. Nevertheless, findings of researches in mother tongue education indicate that the best medium for teaching a child is the mother tongue, particularly because this is the language that children understand best and express themselves freely in (Ndamba, 2008). Similarly, Kembo (2000) argues that cognitive and affective development occur more effectively in a language well
known to a child. But are teachers in Kenyan primary schools aware of such benefits of mother tongue education and do they fully implement the use of mother tongue education in their classrooms?

2. Statement of issue

Despite the crucial role played by the mother tongue in early learning (as documented in various studies on mother tongue education), many independent nations in Africa such as Senegal and Kenya continue using ex-colonial languages in their education system, at times right from kindergarten. Thus the child is bound to face myriad problems when he or she starts formal learning in a language foreign to him/her. Using Kenya as a reference, this paper sets to establish teachers’ perceptions on the use of African languages in the curriculum, highlights the challenges that are faced in the teaching of such languages, and argues for the preservation, development, and use of instructional materials in African languages.

Rationale

The role of indigenous languages in national development must not be undervalued particularly because they are the means by which different groups within society maintain their identities. The objective of learning these languages should be to promote, foster and propagate the cultural heritage. Such languages will help the learners retain strong ties with their culture; their heritage. Indeed the greatest and most important gift a parent can give a child is to pass their language and culture. Thus, indigenous language teaching should lead to a deeper sense of cultural pride and self awareness, giving the learners social identity. The learner is, therefore, socialized into a culture of his or her language. As President Julius Nyerere once said, "A country which lacks its own culture is no more than a collection of people without the spirit which makes them a Nation." (Abdulaziz, 1971). Therefore, if learners lose their mother tongues in
their early years, they are also losing a part of their culture, resulting in the stripping of their identity.

Secondly, linguists believe that if pupils do not fully acquire their first language, they may have problems later in becoming fully literate and academically proficient in the second language. This is supported by evidence from research which indicates that pupils learn academic material and other languages most successfully when they begin school in the language they speak most comfortably (Hornberger, 1996: 456 and Cummins, 1996). The interactive relationship between language and cognitive growth is very significant. This implies that everything acquired in the first language (academic skills, literacy, concept formation, and learning strategies) will be transferred from first language to the second language. That is, the first language will act as a foundation to the learning of other languages. Teachers’ Perceptions on the Use

In addition, intellectual independence is an important condition of achieving economic, social, and political independence (Kamwangamalu, 2000). The usage of African languages in education and teaching is a prudent way to achieve intellectual independence. It is on that point of view that this paper argues that the usage of African languages in schools will help in promoting African students’ academic growth and develop in them a strong sense of confidence.

Moreover, African languages, when used in schools, act as a link between home and school. Their own languages enable young learners to immediately construct and explain their world without fear of making mistakes, articulate their thoughts, and add new concepts to what they already know. Therefore, those who come to school with a solid background in their mother tongue develop literacy in the school language, since both languages will nurture each other when the educational and home environment permit children access to both languages. On the other hand, Abiri (2003) posits that mother tongues also play a profound role in the psychosocial devel-
opment of the individual and therefore early use of the languages will help expand the learners’ verbal facility and cognitive realm.

Mohanlal (2001) opines that a good education is that which draws from the learners' ethnocentric and eco-centric values. This postulation lends credence to the commonly held belief that it is only the mother tongue education that fully meets this requirement. But are the teachers entrusted with this responsibility aware of the benefits of using the learner’s first language as the medium of instruction? What are their attitudes toward mother tongue education? These are some of the questions that this paper purposes to answer.

3. Research Questions

This study was designed to find out the opinions of teachers on the use of African languages as the medium of instruction in Kenyan schools. It sought answers to the following questions:

a) What is the reality on the ground?
b) What media do teachers use in teaching?
c) What challenges do teachers face when teaching in the mother tongue?
d) What are the teachers’ perceptions as regards use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction?

4. Literature Review

4.1 Mother Tongue Education

The mother tongue is normally understood as a language that is naturally learned by members of a speech community and is employed by them as the first medium of vocalized communication (Iyamu and Ogiegbaen, 2007). It could also be understood as the language of a native community or of a group of people with common ancestry. Therefore, each of the diverse ethnic communities in
the world has its own language that is naturally learned by members in the socialization process (Blake, 2004).

In this paper, mother-tongue education is used to refer to the use of the mother tongue in formal education. A lot of research has been done about education in the mother tongue (Blake, 2004; Iya-mu, 2005; Urevbu, 2001). Mohanlal (2001) and Blake (2004) are of the view that an important goal of education is to instill the conventionally recognized moral norms to the individual and integrate these with the ethnic values, cultural norms and the worldview of the learner’s community.

Among many other advantages, a mother tongue plays a significant role in the psychosocial development of an individual (Abiri, 2003). The mother tongue also provides a more rewarding learning environment, as school learning and experience become a continuation of home experience, a condition that guarantees cognitive equili-brium.

4.2 Teachers, pupils and parents’ perceptions of the mother ton-gue

Barkhuizen (2002) examines high school students’ perceptions of the status and role of Xhosa (an indigenous African language) and English in the educational context. He surveys 2825 students in 26 high schools throughout the Eastern and Western Cape Provinces. These Xhosa high school students were being instructed in their mother tongue and also learning English as a second language. It was discovered that students had a preference for English as a second language. Dyers (1999) in her study of Xhosa university students’ attitudes towards South African languages observed a similar pattern. The two studies, however, did not look at how teachers perceived the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction.

Iyamu and Ogiegbaen (2007) looked at parents and teachers’ perspectives of mother-tongue medium of instruction policy in Nigerian primary schools. Questionnaires on the subject were adminis-
tered to samples of 1000 primary school teachers and 1500 parents of primary school children. They found out that many inadequacies of Nigeria’s schools stem from their religious and colonial past which seems to have put a lot of premium on the language of the colonizers to the detriment of African languages. There is also considerable opposition to the use of mother tongues as the medium of instruction. In addition, both parents and teachers were found to appreciate the advantages of mother-tongue education, but parents would not subscribe to their children being taught in the mother tongue in this era of globalization. It is important to find out whether the attitudes of teachers in Kenya will be different from those of teachers in Nigeria as far as the use of mother tongue medium of instruction is concerned.

Ejieh (2004) looks at the attitudes of student teachers toward teaching in the mother tongue in Nigerian primary schools. Data for the study were gathered by means of a questionnaire administered to 106 students in a Nigerian college of education. It was found out that the students had a generally negative attitude towards teaching in the mother tongue.

These studies on mother tongue teaching and others conducted in other contexts have succinct valid beliefs about their people’s experiences and attitudes towards the use of indigenous languages in teaching. It is crucial to establish what holds true for Kenyan situation and this is our main motivation for undertaking the study discussed in this paper.

5. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative survey design. An interview schedule (Appendix A) was used as a data instrument for this study. The teachers were asked questions and their responses written down. Later, these recordings were analyzed to determine teachers’ perceptions on the use of African languages in the Kenyan curriculum and
the emerging patterns are then discussed. Further, the challenges that teachers undergo in the course of their teaching as far as teaching using three languages (English, Swahili and Mother tongue) are discussed and recommendations on how the challenges can be mitigated are suggested.

5.1 Sampling procedure and sampling size

The research randomly sampled 6 schools out of 54 schools as well as the 32 teachers. In view of the fact that the research dealt with the perceptions of teachers on the use of African languages in the curriculum, the dichotomy of gender was factored in so that 16 teachers were males and the other 16 were females. The teachers were carefully chosen so that only those who could read and write in English and Gĩkũyũ were selected. We considered a sample of 32 teachers’ representative since there is a strong indication in the field that large samples tend to bring increasing data handling problems with diminishing analytical returns (Milroy, 1987). Since our interview schedule consisted of 8 questions and our sample comprised 32 teachers, we expected to analyze 256 items.

5.2 Data collection

An interview schedule (Appendix A) was presented to the 32 teachers of Grades 1-3. The introductory section of the interview schedule helped us in getting the bio-data of the respondents viz name, sex, and age. The interview schedule comprised both the open-ended and close-ended. This helped the researchers to understand the perceptions and logically structure them for analyses.

5.3 Data collection instrument

The instrument used in this study was an eight-item interview schedule. The questions sought the opinions of the teachers on some issues and problems related to teaching and learning in African languages. These questions included teachers’ opinions on the possibility
of teaching all school subjects in African language, the benefits of teaching and learning in the mother tongue to pupils, and some of the limitations of imparting education in the mother tongue.

Items 1 and 2 sought the teachers’ opinions on whether all the subjects in class are taught using the mother tongue and whether pupils in school found it hard to make a switch to English at Elementary Grade Four. Item 3 sought their opinion on whether they were trained on how to teach the mother tongue at teacher training college. Item 4 sought their opinions on whether they teach Mathematics using the mother tongue and whether pupils seem to understand better than they would if they were taught in English. Item 5 sought to know whether parents mind the medium of instruction used in teaching being English, Kiswahili, or the mother tongue. Item 6 sought to know whether there are benefits of teaching pupils in lower primary and nursery school in the mother tongue while item 7 sought their views on whether they would recommend that teaching in schools be done in the mother tongue. The last item sought their view on whether they would want the Kenya Language Education Policy changed so as to allow teaching of all children in English right from kindergarten.

6. Responses

Both men and women respondents had similar observations in relation to the questions in the interview schedule. The responses to each item are presented below.

6.1 Item one

The research found out that all the 32 teachers mostly use the mother tongue in their teaching. Interestingly, the research also found out that teachers use the 3 languages (English, Kiswahili and mother tongue) in the classroom teaching and learning. In most cases, code-switching practices play an important role in many Kenyan
classroom environments, although they can never be said to constitute a viable alternative to the development of formal academic proficiency in the African languages.

Code switching, the mixing of words, phrases, and sentences from two distinct grammatical systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event (Bokamba 1989) is a regular phenomenon in multilingual settings. In this connection, Abdulaziz (1971) reports that mixing of languages occurs in many schools in almost all environments from an early age. He argues that this is probably necessitated by the dearth of materials to teach all subjects in the mother tongue and similarly the pupils do not understand English as used in the school texts. This scenario was the case in the schools visited. The learners did not understand some concepts in English. Thus the teacher switched to the mother tongue and the learners would say, “haiya”, surprised that what they had found incomprehensible was so easy to understand when communicated in their mother tongue.

6.2 Item two

On whether pupils found it easy or hard to make a switch to using English at Primary Grade 4, all the 32 teachers indicated that their learners faced difficulties and that most learners drop out of school at this level. They find the curriculum too hard to follow, hence they opt out.

6.3 Item three

It emerged from the data analysis that teachers are not trained on how to teach the mother tongue or how to teach using the mother tongue. The syllabus in the teachers training colleges is silent on this and does not include any guidance on mother tongue education.

6.4 Item four

The teachers reported that when they used the mother tongue to explain some mathematical concepts, learners understood better
than when the same are explained in English. One teacher explained how difficult it was for her to explain the concept of ‘division’ using English. When she switched to the learners’ mother tongue, they all understood more easily.

6.5 Item five

The teachers reported that parents wanted their children taught in English from Primary Grade 1 since they felt that this would give their children a head start, now that English is an important language in Kenya. This situation could be the case due to the fact that English enjoys more functional privileges than Kiswahili and other indigenous languages in Kenya. English is thus seen as the key to economic and educational advancement. The language is accorded very high status and has overall dominance in many spheres that are associated with modernization. The language is thus associated with power and elitism and is a major asset in social mobility.

6.6 Item six

All the 32 teachers were in agreement that the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction in school is beneficial to learners. This finding concurs with the consensus among researchers and practitioners that children learn best in the mother tongue since it helps to bridge home and school experiences. The World Bank Report (2000), for example, notes that learners are more likely to participate actively in the classroom when the language of instruction is the local language.

The teachers interviewed noted that the level of development of children’s mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development. Children who come to school with a solid background in their mother tongue develop literacy in the school language. African languages teaching also enables parents and teachers to work together to support the learning which takes place at school while at the same time encouraging first language development and
support through storytelling, sharing books and reading in the mother tongue.

Teachers perceive mother tongue as a means of promoting cultural heritage. As noted out earlier in the rationale, using an African language as a medium of instruction leads to a deeper sense of cultural pride and self awareness giving the learners social identity. This is because indigenous languages have a wealth of knowledge concerning the local ecosystem and act as a “repository of a polity’s history, traditions, arts and ideas.” (Kamwangamalu, 2000).

Teachers noted that mother tongue education is effective in helping the child to understand his environment. This view is in consonance with the opinion of Mohanlal (2001) that a good education is that which draws from the learners’ ethnocentric and eco-centric values. We also found out that African languages help children understand the environment and helps them recognize their own mother tongue as a source of identity, thought, and instruction (Maas, 2001).

Teachers also stressed that mother tongue facilitates acquisition of second language and third language learning. This finding concurs with what research has consistently shown that learning to read and write in the mother tongue facilitates access to second language learning (Heugh, 2002; Brock-Utne, 2000; Grin, 2005 and Reh, 1981). Therefore, the teacher of a second language can make his/her job easier by creating conditions for students to reactivate these study skills and learning strategies and apply them to their study of a new language so long as the child has the vocabulary to reproduce it in that second language. Urevbu (2001), an expert in curriculum studies in Nigeria, believes that early education in the mother tongue enhances a child’s cognitive equilibrium.

The mother tongue is also perceived as a guarantee of security for the pupil. This is because language gives the individual a sense of belonging and ownership. When a child cannot competently use a language, her/his self-esteem is negatively affected, making the child insecure.
In the view of the teachers, learners are passive and take long to respond if they are asked questions in English and are expected to use English in their responses. That is, they view English as a strange tongue. For instance, one of the teachers interviewed informed this study that when the pupils are asked questions in the three languages, that is, English, Kiswahili, and the mother tongue, they would exhibit different behavior. For example, if they reported to school late and were asked:

1. Why are you late? (question asked in English)
2. Umechelewa kwa nini? (question asked in Kiswahili)
3. Wacererwo niki? (question asked in mother tongue – Kikuyu)

pupils would keep quiet if asked question (1), while a few learners would understand question (2) and respond, but their Swahili would not be grammatically correct. For question (3), all the learners would understand and respond correctly. Therefore, when teaching is done in English, learners are confused and many of them do not understand what is being taught because at Grade 1-3, they have not received much input in English.

6.7 Item seven

In view of the above benefits of mother tongue education, all the teachers recommended that teaching, especially in the early years of formal learning, should be done in their mother tongue. Teachers observed that lessons in a foreign language are mostly teacher centred especially in primary schools, since learners have not acquired reasonable proficiency in the target language. Therefore, the use of the mother tongue or a familiar language facilitates the use of effective, child-centred teaching practices which encourages learners to be active and become involved in the subject matter. Alidou and Brock-Utne (2005) is an example for such an approach.

The teachers further reported that the child becomes more confident and expresses himself/herself best in the mother tongue
than when using a second language. This finding agrees with Lameta-
Tufuga (1994) who found out that if learners are given a chance to
discuss a task in the first language before they had to carry it out in
writing in the second language, they will do the task well. This is be-
cause the learners will be very actively involved in coming to grips
with the ideas and hence making school less traumatic.

Secondly, the first language discussion will facilitate acquisi-
tion of second language vocabulary which would be used in a later
task. Therefore, it is imperative that when a teacher feels that a mean-
ing based second language task might be beyond the abilities of the
learners, a small amount of first language discussion can help over-
come some of the obstacles. Therefore, from a pedagogical point of
view, school results are plausibly better when children are taught in
their mother tongue.

6.8 Item eight
Teachers did not recommend the change of language in education
policy to have the language of instruction from Primary Grade 1 be-
ing English. They argued that the benefits of teaching children in
their mother tongue during the early years of formal learning out-
weigh the advantages of teaching them using English as the medium
of instruction. However, the teachers were aware of several chal-
 lenges that need to be countered for mother tongue education in Ke-
nyan schools to be a reality.

7. Challenges of adopting mother tongue education

According to the teachers interviewed, one of the challenges
encountered in attempt to implement the use of mother tongue edu-
cation policy in Kenya is the lack of enough teachers trained to teach
the various mother tongues spoken in the country. As Mbaabu (1996)
points out, primary schoolteachers in Kenya are not trained in teaching in mother tongue. On the other hand, Wolff (2006) notes that language teachers, whether of English or African languages, must be exposed to the general methodology of teaching language for effective teaching in the said languages.

Secondly, teachers felt that there is profound lack of instructional materials in African languages. This observation concurs with Okombo (2001), who notes that reports of the unavailability of instructional materials in indigenous languages are very common, even in the child’s first three years of primary education. In order to lessen the paucity of literature materials, Rubagumya (1986) feels that the state should assist various groups in producing reading materials to minimize the problem. According to Kembo-Sure, Mwangi, and Ogechi (2006) English books normally take the lion’s share in the publishing industry. Mother tongue books are rarely published. Fagerberg-Diallo (2001), on the other hand, feels that the availability of attractive reading materials will contribute to increasing the demand for literacy courses.

The teachers further commented that there is also an apparent lack of enthusiasm for African language teaching in Kenyan school. This remark tallies with Wolff’s (2006) observation that one of the major problems that blocks progress towards African languages is the continued lip service to the importance of African languages. The maintenance of education systems which systematically exclude the use of the majority's vernacular languages can no longer be justified by politicians (Elwert, 2001). Coulmas (2001) argues that giving up social and cultural pride is one of the "costs" of literacy. Learning to be literate in a second, international language at the expense of an indigenous vernacular language is one of the sacrifices in building a more literate society. On the other hand, Heugh (2005) opines that learning indigenous languages is relevant and sustainable by itself and that it is inappropriate and costly to pay lip service for the sake of economy of scale (see also Grin, 2005).
In addition, there was an observation that teachers using African languages as a media of instruction lack interpretive and translation skills that may help nurture learners for higher learning. On the other hand, while learners may have attained a certain level of basic interpersonal communicative competence in African languages, they lack what Cummins (2000), for example, termed cognitive academic language proficiency, and thus they are unprepared for higher education or for training in a sophisticated work environment.

Another challenge to African language teaching, according to the teachers interviewed, is the ardent push of a language of wider communication. Although Kiswahili is seen as a unifying language in East Africa, some people still look at the use of African languages in education as an obstacle to national unity. In other words, national unity, it is argued, is tantamount to official monolingualism. The use of several mother tongues is misconstrued as accentuating inter-ethnic conflict. English, being the dominant language of international business and economic development, continues to flourish with the continued globalization of business and international investment.

As such, the respondents noted that most teachers, parents and pupils look at African languages as inferior. This defeatist attitude towards use of indigenous languages for education may be connected to the inferior position accorded to African language during the colonial era. It has been argued that because of the status attached to the European languages, some Africans educated through them shun their mother tongues (Sure & Webb, 2000). In addition, some Kenyans believe that indigenous languages cannot be used for any serious conduct of scientific and technological affairs (Okombo, 2001). They, therefore, look at English as a language that helps bridge communication gaps between people. However, this only helps to threaten the continued existence of many mother tongues.

The respondents argued that a number of Kenyans view English as a status language with many benefits. However, teachers, parents, and their children must be made to see that the use of African
language in education leads to palpable benefits in economic empowerment, social mobility and influence and pathways to further academic opportunities (Dyers, 1999; Kamwangamalu, 2000; and Githiora, 2008). Therefore, its deployment often serves to establish formality and social distance between interlocutors. Stakeholders in the education sector must be convinced of the benefits of vernacular languages’ teaching, not merely in a cognitive sense, but in a much larger socio-economic context.

A few teachers though, the respondents observed, consider African languages as obstacles for the learning of English. This position is also shared by some linguists like Marton (1981). Marton maintains that from a psychological perspective not only at the moment of cognition but also when amassing fresh knowledge for his/her ‘linguistic reservoir’, the pupil is faced with a belligerent conflict between his native language and the second language system. Intriguingly, these are the same arguments that were peddled earlier in Kenya against the learning of Kiswahili in the curriculum (Sheffield, 1973). However, research evidence shows that the level of development of children’s mother tongue may be a strong predictor of their second language development (Cummins, 2001), and that teaching and learning in mother tongue facilitates learners’ cognitive and affective development (Kembo, 2000 and Thondhlana, 2000).

Another noticeable challenge noted by the respondents is that the national examinations in Kenya are set in English and therefore learners introduced to English at Grade 1 are advantaged. Those pupils who have not mastered the fundamentals of the language are disadvantaged. Such candidates do not seem to understand what is required of them and when they try answering the questions they lack the proper facility to express themselves.
8. Recommendations

Standardized textbooks, support materials, teaching aids and literature must be made readily accessible in African languages and kept continuously up to date. This is particularly germane in the fields of humanities, mathematics, science, and technology where new terms will have to be developed and communicated to the learners. It is imperative, therefore, that standard written forms in African languages need to be modernized, regularized, codified and elaborated.

We also recommend that African languages be examined in the curriculum. The government should come up with a policy that would make indigenous Kenyan languages examinable throughout the different educational levels. This will boost their status and many publications will be realized. This is going on in South Africa as well as Uganda where Luganda is taught up to the university level. The Kenya National Examination Council should set examinations in African languages and give certificates to successful candidates. Passing of the examination at Standard Eight should be one of the prerequisites for admission into secondary school level.

Trainees should undergo thorough training in African languages and the language content in the syllabuses should reflect the social, political and economic philosophies aspired for. In the government domain, policy issues should be written in the language understandable by the people and in a style that embodies the culture of the people.

It is also important that the government offers service contract bursaries for student teachers specializing in African languages. In addition, the government should form a committee in the Ministry of Education to oversee the establishment of teaching materials and syllabuses in African languages.

Programs aimed at the citizenry in Kenya and Africa in general, for example, HIV/AIDS, political awareness campaigns, human rights violations, the constitutional implementation debates, gover-
nance, female genital mutilation, and affirmative action, among others, should be transmitted to the people in African languages. The NGO's and other stakeholders should use indigenous languages as much as possible if they are to make any effective impact.

The government in partnership with the Kenya Institute of Education and other stakeholders should not only come up with the African language school curriculum at the primary, secondary and at tertiary levels, but should also revise and modernize the entire teacher education curriculum (including the undergraduate Bachelor of Education programs) at our universities.

The government also ought to undertake a massive translation of government documents such as the constitution from English to Kenyan languages so that all people can comprehend and follow such documents in their vernacular languages. Translation of other literature materials covering mathematics, sciences, philosophy, and other disciplines would also be undertaken so that even such specialized disciplines are not left in the dark.

The government and non governmental agencies need to support and finance literature in African languages by organizing workshops and seminars and providing grants to publishers and authors.

9. Conclusion

In this paper, we have attempted to present the perceptions of teachers on the use of African languages (learners’ mother tongues) as media of instruction especially in the early years of formal learning. The general finding is that the teachers interviewed noted that African languages had a significant role to play in education. The paper has highlighted some of the benefits of using mother tongue media in teaching as far as concept formation and comprehension are concerned, as seen from the teachers’ perspectives. It has also looked at some of the challenges that need to be countered and made some
useful recommendations that will facilitate a change of attitude among teachers, parents, and learners in relation to the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction.

Because of the many benefits to the learner that are associated with mother tongue education, as shown by research evidence, the respondents felt that attempts should be made by policy makers, educational administrators, and planners to empower teachers to develop positive attitudes towards African languages. Teacher education programs in training colleges should be restructured to reflect major indigenous languages in Kenya. Further, teacher trainees should be trained on mother tongue education so that teaching the same in the primary schools will be easy and effective.

All the teachers were in agreement that there is a great need to promote African languages by putting in place and fully implementing language in education policies if all the benefits are to be realized. The implementation of such policies will be meaningful if the African languages are developed extensively and aggressively through programs in the print and electronic media. That way, their cultural richness will be sustained and developed.

Although this study provides useful information about the perceptions of teachers on the use of the mother tongue in the curriculum, the generalizations that are made are not conclusive. The findings of this research, therefore, may need to be validated by further research. However, these findings are hoped to provide insights into what is actually happening in a multilingual nation like Kenya, and probably in the rest of Africa.
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Appendix A
Interview Schedule

Introduction

The purpose of this interview schedule is to get your views on the perceptions of teachers on the use of African languages in the curriculum. Any information that you give will be treated with confidence and will only be used for the purpose of this academic research.

Name (optional) .................................................................
Age ....................................................................................
Your sex

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1) Do you teach pupils all the subjects in your class using the mother tongue?
2) Do pupils in your school find it hard to make a switch to English at Standard Four?
3) Were you trained on how to teach the mother tongue at Teacher Training College?
4) When you are teaching mathematics using the mother tongue, do pupils seem to understand better than they would if you were to use English?
5) Do parents mind whether you teach the children in English, Kiswahili, or in the mother tongue?
6) What are the benefits of teaching pupils in lower primary and nursery school in the mother tongue?
7) Would you recommend that teaching in the primary school be done in the mother tongue?
8) Would you want the Kenya Language in education policy changed so as to allow teaching of all children in English?
Multilingualism Going Nowhere Slowly At One Of The Most Demographically Representative South African Universities

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Abstract

This discussion situates itself amidst increasing tensions about multilingual policy implementation in South African Higher Education. As a result of revised education legislation that has been amended to synchronise with the country’s new democratic constitution, many universities have been forced to undergo a rather complex alteration in their language policies. Most recent language policy encourages institutions to develop strategies to promote bi/multilingualism, elevating the use of previously marginalized languages.

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) is one of the largest universities in the country, much more demographically representative than any other South African university. Its deliberate move to revamp language policy in line with latest education initiatives has resulted in the implementation of a bi/multilingualism policy for education. Now that the policy is in place, actual implementation seems to be hampered by user-attitudes. This discussion offers a descriptive analysis of the sentiments of UKZN’s constituents (staff and students) towards the policy.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Bilingualism, Higher Education, User-perceptions, South Africa

Multilingualism going nowhere slowly at one of the most demographically representative South African universities
UKZN is the most culturally and linguistically diverse university in South Africa, boasting a vision to be the Premier University of African Scholarship (UKZN 2009a). It claims to draw inspiration from its African identity, thus taking seriously its responsibilities to the development of the African continent. The institution's current mission is to commit itself to the principles and values enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa (1996), and articulated in the preamble to the Higher Education Act of 1997. The university has set itself up as an icon in South Africa, committing itself to academic excellence, while at the same time embracing any change that might occur in pursuit of advancing previously disadvantaged societies. Not only has the institution been identified as the primary site for language development in the region of KZN, but it also has African First Language speakers in the majority (UKZN, 2009b), making up the preponderance of its enrolment. In fact, the university has been identified as an 'embryo of isiZulu' (Zungu, 2000). IsiZulu is the language of the Zulus; a people who form a particular ethnic group of Africans. The Zulu people hail from the Bantu nation (a large number of linguistically related peoples of Central and South Africa), comprising a prevailing population group in the province of KZN in South Africa.

In an attempt to orchestrate with urgent national initiatives to revamp language policies in education, a bi/multilingualism policy has recently been implemented at UKZN (UKZN, 2006). The policy essentially proposes a bilingual (isiZulu/English) medium of education, supporting of isiZulu alongside English, not only for instruction, but also for university-wide communication. The policy has already met with immense criticism; both positive and negative. Now that the policy has enabled such linguistic freedom at UKZN, the question remains whether the university community is embracing the new policy, or do they remain a body of 'bland monolinguals'?

UKZN’s new policy itself envisages how it would indeed be a bitter irony if the new democratic South Africa allowed its indigenous
languages to erode irreversibly through benign neglect. There is a
need to scrutinize more profoundly whether the policy, although laid
down in theory, is merely a political farce, meeting with possible re-
sistance from its users. Already, there exist impending tensions re-
volving around the resuscitation of a previously disadvantaged Afri-
can language (isiZulu) on one hand, and maintaining the already
established ‘high status’ language (English) on the other. This discus-
sion answers one imperative question: How successful is the new
language policy? It reveals that the answer lies in the measure of its
users' attitudes towards it and their acceptance of it.

Background

Language is an “extremely emotive issue” in a country like South
Africa, with such an ethnically mixed population so affected by a co-
lonial past (Thorpe, 2002). In fact, apartheid has caused ‘hardened’ atti-
tudes against African languages, which have been severely marginal-
ized throughout South Africa’s history (Owino, 2002; Banda, 2003).
These attitudes, Owino states, still continue to prevail right into the
post-apartheid era.

If one has to retrace the history of South African language
policies from the post-colonial era, it is evident that attitudes pro-
foundly affected policy implementation. As far back as 1652, gov-
ernment put a particular language into practice to meet its own eco-
nomic needs (Maartens, 1998). In fact, foreign languages were
imposed on people without a choice. Maartens records the policy of
‘free association’ as being adopted for reasons of ‘trade’ and later for ‘mis-
sionary-consciousness’.

Within about forty years of the formulation of the first lan-
guage policy in South Africa, an early form of Dutch, which evolved
into Afrikaans, became the South African lingua franca. The govern-
ment’s reason for imposing Afrikaans on immigrant slaves and the
Khoikhoi inhabitants was again for economic reasons, in that these
people had entered the employ of the white settlers and had to com-
municate with each other as well as with their employers if business
had to succeed (Maartens, 1998).
With regard to English, notice the vigorous manner (special emphasis on words in bold) in which it gained ground within the next forty years or so:

That the British authorities saw the importance of language is apparent from the steps periodically taken to compel the public use of English. They applied pressure first in the schools; they extended it by proclamation in the courts from the late 1820’s onwards; in 1853 they made English the exclusive language of Parliament; and by [1870] they appeared to be triumphing on all fronts (Maartens, 1998:25).

The ardent attitude of government further made it compulsory for Bantu Mother-Tongue, as well as English and Afrikaans as second and even third languages, to be taught at schools. Government’s reason was simply because they were official languages and because they met with learners’ cultural needs. However, for the colonized people themselves, this was a deliberate move to deprive them of the language of prestige – English. Hence their own languages were looked upon as inferior.

Even today, the prevailing negative attitudes of Black South Africans towards MT education are as a direct result of the negative impact of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. (Kamwangamalu, 2001). Kamwangamalu firmly puts forth that it is against the bleak backdrop of the apartheid demise which promoted discriminatory policies, that current multilingual policies are formed in the new Constitution. No wonder, he continues, Blacks consider education in African languages as “useless, for it has no cachet in the broader socio-economic and political context” (2001: 397). Maartens (1998: 35) concludes that, “most African people attach little value to their mother-tongue and believe it to be deficient or impoverished in a way that makes it unsuitable for use in modern society.” In terms of being used as media of instruction, Letsie (2002: 202) reveals that African languages have received very little attention from its own speakers. The reason he states this is that, “African languages have a low status compared to the former colonial languages”.
Theoretical approach

From a conceptual standpoint, Triandis (1971) makes reference to attitudes encompassing three parts: cognitive, affective and active. In language, cognitive attitude may be exhibited by effective transmission of words and symbols, affective attitude may refer to feelings and emotions, and active attitude relates to 'readiness for action'.

In support of this theory, Baker (1988) recommends that if language policy seeks to be successful, all three of these aspects should work concurrently. He suggests that while there may be "consonance" between these three factors, there may also be "dissonance" (1988: 113) and conveys that attitude is fundamental to the "growth or decay, restoration or destruction..." of a language (1988: 112). He adds that attitudes are pivotal to language policy and attitudes can predict the success or failure of policy. He explains that individual attitudes have a profound effect on communal or societal behaviour towards languages. For him, "attitude...impinges in an important way on the reality of language life" (1988: 112).

Building more on the crux of Triandis’s theory, Baker perceives attitude as an 'end product', involving both input (causal) variables as well as output (outcome) variables. He uses Welsh lessons provided in school as an example illustrating how it could yield "greater facility in the language" as well as "positive attitude to the language" (1988: 113). For him, watching Welsh language programs on television may have twofold results too: "enculturation and positive attitude to Welsh cultural forms" (1988: 113). He continues to clarify this idea in explaining how examination success, while it may be seen as the most important outcome of schooling, may result in mere 'short-lived' knowledge, whereas if accompanied by positive attitude, may yield a more 'enduring' outcome (1988).

Baker adds another important dimension to his argument on attitudes. He alludes to the notion that attitudes and behavior can be incongruent, this too resulting in the failure of policy. In other words, for him, "A person may have positive thoughts about a language, yet behave in a negative way" (1988: 113).

According to Lewis (1981) too, language policy implementation is crucially impacted by the attitudes of its users:
Any policy for language, especially in the system of education, has to take account of the attitude of those likely to be affected. In the long run, no policy will succeed which does not use one of three things: conform to the expressed attitudes of those involved; persuade those who express negative attitudes about the rightness of the policy; or seek to remove the causes of disagreement (1981: 262).


Concerning languages in education in South Africa, tensions revolve around the resuscitation of previously disadvantaged languages on the one hand and maintaining the already established ‘high status’ languages on the other (Balfour, 2006). Further, there are challenges from affirmative action for African languages. It is in many ways unsurprising that language policy remains such an emotive issue, where complexities and difficulties exist in implementing multilingualism policy in the context of a country that has just emerged from political and racial inequalities in education. This is the historical context within which the bilingualism policy at UKZN was implemented.

Other universities in South Africa have been following suit in regard to reforming language policies according to the changing political and social environment. Van der Walt (2007) reports on a survey conducted in the bilingual context of the University of Stellenbosch situated in the Western Cape in South Africa. It must be noted that, unlike the UKZN, Stellenbosch University comprises 60% Afrikaans and 40% English-speaking students. The University Council approved a multilingual language policy and implementation plan in 2002, which included the use of Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa (the official African language of the Western Cape). Also of importance is the fact this policy has already, to some degree, been in practice for a
few years now. It is against this backdrop that the survey attempts to "gauge students' experiences of bilingual practice" (2007: 2). Van der Walt found that the majority of students felt that they benefited when the lecturer used English and Afrikaans.

Conduah (2003) focuses on the attitudes of selected groups of staff and students at another university that has an enrolment of 21,000 local and international students from diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. He notes that although "...all the eleven official languages of South Africa and 65 other languages are spoken at the University as primary languages...English is the sole language for teaching and learning" (2003: 246). He found that the overall view of bilingual education elicited by most of the participants was one of 'ambivalence', which "suggests conflicting attitudes" (2003: 245). Views on possible introduction of an African language in addition to English for instruction revealed that a large percentage "...anticipated negative social and cultural effects such as disunity amongst students and violation of some students' linguistic rights if any one African language were selected for introduction" (2003: 248). A larger percentage felt that the introduction of an African language could enhance communication, academic progress and unity. Regarding the relationship between academic success, African identity and access to English, here too Conduah testifies to, "Conflicting and competing views...regarding pressure to maintain both African identity and access to English" (2003: 250).

Overall, it has been found that after more than a decade of democracy, there is notable absence of a single South African university that employs an African-language medium of instruction.

**The problem**

In its preliminary stage, UKZN’s bilingualism policy plan provoked criticism and controversy from many sides (Moodley, 2009). For some, the policy plan appeared to encompass a top-down orientation, creating the impression of 'imposing' a particular language on the University community and seeming to neglect the consideration and input of its constituents, viz. the students and staff. Discrepancy stemmed from a noticeable absence of evidence of either the needs or opinions of the University community that had formally been addressed in the formulation of such a document. For
others, the tone adopted by the authors of the policy plan was “overwhelmingly prescriptive, as if they had been given a mandate to impose their policies upon the University as a whole without debate or discussion... endlessly authoritarian (and hence anti-academic)” (Wade, 2005:1). According to a University academic, “…the introduction of Zulu as a teaching medium will achieve precisely what the Apartheid government was trying to achieve - an ethnic institution” (Moodley, 2009:72).

Amidst such sentiments, facts and trends needed to be more closely examined in order to gauge the nature and scope of the University constituents’ feelings towards the use of bilingualism for education. Such careful interrogation could ultimately assist in driving the move towards multilingualism forward. It was envisaged that it would better serve scholarship to get beneath the skin of resident attitudes about language use by investigating their inclinations about the proposed bilingualism policy. So, rather than regarding the University population as inflexible racists or cultural conservatives, a study was undertaken, addressing the following areas of concern:

- Does the proposed new language policy conform to the expressed language preferences of those involved?
- What is the status of bilingualism at the University? To what extent is isiZulu being used alongside English, on a functional level?

**Method**

A University-wide study was conducted, assessing the sentiments of UKZN’s staff and students towards the use of isiZulu alongside English as a medium of education (Moodley, 2009). The investigation hypothesized inherent dissonance between policy and practice at UKZN; that language preferences of UKZN’s community were largely at odds with proposed language policy.

The research methodology fell within a quantitative design, using an effective instrument consistent with the quantitative method – the survey questionnaire (Neuman, 2007). Two separate instruments were developed for staff and students. Each questionnaire was presented in both English and isiZulu. Respondents were required to
indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with a variety of statements pertaining to their language use. Some questions took on a multiple-choice format. Response options were arranged in a Likert Scale, utilizing the anchor of ‘strongly disagree’; ‘disagree’; ‘neither disagree nor agree’; ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’.

The first part of the questionnaire asked for factual information, such as age, gender, race, occupation, home-province, length of residence and home-language. Some questions asked for language background. Others required information about degree of daily use of isiZulu and degree of contact and association with Zulu language speakers on campus. Additional questions required attitudinal responses to the status and use of English and isiZulu for education at UKZN.

The target population for this study was the University community, comprising more than 35 000 students and over 6 700 staff (2009). The technique of probability sampling was used, facilitating random sampling on a large scale and stratified random sampling on a smaller scale (Vogt, 2006). The purpose of choosing this type of procedure was to ensure representation of two strata: staff and students. Table 1 (see Appendix) clarifies how the sample was represented.

The survey was administered via the University’s Intranet Web system over a nine-month period, beginning October 2006. The analysis drew on both descriptive and inferential statistics working hand-in-hand for retrieval of the results. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme (version 11) provided these statistics. Raw data derived from the questionnaire were converted to Tables and Charts. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha (Salkind, 2005). The resultant coefficient alpha was 0.734 for the staff questionnaire and 0.921 for the student questionnaire, indicating that the study was highly reliable and had a high degree of consistency among the items in the questionnaire.
Results

Participant demographics

140 staff members and 278 students across all age-groups responded to the survey. The majority of staff (70%) was above 35 years old, presumably having experienced significant changes in language interaction in education both during apartheid and also through a transformative period regarding the country’s language policies. As for students, the majority (74%) was below 25 years old.

Although staff members comprised equal numbers of males and females currently employed at UKZN, the number of female respondents (67%) more than doubled the number of male respondents. This supports the notion, which many researchers advocate, that females may be more ‘language sensitive’ than males, and might thus display relatively more eagerness to participate in a survey of this nature. However, the student participants comprised equal proportions of males and females.

From the standpoint of educational qualifications, the majority of staff (87%) had acquired post-graduate qualifications, viz. Postgraduate Diploma, Honors, Masters and PhD or equivalent; adding to the credibility of their opinions on educational issues. The majority of students (60%) were undergraduates.

Most staff and student respondents (29% and 45% respectively) hailed from the Faculty of Human Development and Social Sciences. The supposition is that the issue under study posed a higher degree of salience to these sectors, since language studies fall under this Faculty. It was also noted that the survey elicited significant responses from the Faculty of Science and Agriculture. The majority of staff was based at the Howard College (38%) and Pietermaritzburg (38%) campuses. Most students (52%) attended lectures at the Howard College campus, followed by the Pietermaritzburg campus (34%); the subject under scrutiny perhaps being more salient to these clusters since the study of Humanities is offered on these campuses.

Most staff (60%) belonged to the academic subdivision when looking at their personnel capacity. By implication, it could be that these individuals interact in actual teaching and therefore expressed more interest in the issue at hand. The number of years of experience of staff respondents provided balanced perceptions, spanning those
who have worked partly through the apartheid era, transitioning into democracy; and those who have experienced working under a democratic system of government only, more or less within the last decade. Concerning students’ duration of study, results indicated that most participants (74%) were in their first three years of study.

Most staff and students (77% and 89% respectively) listed KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) as their home province, placing both sets of respondents in a credible position to comment on the two predominantly used languages in KZN – English and isiZulu. A possible inference is that these representations of staff and students may demonstrate a greater degree of sensitivity to the most predominant regional languages spoken by the majority in KZN, particularly English and isiZulu.

English featured as First Language amongst most staff (71%), while most spoke Afrikaans as ‘other’ language (45%). This is likely a direct result of having been compulsorily schooled in these two official languages during apartheid. The greatest percentage of students (44%) indicated isiZulu as their first language, followed closely by those who spoke English as first language (41%). These statistics correlate with student enrolment figures that show isiZulu first language speakers in the majority. Furthermore, the greater percentage of students (38%) spoke English as their ‘other language’, while 31% spoke Afrikaans as their ‘other language’. It is possible that respondents were compulsorily schooled in English and Afrikaans.

**IsiZulu competency**

Respondents’ self-reported proficiency in isiZulu was charted. The data revealed considerably poor isiZulu overall competency among staff (see Appendix, Table 2). On average, only 9% indicated ‘excellent’ ability in isiZulu and 3% reported as ‘good’. Although the majority of students indicated ‘excellent’ to ‘average’ ability in isiZulu (see Table 3), a large proportion also revealed ‘poor’ or ‘non-existent’ proficiency.

The majority of staff (80%) responded negatively to the question as to whether they had studied isiZulu. A possible reason for this state of affairs could be that that many may have missed the oppor-
tunity to study the language at school, when only English and Afrikaans were offered during the apartheid era. As far as student participants were concerned, the majority (69%) responded affirmatively to the question about whether or not they had studied isiZulu. The presumption here is that most schools began offering isiZulu as a subject of learning since the onset of democracy in the country.

For those staff and students who studied isiZulu, the reasons they gave for studying the language were varied. Most wanted to learn about Zulu culture and needed it as a requirement for their studies (see Tables 4 and 5). However, the greater proportion of staff may have missed the opportunity of studying isiZulu at school-level, since it has only recently become part of the national school curriculum.

The question of why staff and students did not undertake isiZulu study at tertiary level was scrutinized. The results revealed that most staff did not have the time to study isiZulu and a significant proportion pointed to isiZulu not being required as an academic requirement (see Table 6). Only recently have some Faculties included isiZulu (basic or communicative) as a core requirement in some of their programs of study. Concerning the reasons why students did not study isiZulu at University, most expressed that it was not an academic requirement (see Table 7). Interestingly, almost all staff and students (99% each) agreed that the language is necessary to know in KZN.

Language preferences

The majority of staff and students indicated that they never used isiZulu for any purpose on campus (see Tables 8 and 9). However, there was some indication that a greater percentage of students used isiZulu for social, religious, cultural and formal events as well as for interaction with peers than staff did.

Although the survey was offered in two versions; isiZulu and English, only two staff members and 4 students chose to use the isiZulu version. The majority of staff and students preferred English as medium for most purposes on campus (see Tables 10 and 11). A small number of staff and around a third of students showed preference for bilingual (isiZulu and English) medium for specific purpos-
es on campus. Nevertheless, there is a slightly higher indication of preference for the bilingual medium for small-group and peer interaction for academic purposes, as well as for non-academic purposes on campus (banking, socializing, and religious/cultural/formal events).

**The status of bilingualism**

The majority of staff and students (77% and 83% respectively) indicated they were either ‘not familiar’ or ‘somewhat familiar’ with language policy. The rest conveyed that they were ‘sufficiently’ to ‘very’ familiar with current policy. While the majority of staff and students agreed that ‘All South Africans must know at least one indigenous African language’, more than a third, on average, disagreed on this issue (see Tables 12 and 13). The majority of staff and students agreed on the notion that, ‘All official languages of South Africa carry equal status’.

In addition, the majority of staff and students claimed that they were ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ consulted, informed, or involved in language policy issues. Furthermore, the following question was presented to staff and students: Do you think it is necessary for the following University affiliates to be involved in language policy decision-making for the University? The majority supported the notion that all identifiable groups that constitute the University should be involved in negotiation about language policy (see Tables 14 and 15).

**Discussion**

A distinguishing feature of the findings was the collective notion of unpopularity for isiZulu and a distinct support of an ‘English only’ status quo expressed by the majority of respondents. The study revealed that the majority of staff and students never, or at best rarely, used isiZulu as medium on campus. Nevertheless, students revealed some isiZulu usage for non-academic purposes on campus, like socializing and religious events. There was a slight hint, too, that students who studied the language took initiative to learn about the Zulu culture and to make new friends. Of note is that almost all staff and students agreed that it was necessary to know the language al-
though they claimed that they were mostly unaware of Language Policy in Higher Education.

One of many possible reasons for the lack of isiZulu use for academic purposes may be linked to low levels of proficiency in the language, stemming from lack of isiZulu study either at school or university level. Respondents’ reasons for not studying the language were largely because it was not an academic requirement and due to insufficient time to study it. There were also indications that isiZulu was not a job requirement for staff members and was therefore not studied.

The study exposes a personnel problem with regard to the level of under-preparedness and unpreparedness to teach in a bilingual system. Regardless of attitudes toward and awareness of the policy, there is the very real problem of proficiency. Most existing academics are not proficient in the language, compounded by the fact that they are not pedagogically trained to teach in an African language. Academics may feel stifled by their lack of knowledge of isiZulu and may also feel that it is time-consuming to learn yet another language, although resources such as bilingual dictionaries, glossaries, course material, and handbooks are available in some departments. Moreover, there has been some significant progress made in undertaking special projects such as workshops, seminars and mini-modules offered to staff to promote isiZulu (Ndimande, 2009). Nevertheless, both staff and students elicited disinterest in learning the language.

An additional finding was that the majority of staff and students exhibited inadequate awareness of language policy for Higher Education. The majority of staff and students claimed that they were never formally consulted or informed about language policy issues. They supported the notion that all identifiable groups that constitute the University should be involved in negotiation about policy. There is seemingly a lack of formal negotiation between University ‘policy-makers’ and the University community in policy development.

The hegemony of English as a medium of instruction at UKZN cannot simply be overturned, because successful implementation of language shifts is dependent on and entwined with user-preferences. Persuading the University community to actually use a
dual medium in a predominantly English-speaking environment may be a real challenge.

First and foremost, developing a cultural ethos on campus could be one way of influencing the use of the isiZulu – use of bilingual posters, emblems and signage could prove to be useful. In addition, the University could be used as a primary platform to launch motivational talks, workshops, seminars and presentations on the benefits of being isiZulu-literate. The academia could be a leading role-model in this respect, enhancing the use of isiZulu at cultural, religious, social and formal events. Their role-modeling could overtly and repeatedly demonstrate belief in the capacity of isiZulu to fulfill all functions of a language in all domains of life.

Campus and community-wide campaigning for isiZulu proficiency could be launched, whereby for example, students and staff could be offered substantial perks in electing isiZulu as a course of study. Otherwise, acquisition and use of isiZulu will continue to be regarded as not worth the effort. Attractive incentives could be provided in the form of grants, scholarships, credit-bearing courses and certification in isiZulu. Incentives should be achievable, tangible, clearly stipulated and widely exposed to the University community. There could be promotion of isiZulu in competitions to produce books, articles, poems, essays etc. Students could be encouraged to pursue careers in isiZulu journalism, translation, interpreting, communication studies, performing arts, entertainment, and script-writing for stage, radio and television.

Another recommendation is that legislating on the learning of isiZulu by staff and students from the University senate is critical to fast-tracking language change. In this sense, making the learning of isiZulu compulsory as a course requirement for all students and a compulsory job requirement for staff would go a long way towards implementing and sustaining bilingualism. International studies have underscored the need to pressure such change during the implementation phase of educational change. With regard to the underpreparedness of teaching personnel in using isiZulu, a quick solution to the problem would be to recruit graduate students as teaching assistants and tutors. These could be derived from those who are pursuing or planning to pursue African language teaching as a profession.
Bearing in mind that the University community needs no motivation for retaining English, for they are already convinced of its value, immediate and rigorous campaigns could be launched, motivating for the importance of adding isiZulu literacy to constituents’ repertoire. It could be stressed upon the University community that vying for bilingualism does not mean that English should be abandoned; rather a dual medium is more favorable, especially since the majority of its constituents see the need to know the language in KZN. The advantages of bilingualism may need to be spelt out to all constituents if they are to see the individual benefits beyond the broader political ones.

Moreover, the bilingual policy may need to ensure that English proficiency is equally developed. If not, this might give rise to suspicions of a reversion to Mother-Tongue education, which, in South Africa’s history, was linked to limited access to economic and academic opportunity for non-English language speakers. The dangers of alienation of certain groups may arise from an insensitive implementation of the policy. Bilingualism needs to have benefits for all groups on campus and they need to be assured of this. The University community should be kept informed of language policy, especially in terms of higher education. Students as well as staff could be more widely exposed to language policy, their rights spelled out, and informed about latest trends in policy before being presented with written versions of it.

It may be crucial that before embarking on any future course of action, the wishes of the University's constituents should be considered by means of a participatory approach to planning. This could lead to a better understanding of the needs of the constituencies the institution serves. Fair representations of the multiple identities of all sectors of the University should be involved in decision-making so as to ensure that the process is not authoritarian. Otherwise the use of isiZulu as a medium of instruction may divide people instead of uniting them, bearing in mind that the inclusion of dual medium education at UKZN has already been criticized as contradicting the very essence of democracy and reverting to South Africa’s old policy of apartheid.

To sum up, the climate within which the new policy has been introduced is not conducive to the implementation of bilingual usage.
If the policy is to be implemented successfully in its current form, the institution will need to address language preferences of students and staff in a meaningfully engaged way. The bottom line is that the attitudes of UKZN’s constituency are at odds with proposed policy, and policy is at odds with popular demand for the language of power (English). Suffice to say, a covert policy of *de facto* monolingualism/unilingualism is here to stay unless the entire community can be convinced of the benefits of bilingualism. There is very little hope that bilingual policy at UKZN will result in practical implementation in the near future if it does not involve perseverance and a collective commitment from all its stake-holders.

Although the results of this study contribute towards highlighting the preferences of staff and students in respect of bilingual education for UKZN, it would be beneficial to conduct a more in-depth examination of attitudes, beliefs, and opinions through a thorough qualitative study involving interviews. Ongoing empirical research must be encouraged to test updated modifications of the language status quo at UKZN. Policy implementation must then adapt constantly to the changing needs of society. What would also serve scholarship would be an exploration into effective motivational strategies adopted worldwide, to enhance the use of less commonly taught languages of teaching and learning in Higher Education.

**Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KZN:</td>
<td>KwaZulu-Natal</td>
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<tr>
<td>MT:</td>
<td>Mother-Tongue</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPSS:</td>
<td>Statistical Package for Social Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>UKZN:</td>
<td>University of KwaZulu-Natal</td>
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References


Appendix: Tables

Table 1: Sample Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Students</th>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest educational qualification</td>
<td>Highest educational qualification</td>
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<td>Faculty registered at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position held</td>
<td>Program of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of years of service at</td>
<td>Level of study at UKZN</td>
</tr>
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<td>UKZN</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Campus location</td>
<td>Campus location</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Linguistic background</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linguistic competence</td>
<td>Linguistic competence</td>
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Table 2: isiZulu Proficiency (Staff)

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<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average</td>
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<td>Excellent</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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Table 3: isiZulu Proficiency (Students)

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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>-Poor</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Average</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Good</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Excellent</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Reasons for studying isiZulu (Staff)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Necessity of knowing it in KZN</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Academic/course requirement</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Enjoyment of learning new languages</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-To learn more about the Zulu culture</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-isiZulu is necessary for my job</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-isiZulu needed for day-to-day life</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Other reasons</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Missing</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5: Reasons for studying isiZulu (Students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To learn more about the Zulu culture</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course/school requirement</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To enable me to make new friends</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isiZulu needed for my day-to-day life</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isiZulu necessary for my job</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessity of knowing it in KZN</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment of learning new languages</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of above-listed reasons</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6: Reasons for not studying isiZulu (Staff)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not have the time to learn isiZulu</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not part of my academic/course requirement</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not have the funds to study isiZulu</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think isiZulu is difficult to study</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not think it is necessary to know isiZulu</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of above-listed reasons</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reasons</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 7: Reasons for not studying isiZulu (Students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for not studying</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not part of academic/course requirement</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think isiZulu is difficult to study</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I resent having to learn isiZulu</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not have the time to learn isiZulu</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not have the funds to study isiZulu</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not think it is necessary to know in KZN</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parents do not want me to learn isiZulu</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of above listed reasons</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8: isiZulu usage on campus (Staff)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY OF USE</th>
<th>TOT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorials</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicals</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar/conference</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written work</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test/exam</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning materials</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff/student consults</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation/interaction with peers</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE</td>
<td>FREQUENCY OF USE</td>
<td>TOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar/conference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test/exam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff/student consults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation/interaction with peers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative procedures</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial matters</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing/residential matters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews/meetings</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social/religious/cultural/formal events</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9: isiZulu usage on campus
(Students)
Table 10: Language preference for education (Staff)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
<th>PREFERENCE</th>
<th></th>
<th>PRETERENCE</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>isiZulu</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorials</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical work</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminars, conferences, etc.</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written work</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning materials</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation with staff/students</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation/interaction with peers</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative procedures</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial matters</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews/meetings</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social/religious/cultural/formal events</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11: Language preference for education (Students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
<th>Preference</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>isiZulu</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorials</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical work</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminars, conferences, etc.</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written work</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test/ exam</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning materials</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation with staff/students</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation/interaction with peers</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative procedures</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial matters</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing/residential matters</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews/meetings</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Views on issues within Language Policy (Staff)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you agree with the following statements:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All South Africans must know English and Afrikaans only.</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All South Africans must know African languages only.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All South Africans must know at least one indigenous African language.</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All official languages of South Africa carry equal status.</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13: Views on issues within Language Policy (Students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you agree with the following statements:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All South Africans must know English and Afrikaans only.</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All South Africans must know African languages only.</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All South Africans must know at least one indigenous African language.</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All official languages of South Africa carry equal status.</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Involvement in Language Policy Decisions (Staff)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University affiliates</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/s of students</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic staff</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support staff</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive staff</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative staff</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University unions, organizations, etc.</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: Involvement in Language Policy Decision (Students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University affiliates</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents of students</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic staff</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support staff</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive staff</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative staff</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University unions, organizations, etc.</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Capturing Students’ Target Language Exposure Collaboratively, on Video – The Akan (Twi) Example

Seth Antwi Ofori
University of Wisconsin – Madison

Abstract:
The video project at the center of this paper is one of the strategies the author has been utilizing in teaching Akan as a foreign language aimed at reinforcing aspects of Akan covered in a given semester, specifically as students transition through different levels of language instruction and acquisition or go home on vacation. The significance of this project lies in the fact that it promotes language documentation and material development in less-documented languages, and also, in the fact that it gives foreign language learners the opportunity to reinforce their target language exposure on vacation, or as they transition through the different levels of study, because each student gets a copy of the video to watch with their communities outside of the classroom.

1. Introduction
The non-availability of videos for teaching Akan as a second language, coupled with students’ inability to retain target language materials, largely as a result of a long school vacation during which they have no access to their new language, are problems that led to this idea of requiring and organizing students each semester to capture much of their language exposure on video. The video at the center of this article is worth sharing because, while there have been countless articles, dissertations (and even books) on the various methods of teaching a foreign language through video (Morris 2000, Steele and Johnson 2000, Rhodes and Pufahl 2004), there have been virtually none on students of less commonly taught, funded, and documented languages working together each semester to document their target language exposure through video. This is particularly true of doing so as a way to address the two main causes of non-retention that were identified above. Anyone who has had my experience of teaching two to four different levels of a foreign language concurrently, especially without the relevant materials, will surely understand
why this has been such a significant project in all of my classes. If done and used well, this project has the tendency to prevent what I have come to describe as “broken lines of communication” between the various levels of language instruction and acquisition. A line of communication between the different levels of instruction is said to be broken when: (a) there is no avenue for the instructor of any continuing level to determine how much of the language materials his/her students have realistically covered at previous levels; or when (b) materials covered at previous levels have no place in subsequent levels; or when (c) instructors of continuing students have a sense of how many materials and which specific topic areas, were covered at previous levels, but their mode of storage does not allow for a quick review. An open line of communication, which presents itself as the absences of any of the above instances, is crucial to successful learning and acquisition in light of the fact that language learning is cumulative.

The video project therefore is about keeping the lines of communication between the different levels of language instruction open by making students live their target language exposure through video, and is a good strategy also for material documentation. This creative usage of the target language requires primarily the knowledge and skills of every learner (Blaz 2002: 74) and, more significantly, the target language instructor’s leadership. Section two provides background on the Akan language, and describes the instructional goals for the level in which the video was made. The project background and aims are given in section three. Section four is an explanation and analysis of the content and contexts of the video project. Section five offers concluding thoughts.

2. Language Background, and Class Goals

The term Akan has both ethnographic and linguistic usage (Obeng 1987, Ofori 2006a). It is a major language in Ghana (West Africa) – the only indigenous language to have reached the stage of being called a lingua franca. Its main written and studied dialects are Akuapem Twi, Asante Twi and Fantse. Genetically, Akan belongs in the New Kwa group of languages (Williamson and Blench 2000) within the Niger-Congo phylum. Currently, there are seven American uni-
versities that offer instruction in Akan as a foreign language on a regular basis. Among the reasons students have given for studying the language are: (a) to conduct research in/on Ghana; (b) to prepare for study abroad in Ghana; (c) to work for the US government; (d) to experience own culture, in the case of heritage learners; and, (e) to experience other cultures. Communication and culture (Blaz 2002) have been the keystones in meeting these different needs and expectations, which became quite evident as this video project progressed. Following is a summary of the goals for the elementary Akan class in which this video was made.

Students will learn X in class and/or outside of class (by watching, listening to, reading about, discussing, debat- ing, practicing etc. X from authentic, or near authentic source(s)) and understand X; and will be given as see fit ample time to practice X either by speech (i.e. in dia- logues, etc.), in writing (by e-mail, letter, in a story, an es- say, portfolios, “album/life project” etc.), or otherwise, in a culturally appropriate manner to the point whereby students acquire X mostly fully – in other words, to the point whereby they are able to use or engage X meaning- fully and comfortably in (target language’s) real-life con- text(s) or simulation(s) of it/them (e.g. skits, etc.) with- out any learning aid.

The following textbooks, coupled with my own native experience, have been very useful in meeting these goals: Schleicher (1994), Dol- phyne (1996), Kotey (2000), Hadley (2001), Blaz (2002), Hall (2002), Senkoror (2003), Bokamba and Bokamba (2004), Ayelew (2005), and Ofori (2006b). This list is not exhaustive.

3. The Video Project: Background, and Goals

The script for the video project in consideration was written by me for my first-semester Elementary Akan (Twi) class, which took place in 2006; it is based on scripts I had authored previously for students to use in in-class role-play and at language/community events between 2000 and 2005. As already indicated, this project has been
my rational response to my utter dejection as, semester upon semes-
ter, my students come back to class after a long vacation or to the
next level of language instruction and acquisition having forgotten
everything from their previous course. I believe that the projects that
this response has engendered has great relevance to the teach-
ing/learning of foreign languages that have little to no instruction-
al/study materials (and/or cultures that are remote to the average
American), and possibly little or no relevance to languages and/or
cultures that are easily accessible to the average L2 Western stu-
dent/learner.

Every language teacher has a list of issues and topics to be
covered over the course of the semester, specific to the level he or
she is teaching. Within each of the topics to be covered, there are
very specific elements/items/events the teacher feels that students
must master and should not forget for that level. This is necessary if
students are going to make any progress through the learning
process. Usually, these are the items on which we test our students.
The script was therefore written to capture the core items of the
course plan for the elementary Akan level. This means that the script,
as presented here, is not everything that was covered at this level of
instruction.

The aim for writing the script, in the first place, was to con-
nect the different core events and elements together in a meaningful
way. The best way to do this is to create a setting – which the video
project is an example of – whereby the different events converge,
have relevance, and, as a result, interact. This is based upon my co-
viction that it is easier to remember/retain the different events
learned as entities within a system – i.e. as interconnected entities –
than as isolated entities. With this approach, a unit has meaning only
in the context of those other units with which it interconnects. This
means that if meaningful learning is the goal of the level then the
learner would have no option but to acquire the different
events/items together.

Again, for the final product to be engaging to students, as I
have always required in such life-long projects in order to ensure that
students revisit them as often as possible, it needs to be about them,
to be relevant to them, and to be well-organized and very attractive in
content, context and sight. It also needs to be portable and, above
Capturing Students’ Target Language

everything, fun to watch. Compared to the other projects I have spearheaded in order to deal with the retention problem, and have subsequently written about, this can be described as the “teacher’s project.” In other words, in this project, the language instructor brings the target language and its socio-cultural context (simulated) to his or her students. The script for the video production was given to students from day one and was structured into “manageable chunks” (Oxford 1990: 45) – or mini-events – to facilitate comprehension and retention. The script was learned as part of materials used for the level/semester that the video was made. There were also outside class meetings devoted strictly to preparing students for the video production. Roles were assigned based on students’ capabilities and comfort levels. I was not just the script writer, but also the producer and the director of the video, since none of my students knew the target language culture as well as I did.

4. The Projects: Description and Analysis of Content

Following is an explanation and/or analysis of the content and contexts of the script that students finally acted out. There were nine students total, all US citizens who were learning Akan (Twi) as a foreign language. The story is set in Ghana with six of the nine students acting as US citizens, and the remaining three acting as Ghanaians. Using their Akan names, the characters were: (i) Abenaa; (ii) Afia; (iii) the three Crazy Joggers – Kwasi, Akua and Amma; (iv) Yaa Panyin; (v) Yaa (Ketewa); (vi) Adwoa; and (vii) Akosua (a dress-seller).

The first six students acted as US citizens and the last three as Ghanaians.1 Five of the six US citizens in the video – namely Abenaa, Afia, and the three Crazy Joggers – are in Ghana on a study abroad program. Yaa Panyin, the sixth US citizen, is working in Ghana, and is a close friend of Afia. The chief character in the story is Abenaa.

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1 The Akan people have names according to the day of the week on which one was/is born. Following are the days of the week and names of those born on that day in brackets – the male name is first, and the female name second): Sunday/Kwasiada (Kwasi, Akosua), Monday/Dwoada (Kwadwo, Adwoa), Tuesday/Benada (Kwabena, Abenaa), Wednesday/Wukuada (Kwaku, Akua), Thursday/Yawoada (Yaw, Yaa), Friday/Fiada (Afia, Kofi), Saturday/Memeneda (Kwame, Amma) (Ofori 2006: 6).
According to the story, Abenaa comes from Indianapolis in the US, and is in Ghana visiting. She leaves her residence to go to the University of Ghana campus in Legon. On her way, she visits two friends so that they can teach her how to prepare two Ghanaian dishes. After the cooking, she thanks her friends and goes to the bus stop so that she can continue her trip to the university campus in Legon. At the bus stop, she meets a person she does not know, and later a person she does know. They converse. A seller passes by the bus stop, and Abenaa’s friend buys something. The seller leaves the scene, the bus comes, and they go their separate ways. The plot as outlined above has several episodes within it that are revealed in the course of analysis. Interspersing the sub-events are songs meant to also teach the language.

Attention should be paid to the principles that fashioned the document, especially to how matters of applied and general linguistics and the socio-cultural practices of the target language have been neatly woven together in a way that is beneficial as well as attractive to foreign language learners. This is a 30-minute video. To make description and analysis easy, the video/script has been divided into thirteen parts, numbered in upper case letters from (A) to (M), and eleven acts – each act with a heading meant to partially capture events/episodes there-in.

**Act I: The Preamble**

(A) The story begins with Abenaa, the chief character of the story, leaving her house to go to the main campus of the University of Ghana in Legon. Legon is a suburb of Accra, the capital city of Ghana. On her way to the campus, she decides to visit two of her friends, Yaa (Ketewa) and Adwoa, so that they can teach her how to prepare two Ghanaian dishes: Kelewele, and *dabodabo nkwan* (“duck soup”). Yaa (Ketewa) and Adwoa, according to the story, are Ghanaians. Following is what Abenaa says prior to leaving her house:

1. **Merekọ me nnamfo fie akọsua sẹnẹ yẹye kelewele.**
   
   *I am going to my friends’ house to learn how to prepare Kelewele.*

2. **Megye di sẹ wọbẹye dabodabo nkwan nso.**
I hope that they will prepare duck soup also.

(B) As Abenaa walks down the path to go to her friends’ house, the class sings the following song (3 – 7): Dabodabo Nkwan ye dë “Duck soup is delicious.”

(3) Dabodabo nkwan ye dë. Duck soup is delicious.

(4) Ne tiri na ëtene [ñëtene] nkwan mu. Its head is what gives the soup the most taste.

(5) Menya aburokyire a anka mënka “(If) I had my way I would go abroad

(6) Mankani fufuo asi me kwan. (But my love for) pounded cocoyam has blocked/is blocking it.

(7) Dabodabo nkwan ye dë. Duck soup is indeed delicious.

Dabodabo nkwan is a very popular children’s song. Almost every Ghanaian from the rural areas grows up knowing it, and so I thought it would be fun for students to know it as well. Secondly, as simple as the song may seem, it embodies, and was meant to help me teach, some of the most complex sentence structures and sounds in Akan, for example, focus constructions as represented by (4) above. Another of these is the hypothetical sentence represented by (5): Menya aburokyire a anka mënka (“(If) I had my way I would go abroad”). The full hypothetical sentence is: së menya aburokyire a anka mëkë. The hypothetical unit is: së ... a anka ... (“if ... then ...”). Occurring in each of the dotted spots is a sentence. The word, së, is dropped in the song and in speech. Asi (“have/has blocked”) in (6) teaches the perfect construction, and mëkë, which is a reduced and preferred form of Me-bë-kë (“I will go”), teaches the future construction.

Again, the song teaches pronouns, namely, the first and third person singular pronouns and their short forms: me-/m- ‘1SG’ in (5) and (6), and ne ‘3SG-possessive’ in (4). The song also captures some of the difficult sounds in the language, such as [kw], [ky], [ny], and [ë] (Dolphyne 1988: 29). In addition, students will learn how to say that something is sweet, as in (3) and (7), or to learn to say that something
is not sweet by changing \( y \varepsilon d \varepsilon \) ‘be sweet’ to \( ny \varepsilon d \varepsilon \) ‘is not sweet’ – i.e. by attaching \( n \)- before \( y \varepsilon \), the verb/copula.\(^2\) These complex structures and sounds are captured at the most memorable junctures of the video, namely, the opening and singing junctures. The content of the song significantly sets the stage for the discussion on cooking in Act IV, during which the characters make the soup.

**Act II: Paying a Visit**

(C) Abenaa walks down the path to her friends’ house as the song continues to be sung. The green grass and the trees on the side of the pavement bring to the story and the learning experience some sense of the natural world. The hope is to create a beautiful scene as Abenaa jumps down the path, with the camera trailing her every move to the door of her friends’ house. She knocks on their door. They answer and welcome her inside.

(8) Abenaa: Agoo! Knocking!

(9) Adwoa ne Yaa: Amee! Hello!

(10) Adwoa: Ei! Abenaa. Hey! Abenaa


(11/i) Mema mo akye. I give you (pl.) morning greetings.

(11/ii) Adwoa ne Yaa: Yaa nua. Peer response (Acknowledged sibling)

(11/iii) Abenaa: Mo ho te s\( \varepsilon n \)\? How are you (pl.)?

(12) Adwoa ne Yaa: Y\( \varepsilon n \) ho ye. Na wo nso \( \varepsilon \)\? We are fine. And you too?

(13) Abenaa: Me ho ye paa. I am doing very well.

(14) Adwoa: Bra mu [br\( \varepsilon m \)]. Come in.

\(^2\) Sentence (2 – i.e. the second of the two opening statements) teaches ECM verbs (Culicover 1997) and “that-complementation” (Boadi 2005: 55) in context – having captured the use of \( gye \; di \), students will also find it easy to use other ECM verbs such as \( nim \) (“to know”), \( \varepsilon \; \varepsilon \) (“want”), etc.
Gradually, we built on pronouns from the song by introducing the plural pronouns: mo ‘2PL/you’ (in 11), yɛn ‘1PL/our’ (in 12), and wo ‘2SG/you’ (also in 12). We then tried to document how to ask about one’s health in (11-iii) and the response to it in (12a): Yɛn ho yɛ (‘We are fine’). Students are taught to use the phrase/structure, Na wo nso ε? (‘And you too?’), which is a reduced form of Na wo nso wo bo te sɛn? (‘And you, how are you?’). The main difference between the full form and the reduced form is that in the reduced form, wo bo te sɛn? (‘How are you?’), which is the main sentence used to inquire about health, is replaced by ε, a pro-sentential unit, because it (i.e. the question sentence) is preceded by the phrase Na wo nso (‘And you too?’). The only way students can learn the reduced form is for them to ask about the other person’s health also, as in (12b). Syntactically, any question sentence in Akan that qualifies for and actually undergoes the na wo nso -prefixation is reducible to ε. In (12b), the fact that health is asked in a previous and immediate turn (i.e. 11-iii) is what makes the na wo nso-prefixation and the reduction of the question sentence to ε possible in (12b). In (14) we also see the use of mu (‘in’), which reduces to m to be attached to bra (‘come’) to yield [bɛm] (‘come in’). Mu is a postpositional morpheme whose NP, fie (‘house’), is understood in the context of the knocking on a door, and so, is always omitted. Thus, we captured in the video when and how to reduce full forms/sentences – or how to derive variants of the same form/sentence and the context in which to do this.

An equally important feature of the excerpt in (8 – 14) is the use of exclamation marks; for example. εi (‘hey’”) in (10) and (11) signals the joy of the friends meeting again. To use εi for a stranger will be alarming and insulting. Ei must always go with a name and the name bearer must be known and the speaker’s social co-equal or subordinate for the form to convey the affective import as it is described in this context. The sequence/order in which the exclamation mark is delivered in (11) -- Ei Adwoa, εi Yaa (“Hey Adwoa, Hey Yaa”) – suggests that Adwoa is first to be seen at the door, and then when the door is flung open, Yaa “pops up.” Given that the door to the house/apartment is slightly open, and given their friendship and
closeness, one would have expected Abenaa to enter without knocking, and, yet, she does not. Instead, she utters *agoo* (also, *kɔkkɔkɔ*), which culturally is her request for permission to do something – in this instance, her permission to gain entry into the house. This utterance is necessary because it otherwise would be regarded as her intruding on her friends’ territory and privacy.

**Act III: How to Welcome or Be Welcomed**

(D) Now, after entering the house Adwoa and Yaa work together to make Abenaa comfortable, to make her feel at home:

(15) Yaa: Abenaa, adwa nie. Abenaa, *this is a chair.*

(16) Abenaa: Meda wo ase [medaase]. *(I) thank you*

(Abenaa tena ase. *Abenaa sits down.*)


(18) Adwoa: Abenaa, nsuo nie. Abenaa, *this/here is water.*


(20) Yaa: Yɛnna ase. *Don’t mention it.*

(21) Adwoa ne Yaa: Abenaa, yɛma wo akwaaba. *Abenaa, you are welcome.*

(22) Abenaa: Yaa nua. *Peer response (Okay my sibling).*


Abenaa, there is only peace here. YOU ARE visiting. *The elders say that it is the messenger we are all eager to hear from.*


There is only peace in Adɛnta. Last week I told you that I will come for you to teach me (how) to prepare Kelewele. That is why I have come.
(25) Adwoa ne Yaa: Enti sɛ ebɔ ahe a na wobɛpɛ sɛ wobɛfiri ha?
   *So at what time would you want to leave here?*
(26) Abenaa: Seesei ara abɔ sɛn? *What is the time right now?*
(27) Yaa: Abɔ nnɔn du apa ho sima aduasa. *It is ten thirty.*
(28) Abenaa: Mɛpɛ sɛ mɛfiri ha nnɔn du-mmienu.
   *I would want to leave here at 12 (noon).*

They make Abenaa feel comfortable by offering her a seat to sit on. She is then offered water to drink according to tradition – as she may be thirsty from a long trip – and she shows her appreciation throughout these offers using *Meda wo ase* (“I thank you”) (16), and later *Medaase* (19), a variant and a reduced form of the former (16). Students therefore learn when ‘thank you’ can be reduced in the language, which is when the giving of thanks is in the second person singular. In (20) is the response. We also capture the sentence that is used in welcoming visitors (especially, those from a long/major trip) in (21), which has the same structure as greeting sentences in (11-i) and (51), except that (21) ends with *akwaaba*, whereas (11-i) ends with *akye*. The full welcome sentence is *X ma Y akwaaba* (“X gives Y welcome”) and is commonly reduced to *Akwaaba*. Adwoa and Yaa then ask her what the reason for her visit is using (23b) and (23c), which generates the response in (24) in observance of tradition. I then manage to weave time (and for that matter numbers) into the above scene by making students ask and tell time, in (26) to (28).

More importantly, we begin to see the sociolinguistics of communication in the Akan socio-cultural context. We learned who says what, when, where, and how. There is a great number of questions and responses. I believe that questioning is at the heart of communication in that it is what keeps a communicative event going. If everybody knows what the other person knows then what is need for these verbal exchanges. If communication is necessary, then it is to expose whatever is available to us in the form of statements, or what is not available to us in the form of questions. In asking the above questions, students also came to terms with the most culturally appropriate mode of turn-taking (see Obeng 1999: 25-94 on turn-taking in Akan). This scene also introduces them to aspects of non-
verbal cues in communication – for example, when and with whom to shake hands. Akwaaba is said with a handshake irrespective of the age and/or status difference of the interactants.

**Act IV: The Cooking Session**

(E) Abenaa’s friends teach her how to make nkatekwan (“peanut soup”) and kelewele.

(29) (Sēne a yëye nkatekwan. *How to prepare Peanut Soup*)

(a) Nkate “peanut butter”, (b) akok nam “chicken” *(duck meat was replaced by “chicken”)*; (c) nsuom-nam a yëaho “smoked fish”, (d) mako “pepper”, (e) gyeene “onion”, (f) magi, (g) ntoosi/amoo “tomatoes” (h) nkyen “salt (to tast)”, ne ade “etc.”

(Sēne a yëye Kelewele “How to prepare Kelewele”)

(30) Wobëdu [duwa] kōkō no. *Peel the ripe-plantain*

(31) Wobëhohoro ho. *Wash the peeled plantain*

(32) Afei, twitwa no nketenkete. *Then, cut it into bits*

(33) Fa nkyene, mako, ne akakaduro [*akaradro]* gu ho. *Soak it in water with salt, pepper and ginger*

(34) Afei na woakye. *Then fry it*

(35) (ma nkyë na danedane no) *(Let it stay on fire for some time and turn it)*

(36) Së yëye kōkō a na woayiyi agu sonyë mu. *(Remove it from the oil when it is light brown and put it in a strainer.)*

(37) Woawie. *You are done*

The cooking session gives students the chance to see and create the food items we have learned about in class and also to taste some of the target language community dishes. Now, this is a life-long study – hopefully, they will prepare these meals the rest of their lives. More importantly, the fact that the steps to preparing the meals have been captured on video, which each student gets a copy of, means that they can always watch it in order to remember the names of these
food items and how to put them together to make these meals. The cooking session also gives students the opportunity to learn cooking utensils by name in the target language (e.g. sɔnyɛ [“strainer”], kwansɛn [“soup-pot”], ayowaa/asanka [“mashing bowl”], tapɔri [“mashing stick”], etc.).

There is also division of labor that goes along with the cooking. Roles are assigned and instructions are given just the way a mother would to her children in Ghanaian communities. Another good thing about this cooking activity is that students are put in a position whereby they are either fully or partly responsible for the things that are created – to watch the video later is to watch themselves in these roles and makes recollecting whatever was done very easy. In the end, we eat the soup with mankanĩ fufu (“pounded cocoyam”). We also make stew and cook ampesi (“boiled yam and plantain”). We talk a lot about how cooking is largely the responsibility of the woman of the house, though men cook under certain circumstances, for instance, when one’s wife or any female available to perform this role is busy doing other things. Students also learn about how men who make unnecessary ‘encroachments’ into the kitchen are badly perceived in the Akan (and Ghanaian) culture. Students are taught a song that has been specifically been written to ridicule such men. The song is “Obarima potɔ ma me ta, no order in the kitchen”, and was written by George Jahraa, a famous Ghanaian musician.

3 From the day of the cooking session, individual students invited me to their apartments to teach them how to prepare other Ghanaian dishes – for example, banku and Fante-Fante – which I think I did perform very well, to the best of my knowledge and training as a man.

4 Obarima potɔ ma me ta no order in the kitchen (“it is my turn to use the mashing stick …”) sings about men who fight their wives over whose turn is it to use the mashing stick, and by so doing, create disorderliness in the kitchen. The kitchen is not the man’s territory in which he may direct the woman around – a man who denies his wife of any freedom, even in the kitchen, is looked upon negatively.
Act V: Showing Appreciation; Leave-taking

(F) Having learned how to prepare the dishes, Abenaa thanks them, and sets off to go to the *trɔtrɔ station* (“the mini-van station or the bus stop”), where she will take the van to go to Legon.

(38) Abenaa: Kelewele no ayɛ me dɛ paa ara.  
*I have very much enjoyed the Kelewele.*

(39) Meda mo ase. *I thank you all.*

(40) Adwoa ne Yaa: Aseda wɔ Nyame. *Thanks belong to God.*

(41) Abenaa: ɛnneɛ merekɔ akɔfa trɔtrɔ akɔ Legon.  
*Then I am leaving to go take trɔtrɔ to go to Accra*

(42) Adwoa ne Yaa: ɛnneɛ, akyire yi [akyirei]. *Then, later.*

(43) Abenaa: Yoo, akyirei. *Okay, (see you) later.*

It is significant to note two concepts from (38) to (43): the showing of appreciation (i.e. 38 – 40) and leave-taking (41 – 43). It also gives a brief picture of the transportation system in Ghana’s capital city. There are many individually-owned mini-vans, and these vans usually have what we call a ‘mate.’ The *mate* is an assistant to the driver whose main job is to collect fares from passengers. His other roles are to announce, by way of ‘shouting’, to the public where the van is heading to, and to open the passenger door for passengers to board it. The drivers’ mates are largely males. The term *trɔtrɔ* for these mini-passenger-vans derives from the word *trɔ* (“three pence”) from Ga, spoken by the Ga people. The Ga people occupy Accra – the capital city of Ghana – and the surrounding lands. The duplication of *trɔ* to *trɔtrɔ* simply captures what the amount was for each passenger at the inception of the *trɔtrɔ* business during the Gold Coast era (McLaughlin Owusu-Ansah 1994).

Act VI: On her way to the Bus Stop; Students Sing Part of the Body

(G) Now, as Abenaa walks down the path to the mini-van station, she is interrupted by three ‘Crazy’ Joggers (Kwasi, Akua and Amma), also American Citizens and her friends. The ‘Crazy’ Joggers sing
about the parts of the body and after singing the song twice, Abenaa joins in the singing.

(44) Kyere wo ti. *Show (point to) your head*

(45) Sɔ w’aso. *Hold your ear*

(46) Kyere w’aniwa, wo hwene, w’ano wo kɔn.  
*Point to your eyes, your nose, and your neck*

(47) Mewɔ nsa mmienu. *I have two hands*

(48) M’afu kɛsɛɛ; me nan mmienu.  
*(With) my big stomach; (and) my two legs*

(49) Me nsatea yɛ du. *My fingers are ten*

(50) Me nansoa nso yɛ du. *(And) my toes are ten also*

This song focuses on the basic parts of the body – a song commonly sung in the elementary schools in the Akan-speaking areas of Ghana. The goal of using this song is to help the college student who is learning Akan as a foreign language cover as many parts of the body as possible. The song requires that students touch these parts as they sing them, and it is a good way to remember them. It is fascinating to see how students bring their own style of dance to the song. Characters, such as the three ‘crazy’ joggers, were students’ own creations, and additions to the parts of the body song; these characters were fine with me because their role did not undermine the target language culture in any form. Structurally, the song reinforces the teaching of pronouns (i.e. possessive pronouns), the attributive use of adjectives, numbers, the basic imperative sentence, the copula *be*, and the permissible organization of the noun-head and its modifiers (e.g. *me nan mmienu*, literally “my leg two,” i.e. “my two legs”) (see Hancock 1999 on teaching grammar through songs).

**Act VII: At the Bus Stop; Meeting for the first time**

(H) After some time singing with Abenaa, the three Crazy Joggers vanish into the bushes, leaving Abenaa standing there alone with her hands open in surprise. Abenaa continues to walk down the path to the mini-van station in Adɔnta, a suburb of Accra, where she meets Afia for the first time. There is an exchange of greetings, asking after
each others’ health, where each person comes from, etc. They then realize that they are both from the United States. They continue this back and forth, asking about what each person is doing in Ghana, how long each intends to stay in Ghana and how long each has been in the country.

(51) Abenaa: Maakye. (From: Mema wo akye.) Good morning.
(52) Afia: Yaa nua. Peer response (Okay my sibling)
(53) Abenaa: Wo ho te sɛn? (ɛte sɛn?) How are you/How is it?
(54) Afia: eyɛ. Na wo nso ey?
  I am fine/It is fine. And you too?
(55) Abenaa: Me nso me ho ye. I am also fine.
(56) Afia: Yɛfɛ me Afia. I am called Afia.
(57) Wo nso, yɛfɛ wo sɛn?
  And you, what is your name?
(58) Abenaa: Yɛfɛ me Abenaa. I am called Abenaa.
(59) Afia: Abenaa, wofiri ɔman bɛn so?
  Abenaa, what country are your from?
(60) Abenaa: Mefiri US. I am from the US.
(61) Afia: Saa! Me nso, mefiri US.
(62) Wofiri US mpɔtam bɛn?
  Really! I am also from the US.
  You are from what state (in the US)?
(64) Na wofiri kuro bɛn so?
  I am from Indiana. I am from Indy.
  And, which town do you come from?
(65) Afia: Mefiri Bloomington a ɛwɔ Indiana.
  I am from Bloomington, which is in Indiana.
(66) Abenaa: Wobaa ha bosome bɛn mu?
  In which month did you come here?/You came here in which month?
(67) Afia: Mebaa ha ɔpɛpɔn mu. I came here in January.
(68) Abenaa: Enti woadi abosome mmeensa wo ha anaa?

So, you have spent three months here, yes/no (i.e. isn’t it)?

(69) Afia: Aane. Wo nso, wobaa ha bosome bɛn mu?

Yes. And you, you came here in which month?

(70) Abenaa: Madi abosome num wo ha.

(71) Mebaa ha Obubuo mu.

I have spent five months here.
I came here in November.

(72) Afia: Abenaa, na wo bɛsan akɔ US bosome bɛn mu?

Abenaa, and in what month are you going back to the US?

(73) Abenaa: Me kɔ US ɔsanaa mu.

I will go to the US in August.

(74) Afia: Me deɛ, mɛsan akɔ Kitawonsa mu.

As for me, I will go back in July.

Now, from a context of the familiar represented by (8) to (50), we move to the unfamiliar in (51) to (74). Here, students act out the basic requirements in meeting and speaking with someone for the first time. There must always be a (formal) greeting according to the time of the day (morning, afternoon, or evening). Here, through usage, students learn how the words anɔpa, awia, anwummere (“morning,” “afternoon,” and “evening,” respectively) are never used in greetings. They again acquire the extent to, and the context under, which greeting sentences may be truncated meaningfully; for example, Mema wo akye (“Good morning”) is reduced to Maakye in (51) meaningfully. Though only the peer response is in use (52), students basically learn and acquire all of the age-appropriate greeting responses. There is self-introduction in (56) to (58), and also a lesson on how much one would like to reveal about oneself based on how intimate one wants to be. This is illustrated when the characters ask and tell about where they live (i.e. residence) and where they come from (i.e. continent, country, state, town) in (59) to (65). They also inquire about the
month and year during which each came to Ghana, in (67) to (71), and discuss future plans in (72) to (74). These parts of the conversation allow students to use the months of the year.

As the content of the scene from (51) to (74) suggests, students learn and acquire the Akan equivalents of months of the year by using them to talk about past, present and future events. Important to note here is the fact that the words for months of the year, days of the week, partitive markers (i.e. postpositional nouns) and tense/aspect converge, and are acquired concurrently. Again, the student are able to learn, acquire, and document inclusive and exclusive words, such as nso (“also”) in (61) and deɛ (“as for me”) in (74).

**Act VIII: At the bus stop: meeting someone you know**

(I) Yaa Panyin (or Yaa P.) finds Abenaa and Afia at the bus stop. Yaa P. and Afia are friends; Yaa P. and Abenaa are meeting for the first time. Like Afia and Abenaa, Yaa P. is a US citizen. The following is a conversation between the two friends, Afia and Yaa P:

(Yaa Panyin ba mu. “Yaa Panyin comes/joins in.”)

(75) Afia: Eei, Yaa (Panyin)! Hey, Yaa (P(anyin)).

(76) Yaa P.: Eei Afia. Afia, maakye.

Hey, Afia. Afia, good morning.

(77) Afia: Yaa nua. Response (peer response)

(78) Yaa P.: Maakye. Good morning.

(Yaa P. kyea Abenaa. Yaa P. greets Abenaa.)

(79) Abenaa: Yaa nua. Response (peer response)

(80) Afia: Yaa (P.), na Ṇte sɛn?

Yaa (P.), how is it (i.e. how are you)?

(81) Yaa P.: ɛyɛ. It is fine/I am fine.

(82) Na Yaw, worekɔ he?

And Yaw, where are you going?”

(83) Afia: Merekɔ Balme Laibri.
Afia has not seen Yaa P. for some time. She spots Yaa P. coming towards the station from afar, and shouts out her name with joy in (75). In (76), Yaa P. shouts Afia’s name in return, also with great joy. And, as tradition demands, it is Yaa P. who walks up to Afia, so she greets Afia using the morning greeting. Afia responds to her using the peer response in (77), in indication of their similar age and status. Since Yaa P. finds Abenaa and Afia conversing, she assumes that they are together. Here, it is required that Yaa P. greets Abenaa as well (78) even though she does not know her. It must be noted that the greeting sentence for Abenaa (78), as with that for Afia (76), is in the bare/simple form – without the addressee’s name given since she does not know her, and also without the exclamatory word. The absence of these elements is an indication that the two people – Yaa P. and Abenaa – are meeting for the first time, and symbolizes formality. The fact that they are meeting for the first time is further supported by the fact that Abenaa only gets a greeting. After a brief interruption in which she greets Abenaa in (78), Yaa P. gets back to Afia and they continue their conversation from (80) to (86). Yaa P. engages solely with Afia until Afia interrupts her to introduce the two – Yaa P. and Abenaa – to each other in the following session (J).

**Act IX: At the Bus Stop: Making Introduction**

(J) To introduce and to be introduced: To allay unfamiliarity or uncertainty and the tension it often creates in a communicative situation, Afia has no option but introduce the two to each other, in (87) to (89):

(Afia de Yaa P. kyerɛ Abenaa “Afia shows/introduces Yaa P. to Abenaa.”)

(87) Afia to Abenaa: Abenaa, m’adamfo nie.
(88) Yɛfrɛ no Yaa Panyin[panii].

Abenaa, this is my friend.
She is called Yaa Panyin [panii].

(89) Afia to Yaa P.: Yaa, yɛfrɛ Awuraa yi Abenaa.

Yaa, this Lady is called Abenaa.

(Abenaa ne Yaa Panyin di nkɔmmɔ.

Abenaa and Yaa Panyin converse.)

(90) Abenaa: Yaa P., wofiri ɔman bɛn so?

Yaa P., you are from which country?

(91) Yaa P.: Mefiri US. Mefiri Kentucky.

(92) Na wo nso, wofiri ɔman bɛn so?

I am from US. I am from Kentucky.
And you too, you are from which country?

(93) Abenaa: Mefiri Indiana a ɛwɔ US.

I am from Indiana (which is) in the US.

(94) Yaa P.: Saal! Mekɔɔ sukuu wɔ IU.

Really! I went to school at IU.

(95) Abenaa: Wobaa ha bosome bɛn mu?

You came here in which month?/(In which month did you come here?)

(96) Yaa P.: Mebaa ha ɔpɛpɔn 2005 mu.

(97) Na wo nso ɛ?

I came here in January 2005. And you too?

(98) Abenaa: Mebaa ha November mu.

I came here in November.

(99) Yaa P.: Na deɛn na wɔrcyɛ wɔ Ghana?

And what are you doing in Ghana?

(100) Abenaa: Meresua adeɛ wɔ Legon. I am studing at Legon.

(101) Yaa P.: Deɛn na woresua? What are you studying?

(102) Abenaa: Meresua Baalɔgyi. I am studying Biology.
Na wo nso? And you too?

Yaa P.: Me de meye adwuma. As for me, I work.

Abenaa: Saa! Really!

Na wobesan ak US bere ben?

And when will you go back to the US?


Wo nso, wobesan ak...

US bosome ben mu?

I will go to the US in January 2007. You too, you will go back to the US in which month?

Abenaa: Mesan ak US sanaa mu.

I will go back to the US in August.

The introduction significantly gives each one of the two individuals meeting for the first time the opportunity to expand their scope of friendship and knowledge. Students therefore get to use the target language in (87) to (110). By portraying Yaa P. and Abenaa as meeting for the first time, we are able to talk about where one comes from, from (90) to (93). They talk about places each has lived before in (94), and when each came to Ghana from (95) to (98) – these require that students use the past tense (from 94 to 98). They continue to talk about the purpose of their respective visits from (95) to (105), and what each is studying in school from (99) to (102), which requires that students use the present progressive sentence in Akan. In (104), Yaa P. says that she is working in Ghana; this sentence is in the habitual/stative form. From (106) to (110), they talk about when they intend to leave the target country for the source country, which requires that they use the future marker (i.e. be-). Scene (87 – 110) allows us to revisit aspects of (51 – 74) for reinforcement as we delve into new areas of language study; for example, the use of nie (“this is”), and the fact that nie derives from ne (“be”) and eyi (“this”), and the use of saa (“really”).
Act X: At the Bus Stop: Buying and Selling

(K) From (111) to (137), Yaa P. sees a dress-seller (Akosua), calls her, haggles with her and buys from her. Calling Akosua into the scene expands the existing scenario, and interrupts the attempt to learn more about each other. Specifically, we move from concentration on school and work, and what one studies and where one is going, to buying and selling:

(Akosua retAw n adeε. Oretwa mu bɔ.
“ Akosua is selling. She is passing by.”)

(111) Yaa P.: Ntaadeε Wura! Dress seller/owner!
(112) Akosua: Sista! Sister!
(113) Yaa P.: Bra! Come!

(Akosua ba Yaa P. nkyεn “ Akosua comes to Yaa P.”)

(114) Yaa P.: Ntaadeε no ye sensεn?
The dresses are how much (how much)?
(115) Akosua: Baako biara ye sidi du.
Each (one) costs 10 GH Cedi.

(Yaa P. hwehwε ntaadeε no mu.
Yaa P. looks through the clothing.)

(116) Abenaa: Wei ye fe. This one is beautiful.
Yes/Indeed. That dress is very beautiful.
(118) Yaa P.: eyε nokoreε. It is true/You are right.
(119) Mεtɔ eno. I will buy that one.
(120) Metumi ahye akɔ asɔre.
I will be able to wear to church.
(121) Akosua: Hwε wei nso. Look at this one too.
(122) Yaa P.: Mεtɔ wei ara. I will buy this very one.
(123) Yaa P.: Wose baako biara (boɔ) ye sidi du (anaa)?
You said (say), each one costs 10 GH Cedi?

(124) Akosua: Aane. Yes/you are right.
(125) Yaa P.: Te so. Reduce it (i.e. the price).
(126) Mema wo sidi mmeɛnsa.

I will give you 3 GH Cedi.

(127) Akosua: Daabi, εnyɛ. No, it is not good (No, it is too low.)
(128) Ma me sidi nson. Give me 7 GH Cedi.
(129) Yaa P.: Te so kakra. Reduce (it) a little bit.
(130) Mɛtuasidi nan. I will pay 4 GH Cedi.
(131) Akosua: Ma me sidi num. Give me 5 GH Cedi.
(132) Mente so bio. I will not reduce it any further.
(133) Yaa P.: Medaase. (I) thank you.
(134) Gye sika no. Take/collection the money.
εye sidi du. It is 10 GH Cedi.

What triggers the new scenario is Yaa P.’s interest, and therefore her calling of Akosua, the dress seller. The first thing to pay attention to is how Akosua is referred to in (111) – Ntaadeɛ Wura (“dress owner/seller”) – and why she is referred to in this way. She is called Ntaadeɛ wura because she sells ntaadeɛ (“dresses”). Again, Yaa P. is meeting the dress seller for the first time and does not know her name. An equally possible reason that Yaa P. calls her in such a way is that there are other people in the scene selling other wares, and the only way to distinguish Akosua is to call her by what she sells. The response from Akosua is Sista, which is an honorific usage of the English word “sister,” usually used for a respected female person of either the speaker’s age or older (but not old enough to be one’s mother). Using Sista here leads us to learn similar terms like braa (from “brother”), and oluman (“old man”). Hawkers are mostly female, hence the use of a female character in the video production.

From (114) to (133), we acquire and therefore document the basics of selling and buying, namely, how to inquire about the prices of things, receive a quote, and the skills necessary to haggle the price down – a skill equally relevant in the open market. The negotiation for a lesser price comes always after one knows what is it that he or
she wants to buy, which is decided from (116) to (122), with the help of friends or standers by (116 – 119).

Hawkers mostly carry their wares on their heads and Akosua (the dress-seller) does so in the video – this is something we do not find in the source language cultural context. The decision, therefore, to capture hawking in the video is essentially a noble one in terms of introducing the language learners to something unfamiliar and seemingly foreign. Hawking is marked by its position within the following three modes of buying and selling: the open market system, the store, and hawking. More so, the skill to haggle in a hawking situation is equally relevant in the open market system (and occasionally in the store system), which the video does not capture. In (121) we see an effort on the part of the seller to alter Yaa P.’s final decision as it is stated in (119). The question is: how do you know the seller is being honest in her suggestions? It is also possible that the seller is being helpful. My advice to students has been that when they doubt a seller’s sincerity, they should rely on their own judgment and/or the judgment of their friends. In the video, we see Afia and Abenaa helping Yaa P. to choose the best out of many dresses, and Yaa P. eventually sides with them (116 – 119). This does not mean one should always heed such advice, but Yaa P. needs the dress to wear to church, and it happens that she can indeed wear it to church, and so buys it.

It is here, in (120), that we remind students of things we have learned about faith and religion in the target language cultural context; an example of this is the fact that there are three main religions in Ghana – Christianity, Islam, and the indigenous religion – and the fact that Ghana enjoys religious freedoms and religious tolerance. The scene also allows us to learn about the currency of Ghana, aside from the banks, the forex bureaus in Ghana where foreign currencies can be changed, the exchange rates in Ghana, the value of the Ghanaian currency in terms of what it can buy compared to the dollar, and the use of numbers (i.e. doing mathematics using the target language).
**Act XI: At the Bus Stop: Leave-taking (L); Parting Ways (M) – a Song**

(L) Appreciation and leave-taking: Yaa P. and Akosua (the dress-seller) thank each other – the initiator here is Yaa P., and Akosua, the reciprocator.

(135) Akosua: Me nso medaase. *I also (I) thank you.*
(136) Nsesa no nie. *This is the change.*
(137) *εyε sidi mpem num. It is 5,000 cedis.*
(138) *εnneε, merekƠ. Then, I am going/leaving.*
(139) Yaa/Abenaa/Afia: *Yoo. Okay/Alright.*

Though Yaa P. does not get the dress for free, she still feels the need to thank Akosua for her time and for her patience, which is a very respectful act. From (136) to (138), Akosua reaches into her purse and hands Yaa P. her change and then bids them farewell, as she leaves them to continue to sell her dresses. Their response in (139) is *Yoo* ("okay"). Akosua leaves the scene as the three continue to wait for the bus.

(M) After some time, three vans arrive and the three go their separate ways. The lesson here is how we are able to tie transportation in Ghana to the existing scenarios (or mini-events). Students do not really get on a van, as we did not have the luxury to do so. We just show pictures of three vans as we play the following song that the class has recorded earlier. So the video ends with the song, and we also get to see who the producer and actors are on screen.

(140)
(a) *Sε yε̱dι ntete mu a…*  
_With the event over and us going our separate ways…_
(b) *εyε yε̱n ya(w) bebree.*  
_We are very sad_
(c) *Nanso yε̱wƠ ani da so…*  
_However, we are very hopeful…_
(d) *Sε daakye bi yε̱bε̱hyia mu.*
...that we will meet in the (near) future

(e) Nanso yɛwɔ anidaso...

(Though it is painful) we are rest assured ...

(f) sɛ daakye bi yɛbɛhyia mu.

...that in the future we will meet

The song basically tells of their parting, the pain involved, how they will be missing one another, and the hope that they will all meet again in the (near) future. Structurally, we learn nanso (“but”) and reinforce the conditional (sɛ ... a ...) and future sentence constructions in a context.

As I have learned through making this video, bringing the target language materials covered in class into reality is the best possible avenue for addressing language retention problems. Do not limit the language experience to the four walls of the classroom. After all, what we seek are the experiences of real people who only exist in the real world. Classroom experiences must therefore become real world experiences, and where the target language reality is out of reach, as is the case with Akan, simulations will have to do. The most reliable technique to acquisition is to let the learner live what is being learned by exposing him/her to either the reality of what is being learned, or to simulations of it, as we did with the video project. Engaging reality or simulations of it significantly takes the focus off of structure and grammar and integrates actual practice and performance, thus helping to reinforce and actualize that which has been, or is being, learned. This has been one of my occupational maxims: To retain items learned is to live them; and to live them is to retain them!

Now, I would like to make a note on the use of music and songs in language instruction, as songs do pervade this project. The content and context of a song must significantly deliver on instructional goals. Featured in the film are three songs -- a song on parts of the body, a song on food preparation, and a song to bid farewell to each other with the semester coming to a close -- though we had learned more than three songs in class. It can be very daunting to learn a foreign language, with learners’ performances under constant scrutiny by peers and teachers, as often happens in foreign language classrooms. It is often very difficult to bring out the best in most stu-
We must therefore do everything within our ability to avert such a situation by engaging students often in activities that will lighten the mood of the classroom, which the singing of songs in the target language has the ability to do through taking the focus away from the individual and placing it on the group. Traditionally (especially in Ghana and in the West African context), songs are sung in times of joy and sorrow. These are times when there is less focus on the individual self and more of a focus on the events responsible for the two states. The excitement that comes with the hearing and singing of a song in the foreign language classroom makes one focus less on self and rather more on the song – the rhythm, the sound-rhythmic association, the meaning, the dance, etc. – and the joy the entire package brings to the hearer or the singer. This, to me, is a good recipe to either remove completely or minimize the state of consciousness, and for that matter, the over-attention placed on the self and on how one is not performing well enough – feelings that often accompany the learning of the new and do not augur well for the acquisition of the unfamiliar. To use songs in a foreign language class, as I have consistently done, is to kill two birds with a single stone – the production of excitement, which then sets the stage for acquisition.

5. Conclusion

This project is structured to ensure that, through simulations, students understand and acquire the act and art of communication in their new language in its socio-cultural context. It is also carefully structured and delivered to enhance students’ structural understandings of, and consequently their ability to express or construct their own thoughts and/or socio-cultural realities/experiences in, the target language. Thus, knowledge of the structure (i.e. all possible formal realizations) and function (i.e. information about context and usage) of the target language could, and ought to be, pursued simultaneously in this effort. Structurally, items on a list (e.g. months of the year, days of the week, numbers, etc) and any two events or words/phrases that often collocate were thrown out to forbid rote memory. We also see a great deal of division of labor going on in the video project (i.e. role specialization) which requires that each student performs his/her role(s) in the context of the remaining roles, and
this stresses the need to be able to perform one’s role(s) very efficiently. To efficiently perform your role(s) in relation to the remaining roles is to understand and, very often, be able to perform such roles equally well. For this reason, each student is guided to be able to perform any role, though not every student can efficiently perform every role -- hence the room for role specialization. Role specialization creates some level of interdependence, mutual benefit, and a sense of community that I very much admire.

This project promotes cooperation and collaboration, which are key principles of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory (Brown 2001) in language learning. More significantly, it allows for students’ abilities, skills and experiences to be utilized in the learning process. According to Ausubel (1968:vi), in his Meaningful Learning Framework (MLF), “[t]he most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach accordingly.” For example, some of the students possess a good amount of knowledge about technology, which becomes useful during the filming process. Injecting reality into text – or bringing the text alive – makes learning the new language very meaningful and relevant to students. As noted by Ofori (2009: 67), “a language is only valuable (i.e. relevant) for what it does, did, can do, or is made to do for its user(s) in a given space and time.” We must therefore facilitate desire for language acquisition by giving students the opportunity to use the new language creatively and relevantly. Creative usage of the target language instills into students the idea of material development and/or language documentation, which we desperately need in the teaching of least documented languages. By so doing, students become agents of language documentation as opposed to consumers in a way that widens the current scope of teaching/learning materials. This project also allows for issues covered and students’ creative work at each level of language study to not go to waste, but to be preserved for posterity. Again, it allows for a longitudinal study of student capacities in ways that inform pedagogy and material development. In other words, the fact that the final product is going to be archived – aside from it helping both the teacher and the learner to go back easily and authentically – gives the language teacher the chance to monitor students’ progress over time as they transition through the different levels of instruction and acquisition.
Perhaps more significantly, this video project meets the standards goals (Blaz 2002) in the sense that it gives students the opportunity to communicate in the target language, and to learn and act out the target culture in a way that is easy to recollect in the target-language setting. It also gives students the opportunity to compare the target language and culture with their own to better understand the target culture, and to see themselves as a community – a community that guarantees each and every student-member a place and a role. Students are allowed to connect the new language (or aspects of the new language assigned to them) to things they already know in a way that makes each student feel wanted in – or to see himself/herself as an important, unique member of – this classroom community.

References


Acquisition of pragmatic competence is a pressing yet challenging issue to L2 learners, particularly when the socio-cultural distance between L1 and L2 is far apart, as in the case of L1 English and L2 Korean, and when learners have little access to L2 and its culture outside the classroom. Despite the widely-recognized importance of L2 pragmatic ability, relatively little work has been published on the teaching and learning of pragmatic knowledge in the field of Korean as a Foreign Language (KFL). This paper provides a review of previous pragmatics research in the KFL context along with current concerns in interlanguage pragmatics. In addition, this paper suggests future research directions for the development of learner pragmatic competence in L2 Korean.

Introduction

Over the past few decades, the issue of pragmatics has received a great deal of attention in foreign/second language (L2) teaching and learning. The research area of L2 pragmatics, which is often referred to as interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), has centered on the development of learners’ pragmatic competence, which involves “the ability to use a wide range of conversational routines and discourse strategies to manage one’s communicative interactions with others” (Yoshimi, 2001, p. 223). The importance of the development of L2 pragmatic competence has been demonstrated by numerous researchers (e.g., Alcón-Soler, 2005; Bardovi-Harlig, 2001, 2002;
Research by these scholars reveals that even learners with high grammatical proficiency commit various pragmatic errors by using L2 in a way that inappropriately deviates from the social or cultural conventions of the target language. Matsuda (1999) points out that the consequences of the pragmatic failure can be significant as it can negatively affect the social relationships of interlocutors or can result in the rejection of academic or professional opportunities. This suggests that language learners are required to develop pragmatic competence in order to successfully engage themselves in social interactions within the target language community (Bachman, 1990; Brock & Nagasaka, 2005; Kasper, 1997).

As one of the less commonly taught languages, Korean as a foreign language (KFL) presents challenges to the teaching and learning of pragmatics since there is often considerable sociocultural distance between learners’ first language (L1) and Korean. According to Kasper (1997), L2 learners often comprehend or interpret L2 utterances literally without inferring their meanings in a situated context. Particularly, when cultural differences are substantial, the degree of linguistic or pragmatic correspondence between L1 and L2 is lower and thus negative pragmatic transfer between the two languages occurs frequently. For example, the patterns of speech acts realized in Korean can be notably different from those realized in English. Native Korean speakers may use ‘Have you eaten?’ as a conventionalized greeting expression which does not require a specific answer from the listener, while this is unlikely to be received as a greeting to English speakers (Pyun, 2007). Or, when responding to compliments, Korean speakers typically reject or deprecate the given compliment such as saying ‘No,’ whereas English speakers tend to accept the compliment saying, for instance, ‘Thank you.’

Given the importance of teaching and learning pragmatic skills, a growing number of scholars have examined various issues in pragmatic development in L2 Korean (e.g., Brown, 2010; Byon,
This body of research is yet in its infancy; much remains to be examined to understand KFL learners’ process and internalization of pragmatic knowledge and to gain insights into instructional strategies to facilitate learners’ pragmatic competence. In order to foster research and classroom instruction in pragmatics, it is crucial to look into what the research on KFL pragmatics has contributed to the field and to examine underinvestigated aspects of KFL pragmatics. The purpose of this paper is two-fold: first, to review previous pragmatics research in KFL settings, and second, to provide suggestions for future research and classroom instruction.

**Review Method**

This review was conducted in order to examine the current state of research on KFL pragmatics. We used the following methods to locate and select studies for inclusion. First, a number of databases (including ERIC, Education Full Text, Electronic Journal Center, and KFL journals) were searched for relevant studies published from 1995 to the present. The following keywords guided the search: Korean pragmatics, Korean as a foreign language, interlanguage, cultural differences, speech acts, and pragmatic competence. Second, the selection of studies was made based on two criteria: (1) the paper was published in a peer reviewed journal or in an edited volume and (2) the paper had to provide either empirical research data or non-empirical data that addressed pedagogical recommendations for classroom practice.

Based on the criteria, 18 papers were found to be suitable for inclusion. We then further identified salient themes that arose from reading those articles. The articles reviewed fell into five broad themes: (1) learners’ production of speech acts, (2) the use of Korean honorifics, (3) the teaching of Korean pragmatics, (4) pragmatic socialization, and (5) the pragmatic analysis of textbooks (See Table 1).
The key themes identified are described in the following section.

Results of the Review: Research on KFL pragmatics

Learners’ production of speech acts

Research on KFL learners’ production of speech acts has been comparative in nature, focusing on describing similarities and differences between KFL learners’ pragmatic performance and that of native speakers of Korean.

Two good examples of research on the speech act of apology are the ones by Wang (1999a) and Byon (2005). Using a written discourse completion task (DCT), both studies examined the patterns of L2 speech act performance, based on two social constraints: social power (the relationship between two interlocutors in terms of social status) and social distance (familiarity and intimacy between two interlocutors). Wang’s (1999a) study, which compared the speech act...
performance of learners of two different proficiency levels, revealed
that beginning-level learners’ responses in apology were generally
much briefer than the responses given by intermediate-level learners.
In addition, the error rate in beginning-level learners’ production was
higher than that found in intermediate-level learners’ use of L2 Ko-
orean, particularly when the speech event involved superior-
subordinate relationship. These two findings by Wang (1999a) sug-
gest that proficiency levels are to some extent related to learners’ ac-
quision of L2 Korean pragmatic norms. As Wang noted, one limi-
tation of this study is that two of the DCT questions involved
settings that the learners were unfamiliar with, thus posing possible
risk to the validity of the measure.¹

Byon (2005), on the other hand, compared apology strategies
among three different speaker groups: (1) American KFL learners, (2)
native Korean speakers, and (3) native English speakers. Byon’s anal-
ysis showed that the apology formulae most frequently used by the
three groups of speakers were similar. However, with regard to the
social variable of power, the study found differences, namely that
KFL learners were less sensitive to the power relationship between
interlocutors than native Korean speakers. The study also showed
evidence of L1 influence on American KFL learners’ use of apology.
For example, the semantic formulae created by American KFL learn-
ers were featured by fewer collectivistic and hierarchical expressions
than the formulae used by native Korean speakers. Byon attributed
this lack of collectivistic and hierarchical features to the American
egalitarian value system and individualistic nature of American cul-
ture. Byon’s study is notable in that it attempted to account for cul-
tural values underlying the differences in pragmatic performance.

The speech act of refusal was investigated by Lee (2003), tar-
geting Japanese learners of advanced Korean. Refusal is considered as
a face-threatening act since it can jeopardize or damage the face of
the speaker by rejecting the given invitation or request (Tanck, 2002).
Thus, it is often realized through indirect strategies, which require a high level of pragmatic competence (Chen, 1996).

Lee’s study utilized a written DCT to examine refusal speech act patterns of Japanese KFL learners. The written DCT consisted of 20 hypothetical pragmatic situations in which learners were asked to decline the given requests, invitations, and offers. Learners’ production of refusals was compared to that of native Korean speakers and native Japanese speakers. Results showed that there was no significant difference among the three groups in terms of the frequency of refusals. With regard to the use of refusal strategies, however, patterns of both similarities and differences were found. For example, in declining offers Japanese KFL learners’ refusal strategies were similar to those of native Korean speakers, whereas in declining invitations their strategies were close to those of native Japanese speakers. Lee’s study is significant in that it reflected various contexts of pragmatic situations to derive learners’ refusal realization patterns. However, while two social factors of refusal speech act (power and distance) were contextualized in the DCT questionnaire, this study does not provide an adequate account for the influence of these two social variations on learners’ refusal speech act performance.

Another work by Byon (2004) examined sociopragmatic features of American learners of Korean in their use of the Korean communicative act of request. American KFL learners’ request production was compared to that of native Korean speakers and native English speakers. In this study, each group’s semantic formulae for request supportive move (RSM) and request head act (RHA) were analyzed. The results revealed that KFL learners’ indirect RHA semantic formulae patterns in requests were consistent with those of native English speakers, indicating the influence of L1 on learners’ production of Korean request speech act. It was also found that KFL learners’ request formulae patterns showed less variation than those of native Korean speakers when communicative situations involved strong hierarchical power-relationships among interlocutors. In the
study, Byon included only female participants in order to eliminate possible gender influence. Future research could incorporate the gender factor and examine its effect on L2 speech act performance.

Overall, the results of the studies examining L2 speech acts suggest that learners’ performance in speech acts is influenced by two major factors: learners’ L1 background and learners’ L2 proficiency. The studies examining the influence of various social factors (e.g., power, distance, and formality) on learners’ speech act production indicate that learners of L1 English tend to be less sensitive to the power factor. These studies of learners’ use and production of L2 speech acts are valuable as they inform us which pragmatic features may be more attainable without explicit instruction and which features may require more systemized pragmatic instruction.

The use of Korean honorifics

One of the most distinguished features of the Korean language is its highly developed honorific system. Honorifics refer to “grammatically and lexically encoded forms of politeness” (Sohn, 1999, p.408). Learner’s use of honorifics has been a focal issue in Korean pragmatics research because of the complex lexical, syntactic, and morphological variations of Korean honorifics as well as “[their] significant role in understanding Korean language socio-cultural rules” (Youn, 2007, p. 88).

In assessing learners’ use of honorifics, various data collection tasks or instruments were employed by researchers. Wang’s (1995) empirical study involved a narrative task, an oral interview and a written questionnaire, whereas Lee’s (1997) study used a written questionnaire consisting of 10 sentence-writing and 10 multiple-choice questions. In a more recent study, Brown (2008) employed four data elicitation methods: a written DCT, audio-recordings of two role-plays between learners and native Korean speakers, audio-recordings of learners’ daily interactions in Korean, and interviews with learners. While the studies by Lee (1997) and Brown (2008) involved learners
of Korean from an L1 English background, Wang’s (1995) study focused specifically on Korean heritage learners (HL).

Data from Wang’s study revealed that although HL learners seemed to understand the basic concepts of honorifics due to their Korean family background, the average percentage of the native-like use of honorifics in the two tasks was low (9.5% in the narrative task and 25.2% in the interview task). With respect to the role of parents in HLs’ acquisition of honorifics, HLs reported that their parents rarely provided corrections for their honorific errors and were not seriously concerned about their misuse of honorific forms and speech levels. Wang explained that this might be attributed to parents being too busy to attend to their children’s use of honorifics or their lack of positive attitudes toward bilingual education. Wang’s study informs us that HLs’ family backgrounds may not always have a positive impact on the acquisition of Korean honorifics. One limitation of Wang’s study is that learners’ use of honorifics-related speech levels was measured based on learners’ responses to the written questionnaire. In order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the relationship between learners’ use of honorifics and family backgrounds, future research could investigate naturally occurring interactions between HLs and their parents.

In her investigation of learners’ use of referent honorifics (RH), Lee (1997) compared KFL learners’ RH usage to that of native speakers of Korean. Lee’s study yielded two findings. First, learners tended to overuse the honorific suffix –si (e.g., malsumba-si/myen ‘if you say’) in comparison to native Korean speakers. Second, although learners identified appropriate honorific forms when they were asked to answer multiple-choice questions, they failed to produce them when they were given sentence-writing questions. This finding is significant because it suggests that the learners’ knowledge of pragmatics does not necessarily correlate with their actual performance of pragmatics.
Using a sociopragmatic approach, Brown (2008) investigated the normative and strategic usage of honorifics by KFL learners. The analysis of the data revealed three findings with regard to learners’ use of normative honorifics. First, there was limited variation in learners’ use of normative honorifics. Second, learners tended to have less sensitivity to the power factor than the distance factor. Third, learners had a tendency to use honorifics in a more equal and intimate manner. The study also provided evidence for learners’ strategic use of honorifics. Learners tended to upgrade speech styles (i.e., from the polite speech style to the deferential speech style) to soften their utterances and express formality and seriousness. In addition, learners showed a marked tendency of upgrading from the intimate style to the polite speech style in status equal situations in an attempt to express politeness.

To summarize, previous studies show that the appropriate use of Korean honorifics presents a great deal of challenges to KFL learners. The studies found several features in learners’ use of Korean honorifics: (1) the overuse of the honorific suffix –si, (2) limited variation in honorific forms, (3) lack of sensitivity to the social factor of power, and (4) tendency to upgrade speech styles. Since Korean honorifics are composed of complex linguistic forms that are governed by various factors (e.g., age, social position, solidarity, and kinship), continued attention should be given to authentic and contextualized practice of honorific usage in classroom instruction.

The teaching of Korean pragmatics

Recently, the role of classroom instruction in developing learners’ pragmatic competence has attracted considerable attention in ILP research. The need for formal instruction in L2 pragmatics is strongly recognized, particularly in foreign language (FL) contexts in which students have limited access to pragmatic input or authentic meaning-based interaction outside the classroom (Kondo, 2008; Rose, 1999; Tateyama, 2009; Tateyama & Kasper, 2008).
A few KFL researchers have attempted to incorporate instructional approaches and strategies to the teaching of pragmatic competence in Korean. Byon (2006a) investigated the effect of the pragmatic conscious-raising approach on KFL learners’ pragmatic awareness of Korean requests. The study used a written DCT to help the students explore normative request expressions in controlled situations. Fifteen intermediate-level college students were asked to complete the written DCT by investigating request strategies used by native Korean speakers as well as native English speakers through face-to-face interviews. After gathering the speech act data in both L1 and L2, students were asked to compare their L1 and L2 request data, which was followed by the instructor’s explicit instruction on the sociopragmatic differences between L1 and L2. The analysis of student evaluations revealed that the DCT as a pragmatic-consciousness-raising tool helped learners to recognize comparative features of request strategies between L1 and L2.

Research on L2 pragmatic instruction has demonstrated the advantages of using authentic media materials to address various features of L2 pragmatics (Alcón-Soler, 2005; Grant & Starks, 2001; Martínez-Flor, 2007). The benefit of authentic audio-visual input in enhancing learners’ pragmatic competence was also confirmed by previous KFL studies (Byon, 2007; Kim & Lee, 2010; Lee, 1999; Wang, 2000). Lee (1999) discussed the purposeful use of movies as a pragmatic teaching strategy, whereas Byon (2007), Kim and Lee (2010), and Wang (2000) explored the effects of television media (TV talk shows, online TV shows, and TV commercials, respectively) in providing authentic pragmatic input. The identified advantages of using movies, according to Lee (1999), include providing authentic pragmatic input, making language tasks more authentic and meaningful, and increasing learners’ interest and motivation to learn pragmatic elements. Byon (2007) proposed seven practical steps in developing teaching activities using multimedia materials: (1) determination of learning objectives (i.e., the target pragmatic elements), (2) a review
of literature on the selected pragmatic feature(s), (3) selection and transcription of relevant media materials, (4) designing classroom activities, (5) developing classroom assessment tools, (6) implementation of the teaching activities, and (7) evaluation of the learning outcomes based on the assessment tools (Byon, 2007, p. 25). Wang’s study (2000), on the other hand, explored the pedagogical values of TV commercials in learning L2 cultural values. For instance, she described a TV wedding commercial and illustrated how it reflected Korean wedding culture. She also demonstrated several potential ways to use the TV commercial for cross-cultural comparison between Korean and American cultures. Although the instructional approaches proposed by the studies by Lee, Byon and Wang were not empirically supported, they provide pedagogically useful insights into how to engage learners in understanding L2 pragmatic meaning.

Unlike the three aforementioned studies, Kim and Lee (2010) conducted an empirical study to examine the impact of using contemporary online TV shows on advanced KFL learners’ development of pragmatic competence. Four HLs enrolled in a 10-week content-based sociolinguistic course were exposed to a variety of genres of online TV such as dramas, entertainment talk shows, news, and documentary programs. The specific pragmatic topics covered in the course included honorifics, reference terms, gender and language, and speech acts. Learners were encouraged to examine and analyze various pragmatic elements presented in online TV shows by using sociolinguistic knowledge gained from course readings and discussions. The analysis of the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest showed that online TV shows helped learners gain knowledge about various speech styles and appropriate honorifics. The data from the pre-and posttest, however, were not comparable since the same questionnaire was not used for each of the tests, leaving a question mark over the validity of the tests. The study, nevertheless, offers evidence that providing explicit instruction and contextual input through authentic
TV media can greatly enhance learners’ sociolinguistic and sociopragmatic competence.

Taken together, the studies on the effects of pragmatic instruction indicate that pragmatic routines and strategies are teachable to L2 learners and that learners’ development of pragmatic competence can be facilitated by formal instruction. The studies also suggest that authentic media materials can serve as valuable linguistic and cultural resources for effective pragmatic instruction.

**Pragmatic socialization**

One approach that has informed classroom-based ILP research is language socialization which is defined as “the process whereby children and other novices are socialized through language, part of such socialization being a socialization to use language meaningfully, appropriately, and effectively” (Ochs, 1996, p. 408). Since language socialization deals with not only the language use but also the sociocultural norms of the target language culture, it provides a useful insight into the acquisition of pragmatic competence (Alcón-Soler & Martínez-Flor, 2008).

Two studies have explored the pragmatic socialization of learners in the KFL classroom setting. In the context of a Korean heritage school, Byon (2003) employed a qualitative approach to investigate how four Korean teachers used the yo marker (the polite sentence-ending) for the purpose of teaching Korean sociopragmatic norms to young KFL learners. The data were collected using recordings of classroom teacher-student interactions. Results showed that through the use of the yo marker, teachers socialized learners into the Korean sociocultural norm that one’s courteousness and respectfulness should be verbally expressed when talking to someone who has a higher social position. The teachers’ utterances with yo were used to help learners experience the hierarchical aspect of Korean culture.

In his subsequent study, Byon (2006b) analyzed teacher-student interaction in two American college-level Korean classes to
Teaching And Learning Pragmatics

examine how sociocultural meanings and interactional routines were delivered through classroom interactions. Byon particularly focused on the teacher initiation (e.g., a greeting, a question and/or a drill prompt), response (e.g., an answer and/or a response), and follow-up (e.g., an evaluation or a comment), commonly abbreviated IRF. The analysis of the data showed that the classroom interaction routines were used to indicate the asymmetry of power relations between a teacher and students. Particularly, teachers’ utterances were dominated by assertive directives as a means of implicitly indicating the authority of teachers. The findings suggest that teacher-student interactional routines play a significant role in socializing learners into L2 sociocultural values.

The strength of the two studies by Byon is the close observation of teachers’ actual classroom practices and careful examination of teacher-student interactions through a qualitative methodology. Future KFL research on pragmatic socialization could explore a wide range of sociocultural contexts and their roles in socializing learners into Korean social functions or pragmatic rules. The sociocultural contexts that deserve attention include peer-peer interactions, native speaker-learner interactions, workplace conversations, and study-abroad contexts.

In summary, the review of the studies on pragmatic socialization suggests that teachers’ socialization practices convey cultural information to learners either implicitly or explicitly and that classroom socialization can provide learners with ample opportunities to learn various L2 pragmatic norms or rules.

The pragmatic analysis of textbooks

Textbooks play a pivotal role in L2 learning as they serve as a primary medium for delivering pragmatic knowledge. A few studies (Brown, 2010; Choo, 1999; Pyun, 2007; Wang, 1999b) examined the quantity and authenticity of pragmatic information presented in KFL textbooks. One common argument put forth by these studies is that
textbook conversations insufficiently or unsatisfactorily present pragmatic input in Korean.

Based on the analysis of four Korean textbooks\(^4\), Choo identified several drawbacks with respect to the presentation of Korean speech styles. One drawback that Choo observed was over-simplified terms referring to various speech styles. For instance, the deferential polite sentence ending (supnita/pnita) and the polite sentence ending (ayo/eyo) were labeled as ‘polite,’ whereas the intimate style sentence ending (a/e) and the plain style sentence ending (ta) were labeled as ‘not polite.’ Choo, however, argues that Korean speech styles cannot easily be dichotomized into two categories (e.g., polite versus impolite, formal versus informal). Such simplified labels fail to describe the multi-dimensional aspects of each speech style, which might cause learners confusion over the appropriate usage of speech styles. Another problem identified was that sociolinguistic changes in speech patterns and honorific usage of contemporary Korean were not well reflected in the textbooks. Examples of sociolinguistic changes provided by Choo included the wide use of egalitarian speech patterns by younger-generation speakers and the decreased use of honorifics in casual and intimate contexts (e.g., non-honorific language used by a daughter to a mother).

In an attempt to expand Choo’s (1999) study, Brown (2010) explored the representation of honorifics through the analysis of three series of Korean communication-based textbooks (5 volumes for each series)\(^5\) from the beginning to the advanced level. The analysis consisted of four areas: the range of social contexts, speech styles, referent honorifics, and forms of address. The analysis showed that the textbooks under-presented hierarchical social relationships or formal interactions and predominantly contained information on only one type of speech styles, namely honorific styles (in particular, the “polite” style). The study also revealed that although referent honorifics were addressed in all three textbook series, they were presented insufficiently and inconsistently. Brown concluded that the Korean
textbooks reviewed included simplified Korean honorifics with limited explicit discussion of pragmatic norms and practices, which indicates the lack of the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic usefulness of the textbooks for facilitating learners’ pragmatic competence.

Wang (1999b) and Pyun (2007), on the other hand, investigated the presentation of speech acts in Korean textbooks. Wang (1999b) analyzed five kinds of textbooks (a total of ten volumes) that were widely used in Korean programs in American colleges and universities. For each kind of textbook, two volumes were selected for analysis—one at the beginning level and the other at the intermediate level. She reported that Korean textbooks not only failed to include various types of speech acts but also failed to provide sufficient contextual information for the presented speech acts. It was also found that Korean textbooks did not present a wide range of interlocutor relationships in a variety of social contexts. Similar to Wang’s findings, Pyun addressed the gap between the authentic examples of Korean speech acts (more specifically, the speech act of thanking and responses to thanking) and their representation in textbooks. In her comparative analysis of native speakers’ corpus and textbook corpus, Pyun found that the most common type of response to ‘thanks’ in the Korean textbooks (i.e., chenmaneyyo ‘you are welcome’) was, in reality, the least frequently found in the native Korean speakers’ corpus. The two most frequently-used responses to ‘thanks,’ according to native speakers’ corpus, were aneyo (‘no’) and nwelyo (‘don’t mention it’, literally meaning ‘what’).

The results of the studies concerning the representation of pragmatic elements in KFL textbooks suggest that KFL textbooks generally lack explicit pragmatic information as well as authentic examples and thus fail to meet the needs of KFL learners in developing pragmatic competence. The findings of the studies also suggest that textbook developers should make a conscious effort to include a wider range of pragmatic elements along with contextual explanations so as to help students make appropriate pragmalinguistic choices.
So far, previous studies on L2 Korean pragmatics have been discussed. Based on the findings obtained from the preceding studies, we provide suggestions for future research and classroom instruction.

**Suggestions for future research and classroom instruction**

One area suggested for future research concerns data elicitation methods. In many of the KFL ILP studies, data were collected under controlled conditions, using a written DCT, in which learners were asked to respond to given controlled pragmatic scenarios. Written DCTs have gained popularity among ILP researchers, due to relatively low cost and easy and convenient administration for gathering a large amount of data within a short period of time (Schauer, 2009). Written DCTs, however, have limitations: (1) learners’ written DCT answers in unfamiliar or unsuitable pragmatic scenarios may not be representative of their actual pragmatic competence due to the lack of awareness or knowledge of the language used in such situations (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Schauer, 2009), (2) written DCT data may be significantly different from spoken data in terms of the length and depth of responses (Beebe & Cummings, 1996; Golato, 2003). Studies that examined the validity of various data elicitation methods (Golato, 2003; Turnbull, 2001; Yuan, 2001) have suggested that the choice of the data collection method may determine the type of data elicited and therefore, the method of data collection should be matched with research questions and the goal of a study. According to Yuan (2001), for instance, an oral DCT technique may be more appropriate if the purpose of a study is “to describe the realization patterns of a particular speech act of a particular language at an initial stage” (p. 289), while the method of using field notes may better suit a study that seeks “to identify when and where a speech act is likely to occur by whom, and in what social contexts” (p. 289). This suggests that to get more reliable and valid data, the researcher should choose and utilize the data collection method that best serves the
purpose of his or her study and research questions. Future study may consider other data elicitation methods, which include role plays, verbal reports (e.g., Felix-Brasdefer, 2004; Woodfield, 2008), computerized listening tasks (e.g., Taguchi, 2005, 2008), video-questionnaire tasks (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Koike, 1996), and observations of naturally occurring talk (e.g., Achiba, 2003; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990, 1993).

A second area worthy of further examination has to do with patterns and courses of KFL learners’ pragmatic development. ILP research in KFL settings has mainly investigated how learners’ pragmatic production differs from that of native speakers of Korean and whether there is any L1 transfer effect on learners’ target pragmatic performance. The examination of learners’ acquisition processes of pragmatic knowledge, on the other hand, has been largely ignored in KFL contexts. Future research may consider, for example, examining learners’ pragmatic acquisition with or without explicit instruction or conducting follow-up studies. This will allow the researcher to observe and examine learners’ acquisition processes and development over time.

Another suggestion for future research is to expand the scope of learner and teacher variables including learners’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds, learners’ identity, beliefs or attitudes towards L2 culture, teachers’ prior training on pragmatic teaching, and teachers’ attitudes and perceptions of pragmatic instruction. Such variables can be viable factors influencing a learner’s choice of pragmatic behaviors or the use and types of classroom pragmatic instruction. For example, a learner with high pragmatic awareness may deliberately choose to break particular L2 pragmatic conventions due to his or her individual beliefs or L1 cultural values (Ishihara & Tarone, 2009). Or a teacher with low awareness of the importance of pragmatic knowledge may give far less attention to teaching pragmatic competence. Future research may address such learner or teacher beliefs and their
impact on the performance, instruction, and evaluation of L2 pragmatic competence.

With regard to the role of formal instruction in acquiring pragmatic competence, a number of scholars (e.g., Bouton, 1994; Kasper, 1997; LoCastro, 1997; Rose, 2005) assert that teaching pragmatics in FL classrooms is necessary, can be successfully done, and should be made an integral part of the day-to-day activities in the language classroom. Rose (2005), for example, advocates the necessity and significance of pragmatic instruction in the classroom, pointing out the fact that “pragmatic functions and relevant contextual factors are often not salient to learners and so not likely to be noticed even after prolonged exposure” (p.386). In the KFL context, the role of formal instruction and pragmatic input in fostering learners’ pragmatic competence has received little attention. One suggestion for KFL teachers is to conduct reflective action research in which they investigate the success or failure of their own pragmatic instruction. Through reflective action research, a teacher can become more aware of his or her instructional practices and can discover factors and conditions that contribute to the success or failure of his or her pragmatics teaching.

If pragmatic knowledge is to be included as a core component in the language curriculum, it needs to be incorporated into assessments as well. In the teaching of pragmatic competence, we suggest that teachers and language programs make use of more alternative forms of assessment. While multiple choice tests or DCTs are certainly pedagogically valid assessment tools, they have limitations in measuring students’ pragmatic ability from a more holistic view. Although one’s perceptive knowledge of pragmatic features is a necessary first step in preparation for successful cross-cultural communication, it may not readily transfer to spontaneous performance. Lee’s study (1997) which investigated the learner use of referent honorifics, for example, discovered a discrepancy between what learners knew and what they were actually able to produce. Therefore, in or-
der to help learners more successfully cope with pragmatic challenges, more integrated forms of assessment such as performance-based assessment should be considered. For instance, role-plays, problem-solving tasks, information gap activities, or interviews can be utilized to simulate the natural communicative contexts in which students are required to spontaneously produce the target language with culturally appropriate and pragmatically accepted manners.

Closing remarks

To reiterate, this paper provides an overview of pragmatics research in the field of KFL focusing on the five major areas of investigation: (1) learners’ production of speech acts, (2) the use of Korean honorifics, (3) the teaching of Korean pragmatics, (4) pragmatic socialization, and (5) the pragmatic analysis of KFL textbooks. This paper also offers suggestions and directions for future pragmatic research and teaching in Korean. Pragmatics should be treated as an essential part of learning in the curriculum where communicative competence is emphasized. The limited amount of research on L2 pragmatics in the field of KFL poses an obstacle to a more comprehensive understanding of the cognitive, psychological, and linguistic nature or patterns underlying learners’ pragmatic development in Korean. More research efforts should be devoted to this area to influence instruction that will help learners effectively grasp pragmatic rules and routines in Korean and further apply them meaningfully in real-life interactions.

Notes

1. Refer to the ‘suggestions for future research and classroom instruction’ section in the present study for a discussion of limitations of written DCT methods.
2. Referent honorifics (RH) refer to “the system that indexes the relationship between the speaker and sentence referents, or otherwise between one sentence referent or another” (Brown, 2008, p.273).

3. The Yale system of Romanization is used to transcribe Korean words.

4. Choo’s study (1999) involved the following textbooks: (1) *Hankwuke* (Korean) and *Hankwuke Hoyhwa* (Korean Conversation) by Korea University Press (2) *Myongdo’s Korean* by U-Shin Sa Publishing (3) *Speaking Korean* by Hollym (4) *An Introductory Course in Korean* by Yonsei University Press.

5. The three kinds of textbooks analyzed by Brown (2010) are: *Sogang Korean* written and published at Sogang University, *Pathfinder in Korean* from Ewha Womans University and *Korean Conversation* from Korea University.


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Placement Test Development for Chinese Heritage Language Learners

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Abstract

Many universities have offered separate-track courses for non-heritage and heritage language learners. However, heritage learners’ heterogeneity in terms of their target language proficiency still makes it difficult to place them in appropriate classes. This study describes the placement exam development for Chinese heritage learners in a Southern Californian university through assessing heritage learners’ formal education background, oral interview performance, and Chinese writing ability. To reveal students’ oral proficiency and ensure consistent and accurate responses, the students’ detailed interview answers were compared with their family background and Chinese learning background that students provided via a survey. This initial analysis indicates that the placement exam is effective only if both the oral interview and the written proficiency components are combined with the survey of the students’ educational background. This combination instrument may serve as a guide for developing local placement exams and may be useful for future less commonly taught heritage languages.

Keywords: placement test, heritage learners, Chinese

I Introduction

Many universities have offered separate-track courses for non-heritage and heritage language learners. Numerous studies in the recent past have offered theoretical support to such a practice (Che-
valier, 2004; Ke, 1998; Kim, 2007; Lee, 2005; Shen, 2003; Yu, 2007; Wu, 2007; Xiao, 2006). These studies investigated similarities and differences between the two types of learners and found that they have different needs in language learning. Heritage learners need to connect oral language with the written form, while their non-heritage counterparts need to develop both oral and written skills. Therefore, heritage and non-heritage learners should ideally be placed in separate tracks as decided by the results of placement tests.

Based upon observation of heritage learners in our Chinese courses, we suspect that some students have been less than honest when taking the placement tests in order to receive an easy “A.” They pretend not to understand listening questions and write very short responses or make mistakes intentionally. Therefore, teachers may be lead to misjudge students’ actual oral and writing proficiency. Moreover, these unfortunate practices and sometimes negative attitudes towards learning displayed by heritage learners may negatively affect non-heritage students, who “frequently feel left out and intimidated” in these Chinese learning settings (Sohn & Shin, 2007, p. 408). The study aims to investigate whether students’ former Chinese education background, oral interview results and writing proficiency are primary factors for identifying Chinese heritage learners’ language proficiency.

II Related Research

1 Defining Heritage Language Learners

Heritage language learners have been defined by various factors. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) National Standards (1999) defines heritage learners as “students who have a home background in the language studied... these students may come to class able to converse in the language in home and community situations, but may lack the abilities to interact comfortably in more formal settings. Further, they may be quite comfort-
able with oral language but possess limited skills in reading and writing” (p. 29).

The ACTFL definition as well as those proposed by scholars (e.g., Carreira, 2004; Chevalier, 2004; Sohn & Shin, 2007; Valdés, 2001; Xiao, 2006) emphasize three important factors when identifying heritage learners: the learners’ place in the heritage language community, their personal connection to the target language and culture through the family background, and their imbalanced language skills in the heritage language.

Chinese heritage speakers are further defined by such factors as bilingual use of Chinese and English, high oral and aural literacy versus limited written literacy in Chinese, and lack of formal knowledge of Chinese. For example, Ke (1998) and Shen (2003) categorized Chinese heritage speakers as bilingual speakers of English and Chinese (Mandarin Chinese or one of the Chinese dialects, such as Cantonese, Hakka, or Southern Min), who are exposed to some form of Chinese orally and aurally at home. Heritage learners are heterogeneous in terms of their historical and cultural backgrounds and their target language proficiency (Kondo-Brown, 2003). Wu (2007) also found that Chinese heritage speakers were heterogeneous in terms of their proficiency in the target language, because “some have had prior formal Chinese educational experiences, such as attending school for a few years before immigrating to the United States, attending Sunday Chinese school, or being taught at home by their parents or relatives” (p. 275). These definitions describe heritage learners as possessing imbalanced oral and written language development, but they fail to take into account students’ communicative abilities. In the current study, Chinese heritage learners are conceived as those who can communicate in Chinese with at least one of their native Chinese-speaking family members. Students with Chinese-speaking family members, such as those of the third or fourth generation, are not automatically classified as heritage learners. For instance, a student who has a Chinese family background but cannot speak Chinese with any
family members should be identified as a non-heritage learner.

2 Chinese Heritage Language Research

Scholars have recognized the importance of understanding Chinese heritage learners’ language background. For example, Ke (1998) conducted a study examining first-year college heritage learners and non-heritage learners in Chinese character recognition. The students were asked to identify the pronunciations and meanings of 30 Chinese characters and to produce another 30 characters from their textbooks. The study indicates that there was no significant difference between the two groups in character recognition and production scores. However, Ke acknowledged that he lacked information about the students’ academic profiles and their motivations for Chinese learning. Therefore, Kondo-Brown (2003) suggested that future studies should consider students’ language background such as the number of years of formal Chinese language education in Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States.

Xiao (2006) investigated the relationship between home background and heritage learners’ Chinese literacy levels. She studied 20 heritage and 18 non-heritage learners at the high beginning level of an intensive Chinese course at a New England university. The results indicate that students’ home background did not affect character writing. In the same study, Xiao continued to investigate learners (n = 148) in beginning, intermediate and advanced level classes to examine the relationship between home background and Chinese language development. The study showed that heritage learners did not perform significantly better than non-heritage peers in reading comprehension, vocabulary learning, and character writing, and that home background did not lead Chinese heritage speakers to acquire reading and writing skills more quickly than non-heritage speakers.

Shen (2003) studied the connection between Chinese heritage learners’ language background and their Chinese writing performance. She analyzed two groups: a homogeneous group (heritage
students only) and a heterogeneous group (heritage students mixed with non-heritage students). She found that heritage students in the homogenous group performed better in written Chinese with one year of study than heritage students in the heterogeneous groups with two years of study. Her study suggests that tracking based on language background enables Chinese heritage learners to improve their writing skills and their overall Chinese literacy.

3 Related Researches in Heritage Learners’ Placement

Many U.S. colleges use commercial tests to place heritage learners. In a national survey of 169 modern foreign language departments in the U.S., Brown, Hudson & Clark (2004) found that the most commonly used commercial tests were Advanced Placement (AP) subjects, the Brigham Young University Computer Adaptive Placement Exam (CAPE), and Wisconsin College Level Placement Test. However, they found that these tests did not specifically target heritage learners. The most cited reasons for using these tests were “the availability of these tests for the most commonly taught languages” and their already “widespread use in other programs” (p. 10). Other reasons for using such tests include top-down administrative decisions and practical considerations, such as the lack of staff to develop and administer localized tests.

Few institutions have developed local placement instruments for heritage learners. Only one such local test has been reported. Recently, UCLA designed a placement test for Korean heritage speakers, which consisted of two parts: (1) a standardized multiple-choice section testing listening, grammar, and reading skills and (2) a composition section (Shohn and Shin, 2007). The test showed that Korean heritage learners manifested disparities between oral and written skills; they achieved high scores in listening and low scores in compo-
sition. In addition, there existed a significant gap between scores in the standardized section and the composition section. Therefore, Shohn and Shin (2007) suggest additional face-to-face interviews with students whose scores are vastly divergent in the two sections.

The placement instrument that Shohn and Shin (2007) described has some limitations. First, the composition prompt for heritage learners is inappropriate. In the UCLA placement test, “test takers are expected to be able to write an argumentative essay on an assigned topic” (p. 418). According to Chevalier (2004), heritage language courses should develop students’ literacy skills by increasing their familiarity with written genres. Different genres suited different pedagogical stages: conversation for Stage I, description and narration for stage II, evaluation and explanation for Stage III, and argumentation for Stage IV. Chevalier suggests that argumentation is appropriate for testing advanced heritage learners and narrative style is better than argumentative style for testing intermediate level learners. Second, the face-to-face interview makes listening in the standardized section redundant because the interview can test students’ listening ability. Similarly, the grammar subsection is unnecessary because it will be tested in the composition section.

Current placement measures for Chinese heritage learners are inadequate. Chinese programs frequently use students’ self-assessment, an instructor’s referral, and commercial tests. The self-assessment measure lets students make judgments as to whether they are heritage or non-heritage learners. An instructor’s referral is another way of helping make placement decisions for heritage and non-heritage classes. As both measures are subjective and unreliable, they could misguide heritage learners in their Chinese studies.

Commercially-produced tests that are commonly used in foreign language programs target various Chinese learning populations but not heritage learners. For instance, the popular Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) II Chinese is designed for high school students who have studied Chinese as a foreign language for two to four years.
(Sohn and Shin, 2007). The test consists of three sections: listening, grammatical structural knowledge, and reading comprehension. However, SAT II does not reflect Chinese heritage learners’ writing proficiency prior to college. The weaknesses of these existing placement measures make it imperative for college Chinese programs to develop their own measurement instruments.

III. Chinese Curriculum

The placement test was conducted at a large comprehensive university with nearly 36,000 students in southern California. In 1984, the university started offering Chinese courses for learners who had no prior knowledge of Chinese. In the 1990s, the number of Chinese immigrants increased steadily in Southern California areas, thus providing a maintenance environment for Chinese spoken as a heritage language. In order to major in International Business with a Chinese concentration, students must complete twelve semester units or four upper-division Chinese courses, including two business and two culture classes. The two culture courses were also made available to students as part of their general education (GE) requirements that all students, regardless of their majors, must take.

Table 1 describes the tracking practice in the Chinese program. Based on different Chinese proficiency levels, students were placed in dual tracks of Chinese classes: (1) Elementary Chinese for true beginners CHIN 101 and CHIN 102, (2) a heritage language track CHIN 201 and CHIN 202, (3) a non-heritage language track CHIN 203 and CHIN 204, and (4) merged upper-division courses for both heritage and non-heritage learners.
Table 1: Tracking practices in the Chinese program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHIN 101</td>
<td>Fundamental Chinese A (non-heritage class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHIN 102</td>
<td>Fundamental Chinese B (non-heritage class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHIN 201</td>
<td>Chinese for Heritage Speakers A (Heritage Class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHIN 202</td>
<td>Chinese for Heritage Speakers B (Heritage Class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHIN 203</td>
<td>Intermediate Chinese A (non-heritage class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHIN 204</td>
<td>Intermediate Chinese B (non-heritage class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Merged System for Advanced Chinese</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHIN 310 Mandarin Chinese in the Business World</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHIN 311 Mandarin Chinese for International Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHIN 315 Introduction to Chinese Civilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHIN 325 Contemporary Chinese Culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Chinese placement test for heritage speakers offered by the Chinese program is a local testing instrument given on the first day of each semester. Each student is required to take the test, which is designed to assess students’ Chinese levels. The test places some of them into different levels of Chinese. Failure to take the test results in being disallowed to enroll in any Chinese classes.

**IV Placement Test Development**

A first step – and a primary factor – involves a questionnaire that asks the number of years a student has taken Chinese in K-12 schools and weekend schools in the U.S. The analysis of an oral interview and composition task is used to describe heritage learners’ oral and writing performance.
Step One: Identifying Educational Background

First, students were asked for demographic information including their own birthplace and their parents’ birthplaces (see Appendix A). Then, students were asked to provide information about the number of years and places where they received Chinese education as full-time students in both target language settings and the United States. Students were asked to list all family members, including mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, and others, with whom they might communicate in the target language because communicating with family members in Chinese at home is an important factor in defining Chinese heritage learners. Siblings were put in the “others” category because Mainland China has a one-child policy, and many students do not have siblings.

Twenty-two students who planned to take Chinese courses participated in a placement test in the fall of 2007. They were born in target language settings: Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mainland China, U.S., Holland, and non-Chinese-dominant Asian countries. Each heritage student was labeled as H1, H2 … H22. Based on the number of years that they were educated in target language settings, the heritage learners were divided into three groups:

Group 1 (n = 8) included students with no formal education in target language settings, who received all their education in the United States.

Group 2 (n = 5) consisted of students who finished elementary school education in target language settings.

Group 3 (n = 9) included those who finished middle school education in target language settings.

Step Two: Taking Oral Interviews

To check students’ Chinese oral proficiency, all students took an oral interview test, which elicited further information regarding their questionnaire responses. The following questions were
asked and answered in Chinese:

1) 你的中文和英文名字是什么?
   (What are your Chinese and English names?)
2) 你是在哪里出生的?
   (Where were you born?)
3) 你的专业是什么?
   (What is your major?)
4) 你在哪里上的小学, 中学, 高中和大学?
   (Where did you attend elementary school, middle school, and high school?)
5) 你在家和谁说中文?
   (With whom can you speak Chinese at home?)
6) Other questions in the questionnaire (see Appendix A).

Based on the ACTFL proficiency guidelines (see Appendix B), Group 1 achieved scores ranging from 0+ to 1 points (Novice – High level to Intermediate – Mid/Low level). Group 2 achieved scores from 1 to 1+ (Intermediate – Mid/Low level to intermediate – High level). Group 3 achieved scores from 1+ to 2+ (Intermediate – High level to Advanced Plus level). The oral placement test results indicate that communication with family members in Chinese at home constitutes a significant factor for their oral communicative competences in the target language.

Students with higher oral proficiency scores are the students who frequently communicate with their family members at home. As shown in Table 2, all students spoke Chinese with their family members, and none of the students in the three groups spoke English only at home. Group 1 was the only group in which some used more English than Chinese at home. Group 1 most frequently (50%) used half Chinese and half English at home. The students in
Group 2 (40%) used more Chinese than English at home compared to Group 3 (44.4%).

Table 2: Languages Used at Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group 1 (n = 8)</th>
<th>Group 2 (n = 5)</th>
<th>Group 3 (n = 9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English only</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More English than Chinese</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half Chinese and half English</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>22.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Chinese than English</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese only</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>33.30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To further understand their Chinese proficiency, particularly their listening and speaking abilities, the communication activities within the learners’ families were surveyed. The results indicate that Chinese heritage learners preferred to communicate with their parents rather than their grandparents and others in Chinese. According to Table 3, all students among the three groups most frequently spoke Chinese with their mothers with the average percentage of 80%. All of the students in Group 3 said that they used Chinese with their fathers compared to Group 1 (62.5%) and Group 2 (80%). As for speaking with their grandparents, the three groups ranged from 20% to 55%. Group 2 most frequently spoke Chinese with other family members (80%) compared to Group 1 (25%) and Group 3 (55.6%).
Table 3: Communicating with Family Members in Chinese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group 1 (n=8)</th>
<th>Group 2 (n=5)</th>
<th>Group 3 (n=9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandfather</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is reasonable to suggest that more years of learning Chinese in target language settings enabled students to communicate more frequently with their family members in oral Chinese. Communication in Chinese also depends on the English proficiency of their parents and grandparents and other family members. If family members’ English is not good enough, learners have to communicate in Mandarin Chinese or Chinese dialects.

**Step Three: Writing Proficiency Tests**

Narrative style is better-suited than argumentative style for students to demonstrate their writing competence at the lower-division level (Chevalier, 2004). Therefore, a 30-minute letter-writing task was administered. Students were asked to write a short letter (about 150-300 Chinese characters) in Chinese according to the following English prompt:

*Your Chinese friend, Jing, who is in Beijing now, will study in California next fall. Since she has never studied in the U.S. before, she wrote a letter to you asking about life on campus. She wanted to know how to rent an apartment close to campus, where she could find a part-time job, and how she should deal with any culture shock that she might experience. All the above-mentioned questions need to be addressed in your response.*

The writing samples were graded by two Chinese instructors, who were trained specifically for this duty. The writing samples were graded in terms of the following scoring rubric: vocabulary, grammar,
and organization on a scale of 0 to 5 adopted from Sohn and Shin’s (2007) rating range:

- 0 = none
- 1 = limited
- 2 = moderate
- 3 = good
- 4 = very good
- 5 = native-like

The scores for the writing test were on a scale that goes from a lowest score of 0 to a highest possible score of 15 of all three parts: vocabulary, grammar, and organization (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Writing Proficiency Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group 1 (n=8)</th>
<th>Group 2 (n=5)</th>
<th>Group 3 (n=9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The letter-writing task was difficult for Group 1; students earned mean scores of 4.87 points (SD = 2.20). In Group 2 (n = 5), students earned mean scores of 9.8 points (SD = 2.78). Students in Group 3 (n = 9) scored mean scores of 12.3 points (SD = 1.80). The results show that the number of years of formal Chinese education correlates positively with students’ higher mean scores of writing performance.

Based on the placement test scores including oral and writing parts, it suggests that heritage speakers whose writing scores are over 4.87 points are potentially qualified to take the Chinese courses for heritage speakers CHIN 201. The heritage speakers whose writing scores are over 9.80 points are potentially qualified to take the Chinese courses for heritage speakers CHIN 202. The heritage speakers whose writing scores are over 12.3 points are potentially qualified for
upper-division Chinese courses, such as Chinese civilization and Chinese for international business courses.

V Teacher Perspectives on Placement Test

At the end of the semester, an interview regarding instructors’ feedback on the placement test was conducted with two instructors who taught the Chinese courses for heritage speakers. One teacher stated, “Students’ formal educational background is a reliable indicator of their Chinese proficiency” (interview with Corrina).

The instructor confirmed the positive correlation between former Chinese education in target language settings and Chinese writing performance. She observed that students who finished middle school or high school in native Chinese-speaking settings had better Chinese writing skills than students who were born in the U.S. or came to the U.S. before middle school. Specifically, she stated that “the length of staying in the U.S. will affect heritage learners’ writing skills because they do not have many opportunities to write Chinese” (interview with Corrina). The other instructor indicated that:

The placement test should focus on assessing students’ use of Chinese characters and vocabulary bank and their familiarity with Chinese sentence structures, grammar, punctuation, and writing organization. The writing task could include different types of questions, e.g., translating a passage or writing a short story based on given pictures (interview with Wendy).

Further, the teacher suggested that in order to make the placement test valid, both the oral interview questions and the writing task need to be altered from time to time. If they remain unchanged, over time they will become an “open secret” for students who want
to take the Chinese classes for heritage speakers in the future. The effectiveness of the tests will be questioned if this happens.

VI Implications for Future Research

Previous research has failed to develop specific criteria to determine the target language proficiencies among heritage learners. As heritage learners’ target language proficiency is multifaceted, it is hard to place learners of different proficiency levels. Thus, it is also essential to identify their target language proficiency levels before placing them in classes.

To reveal students’ oral proficiency, the students’ detailed interview answers should be compared with their family background and Chinese learning background provided in the survey to make sure their answers are consistent and accurate. The placement exam is effective only if both the oral interview and the written proficiency components are combined with the survey of the students’ educational background.

Two major limitations of the present study exist. First, this study focuses on a Southern Californian university, which is surrounded by large Chinese communities and is attended by many heritage Chinese learners. The placement instrument in the present study may not work as well at institutions in other regions of the United States. Because of the small enrollments of Chinese heritage learners, some Chinese programs have to place heritage learners of various Chinese proficiencies in the same class or place both heritage and non-heritage learners in the same class. Second, the study has examined a relatively small sample size involving twenty-five students and one instructor. Future studies may examine larger sample sizes of heritage Chinese learners and instructors.

Currently, one of the major discussion issues for placement test development is the influence of computer-assisted testing methods. Allen’s (2008) study suggests integration of Chinese handwrit-
ing skills with the new electronic writing technologies rather than the traditional paper-and-pencil approach. In addition, Eda, Itomitsu and Noda (2008) state that developers are considering online versions of the Japanese Skills Test (JSKIT). If heritage learners are allowed to complete the Chinese composition section of the placement test online, this might impact the results of their placement tests.

The heritage-related motivation and parental involvement are currently the most significant variables for East Asian language learners studying languages such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Liu and Shibata, 2008; Sung and Padilla, 1998; Valdes, 2001; Nunn, 2006); many language programs have been or will develop the placement tests for heritage learners of these languages. Based on the results of a recent, short-term (8-week) summer study abroad program in China, it was found that students with a Mandarin Chinese heritage family background in which their parents did not frequently communicate in Mandarin Chinese improved their Chinese more rapidly compared to their true beginner counterparts (Liu, 2010). After the study abroad program, some heritage students mentioned that they increasingly communicated with their parents and grandparents in Chinese. This combination instrument may serve as a guide for developing local placement exams and study abroad program for heritage language learners, and may be useful for future less commonly taught heritage languages.
Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Dr. Xiaoye You of Pennsylvania State University for his insightful suggestions during the preparation of this article.
References


Liu

Appendix A

Questionnaire

Your responses on this questionnaire will remain confidential. Please answer as openly and honestly as you can. We appreciate and value your input. Thanks.

English Name__________________

Chinese Name ______________

Gender _______________

Major ___________________

Where were you born? ________________

Where was your mother born? ______________

Where was your father born? ___________

Place where you attended elementary school
____________________

Place where you attended middle school _____________________

Place where you attended high school
________________________

Chinese Language Education History

1. Have you ever taken a college Chinese course prior to this class?
   a. Yes  b. No

2. If you answer “yes” to the above question, when did you take the Chinese course?
   a. elementary school      b. middle school    c. high school
d. community college/university
3. Have you ever taken Chinese courses in Chinese weekend schools?  
   a. Yes    b. No

4. Please circle the items that best describes how much Chinese is used in your family?  
   a. English only  
   b. More English than Chinese  
   c. Half Chinese and half English  
   d. More Chinese than English  
   e. Chinese only

5. Without counting yourself, which of your family members use more Chinese than English at home?  
   a. Mother  b. Father  c. Grandmother  d. Grandfather  e. Others
Appendix B

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines

Superior (3 - 3+) Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations

Advanced Plus (2+) Able to satisfy most work requirements and show some ability to communicate on concrete topics

Advanced (2) Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements

Intermediate – High (1+) Able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands

Intermediate – Mid/Low (1) Able to satisfy basic survival needs and minimum courtesy requirements

Novice – High (0+) Able to satisfy immediate needs with learned utterances

Novice - Mid/Low (0) Able to operate in only a very limited capacity or no ability whatsoever in the language.
Abstract

This paper examines the term “Chinese” in light of the prevalent rhetoric of Chinese as a critical language for the job market. As Mandarin has received rapid recognition and usage in “professional” contexts such as academia and international business, we call for a critical viewing of placing too much worth in the political economy of Mandarin at the expense of overlooking all the other varieties of Chinese in the local ecologies. Using data from the authors’ own experiences as instructors of Mandarin and Cantonese in secondary and university contexts, this paper speaks to the possibility of multiple Chinese languages being taught and used together, or, conversely, what the negative consequences have been in neglecting multiple varieties of Chinese in a Mandarin-only language classroom. We argue that while it is currently not the case, Mandarin can be “professional” with its fellow Chinese varieties while still being considered a LCTL used at the “professional” level.

Introduction

While Chinese in the form of Mandarin is currently heavily emphasized in language teaching arenas, little research has looked at the maintenance of other equally relevant Chinese languages. Though not often talked about, long-standing diversity of Chinese languages has existed both in the U.S. and Asian contexts for centuries. Thus, inattention to this diversity sparks the need for a critical viewing of placing too much worth in the political economy of Mandarin, still considered a Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL) at
the expense of overlooking all the other varieties of Chinese, which then should be Truly Less Commonly Taught Languages (TLCTL), in the local ecologies. In looking at local-level processes we can better understand how to bring forward varieties with minority status (Hornberger and King, 1996).

This paper will begin with background information on the varieties of Chinese, followed by definitions of “professional” in the arenas of LCTLs and heritage language learners. The paper will end with the authors’ personal experiences teaching Mandarin and Cantonese.

**Background**

In order to understand the interrelationships among the many varieties of Chinese, it becomes necessary to first step back and view the macro-level processes of how the term “Chinese” came to be singular and why this must be critically problematized, since not doing so directly impacts non-Mandarin Chineses and their speakers. Through the linguistic lens of mutual unintelligibility, a language like Cantonese is quite unarguably a separate language from Mandarin, but enough overlap in phonology, intonation, and particularly grammar and script allow for the translating of Cantonese knowledge into assets for Mandarin learning. Yet these elephant-in-the-room factors are largely quashed because from a more sociolinguistic lens, “we usually do not speak of Chinese in the plural” (Ramsey, 1987, p. 17). This ideology is bolstered by the fact that standard written Chinese, matching most closely to spoken Modern Standard Mandarin (MSM), overrides all oral varieties of Chinese because it is (more or less) the shared writing system of speakers of all varieties of Chinese.

In addition, the name for these varieties of Chinese, called 方言 (MSM: fangyan), has long been erroneously translated as “dialect.” The meaning is better captured with “topolect” (Mair, 1991), referring to language groups (Sinitic or otherwise) by topographic distribution; the mistranslation and linguistically irresponsible perpetuation of “dialect” without cultural and historical prefacing further solidifies the ideology that “[t]he language variety that has the higher social value is called a ‘Language’, and the language variety with the lower social value is called a ‘dialect’” (Roy, 1987, p. 234). Li (2004)
puts forth the idea that geography plays a major role in determining linguistic “likeness” in another way, using a hypothetical “Chinese layman”:

[T]he western language-dialect distinction cuts through traditional Chinese regional groupings of language. The Chinese layman, reasoning from historic-geographical proximity, would group Taiwan Mandarin with Taiwanese, and Shanghai Mandarin with Shanghainese, concluding that both varieties are distant from and thus unintelligible with northern or Beijing Mandarin, when in fact similarities between the Mandarin varieties of Taiwan, Beijing and Shanghai are in fact far greater than those between Taiwan Mandarin and Taiwanese, or between Shanghai Mandarin and Shanghainese. (p. 112)

Along a more diachronic vein, Keeler (2008) reminds us of the long-standing translingual practices of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic parling of meaning:

The notion of ‘dialect’ as understood by some Chinese speakers today is part of a way of thinking about language change and language relatedness that was elaborated by European and American linguists in the 19th century. Any discussion of the translation into ‘Western’ languages of the Chinese words for ‘dialect’ or ‘language’ must make clear that the Chinese words themselves are palimpsests of over a century of events of translation and cross-cultural negotiation. (p. 345)

This metaphor of translingual naming practices as palimpsests, where parts of a document are written over more than once or erased, often incompletely, to make room for more text, helps to characterize the current state of the “Chinese” confusion, and why disentanglement is dutifully and duly required, especially when considering the field of language education.

Scholarship on language policy and planning notes that in creating national hegemony, states often simultaneously engage in
creating language hegemony that ignores language diversity in order to define who is in and who is out (Billing, 1995; Blackledge, 2008); education often becomes a major means to achieve this end. A growing number of researchers with a critical and social-minded lens have proposed more equitable approaches to education that take into account linguistic diversity and do not disadvantage speakers of non-dominant languages (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999, 2004; Delpit, 1996; Katz & DaSilva Iddings, 2009; Lin, 2004). As China has been a multilingual location since its very inception as the “Middle Kingdom,” the teaching of its languages also needs to recognize this linguistic reality. Lam (2005) writes:

A land of many languages and dialects, China is also faced with making linguistic choices; so are learners in China. Focusing on one language or dialect means less learning resources for others.... At the individual level, the language learning experience of learners in China is certainly not linguistically discrete; each learner tends to be exposed to more than one language and more than one dialect. Hence, a multilingual approach is quite essential for an appreciation of the realities of language education in China. (p. 18)

In the case of language education in the U.S., we argue that there is also a critical need to acknowledge a variety of Chinese residing in the U.S. language ecology.

Due to recent esteem for China and Mandarin Chinese, the current folk mapping of “Chinese” as only being Standard Mandarin has caused an inordinate spike in educational research studies dealing singularly with Chinese in the form of Mandarin. The situation is no different in discourse projected by the mass media. As Stubbs (1998) notes of text and corpus analyses, looking at semantic prosody (a type of collocational phenomenon where the co-occurrence of words shifts toward predominantly positive or negative semantic values) can help researchers understand and clearly present, through large bodies of written text as data, the intuitive cultural significance of words (p. 176). A recent corpus analysis of U.S. newspapers of the last 22 years shows clear semantic prosody for the word “Mandarin” with “lan-
language,” “Chinese,” and “fluency” (Leung, 2009). Conversely, for the word “Cantonese,” which appears more than half as frequently in the corpora, there is semantic prosody with the words “dialect,” “Chinatown,” and “restaurant.” The current metalinguistic and metapragmatic commentary about “Chinese,” that is, the “talkings about” what “Chinese” is, having been reappropriated and changed over time, has both explicitly and implicitly propelled Mandarin over all other Chinese languages. This directly impacts how non-Mandarin Chinese languages are thought of and talked about.

In the educational arena, we find Gambhir’s (2001) distinction between Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs) and Truly Less Commonly Taught Languages (TLCTLs) to be particularly useful in categorizing the current prized state of Mandarin and other, less esteemed varieties of Chinese in the U.S. If Mandarin is considered a LCTL, then other varieties of non-Mandarin Chinese must definitely be considered TLCTLs. Gambhir points out the need to distinguish the two because programs of the two types of languages encounter different issues and challenges. For instance, programs of TLCTLs often enroll few students and high proportions of them are heritage language learners. Although Mandarin is still a LCTL at this moment, it is identified as a critical language to the U.S. in policy and public discourse, thus receiving growing governmental and educational attention. Since the current discourse on “Chinese” mostly refers to Chinese in the form of Mandarin, and folk discourse never talks about it in the plural (cf. Ramsey, 1987), this renders funding for other varieties of Chinese unavailable and furthers the power imbalance between Mandarin and non-Mandarin Chinese languages.

**Defining “professional” in language education**

For the purposes of this paper we are viewing the root word “professional” on two divergent yet related planes that help us come to terms with the problematizing of a singular “Chinese.” From one sense of the word, to “professionalize” a language means making it into a world language, connecting it to be used in professions and businesses. In many ways, this singularizes “Chinese” to solely Chinese in the form of Mandarin. However, a related form of the word is also the sense of acting “professionally,” that is, having appropriate behavior and thinking, with ties to access and ethics. It is through
this definition that language learners can gain heightened Critical Language Awareness (CLA, cf. Fairclough, 2001; Males, 2000) about the power differentials amongst Chineses and the implicit capital instilled in the variety that they are learning.

This is particularly important for teachers of heritage language learners whose language variety is not an institutionalized one. In a survey paper that delves into “who studies which languages and why” among the first year college-level language learners in two large East Coast universities, Howard, Reynolds and Déak (2010) find that students register for language courses for various reasons: non-heritage language learners often register for a language course for career motivation, while heritage language learners often do so for the purpose of understanding their heritages. The latter group’s classroom experiences are further complicated by their previous experiences with ways of communication in different contexts and thus Howard et al. remind us:

Language teachers need to be especially careful to honor the wide variety of rich (yet often non-standard) language resources that students bring to class, while providing an environment in which learners become increasingly aware of the sociolinguistic variation present in any language, and more adept at flexibly deploying a growing linguistic repertoire to inhabit their social worlds, to express their identities, and to realize their aspirations. (pp. 29-30)

For the “Chinese” language teaching field, we suggest that the first step is to professionally recognize multiple varieties of Chinese and to avoid reinforcing the “Mandarin equals Chinese language” ideology. We currently face a critical junction in the field, with the Chinese government making strenuous efforts to promote Mandarin abroad (i.e., the establishment of Confucius Institutes and classrooms, providing schools with low-cost guest teachers from China), compounding with the fact that the U.S. hosts the most Confucius Institutes worldwide and depend heavily on guest teachers from China for their “critical” language programs, one needs to be especially mindful about the repercussions of such relationship on non-Mandarin Chinese heritage learners in the U. S. The following section
Being A “Professional” LCTL

takes a closer look at non-Mandarin Chinese heritage learners’ experiences. As a group that has been largely neglected by research on “Chinese” education, non-Mandarin Chinese heritage learners’ perspectives are crucial in providing insights in promoting and professionalizing TLCTLS.

Definitions for Heritage Language Learners (HLLs)

It is necessary to begin by mentioning that researchers acknowledge there is no one set “type” of HLL (Hornberger & Wang, 2008) and that labeling is sometimes very problematic because schooling often links learners with the prestige variety but not necessarily with the community or heritage variety (Wiley, 2001). Nonetheless, scholars’ attempts to define HLLs have resulted in several widely accepted descriptions useful in understanding the diversity of HLLs in the United States.

Valdés (2001) gives two types of HL students along a continuum: one who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, speaks or at least understands the language and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and English and one who has historical or personal ties to a language that is indigenous or an immigrant language not generally taught in school. Fishman (2001) groups heritage language students in terms of speakers with roots to Native American languages, colonial languages (e.g., French, German, Spanish), or immigrant languages (e.g., Arabic, Japanese, Korean).

Together, Valdés and Fishman’s definitions describe HLLs using their language and socio-historical backgrounds within the United States; already the difficulty in generalizing such a huge population of language learners is evident. Additionally, focusing on these definitions alone diverts attention away from identity and psychosocial conflicts many culturally and linguistically non-dominant HLLs face in the United States. As HLLs are seen as linguistic border crossers (Harklau, 1994; Kelleher, 2008; Rampton, 1995, among others), the politicization of these identities often pits the HL(s) against English, forcing speakers to choose one language over another in a show of language loyalty for social alignment. Choosing affiliation with an ethnic or heritage speaker identity over the acceptance by a dominant group is not uncommon, and akin to this element of
choice, Hornberger and Wang (2008) suggest that individuals have agency in deciding whether they want to consider themselves HLLs. In addition, they make the differentiation between HL speakers and HL learners who may or may not speak the HL (p. 6).

Thus distinct notions of what researchers regard HLLs to be and how HLLs decide to position themselves lead to complex and dynamic pedagogical implications of HL teaching for a heterogeneous body of learners. Indeed, someone with linguistic roots or personal ties to a less commonly taught language but with limited to no linguistic experience in it might consider him/herself a foreign language (FL) learner instead. FL/HL dual tracks are available at universities with resources to bifurcate, though the range of students within even a single track is wide and, depending on the university, a student might not be able to choose the FL class if faculty prescribe him/her to be a HL learner.

“Chinese” as a heritage language in the classroom

One exemplar of the hierarchies of Chineses and “Chinese confusion” running rampant lies in the heritage language (HL) sector of Mandarin language instruction. The case of Mandarin education in the U.S. helps illustrate how even when programs exist for so-called heritage language learners (HLLs), providing for all students is not a straightforward task. In the university where Kelleher (2008) conducted her research, the FL class was designated as the “regular” class, while the HL class was designated the “bilingual” one. Students of ethnic Chinese heritage and students with linguistic experience in other Chineses were found in both FL and HL classes. She notes that for the “bilingual” class, 55% of the class identified Mandarin as their first language (L1), while for the “regular” class, 54% identified Cantonese as their L1. While the dual track system seemed most effective for those students at the extremes (i.e., either significant or no previous experience with Mandarin) Cantonese HL speakers traversed through both classes and were forced to reposition themselves and their expectations of the class, “caught at the intersection of institutional values, program structure and their own lin-

1 Hornberger and Wang (2008) mention the example of adoptees.
guistic and cultural resources” (p. 239). So embedded is this frustra-
tion to Chinese Americans of various Cantonese heritage that even
Sterling Lung, the main character of David Wong Louie’s book, The
Barbarians Are Coming, speaks of the disjunct between his home
language and Mandarin:

My spoken Chinese is weak. Zsa Zsa [his mother] talks at me
and my sisters only in Chinese; we in turn understand much
more than we can speak, and answer her mostly in a tossed
salad of bad English and ruptured Chinese. I studied Chinese
for seven semesters in college, earning straight A-minuses,
costarring in a Chinese-language theatrical production (I
played the patriarch whose wayward son goes to the United
States and marries an American girl, forsaking his first, Chi-
nese wife at home), and later was an extra in a professional
Peking opera. But all that study is wasted on my parents, be-
cause their dialect (Toisanese) and the one I learned (Manda-
rin) are as different as Spanish and French. (2000, p. 60)

Kelleher (2008) notes that identifying characteristics of stu-
dents’ fangyan assists in legitimizing the presence of HLLs in the lan-
guage classroom, adding that “this is important for Chinese HL stu-
dents whose ‘visible’ ethnicity makes them particularly susceptible to
criticism, borne of ignorance, for studying a language they are pre-
sumed to already ‘know’” (p. 242).

The needs and potential of HLLs in the contemporary Man-
darin classroom, particularly those of a non-Mandarin Chinese back-
ground, have been oversimplified, as the following examples from
Cantonese HL speakers in Mandarin classes illustrate. Weger-
Guntharp (2008) describes the university-level Mandarin classroom
as one where Cantonese plays a role for half the class. She writes:

[F]or half of the CHLLs of this study, Cantonese is the lan-
guage of at least one of their parents and is the source of their
background knowledge in Chinese. Participant 26 identified
Cantonese as his native language; and during the interview
session, he mentioned his years spent studying at Cantonese
school, “So I didn’t learn anything there, just like Cantonese, which is not useful here”. Participant 18 said of her unwillingness to use vocabulary, “I don’t want to say [a word] and it’s wrong, and then plus it’s in Cantonese, so then everyone’s like ‘What?’”. And Participant 5 commented, “My parents wanted me to take Chinese, because I am Chinese, except almost no one speaks Mandarin in my family, so it’s pretty pointless [to take classes here]”. (p. 223-224)

It is unclear whether Weger-Guntharp knows that Cantonese is a variety of “Chinese,” but she does not seem to, as she still calls Cantonese-background learners “limited proficiency heritage language learners.” This label is misleading because while these participants might have “limited proficiency” in Mandarin, it discounts existing knowledge of “Chinese” in the form of Cantonese as a HL. This oversight reverberates in the language attitudes of “everyone” in the classroom being confused when Cantonese is spoken, is internalized in Cantonese HL speakers to the point where Mandarin classes become “pointless,” and, ultimately, Cantonese as a possible linguistic scaffolding tool for Mandarin acquisition is not even alluded to by Weger-Guntharp herself. Kelleher’s (2008) Cantonese HL speaker respondent, Kelly, says of her Mandarin class:

I’ve gotten used to it…it doesn’t address Cantonese speakers. [The program is] ignoring us…[It would be] more effective to have a Cantonese program…not teaching Cantonese as a language…[I] don’t expect that, but [I] would like it if there was a Cantonese transition course to Mandarin.” (p. 250)

Kelly’s desire for “a Cantonese program” does not actually mean a Cantonese language class for HLs, which is, in theory, a completely viable option. Instead, her description of a “transition course to Mandarin” is slightly reminiscent of transitional bilingual education programs, which entail language shift, cultural assimilation, and social incorporation into a mainstream (Hornberger, 1991).

Wiley (2008) proposes that Mandarin teachers be “minimally trained in contrastive analysis and sociolinguistics of the major Chinese languages,” validating the “dialect” as being just as rule-
governed as Mandarin, an issue fitting squarely in the realm of status planning (p. 102). The fact that this implies Mandarin language teachers are not trained in such sociolinguistic techniques demonstrates the need for consciousness-raising around issues of language, identity, and ideologies of language for all members of the classroom. Employing instructors who speak Mandarin plus other Chinese languages or instructors who are American-born and have completed Mandarin language courses in the U.S. could serve as options in diversifying the pool of teachers.

The tensions above illustrate how the language classroom is a site that “reinforces societal values about language in general” (Valdés, Gonzalez, Lopez Garcia, & Marquez, 2008) and can have severe effects on Cantonese HL speakers’ perceptions of language heritage. Hornberger and Wang’s (2008) distinction between HL speakers and HL learners come to mind as Kelly, the Cantonese HL speaker, would prefer to be transitioned into a Mandarin HL learner as opposed to being a Cantonese HL learner. It should not be discounted that heritage speakers of other Chinese languages have an imagined ethnic or nationalistic affinity towards learning Mandarin. However, this desire to shift from one’s “true” heritage language to a “surrogate” one (and the implications this has on shifting learners’ investment and linguistic identities) can also be attributed to the decrease in instruction of other Chinese languages due to the increase of Mandarin instruction. Wiley (2008) writes

The status of Mandarin as a common “heritage” language for all ethnic Chinese is open to debate. Despite this fact, there is currently little attempt in the U.S. to promote HL instruction in other Chinese languages (with the exception of Cantonese) such as Taiwanese or Hakka. As these are languages of the home and local communities, they could also be considered HLs. (p. 96)

While fundamentally this holds true, we argue that currently there is still little attempt to promote HL instruction in Cantonese. Officially Cantonese might be listed as a language option for university students, but it might not have been offered in years or state budget cuts have cancelled it altogether (as in smaller state colleges in Cali-
Moreover, it is not the case that languages like Cantonese, Taiwanese, and Hakka “could” also be considered HLs: they should be considered so because they are HLs and have collectively been so for over 100 years. It is not enough to simply consider debating whether or not Mandarin is the only heritage language of ethnic Chinese learners because Mandarin classrooms are already reinforcing (blatantly or latently) the idea that “Chinese” only refers to Mandarin Chinese and are invalidating HL speakers of other Chinese languages at a faster rate than learners are attaining heightened awareness of sociolinguistics. Similar tensions of dialect face heritage learners of Spanish, where scholars like Martínez (2003) argue for critical dialect awareness through explicit teaching of dialect function, dialect distribution, and dialect evaluation beginning from the first year of college Spanish for heritage learners (p. 1). While what “Chinese” heritage classes need falls more along the lines of critical language awareness, much can be learned from the very productive and progressive field of Spanish for Heritage Learners. As the field of “Chinese” heritage language seems to deal singularly with Chinese in the form of Mandarin, it is hoped that this paper leads to more scholarship that will eventually look at other Chinese languages in order to more accurately reflect the actual language makeup of speakers of Chinese languages around the world and develop a more equitable language education that does not discount learners’ prior resources and knowledge in other varieties of Chinese.

One way to diversify simply viewing “Chinese” (in the form of Mandarin) for its instrumental value for individuals and nations is to bring to the public’s attention the existence of non-Mandarin Chinese languages, to view them as resources, and to promote them. Although an orientation to multilingualism that characterizes language-as-resource (LAR, cf., Ruiz, 1984) has recently been taken up

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2 Additionally, even in the case where Cantonese is taught at a university institution, it definitely is not placed on equal footing with Mandarin, as at Harvard, where the course description for its one Cantonese course is: “Non-intensive introduction to Cantonese dialect...primarily intended for non-native speakers who will conduct research in a Cantonese-speaking locale. Prerequisite: Two years formal study of Mandarin,” suggesting that somehow knowledge of Mandarin is a requisite to learn Cantonese, implying that one “language” is more important than the other “dialect.”
by advocates and academics to promote HLs in the U.S., Ricento (2005) argues that we must still be mindful that the values embedded in a LAR orientation in current policy and public discourse often lie only in the needs and interests of the state, and may perpetuate a view of language as an instrument and a commodity that is irrelevant to ethnic groups’ identities and ignores historical contexts. HL movement advocates’ narrow interpretation of HLs’ values in terms of advancing economic interests of nations and individuals makes Ricento cast doubts on how the LAR orientation can actually elevate HLs’ status. He urges advocates of the promotion of HLs in the U.S. to ponder on important questions, such as “Resources for whom? For what purposes or end?” (p. 364).

In response to Ricento’s critiques, Ruiz (2010) argues that while language policies are driven by the economy and do not necessarily aim to promote cultural democracy and social justice, the issue “is how we (researchers) can accommodate it (economic argument) without having it define the entire effort” while giving guidance on how to promote the use of minority languages (p. 162). Ruiz (2010) reminds us that a LAR orientation connotes even the most marginalized HL can be seen as advantageous because their multifaceted values are defined along intellectual, aesthetic, cultural, economic, social, and citizenship planes, all of which are valuable resources. Ruiz cites the fact that for many communities that have used their languages for generations without placing instrumental values on them, these languages can work alongside majority languages to show that values can be given to languages within the communities in ways that outside communities may not appreciate in their own languages.

In the remaining paragraphs, we will illustrate how we, as instructors of Cantonese and Mandarin, build on students’ prior knowledge in different varieties of Chinese and different scripts to facilitate their learning of the targeted languages in our teaching. We hope our experiences presented here can initiate more grounded discussions on how to professionalize the “Chinese” language education in the U.S. without disadvantaging speakers of non-Mandarin Chinese languages but instead bringing all Chinese languages forward to a professional level.
Genevieve’s Cantonese Teaching Experience

During the 2009-2010 academic year, Genevieve taught a Cantonese language independent study to an undergraduate student with interests in working with in a medical clinic located in New York City Chinatown. This student, a Chinese American who was partly of Cantonese heritage, had extensive Mandarin language experience and was very fluent in both speaking and writing; additionally he had exposure to Cantonese through home and peer group interactions. Genevieve, who had also learned Mandarin as a foreign language in college, set up the course under the explicit premise that Cantonese would be viewed as the course’s central focus but that Mandarin contrastive analysis would be used to supplement instruction (cf., Wiley, 2008). Additionally, the course discussed issues of power differentials and language ideologies between Cantonese and Mandarin. Many of these conversations used Cantonese, English, and Mandarin in combination and drew from shared cultural experiences growing up Chinese American and popular culture references from Mandarin and Cantonese music and movies.

This student’s capacity for language learning aside, a significant amount of his progress in language acquisition can be attributed to his explicit building on and awareness of multiple Chinese languages. Because of this student’s prior exposure to pinyin Romanization, he was able to pick up both Yale and Jyutping Romanization schemes for Cantonese with much more ease than students with little familiarity to Romanization. He was able to easily enhance his Cantonese vocabulary and word choice through existing knowledge of Mandarin and MSM words. His connection to Hong Kong and Guangzhou as places of his heritage, as well as his appreciation for Cantonese as much more than “a mere dialect” propelled him to see this class as not only a means to adding to his language background to help his future profession, but also acting “professionally” by placing Cantonese and Mandarin side by side, each serving a different purpose, thereby facilitating language learning.

Ming-Hsuan’s Mandarin Teaching Experience

In a STARTALK Mandarin class for heritage language learners that Ming-Hsuan co-taught with another teacher in 2009, students
came from families speaking a wide range of Chinese languages, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese and Shanghainese. Students also showed different preferences to traditional and simplified Chinese characters. When asked to set personal goals for their learning at the camp, most students hoped to improve their language skills, especially in speaking, and their understanding of Chinese culture. Teachers then constructed the class around students’ lived experiences to help students learn to tell their stories, to record their life, and to discuss their thoughts in Mandarin. Teachers encouraged students to express themselves in Mandarin as much as they could and also made it clear to the students that everyone of us speaks a language with some accents and that many languages are spoken in China, thus many people in China actually learn Mandarin as a second language. After Ming and her co-teacher helped students recognize the complexity and reality of language phenomena in society, they further stressed that discriminating against someone based on how he/she speaks was not permitted in this class. By the same token, Beijing-accented Mandarin was not the goal or criteria for the class, but comprehensibility and intelligibility.

Influence of other varieties of Chinese on students’ spoken Mandarin was particularly noticeable in classroom activities where they talked about their personal experiences of Chinatowns or inter-generational relationships. While students might have limited knowledge in some expressions in Mandarin, they oftentimes had some knowledge in food or emotion-related expressions in another variety spoken at home. It was important for teachers to have a resourceful view toward students’ heritage languages: when students switched to other varieties in their speaking, their contributions to the class were acknowledged, and then they were taught how to say those particular phrases in Mandarin and were encouraged to pay particular attention to the differences.

Moreover, we extended classroom interaction to the Internet by creating a class blog on Google. On a daily basis, students needed to respond to teachers’ and peers’ posts on the blog in Chinese, be traditional or simplified characters. As students came from different backgrounds in traditional or simplified Chinese characters, we tried not to discourage any of them by including both uses as much as we could. After all, as Valdés (2000) suggests, effective HL instruction
builds on HLLs’ existing knowledge rather than stigmatizing it: HL teaching is about “expand(ing) the bilingual range (of the HLLs)” (p. 388). Toward the middle of the class, there were several cases when students using different scripts asked each other for how certain characters should be written in traditional or simplified characters, showing their interest in broadening their writing repertoires by learning from their peers.

Conclusion

The status of non-Mandarin Chinese languages within the overall conceptualization of “Chinese” HL programs is sure to incur ambivalent reactions at a time when most resources and efforts have been put to promote Mandarin. However, as many of “Chinese” heritage language students in the U. S. are from families where other varieties are spoken, teachers of such students should recognize their unique status as border crossers and develop pedagogies or curricula that take into consideration their multilingual backgrounds. Wiley (1996) argues that language programs’ incorporating (or failure to incorporate) students’ heritage languages represents issues related to the domain of status planning from a language policy and planning perspective. In line with the view that all language teachers are engaged with language planners from the bottom-up (Hornberger, 1997; Ricento & Hornberger, 1994), we hope our paper highlights the importance of recognizing and professionalizing multiple Chineses, as well as for the learners, teachers, and administrators of various Chineses to work together professionally within the local ecologies of languages.
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