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<tr>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Individual</td>
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<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>$60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents

Editor’s Introduction Danko Šipka

Teaching Norwegian to beginners: Six principles to guide lesson planning 1
Anna Krulatz, Sør-Trøndelag University College

Informal Language Learning and Self-Instruction: The Learning Ecosystem of Learners of Macedonian 15
Biljana Belanarić Wilsey, North Carolina State University

Developing Linguistic and Professional Competence: Business Ukrainian Online 43
Alla Nedashkivska

Content-based Persian language instruction at the University of Maryland: A field-report 73
Ali Reza Abasi, University of Maryland

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety: A Study of Chinese Language Learners 99
Han Luo, Northwestern University

The Arabic Language Fog of War: Exploring Iraq War Veterans’ Motivations to Study Arabic Language and Culture Post-Deployment 119
Jennifer Nichols, Kenyon College

Meso-American Languages: An Investigation of Variety, Maintenance, and Implications for Linguistic Survival 155
Ransom Gladwin, Valdosta State University
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Editor’s Introduction

Danko Šipka
Arizona State University

The present volume comprises seven papers from diverse linguistic and methodological perspectives. The first paper addresses lesson planning in a general introductory Norwegian class. The second paper, devoted to the Macedonian language, addresses a specific niche of language learning, i.e., informal and self-guided learning. The Ukrainian paper, third in this volume, addresses teaching for special purposes. The fourth contribution to this volume is about Persian and addresses one particular teaching approach. The Chinese paper discusses a specific student-related issue of speaking anxiety. The following paper, devoted to Arabic, explores a particular student population, returning war veterans, very common in many less commonly taught languages. The final paper is somewhat different from the previous seven as it discusses, using the example of Meso-American languages, the efforts to preserve and revive least commonly taught languages. All seven papers offer innovative solutions, which can readily be deployed across a range of less commonly taught languages.
Teaching Norwegian to Beginners: Six Principles to Guide Lesson Planning

Anna Krulatz
Sør-Trøndelag University College

Introduction

Teaching a foreign language is no simple task. There are several factors to consider, from curriculum design, to material selection and lesson implementation, to assessment. The challenge, however, is even greater, if you are teaching a less commonly taught language such as Norwegian – a language spoken by fewer than six million native speakers, used almost exclusively in one country, and with a limited number of available pedagogical materials. Under such circumstances, the task of preparing high quality communicative lessons is immense, even for an experienced language instructor.

The goal of this article is to present how a successful language lesson can be developed even if one is using a textbook that does not foster communicative competence. As an example, I am using a unit from a Norwegian textbook for beginners: På vei, often used in Norwegian as a second language course for adults in Norway. The lesson focuses on routines and times of the day, and it concludes with the students comparing and contrasting their daily routines with a partner. Prior to this lesson, students have learned to provide basic information about themselves (where they come from, what languages they speak, what they do for work), expressions for greetings and goodbyes, basic verbs relating to daily activities such as ‘snakker’ (to speak), ‘kjører’ (to drive), ‘kjøpper’ (to buy), ‘jobber’ (to work), ‘leser’ (to read), ‘sriver’ (to write), ordinal numerals, meals, some food items, some basic prepositions and locations, words for family members, and subject and object pronouns for all persons. If you were to closely follow the textbook in teaching this unit, you would begin by teaching the students how to tell time, then briefly go over some verbs to express daily routines, listen to and read a text titled ‘Jeg står opp klakka seks,’ a narrative about Monica’s day (Monica is one of the characters in the book), and finally ask the students to produce a similar narrative
about their own day. Such a lesson, however, would not provide the students with the skills necessary to independently compose a narrative nor would it promote the development of communicative competence. Instead, it would leave both the teacher and the students frustrated and with a sense of failure because:

1) There are no clear goals stated at the beginning of the lesson, so the students do not know why they are doing these activities; the teacher may have some goal(s) in mind, but these are not explicitly stated.

2) The connections between the individual activities in the lesson are not clear (e.g. how to tell time is followed by a presentation of (apparently) random verbs).

3) Students are expected to read and understand the text without much attention given to whether the text is a) interesting and b) possible to understand. There are no comprehension questions or other activities accompanying the text.

4) There are no opportunities for meaningful interaction.

5) Students are expected to construct a text about their own day without any assistance other than the text which they can use as an example (i.e. more or less copy).

6) The only form of assessment is the final product: the narrative.

Instead, I would like to provide an example of a lesson guided by specific objectives, designed using the Into-Through-Beyond approach to lesson planning (Brinton & Holten, 1997) and supported by current second language acquisition (SLA) theory. The lesson begins with solid doses of comprehensible input, builds up on students’ background knowledge, offers multiple opportunities for interaction, and provides a communicative goal and appropriate scaffolding to prepare the students for meaningful interaction. The careful design of the activities also creates opportunities for the teacher to conduct ongoing assessment and thus to adjust, add or remove activities as the lesson is being delivered. Thus, the lesson presented here follows these principles:

- Principle 1: The lesson is guided by clearly specified objectives.
- Principle 2: Activities in the lesson follow a logical sequence.
- Principle 3: Comprehensible input is provided.
• Principle 4: There are multiple opportunities for communicative practice.
• Principle 5: Scaffolding and strategies are provided to enable students to perform at a higher level.
• Principle 6: Ongoing assessment informs lesson design and implementation.

In addition to the six guiding principles listed above, the lesson plan described in this article also adheres to the following characteristics of communicative language teaching (Brown, 2000, pp. 266-267):

• Classroom goals are focused on all of the components of communicative competence and not just restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.
• Language techniques are designed to engage learners in pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.
• Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times, fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
• In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts.

Below, a detailed discussion of the six principles follows, including justification from SLA research and the account of how they guide the lesson plan I am proposing.

Principle 1: Objectives

According to Echevarría, Vogt, and Short (2008), one of the characteristics of effective instruction is that it is guided by “concrete […] objectives that identify what students should know and be able to do” (p. 24). Lesson objectives can be derived from the common core,
from the course syllabus, or from language proficiency guidelines defined by institutions such as the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) or the Council of Europe. However, the objectives specified in these sources are typically extremely broad, and often stated in terms of “knowledge” and “understanding,” constructs that are not very helpful when measuring student performance (i.e. determining whether the objectives have been attained or not). For instance, the Council of Europe states the following objectives for level A1 (basic user), the target language learner of the unit from På vei discussed here (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, 2012):

- Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type.
- Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has.
- Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Clearly, because these objectives are supposed to guide a whole course and not a single lesson designated for level A1 learners, they only specify learning goals very broadly, and the task of narrowing them down is left to the teacher. Further help can possibly be found in textbooks. In fact, more and more foreign language texts state specific objectives for every unit. This indeed is the case with På vei. The objectives for the unit in question are as follows (p. 5):

- **Snakke om tider på dagen** (To talk about the times of the day).
- **Snakke om daglige gjøremål, jobb og avtaler** (To talk about one’s daily activities, job and appointments).

While this is a good starting point, I still see these objectives as problematic because they can easily lead to a lesson plan in which individual activities are very loosely connected. In addition, these objectives tell us very little about how they will be attained and in what ways the attainment will be measured. Finally, they also do not reflect all of the characteristics of communicative language teaching as
defined by Brown (2000). They do not warrant that students will engage in meaningful communicative practice rather than focusing on the forms needed to discuss these topics. Of course, it is important for language learners to be able to state what time of the day it is and also to talk about different activities they engage in, but this should be done during meaningful interaction. This is how the objectives above can be rewritten to reflect measurable outcomes that will be demonstrated by students, and to create opportunities for communicative language practice:

By the end of the lesson, the students will:

- Match pictures with corresponding verbs that describe daily routines (Objective 1).
- Listen to a short text about a person’s typical day and arrange the activities in a correct order while listening (Objective 2).
- Write short sentences about activities they perform on a typical day, including the times of the day at which these activities are performed (Objective 3).
- Compare and contrast their day with a partner using a Venn diagram (Objective 4).

Each of these objectives is measurable, i.e. the teacher can assess, either during or after class, whether the objective was met or not. For example, the teacher can monitor the class and determine if the students are matching the pictures and the verbs correctly, and she can collect the graphic organizers to check whether the students were able to find similarities and differences in their daily routines. In addition, these objectives lead to meaningful communicative activities and promote unrehearsed interaction (Brown, 2000): the students describe their day because they need to compare what they do with what their partner does; they need to tell each other about their day in order to complete the graphic organizer. Finally, these objectives invite creation of a sequence of logically connected activities, where each step leads to the next, and in which all steps need to be completed for the final task to be successful.
Principle 2: Logical sequence

A well designed language lesson is comprised of activities that follow a logical sequence, one activity leading to the next, and all the activities unified by a common theme. Brinton & Holten (1997) propose an Into-Through-Beyond model of lesson planning that does just that. The model was designed for content based instruction (CBI), a communicative language teaching framework in which language is taught through meaningful, interesting and engaging content. While promoting CBI for teaching less commonly taught languages is beyond the scope of this paper, I believe that the Into-Through-Beyond model provides an approach to language lesson planning that is easy to follow and that can aid in creation of any foreign or second language lesson. During the first stage of the lesson (Into), students’ background knowledge is awakened, or activated, so that they can create stronger links between old and new information. It is during this stage that the teacher should make students curious about the content of the new lesson as well as state the objectives. The goal of the next stage (Through) is to present and practice new language and content, including activities with a new text or texts, and grammar and vocabulary practice. Finally, in the last stage (Beyond), students apply newly learned language skills and content knowledge in new contexts, for example by doing a project. While assessment is ongoing, this last stage best reflects whether the students have learned the new language to a degree which allows them to use it in communicative, unrehearsed situations. The following outline provides a list of activities that can be implemented in the beginning Norwegian lesson at hand.

1. Into
   a. Hand out pictures of various activities (e.g. people walking, someone cooking, someone reading a book, eating, watching TV, verbs students should already know, but also some of the new verbs such as ‘å ta en dusj’ (to shower), ‘å skynde seg’ (to hurry), ‘å vaske’ (to wash) which appear in the text the students will listen to). Display these verbs on Smartboard in a random order. Ask the students to
label as many pictures as they can individually or with a partner (Objective 1).

b. Using a wall clock (or a paper clock with movable hands), and pictures illustrating different times of the day, introduce the following terms:
   i. om morgenen – in the mornings
   ii. om formiddagen – during late mornings
       (between 10 am and noon)
   iii. om middagen – at noon / every day at noon
   iv. om ettermiddagen – in the afternoons
   v. om kvelden – in the evenings

c. Hand out paper clocks with the times of the day the face of each clock. Ask the students to list the activities they typically do during different times of the day using Post-it notes and to post them on their clocks.

2. Through
   a. Now that the students’ background knowledge is activated and new vocabulary introduced, they are ready for a listening task (Track 42, På vei. Tekstbøk). Distribute slips of paper with simplified sentences from the text, e.g. ‘Monica står opp’ (Monica gets up). ‘Hun tar en dusj’ (She takes a shower), ‘Hun går på job’ (She goes to work), ‘Monica ser på tv’ (Monica watches TV), etc. Explain that they will listen to Monica tell about her typical day (‘Monica vorteller om hennes typisk dag’). Tell the students to arrange Monica’s activities in the correct order in a table as they listen (Objective 2). Figure 1 shows what the table could look like.
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<td>Om middagen</td>
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<td>Om ettermiddagen</td>
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<td>Om kvelden</td>
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**Figure 1:** An example of a table to help students organize the activities from the reading about Monica's day.

b. Play the track 1-2 times, depending on the students’ need. Then display the table on Smartboard and go over the answers with the class (Objective 2).

c. Now tell the students to open the books and play the track one more time as they follow the text in the book. If they have questions about any other expressions in the text, explain them using body language, visuals and Norwegian, providing translation only if necessary.

d. Using the verbs they have listed in step (c) of the Intro stage and the sentences describing Monica's day, students should now be able to write simple sentences about their own activities throughout the day (Objective 3). This is a scaffolding strategy to prepare them to talk about their own day with a partner (Objective 4). It also provides an opportunity to practice newly learned language.
3. Beyond
   a. Hand out copies of Venn diagram. Tell the students to stand up and find someone who has a different occupation from their own. Model asking and answering the question ‘Hva gjør du?’ – ‘Jeg er...’ (What do you do?/What is your job? – “I am a…”), which the students already know from a previous lesson. They sit down with their partner.
   b. Explain and model with a volunteer: they tell each other what they do in the mornings, late mornings, at noon, etc. and record the similarities and the differences in the graphic organizer (Venn diagram) (Objective 4). To provide continuity, the notes can be used as a warm-up (Into) activity during next class, and to introduce the conjunction ‘men’ (but), e.g. ‘Jeg drikker te om morgenen, men Benito drikker melk’ (I drink tea in the morning, but Benito drinks milk).

Principle 3: Comprehensible input

According to Krashen (1985) and Krashen and Terrell (1983), comprehensible input is a sufficient condition for second language acquisition to take place. While I believe that other factors such as modified interaction (Long, 1985, 1996) and comprehensible output (Swain, 1993; Swain & Lapkin, 1995) are also crucial – and are therefore captured in Principle 4 below – providing large doses of comprehensible input has been widely acknowledged as effective in second and foreign language instruction (see, for example, Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). The strategies a language teacher can use to make input comprehensible to the students include using visuals, demonstrations and body language; slowing down the rate of speech; enunciating carefully; repeating; and providing synonyms and paraphrasing. In the lesson outlined above, the teacher uses pictures to review known vocabulary and to introduce new vocabulary before asking the students to complete a listening task; she replays the monologue as needed; she provides a written script of the listening and uses visuals, body language and simple paraphrases to explain
unknown words. In other words, she makes the language understandable to the students using a variety of both linguistic and non-linguistic means.

**Principle 4: Communicative practice**

As Swain (1993) and Swain and Lapkin (1995) argue, production of output (i.e. speaking and writing) fosters second language acquisition. This principle is also strongly supported by the characteristics of a communicative language classroom (Brown, 2000), including productive and receptive practice in unrehearsed situations. For this reason, objective 4 and the supporting activity (comparison of a daily routine with a partner) have been included in the lesson plan above. In contrast to the activity suggested in ‘Fortell om en vanlig dag for deg’ (Tell me about your typical day) which gives the students no communicative purpose (‘Listen to your partner’ can be considered meaningful practice, but not communicative practice (Richards, 2006, p. 16)), the comparison/contrast activity provides the students with a clear goal: find similarities and differences. As a result, the new language forms – verbs in the present tense – are not the central focus of the lesson. Rather, they provide the students with the tools they need to accomplish a communicative task.

**Principle 5: Strategies and scaffolding**

The use of scaffolding has been originally justified in the writings of Vygotsky (1978) and his Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the metaphorical space in which children can accomplish more because of the scaffolds provided by adults. This metaphor has been extended to second language learning. Scaffolding and strategies such as providing language learners with a word bank or sentence frames, modeling a task, showing how to organize information using a graphic organizer or how to better learn new vocabulary using flash cards are just a few ways of creating the ZPD for foreign or second language learners. At least three examples of strategies and scaffolding can be found in the lesson plan presented here: students writing down sentences before telling about your day; the teacher modeling how to find a partner and how to complete the Venn diagram; and students
using the Venn diagram to organize ideas. The goal is to assist the students in gaining independence to finally accomplish the communicative task on their own.

**Principle 6: Assessment**

The final principle that guides the lesson plan presented here is assessment. It is perhaps not as clearly visible in the lesson plan as the other five principles because in a way, it overlooks them all. There are many reasons to conduct assessment, from high stakes assessment leading to correct course placement or course completion, to low stakes self-assessment to help students understand their strengths and weaknesses. The most relevant assessment goal in this lesson is to inform the teacher about the effectiveness of instruction – about what is working well and what could be improved, as well as about how to design future lessons. It can be done informally at several stages of the lesson. For example, the teacher can monitor and spot check when the students are matching verbs with pictures, or when they are discussing their daily activities with a partner. The teacher is also using Smartboard to ensure students have arranged the activities in Monica’s day in a correct order. Finally, it would be possible to collect the graphic organizers to provide feedback on language points such as spelling and correct verb forms. In all, these ongoing assessment strategies help the teacher determine if the lesson was effective, and if not, what changes should be implemented and how the next lesson should be designed.

**Conclusion**

Teaching languages such as English, German, French or Spanish is facilitated by a plethora of instructional materials, several of them available for no charge on the Internet. On the contrary, teaching less commonly taught languages poses an additional challenge to teachers who have to create their own supplementary materials in an effort to aide often poorly designed textbook chapters. The goal of this article was to provide a framework to language lesson planning guided by six principles and to illustrate each of the principles with an example from a Norwegian lesson for beginners. The six principles foster
creation of a lesson guided by clear and measurable objectives, which leads to logical organization of the activities. During the delivery of the lesson, students are provided with large doses of comprehensible input, multiple opportunities to practice language in communicative tasks, and strategies and scaffolding to enhance their performance. Finally, the ongoing assessment principle ensures that the teacher constantly monitors, evaluates and adjusts the lesson to better meet the needs of the students. Of course, we could argue that it is crucial at this point to create better learning and teaching resources for the non-dominant languages of the world, and I wholeheartedly agree with this point. That, however, is an immense endeavor, and until it is done, teachers will have to continue to rely on their own creativity and resourcefulness. The model presented here might help them in this task.
References


Informal Language Learning and Self-Instruction: The Learning Ecosystem of Learners of Macedonian

Biljana Belamarić Wilsey
North Carolina State University

Abstract

In a landscape where research on online language learning and learning less commonly (LCTLs) and almost never taught languages (ANTLs) is focused on experiences in formal learning settings, there is a large gap in knowledge about the experiences of learners outside of the classroom, using online self-instructional materials and tutoring. The present research aims to fill that gap by answering the question how an ecologically-conceptualized context impacts informal learners of one ANTL, Macedonian. The research approach is qualitative, taking as primary data Skype interviews with learners recruited through the online non-profit language learning resource center, Macedonian Language E-Learning Center. Framing the research within ecological systems theory, the researcher found that within their microsystems, the learners found support but not resources for their study; for resources they had to turn to the Internet. Furthermore, macrosystemic influences negatively impacted their study of Macedonian. Finding themselves challenged by their ecosystem, the learners persisted with their study, demonstrating a high level of self-motivation. The research is significant not only because it offers a glimpse into the experiences of informal language learners with online resources, including tutoring, but also because it exemplifies a cross-disciplinary theoretical approach for research with other learners of LCTLs which takes into consideration the impact of the learners’ entire ecological system on their learning choices and progress.

Many researchers have called for more research on the teaching and learning of the LCTLs (Felix, 2005; White, 2006; Garrett, 2009), among which are the so-called “almost never-taught languages” (ANTLs) (Friedman, 2007; Bhatia & Ritchie, 2009; Garrett, 2009). Furthermore, nearly all the current research on language learning and
technology is focused on the formal setting, including distance education through universities. But for ANTLs, there are inherently few formal learning opportunities and therefore this setting is not the most appropriate for research. In the absence of formal learning opportunities, learners today turn to the Internet for informal language learning resources, which are often created for self-instruction. Because access to these learners is not readily available, since most researchers are from the ranks of academia, there is a large gap in research about informal online learning of LCTLs (Bown, 2009), such as using online resources, online tutoring, and self-study.

The current research begins to fill this gap by examining the learners’ perspective with the aim of answering the question: when conceptualized ecologically, how does the learners’ context impact informal language learning, self-instruction, and learners’ motivation? The context was ecologically conceptualized in order to capture the broadest influences on learners’ experiences with language study. The data was gathered through Skype interviews with informal learners of the ANTL Macedonian. The significance of the research lies not only in the glimpse it offers into the world of informal learners of ANTLs, but also because it suggests and exemplifies a cross-disciplinary theoretical approach for research with other learners of LCTLs which takes into consideration the impact of the learners’ entire ecological system on their learning choices and progress. Before describing the study and results, it is necessary to define some terminology and briefly explain the theories on which the research is predicated.

**Ecological Linguistics**

The ecological approach is one line of research in second language acquisition (SLA) that has gained prominence very recently (Tudor, 2001; van Lier, 2003, 2004; Ingeborg, 2007; Lafford, 2009; Blyth, 2009; Menezes, 2011) and is closely related to the socio-cultural theory approach (Berglund, 2009). The ecological view includes the notions that language learning is context-situated (which includes nested linguistic ecosystems), relational (dynamic process of negotiation between learner and environment), and functional (occurs through interaction and socialization into communities of practice).
rather than just grammatical. Ecological linguistic analysis focuses on relationships and processes rather than products and outcomes.

As with language learning and technology, most of the publications within the ecological linguistic perspective focus on the classroom (Warschauer, 1998; Tudor, 2001; van Lier, 2003, 2004; Ingeborg, 2007; Borrero & Yeh, 2010) and distance education (White, 1999; McCann, 2004). One counterexample is the recent collection of research papers edited by Benson and Reinders (2011), which addresses informal language learning and self-instruction including some LCTLs. The research presented in this paper continues in the direction outlined by Benson and Reinders (2011).

The current research also draws on developmental psychology, specifically Urie Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979), which is useful for research espousing an ecological worldview because it is activity-based and focused on the connections within and across nested systems (van Lier, 2003, 2004). These nested sub-environments include the microsystem (individual’s direct social interactions), mesosystem (multiple interrelated microsystems; e.g. support that is available for language learners to study and practice the language), exosystem (social systems with which the individual does not interact directly but that influence the individual’s language learning) and macrosystem (broader cultural context) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1998). The macrosystem influences the learner’s identity, whether as a member of the native culture (speaking the native language), the target culture (speaking the target language), or somewhere in between, “a third place,” located at the intersection of multiple native and target language learning cultures (Kramsch, 1996).

Informal Language Learning and Self-Instruction

Several researchers have written about the settings where learning takes place and regardless of differences in classification or terminology, the researchers agree that learning does not only take place in formal settings such as schools, but also through day-to-day activities, on the job, and in the community. The traditional view identifies three separate settings: formal, non-formal, and informal (Merriam & Clark, 2006; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007); a classification that has been criticized by other researchers in adult
learning who have proposed their own definitions (Mocker & Spear, 1982; Rogers, 2004; Zurcher, 2010). For the purposes of the present research, formal learning is defined as directed by a representative or representatives (instructor, teaching assistant, etc.) of an educational institution and includes distance education classes. In contrast, informal learning takes place outside of the traditional educational establishment, including on-the-job training, consultant-led training, tutoring, and community workshops. In this definition, informal learning has a broader scope than in other definitions and subsumes what has previously been defined as non-formal learning.

The curriculum in informal learning, thus defined, can be set by the learners themselves (as in the case of self-instruction) or an instructor, tutor, or consultant, but that curriculum is not endorsed by a school or university. While the same materials may be used in both settings, their application is different: in the formal setting, the materials are part of a curriculum that also requires the learner to produce proof of learning, such as through assignments and assessments, for which the learner is provided feedback and (in most cases) rewarded with a grade. In the informal learning setting, the proof of learning is not required; instead it is up to the learners to evaluate their own learning and seek out further resources (including assessments) if they feel that they need them. Learners can check their knowledge and receive feedback (such as from an instructor, consultant, tutor, or computer program), but that feedback is for the learner’s own benefit and not formalized through a grade. Because informal language learning is devoid of external motivators, such as grades, it is self-directed. The learners may locate and use self-instructional tools: commercial software or self-access learning centers, or they may join online language learning communities, such as Babbel (http://babbel.com) and Livemocha (http://livemocha.com), or they may hire tutors to guide and assist their learning. Self-instructional software is often not available for ANTLs, such as Macedonian, because of companies’ perceived lack of profitability for those markets. But there is one online language learning resource that is available for Macedonian, and it is the informal learning environment provided by the non-profit organization Macedonian Language E-Learning Center (MLEC) (http://macedonianlanguage.org), which is the recruitment site in the present investigation.
The Recruitment Site and Participants

Macedonian is the administrative language of the Republic of Macedonia, an Eastern European country located north of Greece, south of Serbia, west of Bulgaria, and east of Albania. Macedonian is an ANTL: there are less than ten universities in North America currently offering any instruction, including as independent study (Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, http://carla.umn.edu/lctl/db/index.php) and only one offers Macedonian online, the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill. In Australia, Macedonian had been offered onsite at Macquarie University, but the course offerings were eliminated in 2011. Therefore, studying the case of Macedonian is ideal for assessing how Internet technologies can impact the teaching and learning of a language that is taught less and less commonly in the formal educational setting worldwide.

The online non-profit organization MLEC provides self-study resources and online one-on-one tutoring for learning Macedonian language and about Macedonian culture. The free asynchronous learning resources for self-study that are available on the site include multimedia tutorials, exercises, games, and podcasts, most of which are focused on beginning levels of language proficiency. The center's free online materials received the 2012 Access to Language Education award, presented by the Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO), the Esperantic Studies Foundation, and Lernu.net.

The participants for the study were recruited via a Survey Monkey (http://www.surveymonkey.com) survey emailed to all registered MLEC users and posted on Facebook and Twitter. Of the 28 people who responded to the survey globally, 11 had enlisted the assistance of a tutor (tutored participants) and 17 had not (untutored participants). From those 28 potential participants, a sample was purposefully selected to reflect the greatest variation in demographics, including country of residence, education level, previous online language learning experience, frequency of contact with the target language and Macedonian heritage. Several participants who were first selected for the sample did not respond to an email regarding setting up the interview, and therefore the sample was redrawn several times.
until a total of 11 participants agreed to participate. The demographics of the sample are presented in table 1 in the results section.

Literature Review

The research question that guided the study was: How does the learners' context, conceptualized ecologically, impact informal language learning and self-instruction? Furthermore, the study aimed to answer how motivation and perseverance with studying the language are supported or impeded in the learner's immediate social environment (microsystem), the broader social community (mesosystem), by the availability of resources for studying the language and the curriculum of those resources (exosystem), and the cultural views on studying foreign languages (macrosystem), which also impact the exosystem and the learner's motivation and sense of identity.

Because the field of research of informal language learning of LCTLs is nascent, this literature review briefly addresses what has been found in formal settings and in learning other subjects. For example, one characteristic often recognized as typical in distance learning programs for LCTLs is that the learners are highly motivated, mature, and sophisticated (Henderson, 1974; Doughty & Long, 2003) and Dickinson (1987) echoes the sentiment for self-instructed learners. Motivation has been hailed as critical to effective learning and an often convincing predictor of language success or failure (Nseendi, 1984; Hurd, 2006). But motivation is not only a characteristic of the learner, it is also impacted by the context (Nseendi, 1984; Styer, 2007).

Subscribing to the notion that language is a social construct means that language learning must also be viewed in terms of social practice (Kurata, 2011), i.e. interactions within the micro and mesosystems, especially when that language learning is taking place outside of the formal classroom (Palfreyman, 2011). The idea of language learning as participation or enculturation into a community of practice is not meant to replace the idea of language learning as acquisition or accumulation of rules and facts in the brain (Sfard, 1998), but to reveal an additional layer of complexity to the learning process (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). Looking at academic literacy socialization of foreign exchange students, Zappa Hollman (2007) proposes the term "individual network of practice" (INoP) to describe an individual's
social ties that are relevant to a particular phenomenon. This term is useful to socially contextualize an individual's support for and process of language learning as well. One part of the INoP to examine for language learning opportunities and impact on motivation is the family. The influence of the family as a learning community was noted by Palfreyman (2006, 2011), who found that the influences can be both encouraging and impeding both for target languages study (in this case, English) and for maintenance of the native language, depending on the target language proficiency of family members.

When looking at learners' social networks, both density and heterogeneity can impact language acquisition. Smith (2002) found that in an expatriate setting, language is best acquired through loose social networks with many native speakers; however, the language acquired thusly may only be appropriate for the realm of public interactions and not for dealing with private, relationally-deep topics. Similarly, in a study of bilingual adolescents, Wiklund (2002) found that language acquisition was aided by social networks consisting of many native speakers with whom the learners interacted frequently. Kurata's (2011) research of how foreign language learners construct opportunities for informal language learning pointed out that these opportunities, which are often taken for granted in certain contexts (such as in Smith, 2002 and Wiklund, 2002) are difficult to construct in others, such as for example when the learners' native language is English and they are trying to acquire Japanese. Sometimes the influences can be traced to the macrosystem, specifically social norms and roles which limit opportunities for interaction with native speakers in the target language (Kurata, 2011) and impact learners' beliefs and fears about their competence (van Lier, 2004).

Looking at exosystemic factors in language learning, Doughty and Long (2003) state that one of the characteristics of distance learning programs for LCTLs is the typical absence of exposure to the target language outside the courses themselves. However, this proposition would not be true for heritage speakers, who normally live in communities of immigrants speaking the target language (Johnson & Hall, 2007). Nonetheless, the statement speaks to the intended audience for distance education language learning programs (and therefore curricular assumptions) as well as the distance education establishment's perceived lack of available resources for using the
language in social settings outside of the courses. This has an impact in the types of courses offered in this setting: "traditional programs, geared only to domestic language learners, have had the fairly narrow, instrumental goal of developing in learners basic language skills, using the educated native speaker of the target language as the standard" (Johnson & Hall, 2007, p. 2). This goal can disadvantage heritage speakers, who have exposure to regional variants and dialects as well as varied levels of knowledge of the target culture, and brings up issues of individual and cultural identity. In addition, it brings into question cultural norms about identity, cultural acceptance of variance in languages vis-a-vis a 'standard' or 'literary' form as norm, and of the ideal that a language learner should strive for: native-speaking ability or a multilingual, multicultural skillset (Lemke, 2002; Johnson and Hall, 2007; Blyth, 2009; Thorne, Black & Sykes, 2009). Indeed, even the notion of a "native speaker" and how one is defined (by birth or participation/acceptance in a community) can be challenged as the native/non-native dichotomy can also be viewed by society as a continuum (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). These issues and relationships exemplify components of the macrosystem. There have been no studies of informal LCTL-learners that considered the impact from each of these levels of the learning ecosystem.

Methodology

The qualitative methodology employed was phenomenology because this approach focuses on understanding meanings and actions (Miles & Huberman, 1994), especially what events and interactions mean to ordinary people (Moustakas, 1994; Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). This approach is in direct correlation with the research question, which explicitly focuses on learners' perceptions of themselves and their experiences in the learning context. The research was framed as a case study because the sample researched and the population from which it was drawn was limited both by language (Macedonian) and site (the Macedonian Language E-Learning Center).

The data collection consisted of participant interviews using open-ended questions that were provided to the participants ahead of time. Of the 11 participants in the study, one person only responded to interview questions via email, and the remaining 10 were
interviewed via Skype. Of those 10, one person was not comfortable enough with English to conduct the interview in English so a combination of German, Macedonian, and English was used. The transcript was then translated into English. Additionally, learning journals were collected from four participants, one of which was a student of the researcher, who also had access to homework and Skype tutoring session notes. The researcher also had access to Skype tutoring session notes from another of her own tutored students, whom she also observed at a cultural event in the student’s Macedonian immigrant community. While it needs to be acknowledged that the researcher’s involvement with these participants as a tutor has ethical implications for the research, all precautions were taken for the participants not to feel obligated to participate or report their experiences overly favorably. Furthermore, the researcher’s relationship and rapport with these learners positively impacted the research because she was in fact embedded in the learning process and ecosystem and observing it from within, rather than without. Altogether, over 120 pages of transcriptions, journals, and observation notes were collected and analyzed. Member checks were performed by nine of the eleven participants; the remaining two did not respond to the email request for a member check.

Data Analysis

As required by the chosen phenomenological research design, the analysis involved several iterations of reading, writing, and configuration of meaning from the data over an extended period of time until themes emerged. As these themes emerged, they were organized and compared using not only text, as is common practice in qualitative research, but also with graphic organizers, as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). The data for each participant was summarized in a word cloud based on the transcription of the interview, a critical incident chart describing the critical occurrences in the participants' lives that impacted their study of Macedonian and a social network matrix of each participant's "individual network of practice" (Zappa Hollman, 2007), constructed to represent the participants' networks of communication in Macedonian (such as Figures 1 and 2). Interactions in Macedonian are marked in orange,
whereas those in English and other languages are marked in gray. Dotted lines represent bilingual communication. The shorter the line representing the interaction is, the closer the relationship represented by that line; the thicker the line, the more frequent the interaction. The matrix does not aim to capture the participants' entire social network, but only the portions relevant to the INOP for Macedonian, which were considered in the study and discussed in the interview. A within-case analysis and a between-case analysis were conducted using the qualitative analysis software Atlas.ti, but for brevity, only the results of the between-case analysis are highlighted in the results of the study.

Results

The demographics of the participants are presented in Table 1. In addition to their age, gender, country of residence, and level of completed education, participants also provided information regarding whether they had had previous experience with online language learning (with options such as ‘first experience,’ ‘have studied another language online before,’ and ‘have studied several other languages online before’), whether they are a heritage learner, and whether they had enlisted the help of a tutor. The participants’ names were randomly assigned pseudonyms.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country of residence</th>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Frequency of contact</th>
<th>Language learning experience</th>
<th>Tutored</th>
<th>Heritage or Not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beatrice</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantin</td>
<td>&gt;61</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>&gt;61</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>&gt;61</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Almost never</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Almost never</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaltrina</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3. Demographics of study participants.*
Turning first to a description of the participants’ context, two categories of participants can be distinguished: those living in Macedonian-speaking communities during the data gathering for the study (Ashley and Frank in Macedonia, highlighted in dark blue in Table 3; Beatrice and Constantin in Macedonian communities in the diaspora, highlighted in light blue in Table 3) and those remaining participants who did not live near Macedonian-speaking communities. These categories impact not only the learners’ microsystems, i.e. the direct social interactions in their immediate environment and mesosystems (multiple interrelated microsystems), but also the exosystem (availability of resources for study in various settings) and macrosystem (learners’ sense of identity and of language study).

The microsystem of the two participants living in Macedonia ought to have been full of opportunities for interacting in Macedonian. And indeed, the social network matrices of these participants (shown in Figure 1) were characterized by the most non-dotted lines of all the participants, meaning that they used only Macedonian to interact with members in their network the most frequently of all participants. However, in the matrices, some of this communication was casual and infrequent. In fact, Ashley reported that her only regular daily interaction solely in Macedonian was with her in-laws and that they spoke a different dialect than the standard language she was learning, which posed a challenge for her. Therefore, it is no surprise that even these two participants reported they did not have enough opportunities to practice the language they were learning.

Figure 1. Comparison of INoPs of participants living in Macedonia
In Ashley’s graph, there are clearly two microsystems, one that requires communication in English and one that requires communication in Macedonian, with virtually no overlap (her husband being the only common link). This is very similar to Beatrice's graph (Figure 2), who lives with her husband and in-laws in a Macedonian immigrant community in the U.S. The similarity in delineation of microsystems for Macedonian language communication (the in-laws) and for English language communication illustrates the role that family plays in providing opportunities for practicing Macedonian and impacting motivation for studying the language.

Figure 2. Comparison of INoPs of heritage speaker participants

However, not everyone with a family that speaks Macedonian had enough opportunities and motivation for learning, as demonstrated by Henry, who was living with a native Macedonian spouse but not near a Macedonian-speaking community. His Macedonian language-speaking INoP was much sparser than those of Beatrice’s and the opportunities he had to use Macedonian were fewer (as shown in Figure 3), which negatively impacted his ability to find time to study as well as to make it a priority. Therefore, just having a microsystemic connection to a native speaker (spouse) was not enough for him to make time for and put focus on learning Macedonian.
Beatrice and Constantin were using Skype weekly to study with a tutor, with whom they spoke both their respective native language and Macedonian in their lessons. For these participants, even though speaking Macedonian was part of their daily routine in their microsystem (in Figure 2), technology facilitated access to a tutor with whom they were able to study Macedonian weekly. These participants turned to online tutors because they could not find anyone in their community that met their needs, Constantin because of influences of the exosystem (Greek government negating opportunities for Macedonian language study and practice), Beatrice because of influences of the macrosystem of Macedonian culture, which she perceived as judgmental of members of the community who did not already speak Macedonian.

The microsystems of the remaining participants were marked with isolated communication in Macedonian, and always in parallel with another language. One example is provided in Figure 4. In fact, when she began studying Macedonian, the participant referred to as Iris only knew one Macedonian: her tutor, the Australian-born son of Macedonian immigrants. Furthermore, Iris, like another participant – John, did not feel comfortable seeking out a Macedonian-speaking immigrant community because they were aware of in/out-group differences that put them at a disadvantage. John, who had lived among ethnic Macedonians in Greece, recounted that as an outsider in the Macedonian community in Greece, he had a difficult time finding anyone who would use Macedonian with him because of the macrosystem's influence: the Greek state does not recognize the existence of Macedonia as a state, its culture, its people, nor its language. Other participants sought out Macedonian-speaking communities either physically (Grace in the U.S., Diana by traveling to
Macedonia) or virtually (Emma) and had positive experiences with the communities they reached out to, but could not spend a lot of time in those communities because of constraints of time and finances.

Turning to opportunities in the exosystem, only three of the participants had at one time studied Macedonian through formal means: Diana through seminars in Macedonia, Frank through a 10-week Peace Corps pre-service training in Macedonia, and Grace through an intensive summer course at her U.S. university. While Diana reported that the seminars had a positive impact on her language learning, Grace's experience was "horrid." She elaborated: "...the teacher was just a terrible teacher. He told me the fifth week of class he knew I didn't like his language." Frank also criticized the Peace Corps language training because it did not incorporate any elements of the Macedonian culture.

The disconnect between learning the language and learning about the culture was illustrated in Ashley’s case to an even greater extent. The informal language learning resources Ashley used to study also did not prepare her for life in Macedonia, particularly for dealing with certain cultural expectations and practices. For example, Ashley’s husband described that when Ashley shops at the market, "as soon as she opens her mouth, the price goes double." This result is one of the effects of in/out-group mentality, coupled with the desire to make as much money as possible from a particular sale and the belief that
foreigners have more money than locals. Where the materials she was using for language study failed, her husband jumped in, trying to prepare her. But even then, Ashley stated "there are a lot of things in Macedonian culture that I wasn't prepared for. ... So that was kind of confusing me." She tried to relate the behaviors she was encountering to her own experiences in the US as a macrosystem and with her family of Italian ancestry as a microsystem, and ended up frustrated by her perception of Macedonians being very hospitable one moment and then uncultured and impolite the next. Her husband, as a member of the in-group, tried to protect her by warning her not to speak to "random people in the streets." Therefore, even for Ashley, the opportunities to interact in Macedonian were mostly limited to her in-laws and their family and friends.

One impact of the technology in the Russian exosystem on language use was described by Emma and focused on the use of written language in texting using the Cyrillic vs. the Latin alphabets. The exosystem, via mobile phone providers, endorsed texting in Latin, which is not the standard alphabet for Macedonian or Russian. Namely, texts in Cyrillic take twice as many characters as those same texts transliterated in the Latin alphabet, effectively making one text message in Latin transliteration count as two (and therefore doubly as expensive) in the native Cyrillic alphabet. This effect limits opportunities for communicating in Macedonian using the Cyrillic alphabet.

**Motivation and Support for Studying Macedonian**

Finding themselves limited in opportunities for studying Macedonian and for interaction in Macedonian did not impact the participants’ motivation to study Macedonian. Those living in Macedonia reported being motivated by their Macedonian micro- and mesosystems. For example, Ashley stated: “I am motivated every time I have to step out of the house and speak to somebody... A conversation with a complete stranger will motivate me to study.”

Those who had significant others who were Macedonian relied on them for encouragement. For example, Iris’ tutor and significant other was "very encouraging," Henry considered his wife his tutor and Ashley said that her husband and family helped her with things like
shopping at the bazaar. Beatrice also relied on her husband and American friends for encouragement.

But these and the other participants are at the core - self-motivated learners. For example, Frank stated that being self-motivated is just “my way of studying anything. I just get up in the morning and say ‘Today I will’.” Discussing motivational help for language study from her parents, Emma stated: “Macedonian happened when I was an adult, so it’s my choice.” The sentiment that Macedonian is one’s own choice was also echoed by Grace, mentioning the lack of help from her professional and personal micro- and mesosystems. This self-motivation may be a necessity when choosing to study a less commonly taught language, such as Macedonian, since the extrinsic resources in the learners’ macrosystems are non-existent.

Discussion

All of the participants in the study had studied other foreign languages prior to Macedonian. They reported that their previous language learning experiences were facilitated by elements of the microsystem (for example, parents or grandparents who could speak a foreign language or say a few words in a foreign language), mesosystem (for example, growing up in bilingual or multicultural communities), and exosystem (for example, radio or TV programs using or teaching foreign languages). Several participants reported that required foreign language study in school had a negative or non-existent effect on people's desire and ability to learn foreign languages. Furthermore, it was interesting that more than two thirds of the participants reported that their own culture exhibited macrosystemic views that did not support foreign language study. These encouraging and hindering impacts of context (Styer, 2007), family (Palfreyman, 2006), and socialization in communities of practice (Smith, 2002; Wiklund, 2002) on language learning have also been noted in previous research.

Describing their ecological context for studying Macedonian, the participants painted quite a different picture than the one they described for language study in general. The two heritage-speaker-participants had heard their parents/grandparents speaking Macedonian, but the remaining participants had not. Furthermore,
while participants in general reported that their families were supportive of their study, more than two thirds of the participants did not consider their family as a resource for studying Macedonian. In addition, half of the participants could not practice their language with their families, friends, co-workers, or other members of their micro- and mesosystems and the remaining participants reported not being able to practice enough. In fact, all of the participants listed this lack of opportunities for practicing the language as their biggest challenge in learning Macedonian.

More than two thirds of the participants had access to Macedonian media programming, whether through watching local TV channels (Ashley and Frank, who lived in Macedonia), satellite channels (Beatrice, Henry), U.S. radio programming in Macedonian (Iris and John), or via the internet (Constantin, Diana, John), so these participants found support for their study in this element of the exosystem. While there were opportunities for formal study available to four of the participants, only one (Diana) was taking advantage of these opportunities at the time of the data collection and she did not feel that her needs as a learner were being met through the instruction. For all of the other participants (Ashley, Beatrice, and Frank), these opportunities were inconvenient. Two other participants (Grace and Ashley) reported poor prior instructional experiences. In summary, although the participants found some support for language maintenance in their exosystems, they did not have access to positive learning experiences.

Since language learning is impacted by context (Styer, 2007), social life (Horwitz, 1995), and social networks (Smith, 2002; Wiklund, 2002; Kurata, 2011; Palfreyman, 2006, 2011) among other factors, the learning ecology that the participants described challenged them as learners of Macedonian. While Smith (2002) and Wiklund (2002) concluded that large, dense, heterogeneous networks promote language acquisition, participants in the current study showed that language can be (and is) studied even in the absence of such networks, although the learners perceived the lack of such networks/opportunities as a hindrance to their language study.

Taking these findings about the language learning ecology into consideration, the learners’ persistence with Macedonian language learning attests to their high level of self-motivation, which was
previously posited by Henderson (1974) and Dickinson (1987) for self-instructed language learners of more commonly taught languages. Some of these self-directed learning strategies that the participants exhibited included “actively controlling the learning situation” (Ulitsky, 2000) by seeking out resources and continuing to search for supplementary resources, including tutoring; “evaluating metacognitive learning strategies” (Ulitsky, 2000), such as “self-talk” (White, 1999) and "time lapse" (White, 1999); “developing regulatory and predictive techniques” (Ulitsky, 2000); and creating a routine (Hsu, Ching, Mathews, and Carr-Chelman, 2009): most of the participants described a regular schedule or set of activities they engaged in as part of their learning process. For several participants, the regularity of the process was a way to fit learning into their busy lives.

Lastly, all of the participants in this study had turned to the Internet for resources to learning Macedonian. But nearly all of them were using resources in addition to the materials provided by MLEC, the recruitment site for the study. They were supplementing the MLEC-provided online resources with websites which stream Macedonian content, such as news, movies, music, and e-textbooks from Macedonia, other websites which explain Macedonian grammar and vocabulary, online dictionaries and Google translate, Facebook, Skype, radio, and online flashcards, pointing to a potential normalization (Bax, 2003) of online technologies for LCTL study. The finding that the learners felt they needed supplementary resources echoes White's (1999), Bidlake's (2009), and Nielson's (2011) studies with adults studying foreign languages using self-instruction and CALL materials. However, what was surprising was that none of the participants spoke about evaluating the quality of the resources (including physical and human) that they found. Taking into consideration that nowadays schools are beginning to teach students about evaluating the quality of internet resources they find, this finding represents a large gap in the knowledge and awareness of learners that needs to be addressed.
Conclusions

In answering the research question how the learners’ context (ecologically conceptualized) impacts language learning, the data showed that the impact was different for foreign language study in general vis-a-vis studying Macedonian. All of the participants in the study had studied other foreign languages prior to Macedonian. One difference between their study of other foreign languages and Macedonian was that the former was often in formal settings, such as in schools, whereas they studied Macedonian informally. Additionally, the participants' first experiences with studying foreign languages were with the more commonly taught (and heard) languages, such as English, Spanish, German, and French, and then they began to study Macedonian.

Another difference between these experiences is in the impact from the context, specifically the support they found in their ecosystem for learning and using the languages. For the most part, the participants reported that their previous foreign language learning experiences were facilitated by elements of the microsystem (for example, parents or grandparents who could speak a foreign language or say a few words in a foreign language), mesosystem (for example, growing up in bilingual or multicultural communities), and exosystem (for example, radio or TV programs using or teaching foreign languages). On the other hand, describing their ecological context for studying Macedonian, the participants painted a picture of a less helpful context than the one they described for language study in general: most of the participants reported support for their language learning/maintenance in their microsystem (although even this support was very limited) and through Internet resources in their exosystem, whereas their macrosystem exerted a negative impact upon their language study. While participants in general reported that their families were supportive of their study, more than two thirds of the participants did not consider their family as a resource for studying Macedonian. In addition, half of the participants could not practice their language with their families, friends, co-workers, or other members of their micro- and mesosystems and the remaining participants reported not being able to practice enough. In fact, all of
the participants listed this lack of opportunities for practicing the language as their biggest challenge in learning Macedonian.

This conclusion takes on an even greater significance when taking into consideration a previous study with the same population, which showed that many learners of Macedonian are motivated by one strong bond, such as would exist with a spouse or a significant other (Belamaric Wilsey, 2013). These learners are choosing to study Macedonian because of one strong social bond but are then not able to find a way to practice the language anywhere, including within the realm that inspired them to learn it in the first place.

It is in this environment that learners turn to resources in the exosystem via the Internet. Therefore, tutors and developers of resources for self-instruction need to take into consideration the learners’ ecosystem and meet learners’ needs for practicing communication, needs that are not being met in their physical environment.
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Developing Linguistic and Professional Competence: Business Ukrainian On-line

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Abstract

The study focuses on the potential of technology tools in language learning for professional purposes.

The premise is that language learning constitutes a process of learners’ socialization into an L2 socio-cultural community with students viewed as participants in this community through their exposure to authentic environments. The analysis unfolds within the discussion of the three As: Attention, Assistance and Awareness in the process of teaching and acquisition of professional socio-cultural competence by students of Business Ukrainian via CALL activities. These activities are designed around various tasks that are linked to a potential increase in students’ engagement in the virtual professional space and to students’ acquisition of not only language proficiency, but also professional competence. The on-line Business Ukrainian is analyzed as a technologically enhanced authentic simulation, which allows the learners to participate in the virtual environment and enables them to grow into confident participants of the authentic professional community.

Keywords

Business Ukrainian; on-line Ukrainian; professional competence; socio-cultural competence; acquisition of Ukrainian
Introduction

Today’s student and language learner lives in a highly mediated world, especially in the technological, social and professional realms. With the ongoing intervention of technology, “students are able to be more engaged in the learning process as active learners, team builders, collaborators, and discoverers”, with language instructors functioning as designers, coaches, guides, mentors, and facilitators (Kelm 1996, p. 27). The present study addresses the role of technology in a language classroom and is a contribution to the field of computer-assisted language learning and teaching.

Scholarly attention to the array of potential technological tools for language learning continues to be visible in computer-assisted language learning [CALL] and teaching research. This rapidly growing field is very rich and diversified with studies. This includes, but is not limited to, the role of synchronous (Abrams, 2006; Blake, 2005, 2006; Doughty & Long, 2003; Meskill, 2005; Smith, 2003) and asynchronous communication in an L2 setting (Sotillo, 2000; Cummins & Sayers, 1995), and its resemblance to face-to-face interactions (Wang & Woo, 2007), Computer Mediated Communication [CMC] or telecollaboration (O'Dowd and Ritter, 2006; O'Rourke, 2005; Darhower, 2007), the explorations into intercultural communicative competence, or intercultural pragmatics and negotiation of meaning in L2 development (Doughty and Long, 2003; O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006; Sykes, 2005; Sykes & Cohen, 2008), electronic literacy (Hegelheimer & Fisher, 2006; Hegelheimer, 2006), literacy and identity construction in L2 environment (Darhower, 2007; Meskill, 2006; Warschauer & De Florio-Hansen, 2003; Kramsch, A’Ness, & Lam, 2000; Wildner-Bassett, 2005), distance-learning (Abrioux, 1989; Roblyer & Ekhaml, 2000), as well as teacher training (Kreutzer & Neunzig, 1997).

With respect to Slavic linguistics, CALL studies are very scarce. At the time of this writing, there are only a handful of articles that deal with teaching strategies in a Russian-language classroom with a component of CMC (Meskill & Anthony, 2004, 2005, 2007; Norkeliunas, 1984). With respect to Ukrainian, there is a single descriptive summary in the CALICO Journal (Iskold, 2011) of the Intermediate Ukrainian interactive language learning software developed by Oksana Sachyk in collaboration with the Critical
Languages Program at the University of Arizona, the U.S. Department of Education, the National Security Education Programs and the University of Arizona College of Humanities.

Access to various authentic cultural communities around the world has been noted as one of the major gateways opened by technology, benefitting L2 environments from both pedagogical and learning perspectives. Importantly:

- Researchers have made it clear that any benefits from engaging in CMC are not automatically or deterministically derived from the tools themselves (Zhao, Alvarez-Torres, Smith, & Tan, 2005; Thorne, 2003), but rather from how CMC is used in service of promoting meaningful interactions and real intercultural reflections.
- Breakdowns can be frequent, but they also provide golden opportunities for students and teachers alike to focus attention on the emerging L2 system as well as new ways of conceiving of students’ new bilingual identity. This heightens rather than diminishes the teacher’s role in designing appropriate tasks and raising the students’ cross-cultural awareness (O’Rourke & Schwienhorst, 2003, cited in Blake, 2007, p. 77).

The present study discusses the pedagogical considerations of an on-line Business Ukrainian Textbook, and how the pedagogical objectives of this content-based resource may be achieved by means of on-line teaching and learning tools. The students’ development of linguistic and professional socio-cultural competence in Ukrainian is at the center of this discussion.

**Theoretical Background**

In this study, language learning is approached from a socio-cultural perspective, in which language learning or language development is viewed as a social process, “socially and culturally situated, shaped by context, and mediated by various tools and technologies” (Thorne & Black, 2007, p. 143). Within such an approach “individuals and environments mutually constitute one
another and persons are not considered to be separable from the environments and interactions through which language development occurs.” Moreover, “knowledge is not owned solely by the learner but is also a property of social settings and the interface between person and social context” (Foster & Ohta, 2005, p. 403). The main premise of this study is that language learning constitutes a process of the learners’ socialization into an L2 socio-cultural community. Students are viewed as participants in this community through their exposure to authentic environments, mediated by the target language.

Please note that the very concept of authenticity has been a subject of controversy in scholarship since the eighties. I operate with Mishan’s (2004) set of criteria for authenticity, according to whom, “authenticity is a factor of (1) provenance and authorship, (2) the original communicative and social purpose of the text, (3) the original context, (4) the learning activity based on the text, and (5) learners’ perceptions of and attitudes toward the text and the derived learning activity” (Mishan, 2004, cited in Belz, 2007, p. 48).

With respect to the present study, the on-line Business Ukrainian textbook represents a technologically enhanced authentic simulation, which allows the learners to begin participating in the virtual environment and enables them to grow into confident participants of the authentic professional community (some of the above ideas have been inspired by studies in pragmatic competence proposed by Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). An environment created around authentic texts, that demonstrate the target system of language, culture, professional environment and social interaction, fosters maintenance of emotional authenticity among learners and leads to acquisition of professional socio-cultural skills. Real-world communication tools embedded in the learning process help language learners to build upon their linguistic and professional repertoire in a target-like socio-cultural setting.

The Text

The on-line Business Ukrainian textbook has been created by the author of this study at the University of Alberta, Canada. At the time of this writing, the project is near completion, available on a
non-profit basis and may be found at: http://www.artsrn.ualberta.ca/ukr/Business/.

The textbook consists of five chapters: Resume, Employment and Job Interview, Official Correspondence, Finance and Banking, and Insurance. In addition, learners have access to three Appendices, which provide an array of functional expressions for: (A) conducting an interview, writing a summary, conducting a comparison, expressing oneself orally or in writing using connecting devices, and giving of advice; (B) expressing an opinion, agreeing and disagreeing, changing topics, misunderstanding, doubting, expressing indifference and other conversational conventions; and (C) thanking, apologizing, bidding farewell, congratulating, inviting, requesting and several other speech acts that one may encounter in the professional world (and beyond).

All instructional materials are in Ukrainian. These include a selection of authentic texts and documents (such as resumes, cover letters, official documents, letters, etc.), images, and unscripted video files. Various task-based exercises accompany these text collections. Specifically, a variety of interactive exercises and activities are offered, which students could use under an instructor's supervision, in collaboration with their peers, or that individuals could use on their own (details on specific tasks are elaborated in the analysis below).

Analysis

As noted earlier, the primary emphasis of this study is on the pedagogical component of teaching and acquisition of professional socio-cultural competence by students of Business Ukrainian via CALL tools. Addressed specifically is the role of Computer Mediated [CM] tasks for their input and output in promoting linguistic and professional socio-cultural competence. The CM tasks discussed are learner-centered and are based on learner-computer, learner-learner, and self-learner interactions that offer multimodal input in accord with specific pedagogical design.

The present focus is on the three A’s, which are embedded into the learning space: Attention, Assistance, and Awareness.
ATTENTION

Current scholarship shows that attention, in fact, plays an important role in Second Language Acquisition [SLA]. According to Schmidt (2001), there is a close link between attention and learning, and that “noticing, which requires learner focus, is an important part of the learning process” (cited in Wang & Castro, 2010, p. 176). To garner learners’ attention in an L2 setting the quality, relevance, and task-orientation of input are paramount. To spark curiosity a learner needs to be exposed to a variety of tasks and interactional contexts, which are simulated via visual input, which is pleasant and familiar; or if unfamiliar, then relevant and authentic. This visual input may be regarded as an “external attention-drawing technique” (Izumi, 2002, p. 543).

Scholarship in SLA has shown that input alone is not sufficient in fostering second language acquisition. According to Swain’s (1985) Output Hypothesis, “language output may trigger the learner to pay attention to the target linguistic form in order to express their intended meaning. The noticing function of the Output Hypothesis posits that learners may notice the gap in the IL [Interlanguage] knowledge in an attempt to produce the target language to prompt them to solve their linguistic deficiency in ways that are appropriate in a given context” (cited in Wang & Castro, 2010, p. 175). Therefore, “the output is an internal attention-drawing device” (Izumi, 2002, p. 543). The learner needs to be given opportunities to produce output and be able to “do things with language – in production as well as reception --- that he or she could not have done without a nudge of assistance” (Ohta, 2001, cited in Foster & Ohta, 2005, p. 41), leading to the discussion of the second A: Assistance.

ASSISTANCE

Computer-assisted second language learning tasks require learners “to work on the target language interactively with a computer program or with other people through the medium of the computer” (Chapelle, 2001, p. 132). Assistance in a CM environment, discussed in the present study, is similar to assistance in a regular language classroom; specifically one that avoids “communication breakdown, it does not threaten face, and can draw a learner’s attention to features of the L2 morphosyntax, phonology and pragmatics as readily as to
lexis” (Foster & Ohta, 2005, p. 415), but also directing learners’ attention to L2’s socio-cultural, or in the present case, professional business knowledge.

First and foremost, authentic texts themselves (verbal and visual input) act as assistants in simulating native-like environments of the target languaculture, capturing the attention of the learner. Tasks developed around these authentic texts are grouped into the following categories: co-construction, self-construction, and self-correction with other-assistance.

The co-construction category is understood as consisting of joint production tasks that involve pairs or groups of learners (and not exclusively in CMC environments), as well as tasks that involve an individual learner and a computer as a partner. In the online textbook discussed, the co-construction tasks begin each unit with a set of discussion questions to get learners into the mindset of a particular topic, as in Figure 1:

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1 Foster & Ohta (2005: 419-421), in their study of negotiation of meaning in a language classroom, discuss the categories of: co-construction, other-correction, self-correction and continuers tasks in a face-to-face classroom environment.
In Figure 1, on the left, under the Discussion sign, learners see “Let’s talk about you” rubric and are asked the following: “First of all, what would you like to do professionally after graduating from the university?” and “Why is this profession attractive to you?”. These are then followed by a set of questions on various professions that are in demand, are popular, and are worthy of collective discussion among learners, thus constituting co-construction tasks. Other examples of co-construction tasks are activities, in which learners take on a variety of participant roles in computer-mediated environments, such as job applicants or employers. All of the co-construction activities allow learners to engage in a variety of professional contexts, in which they adapt different roles in the process of learning.
Throughout the textbook discussed, in certain exercises and also in Discussion activities, students are presented with meta-linguistic and socio-cultural commentaries on specific cultural environments and certain conventions that are at play. A text on how to write a resume, presented in Figure 2, illustrates socio-cultural information incorporated into an activity:

Figure 2: [Ch 1, Ex. 3]

Figure 2 presents instructions for a successful resume, specifically, the facts and information which should and should not be included in this type of a document. Figure 2 illustrates an explicit socio-cultural input as a part of an activity.
Empirical studies in the field of SLA, and CALL in particular, have shown that various types of co-construction tasks promote students’ engagement in a learning environment and increase students’ participation in the learning process through negotiation of meaning, fostering L2 acquisition (Hampel and Pleines 2013, Hampel 2006, Foster & Ohta, 2005).

The self-construction category focuses on assistance in self-centered activities, or an ‘individualized’ performance. Allowing the learner to practice and experiment with language at their own pace has been shown to reduce anxiety (Brantmeier, 2005). Learners, navigating through the learning process in a self-paced manner, direct their attention to linguistic forms and their functions in various socio-cultural contexts without any fear of losing face. The category of self-construction tasks consists of the following activities: self-discovery, reflection, and problem solving.

Self-discovery

Examples of self-discovery tasks are the pre-reading and previewing, as well as reading and viewing tasks, which begin with brainstorming on the topic (as in Figure 1 above), directing the learner’s attention to new or crucial for understanding vocabulary items. An actual reading of a text or viewing of a video, as illustrated in Figure 3, from Chapter 4 on Banking, follows these tasks:
It’s worth pointing out that Figure 3 illustrates a culturally peculiar topic of a credit card, “Lady’s Club” specifically designed for women, determined to spark curiosity and hence discussion on cultural differences. In this authentic text presented in Exercise 3 in Figure 3, and similar other tasks of self-discovery in the textbook, learners, after
reading or viewing, retrieve genuine language used in the written texts or by the native speakers in video segments. The learners then browse for attested words and expressions, shown as underlined in the text of Exercise 3, Figure 3, and in the Glossary (which occurs in the top right corner of each page in the textbook; visible in Figure 1 above). Learners are thus presented with opportunities to discover for themselves a repertoire of forms and functions attested in authentic contexts, while learning culturally specific information.

**Reflection**

Various post-reading or post-viewing activities throughout the textbook are regarded as examples of reflection tasks. An example is an activity following the “Lady’s Club” text discussed above (Figure 3), presented in Figure 4:

**Figure 4: [Chapter 4, Exercise 4]**

Exercise 4 in Figure 4 asks learners to reflect on the text they have read above, prepare questions and discuss their thoughts in groups, using the vocabulary items underlined in the actual text (Figure 3). In such reflection activities, learners are presented with an opportunity to reinforce their linguistic knowledge, as well as cultural information; in this particular case, on the banking system in Ukraine.

Overall, with a variety of topics present in the chapters, there are numerous opportunities for learners to express their opinions or beliefs, and voice their agreement or disagreement, as well as compare one’s own answers with suggested or simulated answers provided in various exercises.
Creating complete sentences, relevant to the texts studied, may also be regarded as reflection activities on the form and content of the topic studied. This is illustrated in Figure 6:

![Figure 6: [Chapter 5, Exercise 12]](image)

As Figure 6 illustrates, in Exercise 12, learners are asked to finish sentences by choosing an appropriate phrase from the list provided on the right. This list of possible answers consists of phrases used in and related to content of authentic texts introduced in the chapter, playing therefore, the reinforcement role. In addition, such reflection activities assist learners in noticing not only linguistic forms, but also culturally specific concepts discussed in chapters.

**Problem solving**

Problem solving tasks have been discussed in scholarship as mediating consciousness raising with relation to L2 linguistic and pragmatic competence (Belz, 2007, p. 50). The importance of problem-solving tasks may also be extended to the level of professional competence. For instance, writing a resume, which is a type of a jigsaw puzzle task, focuses on understanding aspects of professional competence. Knowledge of how to structure a resume in Ukrainian business culture goes beyond attention only to specific linguistic forms appropriate for the context. Empirical evidence from studies in CMC...
(Blake, 2000, p. 133) confirms that the jigsaw tasks in CMC heighten learners’ metalinguistic awareness of where they are in their L2 and where they still need to go in order to gain more target-like proficiency. In addition to structuring a resume, an activity that combines questions and appropriate answers during a job interview may also be regarded as a problem solving task, as illustrated in Figure 7:

![Figure 7: [Chapter 2, Exercise 11]](image-url)

Figure 7 demonstrates an activity in which students are asked to click and drag answers, which may be posed during a job interview, from the right to their appropriate job interview questions on the left. In this activity (partially represented above in Exercise 11, Figure 7), along
with attention to linguistic forms and meanings, learners also focus attention on the appropriateness of answers to particular questions in a professional environment.

A Crossword puzzle, a leisure type of problem-solving activity, is illustrated in Figure 8:

Figure 8: [Chapter 4, page 5]

The crossword presented in Figure 8 is structured around content of the Banking and Finances chapter and is one of the last activities of the unit. Crosswords are fun, they provide a thrill, and at the same time direct learners’ attention to new vocabulary items; thus are beneficial to the learning process.

Problem solving tasks, such as applying for a job, participating in a job interview, opening a bank account, or applying for a mortgage without the actual threat of failure which exists in the real world, assist learners by promoting their direct engagement in the learning process as well as their self-confidence.

Self-correction with Other-assistance

The opportunities presented to learners to navigate through the self-construction tasks discussed above, allow learners to notice forms
and functions present in given texts. By noticing these various forms and their functions in various contexts, students engage in self-construction.

The Business Ukrainian textbook features assistance in a form of self-correction, in which a self-correction is defined as self-initiated or self-produced based on some prompts from the other party, that is, with ‘other-assistance’\(^2\). Figure 9, an example of a self-correction activity, presents a task of creating an official autobiography, which is an important document in Ukrainian business dealings:

\[^2\text{My definition of self-correction diverges from one offered by Foster and Ohta (2005), according to whom, self-correction is understood “as self-initiated, self-repair, and occurs when a learner corrects his or her own utterance without being prompted to do so by another person” (Foster & Ohta, 2005, p. 420).}\]

![Figure 9: [Chapter 3, Exercise 12]](image-url)
In Figure 9, the learners’ task is to create an autobiography from a collection of sentences, given on the right, which would normally be used in such a document, presented initially in no particular order. Learners are asked to place these sentences in an appropriate chronological as well as logical order by matching sentences from the right to their numerical place in the document, marked on the left. After finishing this activity (and similar others), learners have an opportunity to check for appropriateness of their answers by clicking on the top middle tab Перевірка ‘Check’. Although there is the ‘other’ that indicates when the answer is correct or incorrect, the learner nevertheless needs to find a correct answer on his/her own in order to complete the task.
In addition, there are activities that provide learner-directed feedback via pop-up windows containing suggested answers, or those providing instant feedback on correctness, as in Figure 10:

Figure 10: [Chapter 4, Exercise 6]

Figure 10 illustrates an activity, in which learners are asked to choose appropriate vocabulary items from a list given to the right for each sentence. This is an example of learners’ self-practice on comprehension of linguistic forms and contents on Banking and Financing. This activity also incorporates instant feedback on appropriateness of choices on the part of a learner (Перевірка ‘Check’ tab at the bottom center).

Learning tasks of co-construction, self-construction, self-correction with other-assistance, discussed in the foregoing, are all examples of assistance. These types of assistance entail learners
directing their attention to target language forms, functions and socio-cultural information. These tasks create a supportive, non-threatening environment that ultimately leads to an increase in L2 production and eventually proficiency. The discussion above reinforces the point made by Foster and Ohta that “what the learner can be assisted in doing is soon to be something that the learner will be able to do without help” (2005, p. 413).

**AWARENESS**

Input, which is an external technique of triggering Attention, as well as Assistance in output, which is an internal attention-drawing technique, both contribute to raising **Awareness** in linguistic, cultural and professional competence in the act of producing language. Awareness-raising tasks in the textbook discussed are those that direct learners’ attention to professional and culturally appropriate aspects of language use, as well as awareness of culturally appropriate conduct. In particular, these tasks are designed to make learners consciously aware of similarities and differences between their own and the target culture’s situational language use and conduct. Some examples of the awareness-raising output tasks that have already been discussed above (writing a resume or an autobiography, as well as problem-solving activities). With respect to an autobiography, for instance, students are asked to discuss similarities and differences between an autobiography and a resume. Additional illustrations of awareness-raising activities are tasks of learning how to write various types of official letters, demonstrated in Figure 11:
In Figure 11, Exercise 9, students are presented with a set of expressions that are appropriate for various types of professional correspondence. This exercise exemplifies culturally specific input. Following this input, learners are invited to complete a sample of an official business letter, as in Figure 12:
Figure 12: [Chapter 3, Exercise 13]

In Figure 12, learners are asked to type appropriate vocabulary items into the empty boxes in the text by choosing from a list provided in the instructions. Exercise 13 in Figure 12 is an example of learners’ self-practice that incorporates culturally specific input on business correspondence, raising learners’ awareness of linguistic and cultural intricacies of dealings in this professional domain.

Awareness-raising input with respect to professional conduct in a target culture constitutes an important element in the learning of

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3 Instant feedback on appropriateness of choices is incorporated into this activity (Перевірка ‘Check’ tab at the bottom center/left). Prompts are given also upon learners’ request (Підказка ‘Hint’ tab at the bottom center/right).
language for professional purposes. In the textbook discussed, such input is delivered via authentic video segments about how to prepare for a job interview, how to behave during an interview, or even how to dress for a successful job interview (cf. Chapter 1, video segment “Resume”). Overall, the awareness raising tasks aid students in figuring out not only socio-cultural meanings encountered in the learning environment of the target language and culture, but also those outside the classroom, or even outside the CM texts.

The three A’s discussed above work in close interconnection with each other: all benefit from each other and all strengthen one another. With respect to CM tasks in the present case, these three A’s ultimately lead to the forth A, the Acquisition of linguistic and professional socio-cultural competence of learners of Business Ukrainian.

Figure 13: The 3A’s
Needless to say, the level of acquisition will vary from learner to learner. As Yule (1996) noted, the “way in which we express and interpret meaning is centrally tied to our assumptions, goals, and backgrounds” (cited in Sykes, 2008, p. 38) and the progress in the learning process will depend on the individual learner. Some learners will demonstrate improvement in their attention to and production of form, the others will show their amelioration in sociocultural knowledge. Nevertheless, it is argued above that the amalgamation of the AAAs constitutes the pillars of the acquisition.

Conclusion

“[T]he march of technology throughout all aspects of the lives of language learners is expanding whether it be through formal education or in their everyday lives” (Chapelle, 2007b, p. 108).

Computer Mediation expands the variety of discourse options to which learners have access, creating an array of opportunities for exposure and performance of L2 language and professional sociocultural competence in meaningful interactions. CMC also allows for a more agentive participation in the language performance activities, in which learners become social actors who attend to real-world tasks.

As shown with the example of the Business Ukrainian textbook, learners are presented with opportunities to participate in simulated near-authentic environments, and practice various types of interactions prior to engaging in real-world scenarios. In addition, the authenticity of content contributes to learners’ development of navigational strategies necessary in an authentic space. Kramsch and McConnell-Ginet (1992, p. 5) astutely point out that “[s]ociocultural contexts cannot be reduced to an inventory to be “mastered”…they are not only too rich and various but also in constant flux as people reshape them through speaking and other forms of social interaction. Yet students can come to understand the centrality of context to linguistic communication and can develop some ethnographic skills to help them better understand the relevant contexts for their own uses of the target language” (cited in Stykes, 2008, p. 38). The present study supports this point of view and stresses that the tasks created around authentic texts allow for the maintenance of emotional authenticity.
among learners. Therefore, if learners gain the socio-cultural and professional competence in the practice immersive CM space, they prepare themselves for real or target-cultural professional interactions⁴.

In the matrix of the AAAs, the learners are placed in roles of engaged language observers and receivers, active language performers and participants, as well as professionally aware language users.

The discussion above focused on one example of a professional socio-cultural learning space, in which students can explore the Ukrainian business culture along with the acquisition of linguistic forms. As language educators and teaching resource designers, we continue to have a vested interest in creating new and exciting opportunities for our students and in assisting them in navigating the modern and diverse languacultural world.

⁴ Sykes focuses on pragmatic competence and states: “if learners gain the pragmatic skills necessary in the practice space, they will be more prepared for authentic interaction” (Sykes, 2008, p. 56).
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Content-Based Persian Language Instruction at the University of Maryland: A Field-Report

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Abstract

Content-based language instruction (CBI) has been increasingly gaining prominence in foreign language education. There is, however, a paucity of reports on less commonly taught language programs in the USA that have adopted this approach. This paper reports on the introduction of CBI in a Persian language program at the University of Maryland. The paper begins with an overview of the most common CBI models in higher education settings. Next, a description of a particular CBI model developed in response to the program needs is presented, followed by a description of an offered course based on this model and a discussion of the views of the students, content faculty, and the language instructor. In conclusion, key considerations and the lessons learned in the process of implementing CBI are discussed.

Introduction

An approach to foreign language education that has been increasingly gaining prominence is content-based language instruction (Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Lyster, 2011; Tedick & Cammarata, 2012). Content-based language instruction (CBI) has been variously hailed as “an excellent way of making progress in a foreign language” (The European Commission report as cited in Dueñas, 2004) and “a truly and holistic instructional approach” (Stryker & Leaver, 1997) that can be an alternative to communicative and task-based language teaching methodologies (Wesche & Skehan, 2002). Despite such enthusiasm, however, reports of college-level foreign language programs that have actually adopted this methodology are indeed scarce compared with their ESL counterparts. Moreover, most of the programs that have in fact implemented CBI involve English as the foreign language (e.g., see
Within the USA, reports of programs involving less commonly taught languages are by comparison few and far between. A key consideration in planning a language curriculum is ‘context’, necessitating a consideration of such factors as the stakeholders’ needs and goals, institutional expectations, teachers’ availability and their relevant training, and expected outcomes. There is therefore a need for reports of CBI implementation in less commonly taught language programs in order to share experiences in developing this instructional approach. Collectively, these reports can help us learn what works best and what needs to be avoided. In this spirit, this paper offers an account of implementing a particular model of CBI in a Persian language program at the University of Maryland and shares the lessons learned.

An overview of CBI

Currently in its third decade of intellectual existence, CBI has been characterized as a “powerful innovation” (Grabe & Stoller, 1997) in language pedagogy across a diverse set of instructional contexts; an innovation that integrates subject matter learning with language acquisition outcomes. CBI which has been regarded all at once as “a philosophical orientation, a methodological system, a syllabus design for a single course, or a framework for an entire program of instruction” (Stryker & Leaver, 1997, p. 2) gained real impetus in second language education with Mohan’s (1986) revolutionary observation in the 1980s that:

What is needed is an integrative approach which relates language learning and content learning, considers language as a medium of learning, and acknowledging the role of context in communication (p. 1).

The concurrent teaching of content and language through CBI provides a meaningful context for language teaching and learning to occur and exposes students to a considerable amount of comprehensible language while learning content. It motivates them to engage in real communicative interactions in the target language which has a crucial role in second language development (Byrnes, 2005; Gass
& Mackey, 2006; Wesche & Skehan, 2002). Moreover, as a highly practical curricular methodology, CBI “lends itself quite naturally to the integrated teaching of the four traditional language skills” (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989, p. 2). In addition, as Byrnes (2005) observed, the CBI methodology can effectively fill the existing gap in most college foreign language education in the US where there is a curricular bifurcation between content-indifferent lower-division language courses and language-indifferent upper-division content courses.

Over the past couple of decades an array of instructional models has been proposed for the integration of content knowledge and language objectives. In an influential taxonomy, Met (1991, 2012) placed existing CBI models along a continuum, depending upon whether they prioritize content or language learning outcomes. At one end of this continuum are content-driven models in which content learning has priority. In these models, language learning is considered important but it is viewed as secondary or an incidental consequence of content teaching. In addition to the primacy of content, two other related features distinguish content-driven CBI models. One is that they are content-accountable, that is, both teachers and students are evaluated in reference to subject matter knowledge or skills outcomes (Met, 2012). Another feature is that in this model courses are typically taught by content specialists rather than language teachers. Examples of content-driven models are total or partial immersion programs in which subject matter courses are entirely taught in a second/foreign language by content specialists (Lyster & Ballinger, 2011). At the opposite end of the continuum are language-driven models in which language learning is the real course objective. Here content simply provides a vehicle for language study, introducing authentic topics that serve to motivate learners to engage in meaningful communication in class. Content is often drawn from general topics of interest to learners or occasionally from academic disciplines. In contrast to content-driven CBI approaches, in language-driven models students and instructors are only accountable to language outcomes and students are taught by language teachers rather than content specialists. In addition to these two rather diametrically opposing approaches, there are also hybrid models that fall somewhere in the middle of the continuum, placing equal emphasis on language and content outcomes. In these models, language and content is taught
concurrently in various arrangements (see below) and students are expected to demonstrate not only mastery of subject matter but also language learning outcomes. In these hybrid approaches, instruction of content and language are typically provided by content and language specialists, either jointly in the form of team-teaching or separately.

The most widely adopted CBI models in North American post-secondary foreign language education contexts are the three instructional prototypes known as theme-based, sheltered, and adjunct (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989; Stryker & Leaver, 1997). Theme-based CBI courses are entirely language-driven, language-accountable, and taught by language teachers. This is the most prevalent CBI model at beginning and intermediate levels of language education (Dupuy, 2000; Weigle & Jensen, 1997). An example of such a course can be illustrated as follows:

[A] 10-week theme-based language course might be organized around several unrelated topics, such as heart disease, noise pollution, solar energy and television news coverage. For example, the topic might be initially presented as a reading selection, the topic and vocabulary would then be recycled in guided discussions, related audio- and/or videotaped materials would provide the basis for listening activities, and, finally, a writing assignment synthesizing the various source materials would round out the topic unit. (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989, p. 15)

Alternatively theme-based courses might focus on one single overarching topic subdivided into more specific or specialized sub-topics in order to link the sub-topics and increase the possibility of recycling linguistics forms.

The sheltered CBI courses are primarily content-driven and are taught by subject matter specialists entirely in the target language. This model involves various content courses such as psychology, geography, or math, exclusively for second language learners in order to ‘shelter’ them from native-speaking students and create homogenous classes entirely made up of language learners. Typically, content specialists who teach such courses have either been trained in issues of language learning (Snow, 1997, 2005) or receive assistance
from language specialists in using linguistically sensitive instructional strategies in order to render the subject matter more accessible to students. Some of the pedagogical modifications used in sheltered courses, for example, include careful selection of texts in terms of their organization and clarity, gearing lectures more closely to the readings, making certain linguistic adjustments to accommodate students’ still-developing listening proficiency and placing greater emphasis on receptive skills and less on speaking and writing as the overall course requirements (for an example of a sheltered course for students of journalism see Vines, 1997).

The adjunct CBI models, in contrast, have a shared emphasis on content as well as language (Met, 2012). In this approach, students are concurrently enrolled in two linked courses: a content course and a language course. Instructors of these two courses work collaboratively to ensure that students acquire the content base and the language skills necessary for successful learning of the content. Adjunct approaches are therefore both language- and content-driven and students are simultaneously accountable to language as well as content (Andrade & Makaafi, 2001). To illustrate, an adjunct psychology course in an ESL program reported in the literature has been described as follows:

The ESL component of this course emphasizes five areas of study: reading, writing, study skills, grammar, and discussion of the content material. During the first week of the course when the psychology instructor is covering the history and methods of psychology, the ESL reading component concentrates on previewing and predicting. The writing component covers topic sentences, paragraph unity, and writing paragraphs for definition […]” (Adamson, 1993, p. 126)

Reports of programs that have actually implemented an adjunct CBI model are comparatively very few in number (e.g., Brinton & Holten, 2001; Goldstein, Campbell, & Cummings, 1997; Iancu, 1997). The reason for this paucity can be attributed to the fact that introducing adjunct courses within an existing curriculum requires a considerable amount of coordination of the curricula between the two linked courses as well as significant institutional commitment and adjustments. It is probably because of these requirements that
implementation of adjunct courses has been characterized as an “ambitious undertaking” (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989).

It is important to note here that regardless of the type, the central feature common to all CBI models is that the curriculum is organized around content. In other words, it is the content that drives the curriculum rather than an inventory of linguistic forms, functions, or tasks used in other approaches to second/foreign language education. Further, in all CBI models there is always a primary focus on meaning rather than form, and efforts are made to render the subject matter as comprehensible as possible to the students through various pedagogical modifications, both in terms of content and language in light of their language competence and knowledge of the subject matter.

In planning a CBI curriculum two challenges stand out. The first one is the thorny issue of appropriately assessing content and language. The difficulty arises from the fact that it is not easy to isolate knowledge of the content from knowledge of the language in the assessment process. In sheltered CBI, one solution around this problem has been to increase the sources and types of assessments such as the inclusion of journal entries, oral responses to questions, and student projects in order to monitor and gauge conceptual understanding. In adjunct CBI, the solution has been to assign the assessment of language development to the language instructor and the conceptual understanding to the content teacher. However, as Crandall (1999, p. 608) notes, such separation is an “artificial one and only partially possible” as content and language are in fact intertwined. Indeed some scholars have even argued that learning disciplinary content is the same as learning the language of the discipline (Halliday, 2007; Kong & Hoare, 2011). Given the infused nature of content and language, it has been suggested that a practical strategy for proper assessment can best be derived from the collaborative analysis of content and language by both of the teachers involved (Short, 1997; Weigle & Jensen, 1997).

The second major issue is that of teacher education. Effective CBI requires that the content and language instructors gain some knowledge of the other’s field of expertise. Language teachers need to become knowledgeable about the content the students are learning, and the content teachers need to learn some of the strategies that
language educators use to make the content more accessible to students (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2013). In planning a successful CBI curriculum, then, proper attention needs to be paid to this issue.

The Persian CBI model at the University of Maryland

Curriculum and students

The University of Maryland offers a four-year Bachelor of Arts degree program in Persian Studies that has an interdisciplinary orientation, involving courses on the language, literature, history, and politics of the three Persian-speaking countries of Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan. Persian Studies majors are required to initially complete a sequence of core language courses totaling twenty-six credit hours over three years. By the end of their third year of language study, students are expected to attain a proficiency level comparable to ACTFL Intermediate High (ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, 2012). With the successful completion of the language sequence, students will then proceed to content courses taught in Persian by disciplinary specialists. With the completion of their studies, students are expected to achieve ACTFL Advanced level.

The University of Maryland is also home to the Persian Flagship program that aims to graduate students with professional proficiency in the language at ACTFL Superior level (ILR level 3 and beyond). While the students enrolled in this program do not have to be Persian Studies majors, the majority elect to be. Flagship students in addition to completing the regular Persian BA curricular requirements participate in a range of extracurricular linguistic and cultural activities and complete one year of study abroad that among other components involves direct enrollment into content courses offered in the language at a partner overseas institution of higher education.

Rationale for CBI courses

The initial decision to introduce content-based courses in the Persian Studies undergraduate curriculum was in part motivated by the curricular demarcation between language and content courses. This
bifurcation meant that those Persian majors who wanted to take fourth-year content courses after three years of language study had to make a significant leap from a carefully structured language curriculum to content courses that typically “require mastery of Persian” and expect from students to perform such linguistically and cognitively sophisticated tasks as reading original texts in Persian, participating in class discussions, making oral presentations and writing term papers. It was clear that the linguistic demands of such tasks was well above the language proficiency level of students who had just finished their third-year courses and were ideally at ACTFL Intermediate High level. Students at this level clearly do not yet meet the prerequisite “mastery of Persian” to enable them to meaningfully and successfully participate in regular content courses and handle most of the academic literate tasks mentioned above. In order to address this gap, it was necessary to build into our BA curriculum a series of intermediary courses that could help students to make the transition from language courses to content courses. To this end, CBI was the obvious candidate for this transitional link, given that it would provide both curricular subject matter and the necessary language support to help students to perform the literate tasks associated with content courses. By participating in these courses, Flagship students would also begin to prepare for their future direct enrollment in content courses overseas.

**Adoption of appropriate CBI model**

The first step in the adoption of an appropriate model for our CBI courses entailed selecting an appropriate model from among the prevalent CBI instructional approaches. As the review of literature above suggests, we were faced with choosing from among the three common prototypes of theme-based, sheltered, and adjunct models. In reviewing these approaches for our purposes, we concluded that none of them in their prototypical format would be quite appropriate for our context for different reasons. Starting with the theme-based model, we felt it was not appropriate, primarily because we wanted to maximally expose our students to the kind of academic tasks that they would encounter in their regular content courses. This meant that our CBI courses need to be taught by content specialists rather than language instructors and carry a discipline-specific subject matter
relevant to Persian Studies rather than general interest themes or topics as is common in this model. The other two models, that is, the sheltered and adjunct models in their prototypical format were not appropriate either. With respect to the sheltered model, the challenge derived from the fact that sometimes content courses in our program were taught by faculty members from other academic disciplines who expressed reluctance to teach their subject matter to a cohort of language learners, reasoning that they did not have much experience teaching language learners. Given such practical difficulties, the sheltered model was deemed to be inappropriate for our context. Similarly, the adjunct model was not feasible mainly because of conflicting class scheduling that prevented many students, some of whom were completing two majors, to simultaneously enroll in both linked courses in one major. In light of these challenges, there was a need to come up with a feasible hybrid model that would have all the positive features of a sheltered and an adjunct model minus the downsides described above. To this end, we devised a model that could be at once ‘sheltered’ and ‘adjunct’. Figure 1 schematizes this model for a three-credit-hour undergraduate course.

As Figure 1 demonstrates, in this CBI model a typical three credit-hour undergraduate course is broken down into three linked one-hour sessions taught separately by a language specialist and a content expert. Based on this model, we shelter instruction in the following ways. First, since the Persian studies student population very often includes many native-speaking or highly proficient heritage students, the CBI courses are closed to this group of students. This helps create a more linguistically homogenous class and protect our
second language students from the negative consequences of placing them in the same course with native/near-native students. Very often when non-native language learners are placed in the same course with these students, the latter group tends to dominate the class and, as a result, the instructor inadvertently tends to adjust his or her speech to the level of these students to the detriment of the second language students in class. The model further shelters the course by reducing the number of class lectures to one lecture per week, thereby reducing the reading load compared with what is the case in a regular content course. A further sheltering feature built into the model has to do with teacher training in that the content instructor is coached in advance on strategies to make his or her lectures and discussions more accessible to the students. This can be done by giving them tips such as linking their class lectures to the assigned readings with as little digression as possible so that students can follow the ideas and argument.

The adjunct component of the model includes the pre- and post-language sessions linked to one core weekly content session. Prior to each content session, the language instructor reviews the associated readings selected by the content instructor, identifying the themes, major ideas, and arguments to be covered in the week. Having done so, the language instructor proceeds with making an inventory of the content-obligatory and content-compatible (Snow, Met, & Genesee, 1989; Stoller, 2004) linguistic forms and functions associated with these ideas and arguments. The instructor next develops pedagogical tasks seeded with these ideas as well as relevant language forms and functions which are to be taught in the pre-lecture session on Monday. This pre-language session serves to provide the students with the background knowledge as well as the language forms for the Wednesday content session taught by the disciplinary instructor.

The language instructor also attends the Wednesday session but only as an observer. This allows the teacher to maintain full awareness of the content discussed and take notes of any problem areas that might arise in the session. At the same time, this session is entirely video-recorded. The video recordings and notes serve as the basis of developing instructional materials for the following language session on Friday. The function of adjunct session is to recycle the themes and ideas and the related language forms and function in order to reinforce them.
Assessment

With respect to assessment, the model incorporates accountability to both content and language outcomes through having two separate assessments for content and language outcomes. Taking note of the observation that “considerations of authenticity and interactiveness are paramount in content-based assessment” (Weigle & Jensen, 1997, p. 211), it is up to the particular content professor collaborating in CBI to come up with modified versions of a set of measures typically used in content courses to assess students’ knowledge of the subject matter. These modified content assessment measures at a minimum involve evidence of concept comprehension (e.g., an evidence of the ability to identify and explain the notions and concepts discussed) as well as problem-solving (e.g., an evidence of the ability to pose and solve a problem appropriate to their level of language proficiency). While each content professor might choose different assessment activities, our experience over the past couple of years suggests that both of the above requirements can easily be met through modified versions of three commonly used assessment measures. One can be a weekly journal writing activity wherein students are asked to identify and explain main points and ideas discussed in the lectures and readings as well as provide an outline of the weekly topics and subtopics. A second activity can be weekly short source-based writing pieces (circa 250 words). A third measure can be a final paper (circa 1000-1500 words) wherein students are given the freedom to either sort and classify themes and ideas, agree/disagree with alternative viewpoints on particular course topics, or briefly explain their own views on the course topics or issues. All of these can engage students’ thinking skills and get them to problem-solve.

With respect to language assessment, three broad outcome categories are identified. Students are assessed for their ability to understand and use appropriately the inventoried content-obligatory and content-compatible language forms. In a political science CBI course, for instance, this means that students should be to understand and appropriately use such content specific terms as ‘pluralism’, ‘constructivism’, ‘national sovereignty’, ‘rentier state’ as well as such general forms common to many academic texts as passive voice,
causatives, sequence words, metadiscourse makers, and the like. Second, students must be able to demonstrate communication skills. That is, they must show the ability to perform a range of language functions such as explaining, describing, comparing, rephrasing, clarifying and asking for clarification, and giving examples in relation to the subject area being studied. And third, they should demonstrate the ability to perform such language tasks as read level-appropriate texts, find main idea and supporting details, take notes of lectures, present short oral reports, etc.

The model: An example

In this section, I provide a brief description of one CBI course based on the model described above. I next consider the views of the stakeholders involved in this course, namely, the language teacher, the students, and the content faculty. This discussion is based on extensive class observations and field notes by the author who acted in the dual role of course designer and language teacher, and conducted interviews with the students and content professor after the course.

The course

In spring 2010, we began to offer the first CBI course in our undergraduate program. The course was on the sociopolitical context of Iranian Media and was co-taught by a political science professor together with the author as the language instructor of the course. It involved one content session per week for a total of fifteen sessions, taught by the content professor; and two weekly pre- and post-content adjunct language sessions for a total of thirty sessions, taught by the author. The focus as stated in the course syllabus was:

“In this course, we will examine social and political issues against the background of media developments in Iran. After a brief review of Iran's media and political structure, we will discuss the changing role of the old and new media, the media’s interactions with factional politics, the emergence of a new generation of religious intellectuals, the rise and the decline of
the reform movement, and the ascendance of the ultra-conservative politicians (p. 1).”

There were nine Persian Studies undergraduates, including five Flagship students, enrolled in the course. All of the students were in the second semester of their third year and some had also completed an intensive summer program.

**Content faculty recruitment and orientation**

The content faculty recruited for teaching content was interested in working with language learners. However, the challenge was that he had little experience teaching a course entirely designed for, and made up of, Persian language learners. As a result, prior to the start of the course, he was provided with a crash course on some strategies to make his lectures more accessible to the students (for a detailed discussion of strategies see Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2013).

**Materials**

The content professor, in consultation with the author, pre-selected a total of fifteen authentic articles on the course subject of relatively manageable length and complexity in view of the students’ language proficiency levels. The materials for the adjunct language sessions were developed on a weekly basis by the author based on pre-readings of the weekly articles and video-recordings of the lecture sessions as well as the author’s notes taken during lecture sessions that he attended as well. The development of these materials was generally guided in reference to the categories identified in Table 1 below. It is worth noting that the table represents the most salient categories and that it is not exhaustive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Sample categories guiding language-based materials development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Function</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Argue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Categorize</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarify</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
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<td>Define</td>
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<td>Describe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
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Assessment

With the course being accountable to both content and language outcomes, each of these was separately assessed by the relevant instructor. With respect to content, three assessment activities were used, including a weekly journal listing and defining new concepts/ideas, a short piece synthesizing ideas from class discussions and readings (about 250 words), and a final paper on a relevant topic approved by the content professor (about 800 words). As for language outcomes, they were assessed in reference with the categories identified in Table 1 through a variety of performance tasks in separate quizzes, a mid-term, and a final exam. Students would then receive one composite grade incorporating content and language grades.

Participants’ views about the course and lessons learned

In what follows, the views of the three stakeholders in the course, that is, the language instructor, the students, and the content faculty are presented. These are based on the author’s observations notes and reflections as well as interviews conducted with the students and the content professor after the course.

The language teacher’s views

In my dual role as the person who planned the CBI course and acted as the language teacher, I had certain expectations from the course. As a language educator, I was especially interested in making sure whether the course created optimal conditions for student language development. Observations of the students’ engagement in all the components of the course were reassuring in that students would frequently remark that the course was relevant, interesting, and fully meaningful to them. More crucially, the course was saturated with the all-important comprehensible input. For instance, during lecture sessions by the content specialist, he would modify his speech to make sure that the students were following the lecture through various strategies such as using a more deliberate style of speech, avoiding the use of marked linguistic forms in favor of unmarked ones, and providing a lot of paraphrasing or rephrasing to convey his meanings.
The adjunct support sessions provided ample opportunity to ensure that not only was the content comprehensible to the students, but that they also actually comprehended the content through various language-sensitive pedagogical tasks. Given that comprehensible input in the context of meaningful communication is widely regarded as a prerequisite for language acquisition (Gass, 1997; Long, 1996; Swain, 1995), it was satisfying to see that the course did meet this important requirement.

However, while the course overall did provide a significant amount of comprehensible input, one major observation was that, contrary to my expectations, the lecture sessions were not equally rich in interactive episodes between the content professor and the students. The anticipation was that the content sessions would give rise to many instances of ‘negotiation of meaning’ between the professor and the students as new ideas and concepts would be introduced, discussed, and clarified in class. From the Interaction Hypothesis perspective (Gass & Mackey, 2006), I was expecting to see students pushed to use Persian during these episodes, thereby enhancing their communicative competence. However, not only were these episodes infrequent, the content professor would occasionally code-switch to English when such interactive episodes did happen, thereby also prompting the students to do likewise. This appears to be something not unique to this CBI course (for similar observations, see Musumeci, 1996; Pica, 2002). From a language development perspective, negotiation of meaning in the language is particularly important because, in their attempts to communicate their meanings real-time, learners are more likely to “notice a gap between what they want to say and what they can say, leading them to recognize what they do not know, or know only partially” (Swain, 1995, pp. 125–126, italics original).” In the wake of this perceived shortcoming during lecture sessions, I felt it imperative to make up for this shortcoming in adjunct language sessions. To this end, I would make sure to include various language tasks such as information-gap, reasoning, and opinion tasks (see Nunan, 1989) in order to trigger episodes of interaction and negotiation of meaning in the adjunct sessions.

One major issue that soon emerged as the course was unfolding was the need to reconsider our earlier decision to use authentic readings. As mentioned earlier, we had initially decided to
assign short and manageable, but *authentic*, reading assignments in the interest of making the course resemble a regular content course as much as possible. However, very soon we noticed the students were finding the readings too difficult to access. As a result, we both felt that there was a need to abandon strict adherence to authenticity and actually provide the students with ‘tailored’ readings to make them more accessible. This tailoring involved shortening the articles as much as possible, adding marginal glosses for difficult or low frequency lexis, occasionally rewriting sections of the articles, adding transition markers to make the links between text sections more clear, and occasionally making linguistic changes to the readings by, for example, replacing low frequency lexical items with high frequency ones.

*Students’ views*

Overwhelmingly the students welcomed the course such that they asked for more similar courses in their end of term anonymous course evaluations. In fact, one of the reasons that we have since continued to offer such courses was this enthusiasm on the part of the students. Given that one academic semester is too short a time frame to result in significant proficiency gains, especially in language for cognitive and academic purposes (Cummins, 1984), I avoid making any claims about students’ language gains. Instead, I focus on their affective response to the course. It is uncontroversial to say that learners’ affect in any context of learning does play a crucial role in the learning process.

Perhaps the most prominent feature that most of the students commented on in their interviews was the face validity of the course as a *content* course rather than a *language* course. For the majority of them, the very fact that a political science professor was the leading instructor in the course was itself a novel experience. When asked how they would introduce the course to a prospective fellow student, one student, for example, stated that:

I’d say in this course you’d read about Iranian contemporary history and politics, and you’d read some political theories in order to understand the political formation in Iran, and you’d talk about them in class. In addition, you’d read Iranian
newspapers. In the course, you’d work with a real political science professor and also with a language professor. [Translated from Persian]

It is important to note that, without exception, all of the students in answering the above question began their response with a description of the content of the course, suggesting that they perceived it primarily as a content course. Frequently, the students stated that, thanks to its particular organization, the course had boosted their confidence as it enabled them to follow and understand class lectures, engage in discussions in the content session and complete the assignments. One student, for example, expressed his sense of accomplishment when he said:

I felt very accomplished to have been able to understand the professor’s lectures and also to have written a six-page paper. [Translated from Persian]

Another student described a similar feeling by stating that:

I think the course was well planned and it helped me to understand the lectures better. For example, the fact that we could listen to the lectures several times helped me understand the lectures more and more. I think this was really helpful because from the middle of the semester I felt I could understand the lectures easily. [Translated from Persian]

For some of the students, the course put them in a position to engage in tasks in the language that they had never done before. One student, for instance, stated that:

I’d never taken notes in Persian like in English and in this course it was the first time I did it, especially on Fridays when we watched lectures and practiced note-taking. [Translated from Persian]

In particular, the adjunct sessions appeared to have been very helpful in boosting the confidence of the less proficient students because they provided these students with the opportunity to listen to
video-recordings of segments of the lectures multiple times and involved explicit focus on the language of the lectures. Some of the students also remarked with satisfaction that the particular organization of the course enabled them to understand the entire fifty-minute long content class in Persian, noting this was something they had not been as confident about prior to the course. As one student put it:

Before signing up for the course, I wasn’t quite sure if I was ready for this course or not. But the course was quite manageable. I mean, the things that we’d do on Mondays and Fridays were useful to me and they helped me succeed. [Translated from Persian]

These statements that clearly speak to the students’ increasing confidence level were reassuring to us as they suggested the course was indeed achieving one the primary goals we had hoped for in introducing transitional CBI courses in our undergraduate program.

While the students invariably made many positive comments about the way this CBI course had been organized, some also pointed to their challenge in comprehending the weekly readings, particularly early on in the semester. In this connection, one student stated that:

In the first few weeks some of the articles were really difficult; sometime I couldn’t understand them at all. Don’t get me wrong, I mean, I liked the challenge but sometimes they were way too difficult.

Some students expressed a sense of frustration at having had to spend a lot of time struggling with understanding just one single article. However, when asked whether they found the assigned readings less challenging as the course progressed, the students’ responses were nearly unanimously positive. Particularly noteworthy was the fact that many stated that the vocabulary glosses that were provided in the margins greatly helped them in comprehending the readings. This corroborates research findings on the importance of second language readers’ knowledge of specialized and low-frequency lexis in their text comprehension (Nation, 2001; O’Keefe, McCarthy, & Carter, 2007).
**Content professor’s views**

One major issue pointed out by the content professor was that he found it a challenge to teach a class of students that was entirely made of language learners. He stated that in this new experience, unlike his regular teaching in English where students’ struggle is with unfamiliar disciplinary concepts and notions, in this course he constantly found himself wondering whether the students were following what he was saying. For this reason, he felt he had to rather simplify things and occasionally switch to English to make sure he has been correctly understood.

The professor, however, added that when reading students’ weekly written responses to the articles, he would often be pleasantly surprised to see that they had in fact comprehended the lectures and the arguments presented in class, especially after we both had decided to make certain modifications to weekly readings. He also attributed students’ comprehension in large part to the support the students received in the adjunct sessions. As he put it:

> When I read the students’ pieces I really liked seeing that nearly all of them had gotten it quite well, especially after we’d decided to ‘treat’ the articles a little bit. I guess the fact that you worked with them on the side really helped. Some of the student’s pieces were unbelievably good. So I guess in my class they’d comprehend something like 40-50% of the discussions but with the things they did in your class they ended up with something like 80 to 90% of it all.

A second issue raised by the professor was the time-consuming challenge of finding suitable articles written in Persian to be used in the course. However, noting that students did read a relatively truncated number of articles compared to his regular classes, he felt the students did show a good grasp of the key ideas and arguments discussed in the course. To add more depth to the students’ knowledge of the subject matter, he suggested assigning articles in English as well. In his view, this could have increased the ‘rigor’ of the course, making it possible to “delve deeper” into ideas and arguments.
Related to the issue of academic ‘rigor’, the professor further stated that in the course he had to modify his expectations given the nature of the course and its students. As he put it:

One other thing I’ve got to say is that in this course my expectations from the students were lower than my other courses. For instance, in the courses that I teach in English, 50% of the time I expect the students to regurgitate the sources and the rest I expect them to give me their own analysis. But here something like 80 to 90% of the time I expected them to understand and only 10% of the time I was interested in knowing what they themselves thought and I think this was because I felt there was not that much linguistic capacity. That is, my priority here was to make sure that they had in fact understood the lectures. So for this reason my expectations were different, that is, comprehension was more important than analysis of the arguments.

For this reason, he found the course qualitatively different from the courses that he normally taught. Understandably, increasing the disciplinary rigor of the course was a major issue for him.

**Conclusion**

Having introduced CBI courses in our curriculum, there are a number of lessons that may be worth sharing. To begin with, it is important to remember that the adoption of content-accountable CBI courses in a curriculum is a rather costly endeavor. At the very least, funding is needed to retain a doctoral student from a relevant disciplinary domain to act as the content professor alongside the language instructor. It is also important to bear in mind that CBI courses are labor-intensive and require close coordination and alignment between the content and language specialists. The language specialist in particular needs to be fully aware of what goes on in content sessions so that adjunct sessions can be closely aligned with them. Video recording content sessions would be particularly useful. However, it can add to the labor and costs.
The issue of costs and labor aside, perhaps one of the most important issues to consider in implementing CBI is that of ‘authenticity’ of sources that students need to read. While there are arguments in favor of using authentic materials (Guariento & Morley, 2001; Rogers & Medley, 1988), our experience suggests that careful selection of readings is critical. This can be more difficult than it may seem as in many less commonly taught languages there are fewer sources available. It is also important to carefully tailor course readings to the level of students. Overly inaccessible reading assignments can discourage students and negatively impact course outcomes.

Lastly, it is also critical to be realistic in setting appropriate subject matter learning outcomes in a typical CBI instruction in college-level foreign language education. Carefully calibrating academic ‘rigor’ with students’ language proficiency levels, setting realistic outcomes and using level-appropriate assessment measures are essential in implementing the model. Typical college-level foreign language students, especially those learning a less commonly taught language, are obviously not at a language proficiency level to fully access authentic sources and engage in highly advanced literate tasks such as evaluating arguments and writing extended argumentative texts. College-level foreign language CBI courses, therefore, cannot be expected to have the same disciplinary rigor as regular content courses. On the other hand, however, they can be the most rigorous foreign language learning courses possible.
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Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety: A Study of Chinese Language Learners

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Abstract

This study investigates Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety and its associated factors among college-level students who learn Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) in the U.S. Although the Speaking Anxiety scores of the participants were not high on average, but frequency analyses showed that quite a number of learners experienced high levels of anxiety when speaking Chinese. The results of ANOVA analyses indicated that gender had a significant effect on Speaking Anxiety, but proficiency level and the elective-required status did not. Correlation and multiple regression results showed that perceived difficulty level of the Chinese language, self-perceived language learning ability, and self-perceived achievement in Chinese classes were significant predictors of Speaking Anxiety and altogether accounted for 21.4% of the variance in Speaking Anxiety.

Introduction

Anxiety has been identified as a common emotional reaction in foreign language classrooms. Researchers have found that one-third of foreign language learners experience at least a moderate level of foreign language anxiety (Horwitz, 2001). Researchers have also found that foreign language anxiety has a wide range of potential negative effects on foreign language learning (see Luo, 2013b for a detailed review). Therefore, foreign language teachers and scholars have been interested in finding out the causes of foreign language anxiety. Among the four skills, speaking has been recognized as the most anxiety-provoking. In spite of numerous studies on general foreign language anxiety, research exclusively focused on foreign language speaking anxiety has been scarce.

As China is playing an increasingly important role in world economy, a worldwide interest in learning the Chinese language has
emerged. Due to its character-based writing system and tonal nature, the Chinese language is a relatively difficult foreign language for most learners, which might lead to higher levels of anxiety. However, studies on Chinese language learners’ foreign language anxiety in general and speaking anxiety in particular have not been rich. Thus, this study investigates CFL learners’ speaking anxiety and its associated factors, hoping to provide some practical suggestions for language teachers and some meaningful recommendations for future research.

Research Background

The literature on anxiety generally distinguishes three types of anxiety: trait, situation-specific, and state anxiety (see Cattell & Scheier, 1963; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991; Spielberger, 1966). Trait anxiety refers to a general tendency to become nervous in a wide range of situations (Spielberger, 1983). Since trait anxiety is a feature of an individual’s personality, it is therefore stable over time. In other words, people with trait anxiety are anxious about many things under many circumstances. State anxiety is the feeling of worry or stress that takes place at a particular moment under a particular circumstance (Spielberger, 1983) and often accompanies physical signs such as perspiration, sweaty palms, dry mouth, muscle contractions and tension, and increased heart rate. A state anxiety is not stable and is likely to change from moment to moment and from circumstance to circumstance. A situation-specific anxiety is similar to trait anxiety in that it is stable over time, but it may not be consistent across situations. Rather, it is subject to change from situation to situation. Public speaking anxiety is an example of situation-specific anxiety.

Early studies on anxiety and language learning conceptualized foreign language anxiety as a transfer of other types of anxiety (i.e., trait anxiety, test anxiety, or public speaking anxiety) in the language learning context, which produced mixed and even contradictory results. At the time, some studies found negative relationships between anxiety and language achievement, some studies found no relationship, but others found positive relationships (Chastain, 1975; Kleinmann, 1977). Scovel (1978) argued that the inconsistent results of the early studies may be due to the fact that researchers used various constructs and measures of anxiety. Since that time, some researchers (e.g.
Gardner, 1985; Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986) suggested that foreign language anxiety should be viewed as a situation-specific anxiety unique to foreign language learning and independent of other types of anxieties.

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) defined foreign language anxiety as “a distinct complex set of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p.128). They also identified three anxieties related to foreign language anxiety - communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1970), fear of negative evaluation (Watson & Friend, 1969), and test anxiety (Sarason, 1978) - to help language teachers and scholars understand the nature of foreign language anxiety. In addition, they offered an instrument, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), to measure foreign language anxiety.

After the introduction of the FLCAS and a number of other measures of foreign language anxiety (e.g. Gardner, 1985; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994), researchers were able to measure foreign language anxiety relatively more precisely. Studies in a variety of language learning contexts have found that approximately one-third of students studying a foreign language experience at least a moderate level of foreign language anxiety (e.g. Aida, 1994; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Horwitz, 2001; Le, 2004). In addition, a large number of studies have investigated the relationship between foreign language anxiety and second language achievement. These studies generally report a consistent moderate negative relationship between measures of language anxiety and language achievement (Horwitz, 2001).

Speaking has been generally recognized as the most anxiety-provoking skill associated with foreign language learning. For example, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) identified communication apprehension to be conceptually relevant to foreign language anxiety. Among many other researchers, Palacios (1998) found that speaking caused the most anxiety among the learners. Price (1991) reported that the most anxiety-provoking thing in learning a foreign language, according to her students, was to speak the target language in front of their peers.
To date, the FLCAS has been the most widely used instrument to measure foreign language learners’ general anxiety in foreign language classrooms. Although the FLCAS includes quite a number of items addressing students’ anxious feelings of speaking the foreign language in the classroom setting, many other items in the FLCAS tap students’ general anxious feelings towards foreign language learning, anxiety associated with listening, test anxiety, or attitude towards foreign language learning. Therefore, the FLCAS does not exclusively measure foreign language speaking anxiety and there have been very few studies focused on foreign language speaking anxiety.

Due to the big differences between Chinese and English, it is widely recognized that Chinese is a challenging language for Americans to learn. The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) of the Department of State has defined four categories of foreign languages on the basis of the difficulty for native speakers of English. According to the FSI, the most commonly taught languages—Spanish and French—are both Category I languages, whereas the less commonly taught languages, such as Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Arabic, on the other hand, are classified as Category IV. According to FSI figures, students need to take 1320 hours of instruction in a Category IV language to reach Level 2 (limited working proficiency)\(^5\) in comparison with only 480 hours of instruction in Category I languages (Walker, 1989).

The high difficulty level of the Chinese language may be an important source of anxiety among English-speaking learners of Chinese (Luo, 2012). In particular, unlike English, Chinese is a tonal language. The need of paying attention to tones while speaking a foreign language may cause extra anxious feelings. However, studies on anxiety among CFL learners are very rare. There are only two published studies (Luo, 2013a; Zhao and Whitchurch, 2011) on Chinese language learning anxiety among college-level students in the United States. There have been no studies exclusively focusing on Chinese language learners’ anxiety associated with speaking.

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\(^{5}\) According to the FSI Absolute Language Proficiency Rating Scale, a person with limited working proficiency of a language is able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements.
Research Questions

In order to fill the gap, the present study attempts to adopt an instrument exclusively focused on speaking anxiety and investigate U.S. college-level CFL learners’ speaking anxiety and its associated factors. The research questions include the following:

1. Are U.S. college-level CFL learners anxious when speaking Chinese?
2. What is the influence of background variables such as gender, proficiency level, and elective-required status on U.S. college-level CFL learners’ speaking anxiety?
3. How is CFL learners’ speaking anxiety related to their perceived difficulty level of the Chinese language, self-perceived achievement, and self-perceived language learning ability?

Methods

Participants

Participants were 257 (147 males, 110 females) CFL learners with an age range of 15 to 59 ($M = 21.3, SD = 4.7$) at two large public universities in the U.S. One university is in southwestern U.S. and the other is in midwestern U.S. 112 participants were from the southwestern university and 145 participants were from the midwestern university. They were taking credit-bearing Chinese language courses at the two universities. 128 (49.8%) participants were taking the Chinese course as an elective and 129 (50.2%) participants were taking it as a required course.

Among the 257 participants, 45 (17.5%) participants were freshmen, 65 (25.3%) were sophomores, 78 (30.4%) were juniors, 55 (21.45%) were seniors, 7 (2.7%) were graduate students, and 7 (2.7%) indicated other categories. 186 (72.4%) of the participants were white, 4 (1.6%) were Chinese American, 26 (10.1%) were Asian but not Chinese American, 19 (7.4%) were Asian international students, 16 (6.2%) were Hispanic, 1 (0.4%) was African American, and 5 (1.9%) were from other ethnic backgrounds.

In this study, participants’ language proficiency was classified according to their current instructional level: first-year Chinese, “elementary level”; second-year Chinese, “intermediate level”; and
third-year Chinese, “advanced level”. In the present sample, there are 141 (54.9%) elementary-level students, 76 (29.6) intermediate-level students, and 40 (15.6%) advanced students. A summary of sample distributions could be found in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Sample Distributions</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Midwestern University</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Southwestern University</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elective-Required Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year in College</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proficiency Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Instruments**

The instruments for this study included the Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986; Luo,
Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

2011) and a Background Questionnaire. The background questionnaire not only elicited participants’ background information such as gender, age, ethnicity, year of college, proficiency level, etc., but also asked participants to estimate a grade they expected to get in the Chinese class and to rate their perceived foreign language learning ability, and their perception of the difficulty level of the Chinese language on a 1-5 Likert scale.

The Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety Scale is an 8-item self-report measure adapted from Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986)’s Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale. The 8 items, reflecting learners’ anxiety experiences associated with speaking Chinese, are scored on a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (strongly disagree = 1; disagree = 2; neither agree nor disagree = 3; agree = 4; strongly agree = 5). The Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety Scale was found to be highly reliable. The internal consistency reliability (using Cronbach’s Alpha) of this scale was .91 (Luo, 2011).

Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety was calculated as the sum of the number of items in the scale (i.e., 8). Negatively phrased items were coded reversely. The possible range of score for Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety is 8-40.

Data Analysis Methods

For descriptive analyses of Chinese Language Learning Anxiety, means and standard derivations and the frequencies of the responses (i.e., strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree) of the 8 items in the Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety Scale were calculated and compared.

In terms of the influence of background variables on Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety, three-way ANOVA analyses were used to compare Chinese Language Learning Anxiety among different subgroups of CFL learners. The background variables included gender, Chinese language proficiency level, and elective-required status. Before the ANOVA tests were conducted, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test along with skewness and kurtosis statistics were performed with the score of Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety to see whether the data were normally distributed.
For the analysis of relationships between anxiety and other variables related to Chinese learning (i.e. perception of the difficulty level of the Chinese language, self-perceived achievement, self-perceived language learning ability), correlation analyses and multiple regression analyses were used to determine how CFL learners' speaking anxiety was predicted by these variables.

Before multiple regression analyses were conducted, the researcher checked Cook's distance and Leverage values for outliers, examined the P-P plot for normality of residuals, plotted the standardized residuals against the standardized predicted values to check linearity and equality of variances, and studied the correlation matrix of all the independent variables for multicollinearity. All these tests indicated that multiple regression was appropriate for the present data.

Results and Discussion

Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety

In order to answer research question 1, the researcher calculated the means and standard deviations of Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety and counted the frequencies of the responses of the items in the anxiety scale.

Means and Standard Deviations

The means and standard derivations of Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety are shown in Table 2. In order to compare the score of Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety with foreign language anxiety scores found in other studies, the researcher divided the means by 8, i.e., the number of items in the scale, and calculated the mean item response for Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety Type</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean Item Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking Anxiety</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>2.725</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Means and Standard Deviations of Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety
As can be seen from Table 2, the mean item response for Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety (M=2.725\(^6\)) is not very high, indicating that the CFL learners in this sample, on average, were only slightly anxious in speaking Chinese. Luo (2013a) found the mean item response of general Chinese Language Learning Anxiety was 2.58, lower than that of Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety found in this study. This finding could indicate that speaking Chinese is more anxiety-provoking than learning Chinese in general, but it could also be due to the fact that the sample in Luo (2013a)'s study included a large number of heritage learners while the participants in this study were non-heritage CFL learners.

In Zhao and Whitchurch’s (2011) study, participants were all English-speaking CFL learners and the mean item response for these learners’ general foreign language anxiety is 2.69\(^7\), a little lower than the CFL learners’ Speaking Anxiety in this study. This result seems to further indicate that CFL learners are particularly anxious in speaking Chinese. However, since the participants in these two studies were different, this conclusion is still premature.

**Frequency Analyses**

The participants’ responses to the 8 items in the Chinese Language Learning Anxiety Scale are reported in Table 3. All frequencies and percentages refer to the number of students who agreed or strongly agreed (or disagreed or strongly disagreed) with statements indicative of Chinese language learning anxiety to the nearest whole number. Percentages may not total to 100 due to rounding.

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\(^{6}\) The range of mean item response is 1-5.

\(^{7}\) Zhao and Whitchurch (2011) did not report the mean item response of anxiety directly. The mean item response of 2.69 is a result of calculation based on the data reported in their study.
Table 3 Frequency Analyses of Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my Chinese class.</td>
<td>24 (9.3%)</td>
<td>63 (24.5%)</td>
<td>54 (21.0%)</td>
<td>84 (32.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my Chinese class.</td>
<td>68 (26.5%)</td>
<td>81 (31.5%)</td>
<td>57 (22.2%)</td>
<td>36 (14.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in my Chinese class.</td>
<td>63 (24.5%)</td>
<td>73 (28.4%)</td>
<td>53 (20.6%)</td>
<td>45 (17.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my Chinese class.</td>
<td>38 (14.8%)</td>
<td>81 (31.5%)</td>
<td>73 (28.4%)</td>
<td>53 (20.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak Chinese.</td>
<td>102 (39.7%)</td>
<td>86 (33.5%)</td>
<td>35 (13.6%)</td>
<td>23 (8.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SA=strongly agree, A=agree, N=neither agree nor disagree, D=disagree, SD=strongly disagree. All percentages refer to the number of students who agreed or strongly agreed (or disagreed or strongly disagreed) with statements indicative of CFL anxiety to the nearest whole number. Percentages may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Although the mean item response of speaking anxiety among CFL learners in the present study was not extremely high on average (M=2.725), quite a number of learners did experience a high level anxiety while speaking Chinese (see Table 3). For example, 116 (45.2%) learners agreed or strongly agreed with the item “I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my Chinese class” and 68 (26.4%) learners endorsed the item “I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in my Chinese class”.

Anxious students showed low confidence in speaking Chinese. 81 (31.5%) participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with statements such as “I feel confident when I speak in my Chinese class”. Anxious
students seemed to be concerned with peers’ opinions as they endorsed items such as “I feel very self-conscious about speaking Chinese in front of other students” (35%), and “I always feel that the other students speak Chinese better than I do” (44.7%). Peer competition seemed to be an important cause of speaking anxiety in Chinese classes.

The Influence of Background Variables

In order to answer research question 2, a three-way ANOVA was used to compare mean differences in Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety with students' background characteristics as independent variables. The background variables examined here included: 1) gender, 2) proficiency level, and 3) elective-required status.

Before the ANOVA analyses were conducted, the researcher examined the normal distribution together with Skewness and Kurtosis to see whether the score of Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety was normally distributed. Results showed that the absolute values for the Skewness (.152) and Kurtosis (.303) were lower than 2, indicating the scores of Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety satisfactorily formed normal distribution. In addition, The Levene's test for the three-way ANOVA test ($p = .817$) was not significant, suggesting that there was not sufficient evidence to indicate that the assumption of homogeneity of variance/covariance had been violated. All these results indicated that ANOVA analyses were appropriate for the current data.

Results of the three-way ANOVA analyses by gender, proficiency level, and elective-required status showed that there were no significant differences in Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety by proficiency level ($df = 2, F = .578, p = .562$) or the elective-required status ($df = 1, F = 3.225, p = .074$), but there were significant differences by gender ($df = 1, F = 5.996, p = .015$). None of the interactions between the three background variables was significant.

In other words, beginning-level, intermediate-level, and advanced-level students were not significantly different on Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety. Students who selected Chinese as an elective course and those who took Chinese as a required course did not differ significantly on Speaking Anxiety either. Female and male
learners experienced significantly different amounts of Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety.

A close examination of the means and standard deviations of Speaking Anxiety for each group showed that elementary-level students were the most anxious \( (M = 22.31, SD = 7.44) \), followed by intermediate-level students \( (M = 21.38, SD = 6.90) \), with advanced-level students \( (M = 21.10, SD = 7.68) \) being the least anxious. The Elective Group \( (M = 22.39, SD = 6.89) \), on average, were more anxious than the Required Group \( (M = 21.30, SD = 7.70) \) in speaking Chinese. Female CFL learners \( (M = 23.34, SD = 7.04) \) were more anxious about speaking Chinese than their male counterparts \( (M = 20.72, SD = 7.34) \).

Many studies have explored the influence of proficiency level on foreign language anxiety. For example, in Liu's (2006) study of EFL learners in China, more proficient students tended to be less anxious. Zhao and Whitchurch (2011) found that elementary college-level CFL learners in the U.S. were a little more anxious than the intermediate learners, but the difference was not significant. Luo (2013a) found that proficiency level had a significant effect on general Chinese Language Learning Anxiety and that students' anxiety levels decreased as their proficiency level increased. All these studies seem to suggest that exposure to the target language helps reduce foreign language anxiety.

The finding that the Elective Group were more anxious about speaking Chinese than the Required Group was surprising. Students who take Chinese as a required course are likely to feel more pressed to perform well in Chinese classes, so the researcher thought these students should experience more anxiety than their counterparts. In contrast with the finding of this study, Aida (1994) did find that the Required Group had a significantly higher level of general foreign language anxiety than the Elective Group among Japanese language learners. Therefore, more studies on the effect of the elective-required status on foreign language anxiety are needed.

It is worth mentioning that female and male students’ general foreign language anxiety levels in Chinese classes were reported not to be significantly different in Zhao and Whitchurch’s (2011) study. However, they also found female \( (M = 2.84) \) were more anxious in Chinese classes than male \( (M = 2.56) \) students. It seems that Chinese
instructors may need to pay special attention to female students' emotional needs in Chinese classes.

**Relationship between Speaking Anxiety and Other Learning Variables**

For the analysis of the relationship between Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety and other variables (i.e. perceived difficulty level of the Chinese language, self-perceived achievement, and self-perceived language learning ability), correlation and multiple regression analyses were used.

Participants were asked to provide a grade they expected to get in the Chinese class (which was used to indicate self-perceived achievement) and to rate their perceived difficulty level of the Chinese language and their self-perceived language learning ability on a 1-5 Likert scale.

The results of correlation analyses show that CFL learners' Speaking Anxiety had a significant positive correlation with perceived difficulty level of the Chinese language \( (r = .342, p = .0001) \) and a significant negative correlation with perceived language learning ability \( (r = -.311, p = .001) \) and self-perceived achievement in Chinese classes \( (r = -.303, p = .0001) \). In other words, students who perceived Chinese to be more difficult were more anxious; students who expected to get a higher grade and who perceived themselves to be better at learning languages tended to experience less anxiety in speaking Chinese.

The multiple regression analysis was performed to further examine how Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety could be predicted by the three variables. Before the multiple regression analysis was conducted, the researcher checked Cook's distance and Leverage values for outliers, examined the P-P plot for normality of residuals, and plotted the standardized residuals against the standardized predicted values for linearity and equality of variances. The results of these tests suggested that multiple regression was an appropriate analysis for the current data.

The results of multiple regression showed that the three variables were all significant predictors of Speaking Anxiety. They, as a whole, had a significant relationship with Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety, \( F (3, 253) = 22.9, p = .0001 \), and explained 21.4% of the
variance in Speaking Anxiety. Considering a large number of other
variables (e.g. learners' personality, classroom environment, teaching
materials, teaching methods, etc.) could affect learners' anxiety
experiences in Chinese classes, the 21.4% of variance explained by the
three variables is considerable.

The squared partial correlation coefficients were often
recommended to assess the relative contribution of individual variables
in multiple regression analysis (e.g. Cohen, 1988). From the partial
correlation coefficients (see Table 4), it can be seen that perception of
the difficulty of Chinese was the best predictor of Chinese Language
Speaking Anxiety, explaining 7.5% of the variance, followed by self-
perceived language learning ability and self-perceived achievement,
accounting for 4.84% and 4.28% of the variance respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Partial correlation coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Learning Ability</td>
<td>-.209</td>
<td>-.220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-perceived Achievement</td>
<td>-.196</td>
<td>-.207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty of Chinese</td>
<td>.261</td>
<td>.274</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Model R=.463; R Square=.214; Adjusted R Square=.205; Std. Error=6.52; F (3, 253) =22.9, p=.0001

Conclusion and Implications

This study found that College-level CFL learners in the U.S.
were not highly anxious about speaking Chinese on average \(M = 2.725\), but frequency analyses showed that quite a number of CFL
learners experienced high levels of anxiety in speaking Chinese,
indicating that Chinese Language Speaking Anxiety should be taken
into serious consideration in Chinese instruction.

The finding that CFL learners' Speaking Anxiety decreased as
their proficiency level increased may suggest that exposure to the target
language could help reduce learners' Speaking Anxiety. Therefore,
Chinese instructors may need to find ways to increase learners' exposure to the Chinese language. For example, involving students in the local Chinese community, setting up a Chinese Table, and building virtual Chinese community online for the students could all be effective strategies to increase language exposure.

In this study, female students are found to be significantly more anxious in speaking Chinese than male students. Chinese instructors may need to take this finding into consideration when conducting Chinese classes. In order to alleviate female students' uncomfortable experience in Chinese classes, Chinese instructors may need to pay more attention to female students' emotional reactions and avoid those anxiety-provoking practices (such as calling on students to answer questions, speaking in front of the class, etc.) on female students if necessary.

This study also found Speaking Anxiety to be positively correlated with perceived difficulty level of Chinese and negatively correlated with self-perceived language learning ability and self-perceived achievement in Chinese classes. Since students who perceive the Chinese language to be less difficult tend to be less anxious in Chinese classes, an orientation workshop demystifying the Chinese language at the beginning of Chinese classes may be able to get the students mentally and emotionally prepared for Chinese classes. In addition, effective strategies for teaching tones and characters, the two most difficult features of the Chinese language, should be enforced in Chinese classes. As CFL learners’ self-perceptions of language learning ability and achievement were reported to be negatively correlated with their anxiety levels, it may be helpful if Chinese teachers could encourage the students and build up their confidence in Chinese classes. Effective methods for encouragement include praising the students in front of their classmates, constant acknowledgement of their progress, and regular individual meetings to track each student’s challenges and progress.

This study explored CFL learners' anxiety associated with speaking and produced some meaningful results. Future studies could investigate CFL learners' anxiety when learning the other three skills, namely, listening, reading and writing and study whether the four skills are equally anxiety-provoking. In order to help reduce CFL learners' anxiety in learning Chinese, researchers could explore the sources of
CFL learners' anxiety. For this purpose, an interview study on highly anxious learners is recommended.
References


The Arabic Language Fog of War: Exploring Iraq War Veterans’ Motivations to Study Arabic Language and Culture Post-Deployment

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Abstract

This article describes research into Iraq War Veterans studying Arabic at the college level post-deployment. What is it about their exposure to the language and culture that motivates them to study the language after serving in Iraq? Few research studies exist in the area of Veterans’ education, a federally recognized minority. The study’s purpose was to explore Iraq war veterans’ language learning motivations and described their experiences, through the use of qualitative research methodology and the development of case study narratives. Results indicate that understanding the Veteran experience can foster a diversity-friendly, inclusive environment in the critical language classroom. There are broader implications for veteran higher education, other Less Commonly Taught Languages, alternative pedagogies, non-traditional student education, K-12, foreign language education policy, foreign relations, diversity & equity in the classroom, and national security.

Introduction

After September 11, 2001 and the inception of the Iraqi War in 2003, interest in the study of the Arabic language and culture in colleges and universities has dramatically increased across the United States, as is evidenced by expanding enrollment figures and the greater number of classes offered in Arabic language, literature, and culture. Arabic is no longer considered a Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL) according to the Modern Language Association (MLA, 2006). Since 2003, the Department of Veteran Affairs has estimated that over two million military personnel have cycled through Iraq, their deployments ranging from 6 months to two years or more, and they have all been exposed in varying degrees to the Arabic language and
culture. The total length of exposure exceeds that of a majority of language study abroad programs.

To clarify, a veteran is defined as any person who has served in the military. Veterans are given the title of Iraq War veteran if they have served in any branch of the United States armed forces at any time during United States military engagement in Iraq and have actively participated in military operations involving Iraq. There are several locations where U.S. military personnel may be stationed, including Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, the Persian Gulf, Yemen, Tajikistan, Japan, and Israel in order to earn the title Iraq War Veteran. This study focused on participants who spent time in a country where Arabic is one of the official languages.

By 2005, I noticed a striking trend in the composition of my Arabic language and culture classrooms. Each academic term, anywhere from two to four post-deployment Iraq War veterans enrolled in my Arabic language and culture classes. My colleagues reported similar numbers in their classrooms as well. This trend provided the impetus for me to conduct further research into the teaching of post-deployment veterans. Very little research has been conducted by language professionals into veterans’ motivations to take classes in Arabic post-deployment. For the veteran participants in this study, Arabic is a language to which they have already been exposed, but they may not need in achieving long-range educational goals. To say they are merely curious as a result of their language exposure in the Middle East is a very broad conclusion that does not incorporate the depth and character of the intercultural interactions these veterans had. Many of their intercultural interactions occurred in a context of conflict and many of these were negative in nature. In this way, as a population of students within the language classroom, the nature of their intercultural interactions sets them apart from other groups of students such as heritage language learners and traditional students.8 The current lack of research focusing on veteran student populations in the Arabic language classroom presents a gap in academic pedagogical literature. Investigating what motivates veterans to study

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8 Here, the term traditional students refers to those students between the ages of 18-22 who are enrolled full time in a college –level program and who achieve their academic/educational goals in the 4-year institutional model.
the language and culture of a region to which they were formerly deployed and to which they may not return could uncover information helpful to educators who design and implement language programs, university administrators who develop policy, and perhaps to the military personnel who train and prepare soldiers in the language and culture of the country of deployment. Existing educational research can benefit from learning about this significant population of minority students attending colleges and universities.

Learning Arabic: How hard is it really?

Arabic is classified as one of the hardest languages for English speakers to learn (Al-Batal, 1995). Arabic is a “category four” language (Samimy, 1992), which refers to the time investment needed to learn the language. Generally, it can take an individual four times as long to learn Arabic as it can to learn a category one language such as Spanish. The length of time it takes to learn Arabic can discourage students from learning the language. One reason Arabic is categorized in this way is the diglossic nature of the language (Versteegh, 1997). Diglossia refers to the linguistic situation where an Arabic dialect is used at home and informal settings and a formal version of the language, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is used for news broadcasts, literature, lectures, and for communication between dialect regions. There exists a spectrum of Arabic language usage between the colloquial dialects and MSA (Alosh 1997). MSA is most frequently taught in institutions of higher education. For students, it can seem as if they must learn two languages in order to grasp the intricacies of communication (Belnap, 1987). Arabic teachers need to understand students’ motivations in order to maintain their interest and to battle discouragement they may feel after several courses or months of diligent study with no noticeable improvement in proficiency (Al-Batal, 1995).

Research Question

The main research question going into the study was the following: 1) What motivates these Iraq war veterans to learn Arabic language and culture? Two sub-questions emerged as the data were collected: a) Does their previous exposure to Arabic language and
culture contribute to their motivations to learn the language; and b) Why do these Iraq war veterans want to learn the Arabic language and culture after their deployments? As previously stated, this is part of a larger study conducted over a period of years, but this article focuses only on the language motivation aspect.

**Language Learning Motivation**

Within the realm of social psychology, the term “motivation” refers to a psychological process that leads an individual to achieve a specific goal. It is among the various affective variables that influence learning achievement (Gardner, 1985). Foreign-language educators require an understanding of student motivations, because tapping into these motivations, especially in less-commonly taught languages, helps to increase course enrollment and allows educators to develop curricula that raise student levels of proficiency. Because of the synergy between motivation and the other affective variables like orientation (Husseinali, 2004 & 2006) and language anxiety (Samimy & Tabuse, 1992) that influence learning, it is nearly impossible to discuss motivation without considering factors such as risk-taking tendencies, language aptitude, and career aims (Dornyei, 2003 & Samimy, 1994). All of these impact the achievement of language-learning goals, both negatively and positively.

One socio-educational model posits that language-learning motivation comes from four main areas – context, anxiety, external influences, and individual differences (such as aptitude and previous language learning) (Gardner, 2001). There is an abundance of studies regarding language-learning motivation, dating back forty years (Dornyei, 2003). The majority of language motivation studies for the past forty years have been conducted on the more commonly taught languages of English, Spanish, French, and German (Taha, 2007). These studies have had far-reaching implications for foreign and second language pedagogy (Ushioda, 2003). As suggested in the introduction, applying some of these research theories and pedagogy to Arabic language learning is more than timely. As of a 2008 MLA study, Arabic was the 8th most studied language in the United States. Increased student enrollment has resulted in an increased demand for Arabic classes, but it is vital to study the motivations in students of
Arabic within their actual pedagogical context rather than merely making general, broad assumptions regarding the growth of interest in learning the Arabic language (Husseinali, 2006).

Absent in many of the existing language motivation studies are qualitative detailed descriptions and accounts of students’ exposure to language and culture prior to their classroom experience. A study done by Lambert (2001) posits that factors exist that contribute to language learning motivation prior to the student even entering the classroom. Students’ past encounters with the language and culture become operative affective variables within the classroom context.

To date, the majority of research participants in Arabic language studies have been put in generic categories such as “Arabic language students” and no other data regarding the participants, as individuals outside the classroom, have been provided. One study conducted by Husseinali (2004 and 2006) divided students into heritage and non-heritage language learners, but there is no data from those studies that investigated and qualitatively documented the students’ actual experiences with the language prior to their classroom experiences. Because participants’ identities outside the classroom contribute to the context that they bring to the classroom environment (Alosh, 1997), it is of value to explore foreign language students’ motivations within the context of their prior intercultural experiences, as well as prior language learning experiences. Because cultural learning is such an organic part of language learning, I refer to Arabic language learning as Arabic language and culture learning.

Several theories informed this qualitative research study, including Dornyei’s construct for language learning motivation (1994 and 1996), Gardner and Lambert’s language learning motivation theories (1972), and Norton’s (2000) postulation on language learning and cultural identity. These theories operate within veterans’ intercultural experiences and their motivations to learn Arabic language and culture and were used to build an operational construct for the relationship between language learning motivations, other affective variables in language learning, and previous ALC exposure.
A Construct for Language Learning Motivation

According to studies conducted by Clement, Dornyei, and Noels (1994), measuring competence and language learning behavior integrates three main components: integrative motivation, linguistic self-confidence, and appraisal of the classroom environment (Dornyei, 1996). Integrative motivation refers to the sociocultural dimension of language learning. It is discussed in detail below, but can generally be described as the language learners’ attitudes toward the speakers and culture of the target language. Linguistic self-confidence combines a variety of affective variables, the main components being language anxiety and language learners’ self-esteem within the target language environment (Dornyei, 2003). Appraisal refers to the learners’ attitudes about and perceptions of the language classroom, the language teacher, and classroom materials.

The Dornyei, Clement, and Noels (1994) research found that the classroom environment contributes to motivation in unique but measurable ways. They identified several aspects of the classroom environment affecting student motivation. Table 1 identifies and describes these elements of the classroom environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Cohesion</td>
<td>• Rapport amongst students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communities of practice (Lave &amp; Wenger, 1991) inside and outside the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>• Students’ perceptions of teachers’ L2 knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>• Native vs. non-native teacher speakers (Braine, 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>• Relevance of course materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>• Students’ perception of course materials’ significance to their language-learning goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Factors of student appraisal in the classroom environment summarized from Clement, Dornyei, Noels (1994)
The Dornyei et al. study found that even though instrumental motivation (i.e. driven by specific language achievement goals beyond the language classroom; explained further below) seemed to be operative within the participants, integrative motivation (i.e. driven by an internal desire to understand the language and culture without specific language achievement goals) seemed to be the most prominent variable motivating the students to learn. In a subsequent study, Dornyei (1996) reflected that it is possible that integrative motivation may be more prominent among students when there are short-term or situational goals within the language classroom environment, which would explain the lack of instrumental motivation contributing to the classroom context at any given time. However, Dornyei conceded that this is by no means a complete picture of the classroom environment, and other variables may be present, immeasurable within this particular study:

“It has been pointed out several times in the second language literature that the difficulty of understanding the exact nature of classroom events lies to a large extent in the complexity of the classroom. In our attempt to find a scientific construct that would cover a large number of classroom phenomena, we applied a group dynamics-based approach.” (pg. 75)

As with Dornyei’s 1996 study, my research applied a group-dynamics-based approach when exploring motivation that the participant veterans brought to the classroom environment. Veterans’ motivations to learn Arabic language and culture post-deployment showed all the characteristics of the complex, recursive process that Dornyei (2005) re-conceptualized into the “L2 motivational self system.” This model attempts to account for motivational factors external to the classroom experience. In recognizing that motivation is a complex, recursive psychological process (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991), this model explains language-learning motivation at the level of the individual language learner. Understanding the L2 motivational self helps in accounting for the context that the individual brings to the classroom and what they contribute to the classroom environment.

Figure 1 conceptualizes this model of language learning motivation according to Dornyei (2005).
The three dimensions of the L2 Motivational Self System, as explained by Dornyei (2005) and represented in Figure 1, include the following:

- The ideal L2 self refers to the language learning and proficiency goals of the individual learner. These goals may be integrative or instrumental in nature.
- The L2 “ought to” self refers to the smaller incremental achievement goals of the language learner. The “ought to” self includes completing homework assignments and classroom activities and meeting course requirements. For example, an individual language learner knows he or she “ought to” study vocabulary lists prior to taking a quiz or test to maintain a satisfactory grade in the course. These smaller, incremental achievement goals are instrumental, not integrative, and are generally imposed upon the learner from an outside authority. The “ought to” self is more concerned with completion of the linguistic task than understanding the L2/ target language and culture.
• The final dimension incorporates the language learner’s prior experiences and exposure to the language and culture before he or she decides to learn the language in the classroom. It may also include concurrent exposure to the language and culture while the student is taking coursework (Dornyei uses heritage language learners in his example).

Dornyei’s conceptualizations set a solid framework for my research because his three dimensions of the L2 motivational self-system help to describe Iraq war veterans’ language learning motivation. However, there is an additional aspect to the veterans’ language learning, what I’ve termed illumination, which seems to fall outside of this construct and will be discussed in the results section.

Methodology

I base the information herein on a qualitative/interpretative study I conducted from 2006 through 2010 with Iraq war veteran student participants. I eventually focused on a population of nineteen Iraq war veterans studying Arabic language and culture and Middle East Studies at a large land-grant university, at a community college with a coordinated transfer program to the land-grant university, and at two other Midwest universities. Using a narrative methodology drawn from multiple data sources (Glesne, 2006; Richards, 2001; Norton, 2000), I explored, in-depth, the nature of the veteran students’ prior cultural and educational experiences. I then related these experiences to their motivations and to other affective variables, which became part of their learning of Arabic language and culture. The qualitative approach included an open-ended questionnaire in conjunction with individual interviews, focus group interviews, classroom observations when possible, and field notes (Nichols, 2010). The use of multiple data-gathering techniques produced rich and thought-provoking results.

Multiple interviews were conducted with each of the 19 participants, with a maximum of three for each veteran (Siedman, 2006). These interviews generally lasted between sixty and ninety minutes. During the interviews, the veterans were asked open-ended
questions and allowed to respond in as much or as little time as they needed, as recommended by Glesne (2006).

“Interviewing is an occasion for close research-participant interaction. Qualitative research provides many opportunities to engage feelings because it is a distance-reducing experience.” (p. 105)

Nine of the 19 participants also participated in a focus-group interview. Each focus group consisted of three participants who had served in Iraq together. As predicted by Richards (2009), group discussion enhanced the veterans’ narrative detail, clarified their perspectives on being exposed to the language and culture, and helped in the triangulation of data (Richards, 2009). By triangulating the data in this way, I was able to identify any inconsistencies in the veterans’ reports on their language learning and eliminate any questionable data that I had obtained. It also helped to identify perspective changes in the veterans over time.

I observed each of the participants at least once in the classroom setting. Observing their intercultural interactions while they were stationed in Iraq was not possible, so it was necessary to find an alternative (Duda and Allison, 1989). Participant observation becomes a vital part of analyzing the data, because it helps the researcher “to understand the research setting, its participants, and their behavior.” (Glesne, 2006, p. 51). Indeed the observation and the accompanying field notes (as per Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995) helped me to gain an understanding of the variety of perspectives that emerged in the data analysis process (as per Spradley, 1979 and 1980).

Finally, after transcribing each of the interviews and focus group interviews, I used the transcriptions and classroom observation notes to develop a case narrative for each veteran (example in Appendix A). These case narratives aided in the analysis of data (Webster and Mertova, 2007), provided specific examples of trends in language learning, perspective changes, attitudes and language learning behaviors (Samimy, 1999), identified individuals’ similarities and differences (Wolcott, 2001), and helped in telling the veterans’ stories, vital to the qualitative research experience (Norton, 2000 and Norton and Toohey, 2004). Once the case narratives were developed, each participant was given a copy in order to review the information and have input on how the information was represented (Weiss, 1994). This was important as some veterans were still completing their
military service and they did not want identifying information available to the public. It also helped them to have a voice in the research (Pennycook, 2001) as well as helped me to completely understand their experiences (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) within the context of their language learning (Norton and Toohey, 2004).

Analysis and Results

Fifteen of the nineteen participants in my 2010 study believed they would be using their knowledge of Arabic language and culture in the future. Some had goals to become proficient enough to communicate with sufficient expertise for a career that required speaking and/or translating, while others wanted to gain enough expertise for reading Arabic publications or building relationships with specific native Arabic speakers. Learning for these reasons—eventual achievement of financial success or status as an expert—indicates instrumental motivation in operation.

Instrumental motivation may also include the notion of “investment” (Norton, 2000), which indicates changed perceptions about the target language. Though most had very little knowledge of or feeling about Arabic language and culture prior to deployment, all nineteen veterans expressed that they now felt Arabic was an “important language” for them to know in the future, including those with no career plans involving Arabic language and culture. However, only five of the participants exhibited purely instrumental reasons for studying Arabic.

Three of the nineteen participants indicated purely integrative reasons for studying Arabic language and culture. They stated that they were there for love of the language and interest in the culture. A majority of participants gave no specifically stated career goals or social purposes when asked why they continued to take Arabic classes. Their motivations for continuing Arabic language and culture studies were much less specific. Their reasons included combinations of the following: “…may work with the language in the future;” “it is interesting and it is important to learn;” “may teach in the future;” “may go back to Iraq;” want to know the basics for possible future use;” “required for major and fun to speak;” “won’t rely on translators and can communicate directly with locals.” These respondents seemed
to have a combination of both integrative and instrumental motivations (Nichols, 2010). Most of the participants had reflected deeply on their interactions in Iraq and expressed desires to understand more about the culture and how the language reflected the culture. They recognized that they were changed by their intercultural experiences and interactions, and were using Arabic language and culture classes to understand those changes. Table 2 provides a brief summary of the veteran participants’ language learning motivations, the classification of their motivation in the existing literature, and language learning motivators.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Type of Motivation According to Dornyei (2003)</th>
<th>Answer to the interview question, “Did your experiences in Iraq motivate you to learn Arabic in college?”</th>
<th>Answer to the questionnaire question, “Why are you taking Arabic now?”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alissa</td>
<td>Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Just interested in it for now; may want to teach it in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Want to work with the language in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Required for the major to minor in Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Most likely will have to know it for a career in the military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Will probably go back to the region someday and want to know what they’re saying and communicate with locals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Career in Intelligence; interesting language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conner</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Important language to learn; career in Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derek</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Just want to know the basics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Know the alphabet; Like languages; Wanted to learn it, but was too hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Important language; career in intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>New kind of war requires that you speak their language; will probably go back to Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcom</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Helps with the career path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Required for the major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Important and interesting language; required for the major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinn</td>
<td>Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Love it; fun to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Fun to know and speak with people; required for the major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Liked using it with the locals and probably go back to Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travis</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not as hard as I thought; enjoy it; will probably go back to Iraq and it will be useful to know; won’t rely on translators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zach</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>May want a career in intelligence but it's a language that's good to know anyway</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Major Language Learning Motivators
It became obvious in studying the data that their motivations could not be limited to two categories, because motivations for learning Arabic language and culture were also affected by influences prior to and outside the classroom and by psychological factors that cannot be measured here (but can be described via the veterans’ narratives). Factors such as prior language education, travel history, and personal value systems (which included some political and religious beliefs) entered into students’ decisions to study Arabic language and culture. Fourteen of the nineteen were exposed to foreign languages before deployment and therefore had previous successes (and failures) with language learning.

One participant believed a trip to Europe with her grandfather when she was in her teens started her interest in other languages and cultures. Several students believed strongly that knowing the Arabic language and culture was important to the strengthening of America’s position in the Middle East. One student explained, “It’s a new kind of war that requires that you speak their language…” These beliefs are all “influential” motivational variables. The notion of “influential” motivation, which takes into account the learner’s life-long influences and previous experiences, is more important than many educators realize (Norton, 2000).

One participant strongly exemplifying influential motivation in her interview was a young woman, Alissa (pseudonym), whose first exposure to the Arabic language was during college, when she became acquainted with students from the Arabian Gulf area. She learned some basic words and phrases from her friends and then went on to take a course in linguistic anthropology. After joining the Reserves, she was sent to Iraq, where she functioned as a supply specialist. In that position, she said she learned a lot from her interactions with Iraqi refugee families who lived in her camp. She felt frustrated when she could not communicate adequately, and became especially concerned about an Iraqi woman who was living in the camp to escape an abusive husband. The woman became a recluse, and Alissa wanted badly to reach out to her and talk with her, woman to woman, but the language barrier prevented it. She also became frustrated when trying to help some of the refugee children, two of whom had burn injuries and another who had a traumatic brain injury. Alissa wanted to convince the families to help these children by taking them to see the medical
personnel, but because of her lack of training in Arabic language and culture, she could not. These emotionally affecting experiences influenced her decision to study Arabic when she returned from duty. Though Alissa eventually became a French teacher, she stated that being able to share her intercultural experiences in Iraq and her knowledge of the language made her a better language teacher in general. Past educational and emotional experiences became strong influential motivators for her to study Arabic language and culture.

There is another, more elusive, type of motivation, which was revealed in interviews, but had also been apparent in my Arabic language and culture classes. I termed it the quest for clarification, or “illumination” (Nichols, 2010). Illuminative motivation combines aspects of both integrative and influential motivation. Most participants indicated that studying Arabic helped them in achieving clarification or clearer understanding of what had happened to them in Iraq. Taking Arabic language and culture classes “illuminates” their language and/or cultural experiences and allows them to put them into perspective, or a more meaningful context. Sharing and discussing language and culture may serve as a type of “debriefing” for the veterans. The presence of illumination became apparent in the interviews in a variety of forms. Some made direct expressions of this illumination:

“Well, taking these classes helped me to make sense of what happened when I was there” (Quinn – pseudonym)

Further examples emerged as each discussed the Arabic dialect they had heard while deployed. For two of the participants, learning Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) brought about a stronger understanding of the Amiyya dialect they had learned in Iraq. They explained, “I’m starting to see where the similarities are with the Amiyya…just some pronunciation differences and small grammar stuff,” and, “… I couldn’t understand why sometimes they said qiffee and sometimes just qif. So the day came in class when we conjugated waqafa [to stop] completely…Then I was like ‘oh! That’s why there is a difference.”

Formal coursework also helped veterans process the political situation in which they were playing an integral role in Iraq. Malcolm (pseudonym) originally believed Saddam Hussein had little to do with September 11th and that we were fighting in the wrong place, but after
reading histories and learning more about the region, he developed strong convictions that our military presence was vital to United States national security. Processing concepts from his coursework changed his perspective considerably. Another participant, Connor (pseudonym), went through a similar illuminative process in his Arabic language and culture classes. During deployment, he had become disillusioned as his company tried to get two groups of Iraqis to work together. In his words, “…it made the whole thing really hard because it was kind of like negotiating with four-year-olds. So then in our Middle East Studies class and in our Arabic class, like on the same day in fact, we learned about the Sunni-Shia divide. And I just knew I had been right the whole time, and so was our commanding officer. These guys were never going to get along.” Though this participant’s conclusions are somewhat disappointing, especially after additional education in the history, language and culture, it continues to demonstrate illumination in that he had learned that there are indeed deep historical and cultural reasons for the differences within the community. Perhaps, with better training prior to deployment, our military personnel could address these differences during negotiations for more successful outcomes.

The illumination effect contributed to motivating veterans to learn MSA and more about the culture post-deployment. The exact psychological mechanism that triggers illumination is unclear, but evidence of illumination arose conspicuously in post-deployment education. Veteran students consistently reported instances of learning material in their classes that filled gaps and enhanced their understandings of Arabic language and culture and of their interactions with Iraqis while deployed. At times, they felt satisfaction when reaffirming that what they had learned while deployed was reliable information. Linguistically, much of what they had learned was dialect, and even though it differed from their classroom Arabic, moments of enlightenment validated their linguistic experiences. When they connected with classroom material, they felt that moment of discovery, so important in achieving goals: “Oh, that’s what was going on!” There suddenly exists a much more complete picture of something that was fragmented.

Perhaps re-conceptualizing Dornyei’s Language Motivation System (2005) to include “illumination” could look like Figure 2.
The L2 Motivational Self System for the veteran participants includes illumination, which feeds into their motivational selves as their motivation helps them to process their experiences in Iraq. However, to know exactly how, when, and where illumination falls into this system requires further study.

Conclusions

This research endeavored to discover underlying reasons for these veterans’ decision to learn Arabic language and culture post-deployment and to find out if their intercultural and linguistic experiences while they were deployed in Iraq influenced their academic decisions. Overwhelmingly, the data revealed that the veterans’ time in Iraq did influence their decisions to learn the language, for a number of specific reasons. In light of current motivation theories, the participants of this study showed significant similarities to findings in studies conducted by Gardner (1972), Dornyei (1994, 1996, 2001 and
2003), Dornyei et al. (2005), Ehrman (1996), and Samimy and Tabuse (1992). This supports current motivation theory, which proposes a complex psychological process operative within students of the foreign language classroom. Following is a discussion of the major motivators identified from the data collected and of how these support motivation theories proposed by Gardner (1972) and Dornyei (1996). The results compel Arabic language teachers (and foreign language educators in general) to explore a variety of methodologies within the foreign language classroom in order to draw upon a complex motivational milieu.

**Motivation in Iraq War Veterans**

As shown and discussed in the data analysis, when all participants were asked about their main motivations for learning Arabic language and culture post-deployment, all participants stated that their experiences in Iraq motivated them to learn the Arabic language. It was apparent from their answers that both instrumental and integrative reasons for learning Arabic language and culture (Gardner and Lambert, 1959 and 1972; Dornyei, 2003) were operative among the veterans. Yet it is also appropriate to apply Norton’s (2000) postulation that motivation in language learning is more complex than described by Gardner and Lambert (1959) and Dornyei (1994, 2003, and 2005). Previous exposure to Arabic language and culture in Iraq had added to the context of their language learning in an academic setting.

This research study confirms findings in previous studies by aforementioned authors and supports current language learning motivation models and constructs. However, apparent with these veterans is the notion that there is an emotional factor that also plays a role in their language learning motivation (Gardner, 2000): a factor I refer to as “illumination.” This emotional factor finds its way into the foreign language classroom and can have an effect on how veterans relate to the language teacher and to their previous experiences. It may cause them to redefine their experiences, or may shed light on these in a way that allows the veteran to better process the mental and emotional stress of going to war. This emotional factor may be more thoroughly studied within the field of social psychology, but cannot be ignored in the classroom.
Broader Implications

The need for illumination/clarification among veterans suggests broader implications for Arabic language education funding—as with other critical languages—at the K-12 level. The veterans in the study underwent pronounced changes in their perspectives toward learning language and culture as a result of their deployment in an Arabic-speaking country (which also strongly influenced their academic decisions later on). Prior to enlisting, they were not given the opportunity to learn about Arabic language and culture through their various high schools. Given the impact first-hand exposure to the language and culture had on their academic decisions, perhaps more attention should be paid to funding critical languages at the K-12 level.

There are also broader implications for the effect that our lack of language and cultural understanding has on the safety and security of US military abroad (Osborn, 2005). All the veterans reported that they realized the importance of learning the language only after they had been deployed—some had known Arabic was important and tried to learn it beforehand, but the full realization of its impact did not hit them until critical moments (Webster and Mertova, 2007) in their deployment. These critical moments, as recounted in their narratives, developed into a desire to learn the language post-deployment. Perhaps we can better serve our veteran communities by improving the quality of language education prior to the enlistment age of 18 (Bell, 1986).

Expanding on this logic means that if United States soldiers are experiencing massive failures of communication in the battlefield, which endanger their lives and the lives of the civilians they are meant to protect, then we are experiencing massive failures in our understanding of military intelligence. Without an adequate understanding of Arabic language and culture, our military cannot accurately perceive and responsibly assess battlefield situations. In this way, lack of Arabic language and cultural understanding is a detriment to national security as a whole.
Recommendations

Drawing upon veterans’ experiences in Arabic language and culture adds dimension to the learning experience for all students. The increased number of veterans in Arabic classrooms places increased responsibility on educators to find ways for veterans to achieve their educational goals. We must understand what factors compel them (Oxford & Shearin, 1996). Though their motivational milieu is complex, there are some relatively straightforward practices a teacher can employ to tap into veterans’ wealth of experiences, thus enriching the classroom context:

- Keep lesson plans flexible, allowing time for comparing and contrasting dialects and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)
- Establish conversational periods that deal with relevant current events and cultural topics.
- Establish conversational periods or plan presentations in which veterans might share cultural experiences (being sensitive to what might make them or their classmates uncomfortable, or what might be classified information).
- Infuse the classroom with as much cultural enrichment as possible. Use authentic food, clothing, children’s literature, icons, etc., which the veterans might share from their deployment.
- Encourage, listen to, and welcome veterans’ stories of their experiences.

Veterans have important stories to tell, and what they tell may enrich not only Arabic classrooms, but other classrooms as well. The illuminative affect that learning Arabic has on many of these veterans warrants further investigation into further possibly psychological benefits that education can have on veterans’ well-being as well as how they can bring their experiences into the academic setting and incorporate them into something productive and informative. Recognizing what motivates them and affirming their experiences within the Arabic language and culture classroom may yield very satisfying “teachable moments” from which we can all learn.
References


Gardner, Robert C., and Bernaus M., (2008) Teacher Motivation Strategies, Student Perceptions, Student Motivation, and


Appendix A: Sample Veteran Narrative

Brent’s Case Narrative

Brent is a white male with a bachelor’s degree in Security & Intelligence studies and with a minor in ALC from a large Midwestern university, to which he had transferred from a local community college. Brent’s commission required that his recorded interview and interview notes be kept confidential in order to protect his identity. However, certain non-sensitive elements relevant to his ALC training, previous language history, and duties while deployed in Iraq are included.

Brent’s demographic data, prior language training, & job duties

He joined the United States Marine Corps (USMC) Reserves as an enlisted soldier and served one tour of duty in Iraq before attending college. Brent had learned some high school Spanish, but he stated that he did not remember any of it. He stated that he joined the USMC Reserves for a number of reasons – the two primary being to serve his country and to help pay for his college education. Brent explained that he had always wanted to join the USMC and to learn about other cultures, but his interest in the Middle East was peaked after September 11th, 2001. Upon learning of his deployment to Iraq, Brent began reading as much about the region as he could. He was unable to take formal classes but he used the Internet to research and read as much as possible even though it was difficult for him to discern what sources were credible. He was aware that there was bias, but didn’t know enough about the region to know how to recognize it.

Immediately before their deployment, Brent’s unit participated in a one-week class on Islam, Arabic history, culture and language. An Iraqi national taught the course. Brent did not know if this type of training was common for US Marines deployed to Iraq. He said the class was very interesting and that the teacher was very friendly, which put many of his colleagues at ease. Brent felt that many of his colleagues had had very negative opinions of Arab nationals and especially Iraqis before the course, though he did not feel he shared their negative opinions. After the week long training course and interacting with the Iraqi teacher, some of his colleagues seemed to become more accepting. In the class, they were taught some basic words and phrases. Then one evening before they deployed, the
teacher taught them some Arabic profanity, when they took him out for drinks. According to Brent, this was a real bonding process for the Marines in his unit. Even though they did not have any more contact with that instructor, the social contact changed his colleagues’ attitudes so that when they began their job duties in Iraq involving extensive contact with local Iraqi civilians, they were more sympathetic.

**Brent’s intercultural interactions, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes**

Brent’s most notable experience in Iraq involved an older Iraqi woman who approached his squad while they were on patrol. The woman had been holding a plastic bag and holding her hand out to them as well as gesturing. There had been a number of incidents that week involving female suicide bombers, so Brent’s unit was on guard for any suspicious activity. Brent felt frustration that he did not know the language well enough to communicate effectively with the woman. The only word he remembered at the time was ‘qif’, meaning ‘stop.’ The woman had stopped but Brent stated that he could tell she was desperately trying to communicate something to his unit. Their location was somewhat precarious since they had stopped immediately before an intersection.

Apartment-type buildings with multiple stories surrounded them and they were tasked with securing that particular block for safe troop movements. He knew they were vulnerable in their position but they could not move forward until the situation with the Iraqi civilian had been resolved. The woman remained in the intersection for almost two and a half hours while his unit waited for a translator to arrive from another city. He felt sympathy for the woman because not only was she elderly, but she was also suffering from thirst in the oppressive heat and Brent couldn’t give her any water. Moving forward to her direct location could have resulted in the detonation of an improvised explosive device (IED) so he and the rest of his colleagues in his unit were ordered to stay in their present location until they could accurately analyze the situation with the use of the translator.

Brent’s frustration peaked when they finally discovered that the woman was warning them that a sniper with a rocket launcher had been waiting in a building around the corner, presumably to fire at
them. She had come to warn Brent’s unit. However, because of the language barrier, not only did she have to yell out her information to them from half a block away, putting herself in danger, but in the two and half hours it took for the translator to arrive, the armed sniper was able to avoid capture. He stated that just some simple phrases such as ‘corner,’ ‘sniper,’ ‘window,’ and some pointing could have resulted in the capture of an insurgent and thus further securing the city, which was what they were tasked to do.

When asked about his experience with translators in Iraq, Brent explained that translators were in high demand and there were too few of them to accompany every single unit on every mission. He did not have much contact with them, because, for some reason, which he was unable to explain, his unit was not assigned a translator even though they had daily interactions with local Iraqi citizens. Perhaps, because his unit was tasked with securing streets and did not enter homes, they were not expected to need a translator all the time. However, as the incident with the elderly Iraqi woman proved, there were times that the language barrier put them in more danger than would have existed if they had learned some Arabic prior to deployment.

**Brent’s post-deployment education, experiences & motivation**

Upon Brent’s return, he began taking Arabic classes along with other coursework toward a bachelor’s degree. He was attending part-time both the local community college and a four-year institution. Enrolling at both institutions allowed him to take a large number of credit hours, including two and three classes of ALC simultaneously in one academic quarter, which helped him save on the tuition money that was available to him through the GI Bill.

He stated that he was not someone who learned language easily, so he found the Arabic classes difficult. He wanted to finish the more challenging classes first so he would have less academic stress closer to the completion of his degree. He explained that the Arabic language classes offered more academic Arabic rather than speaking, which was not as practical for his language learning and career goals. He intended to return to Iraq either in the military or working for a private company to help in the rebuilding of Iraq. Brent was uncertain at that point in exactly what capacity he would return to Iraq, but he
was adamant about returning. I asked him if he felt his experiences in Iraq contributed to his motivations to learn Arabic. He responded that it was definitely the reason he was taking ALC classes. He would not have tried to tackle a language as difficult as Arabic if he had not been to Iraq and had not had the experience. He also realized after he was exposed to some formal Arabic learning how much important information he had missed during his deployment. The more he learned about the history and culture of the Middle East, the more he reflected. His perspective had definitely changed, but he could not elaborate on how his intercultural experiences and subsequent language training effected the perspective change. His opinions regarding the Middle East, in the abstract were negative, but when he experienced intercultural contact on a person-to-person level, he did not share the same biases as his colleagues. He confessed that he had some negative attitudes toward the Middle East before he was deployed and before his college coursework were negative, but he did not share his colleagues’ negative biases against Arabs before their deployment. He seemed to be very unbiased toward the Iraqi instructor who taught their one-week pre-deployment class.

Though Brent was adamant that his Iraq experiences motivated him to learn the language, he indicated that he had gone as far as he could with coursework in ALC in an academic context. He believed upper level classes focusing on Middle Eastern literature were outside the scope of his language ability and language goals. He wanted to concentrate on advanced level Arabic conversation, which was not part of the college coursework offered. At least, that was the impression he was given by other students in the Arabic program. He had also discussed coursework with professors who could not explain to his satisfaction how a focus on Arabic historical literature and Arabic poetry would provide training in conversational skills. He did not want to spend money on classes not geared toward his linguistic and career goals. He believed he would learn more by personal intercultural contact with “native” speakers (people of Arabic origin). When asked if he preferred a teacher of Arab origin, he replied he liked having instructors, who learned “from scratch,” as he had, but he desired one or two sessions a week in a dialect, which would make him feel his training was more comprehensive. Because his university did not offer that, he wanted to pursue dialect training after graduating.
He did not know how much he would use language in his career, but he was certain that knowing the language would be an important tool for him in the future.

**Brent Summary**

Brent had little knowledge of Arabic language and culture prior to his military experience, but stated interest in other cultures. He seemed to embrace the little training he received prior to his deployment. His deployment influenced his motivation to learn the language and even solidified his language learning goals. His most influential and memorable intercultural experience while deployed in Iraq centered on the language barrier issue. Though he did not attain advanced level proficiency through his college coursework, he planned to continue studying the language on his own.
Meso-American Languages: An Investigation of Variety, Maintenance, and Implications for Linguistic Survival

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Abstract
Forty-five Meso-American language speakers, speaking thirteen Meso-American languages, were interviewed in the agricultural region in and around Colquitt County, Georgia. Language shift is common among such displaced immigrant populations (Fishman, 1967), specifically among less-dominant languages (Paulstone, 1994) such as Meso-American languages. The study used oral survey methods to record demographic data concerning Meso-American language speakers and the diversity of Meso-American languages spoken. The interviewers surveyed the use of and attitudes towards English, Meso-American languages, and Spanish among the speakers and their children (or hypothetical children). These responses documented language links to dominant socio-economic forces and generational language maintenance. The findings, such as differing rates for desired vs. reported language maintenance among the population, contribute to the national picture of Meso-American language maintenance among Meso-American speakers in the United States. The results of the study predict a gradual Meso-American language shift, but there was strong sentimentality for Meso-American languages. Such findings present implications to help stabilize language shift for those in common contact with Meso-American speakers in the United States, such as teachers and health workers, as well as Meso-American speakers themselves.

Context

Historical
As a cultural and geographic entity, Meso-America stretches from central Mexico to Honduras. Meso-American history includes significant cultures of the Americas, such as the Olmec, Maya, Aztec,
and Teotihuacan; pre-dating the arrival of the Spanish in the 15th and 16th centuries, these pre-Columbian societies prospered for centuries. The Aztecs, historically noted for large-scale construction, resourcefulness, and militancy, were so named by the Spanish refers to the Nahua speaking people group located in central Mexico; many anthropologists date the Aztecs to 1100 CE (Blanton, Kowalewski, Feinman, & Finstein, 1993). To the south, the Maya possessed both complex mathematical systems and a well-established artisan tradition, with verified dwellings dating to 1800 BCE along the Pacific Coast of Guatemala (McKill, 2004). Linguistically, by 2100 BCE in this area (the Yucatan and the border of Chiapas and Guatemala) the Maya principally spoke Cholan-Maya (Campbell, 1984).

This distinct Meso-American cultural dominance ended with Spanish colonialism. But, millions of direct descendants of these cultures survive today, creating one of the largest concentrations of Indigenous peoples in the world, speaking hundreds of Meso-American languages. Many modern-day Guatemalans, Mexicans, and other Central Americans speak Tzotzil, Mixteco, Cajova, and dozens more Meso-American languages as their first language, originated from the tongues spoken by pre-Colombian Meso-American groups (Campbell, 1986; Clemens et al., 2011; McKill, 2004).

Today, all Meso-American languages are endangered in that there is gradual language shift, as not all Meso-American speakers pass the languages on to the next generation. All Meso-American languages are threatened in their ancestral lands by what is clearly seen among the Maya, the monolingual adoption of Spanish by Maya children (England, 2003). In the case of some Meso-American languages, the languages border on extinction.

The strength of individual Meso-American languages, as defined by the number of active speakers of the language, varies widely. For example, Zapoteco, in the Oto-Manguean linguistic family, is spoken by over 500,000 people (Campbell, 2000). Within the Mayan language family there are languages such as Mam, Kaqchikel, and Kiche, with 500,000 to 1,000,000 speakers each. However, other Mayan languages barely survive, such as Itzaj, with roughly 30 speakers, all of them elderly (England, 2003). Even the Meso-American language with the most speakers, Nahuatl of the Uto-
Meso-American Languages

Aztecan family, has less than 2,000,000 speakers (England, 2003) and has experienced significant language shift/loss (Rolstad, 2002).

There are six major Meso-American language families: Chibchan, Mayan, Mixe–Zoquean, Oto-Manguean, Totonacan, and Uto-Aztecan. Among these major families, the Oto-Manguean and Mayan families are the largest, and language isolates exist within the diversity of Meso-American tongues. There are traits broadly shared by many of these languages. In fact, researchers have concluded that the Meso-American linguistic area, a linguistic area being a group of languages that has developed some level of sameness and linkages, is a notably strong one (Campbell, Kaufman & Smith-Stark, 1986). These languages, many far pre-dating the colonized Americas, demonstrate unique linguistic phenomena such as entirely whistled languages, languages with extensive dream talk, and dialects of languages with five registers (Groark, 2009; Merrifield & Edmonson, 1999).

The Spanish dominated and subdued Meso-American cultures, as they colonized the Americas. Within a century of initial contact with Spaniards, the native Maya lost fifty to ninety-five percent of their population (Arias & Arrianza, 1998; Wellmeier, 1998). Similarly, war and disease decimated the Aztec population (Cook, 1998). In modern times, the remaining Meso-Americans have not fared well. Specifically, all sides systemically targeted Indigenous peoples throughout the longest war in modern Latin American History, the Guatemalan Civil War, which lasted four decades, from the 1960s to the 1990s (Wilkinson, 2002). Hundreds of thousands of ethnic Meso-Americans sought legal refugee status in and/or fled to the United States during this “Maya Diaspora” (Burns, 1993; Vlach, 1992; Wellmeier, 1998). Because of proximity and challenging economic conditions in their native lands, Meso-Americans, speaking Meso-American languages, continue to immigrate.

Sociolinguistic

Language shift, the process of gradually changing from one first language to another over successive generations, often occurs among displaced immigrant populations. Language shift occurs from the first language to the language(s) of the dominant surrounding socio-economic forces. Specifically, the language(s) used at work and school, both dominant social forces, will ultimately come to be the
language(s) used at home (Fishman, 1967). Paulstone (1994) later tested these theories of Fishman’s and proposed three linguistic results of prolonged contact between linguistic groups: language maintenance, bilingualism, or loss/change of native language, with the most typical result being language loss of the less-dominant language.

Among Meso-American language speakers in the United States, there are two dominant languages, English and Spanish, surrounding the speakers. Each language has specific economic and/or social incentives. English tends to be the language connected with education. Spanish is often connected with both work, commonly agricultural or construction labor, and social interactions among other Latinos. Thus, both English and Spanish have clear connections to dominant social forces (education and work). Many Meso-American speakers arrive as bilinguals, speaking a Meso-American first language and Spanish as their second language. In the transition to language shift, many Meso-American speakers become trilingual, speaking a Meso-American language, Spanish as a second language, and limited English. Peñalosa (1985) documented this trilingualism in Los Angeles, California, as a stage before the loss of Meso-American language speaking. He concluded from his data sample of 134 adults that the Meso-American community was in a state of transitional Qanjobal/Spanish/English trilingualism away from Qanjobal/Spanish bilingualism and towards Spanish/English bilingualism. Light (1995) investigated the community a decade later and verified much of what Peñalosa found, but with English increasingly utilized among the youth. Gladwin (2010) similarly predicted a potential language shift/loss of Meso-American languages among speakers in North/Florida and South Georgia.

Other approaches to the study of language maintenance involve social network theory and language dominance, as one lens focuses on personal communities and the other on feelings, beliefs, and identity awareness. Clearly linked to these concepts, “language attitudes affect language maintenance (García, 2003, p. 28). For example, recent language maintenance studies sought to document positive attitudes toward first languages (Smolicz, Nical, & Secombe, 2000) as well as positive attitudes toward general multilingualism (Dagenias & Bennon, 2001). Thus, despite newer emphases on the study of language ideology and network analyses in language shift.
research, attitude remains an important focus and factor (García, 2003).

Meso-American language loss fits into the greater sociolinguistic narrative of minority language loss in the U.S. In fact, much language maintenance research has shifted to the question of how to encourage language maintenance and revitalization (García, 2003). Nevertheless, today, even Spanish, the most widely spoken minority language in the U.S., shows language loss (Fishman, 1996). This is coupled with a clear language shift away from, if not extinction of, Indigenous languages in most Native American societies in the U.S. (Crawford, 1996; Goodfellow & Pauline, 2003).

Geographic

Colquitt County, Georgia is a largely agricultural area in South Georgia. Specifically, the area is known for vegetable production, an industry dependent on migrant labor. The population of the county is less than 50,000, with an additional 15,000 migrants estimated to labor in the vegetable fields, other farming operations, and non-farm occupations. The Colquitt County School system is fifteen percent Hispanic (Oxford, 2007). The researcher chose this area for the study because of its long history of migrant labor linked to its agricultural heritage, which has led to a large Latino population, both permanent and seasonal, with roots in Meso-America.

Research Questions

Research shows Meso-American language shift in ancestral Meso-American lands (Rolstad, 2002) and Indigenous language shift among Native-Americans in the United States (Riegelhaupt, 2003); however, there are fewer studies of Meso-American language maintenance in the United States. In this void, this study focused on the issue of language maintenance among Meso-American language speakers in the United States. Despite some revitalization efforts and bilingual education programs in Mexico and Central America, Meso-American languages are threatened with language loss in their native lands. Speaking these threatened languages, Meso-American language speakers in the United States are further impacted by the potential language shift common to displaced immigrants and those surrounded
by dominant languages—in this case, both English and Spanish (Fishman, 1967, Paulstone, 1994). This study seeks to forward generalizable findings linked to Meso-American language maintenance and desire among this population, Meso-American language speakers in the United States.

Using oral surveys conducted in Spanish, the researcher sought to answer the following research questions.
1. What demographic features do the Meso-American speakers display in terms of age, gender, country of origin, and languages spoken?
2. In what context are the specific languages spoken?
3. Do the children of Meso-American language speakers also speak Meso-American languages?
4. What are the linguistic attitudes towards the learning by children of specific languages?

**Methods**

Three graduate students, all full-time public school teachers in Colquitt County, assisted the author with data collection and tabulation. The interviewers, including the author, were all familiar with the area studied and spoke Spanish. All survey questions were asked in Spanish and results were written in Spanish. Meso-American language-Spanish bilingualism is common among Meso-American speakers (Garzon, 1992). Thus, Spanish was the shared language of communication among interviewers and interviewees. In the case of monolingual Meso-American speakers, a friend of the interviewee, who spoke the same Meso-American language and Spanish, translated.

**Survey Questions**

After biographical information was assessed (gender and age), the following questions were asked of each individual surveyed:
1. ¿De dónde es usted? ¿Where are you from?
2. ¿Tiene hijos? ¿Do you have children?
3. ¿Cuáles son los idiomas que habla? ¿What languages do you speak?
4. ¿Cuándo usa ___________? ¿When do you use ___________? This question was repeated for each language spoken.
5. ¿Cuáles son los idiomas que hablan sus hijos? ¿What language(s) do your children speak?
6. ¿Quieres que sus hijos hablen ___________? ¿Por qué? Do you want your children to speak ___________? Why?

This question was asked with reference to English, the Meso-American language(s) spoken by the respondent, and Spanish. To establish community desire for future language maintenance, if the person did not have children, the person was asked the question referencing his/her future or hypothetical children.

Demographic data and most survey data was recorded exactly as stated. Answers to when each specific language was used were recorded on the survey sheet, as were the answers to why they want their children, or hypothetical children, to learn specific languages. Thus, questions four and six produced extended answers (anywhere from one word to several sentences).

With the goal of linking the responses to one of sixteen codings, the interviewers, as a group, analyzed each response. The codings for this study were based on terms directly tied to seminal research on dominant languages (Fishman, 1967, Paulstone 1994) to document home-directed, educational, or work-related factors. Additionally, some codings developed, or were refined, organically from commonly occurring data responses from Gladwin’s 2004 and 2010 studies. The sixteen codings were 1) Always, 2) Church, 3) Culture, 4) Education, 5) Family, 6) Friends, 7) Helpful, 8) Home, 9) Homeland, 10) Improvement, 11) Live Here, 12) Never, 13) School, 14) Seldom, 15) Work, and 16) Not Coded. Table 1 presents nine of the codings as specific groupings tied to their research purpose, factors that link to language dominance. To achieve inter-rater reliability, all four interviewers had to agree unanimously that the answer as written was clearly represented by a specific coding. Answers that were not unanimous or that a majority believed did not fit one of the sixteen codings, were recorded as not coded (see Tables 3 & 4).
Table 1: Codings and Factors Linked to Language Dominance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Education, School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-Directed</td>
<td>Culture, Family, Friends, Home,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeland,</td>
<td>Improvement, Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Forty-five Meso-American language speakers were interviewed in Colquitt County, Georgia in multiple locations. Survey sites included a grocery store, convenience stores, outside a public high school, and on a produce farm (K. Bejarano, S. Earley, & C. Marsh, personal communication, April 11, 2013). Demographic results revealed a respondent population of seven females and 38 males. Seven respondents appeared under 30 of age. Thirty-three appeared between 20 and 50 years of age, and five appeared older than 50 years of age. Eleven of the respondents were from Guatemala and 34 were from Mexico. Table 2 presents the data as percentages.

Table 2: Meso-American Language Speakers (Colquitt County, Georgia)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample size</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>16% Female; 84% Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>16% under 20; 73% 20-50; 11% 50+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of origin</td>
<td>24% Guatemala; 76% Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>87% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages</td>
<td>4% Monolingual; 76% Bilingual; 20% Trilingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language maintenance</td>
<td>64% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive desire</td>
<td>89% English; 80% Meso-American; 91% Spanish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two of the respondents spoke only a Meso-American language. Thirty-four individuals reported speaking a Meso-American language and Spanish, and nine individuals reported speaking a Meso-American language, English, and Spanish. Table 2 notes these respondents as mono-, bi-, or tri-lingual. Thirty-nine of the 45
respondents reported having children. Of these 39, 25 reported that
their children spoke a Meso-American language, representing
maintenance of the Meso-American language.

Thirteen individual Meso-American languages were reported
from the study (see Table 3). Nahuatl was the most commonly spoken,
followed by Mam. Three of the major Meso-American language
families were represented among the languages surveyed, along with
one language isolate, Purépecha. Four of the languages only had one
speaker in the sample.

**Table 3: Meso-American Languages (Colquitt County, Georgia)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th># of speakers</th>
<th>Language Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nahuatl</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Uto-Aztecan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mam</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mayan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otomí</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Oto-Manguen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zapoteco</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Oto-Manguen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purépecha</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Language Isolate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tzotzil</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mayan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuj</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mayan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanjobal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mayan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixteco</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Oto-Manguen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinantec</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Oto-Manguen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huichol</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Uto-Aztecan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazatec</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Oto-Manguen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tlapaneco</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Oto-Manguen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents reported varied times for when English,
Meso-American languages, and Spanish were used (see Table 4). For
English, the most common response was *never* and the second most
common response was *seldom*. The third most common response for
English was *work*. For Meso-American language use, there were four
top responses: *family, friends, home, and homeland*. Spanish had two
common responses, *work and home*, and then *always* was the third most
common response.
Forty of the 45 respondents wanted children to speak English, while 41 wanted the same for Spanish. Thirty-six desired that children speak a Meso-American language. When explaining why they desired children to learn English, the most common reasons were *live here* and *improvement* with *work* closely following. For Meso-American languages, the reasons given were clear with *family* mentioned 17 times and *culture* 15 times. When responding to why they wanted children to learn Spanish, the responses were the most varied. *Helpful* was mentioned ten times, but then seven different codings, representing from one to six responses, were recorded (see Table 5).
Table 5: Number of Responses Linked to Codings for Question #6 - Language Desire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Meso-American</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeland</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Here</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
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<td>-</td>
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Discussion

The results showcase the great linguistic diversity found among Meso-American speakers in the U.S. The respondents reported speaking thirteen different Meso-American languages. These findings were representative of actual language speaking numbers. Exact numbers for Meso-American languages differ depending on the research cited; however, the five most commonly occurring languages in the survey have at least 150,000 global speakers. Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs with over 1,000,000 speakers today, the most
of any living Meso-American language, was spoken by the most respondents. Nahuatl’s strength is supported by this study. The only other language in the sample of the Aztec family was Huichol, with one speaker. This is a representative finding in that Huichol is a small language with only 30,000 speakers (Lopez, 2007).

Mam was the second most spoken language in the sample. This finding supports current language realities, as Mam is a widely spoken language of the Mayan language family. Other Mayan languages reported were Tzotzil, Chuj, and Kanjobal. Of these languages, Chuj is the smallest with 40,000 speakers, having lost 20% of its total speakers in a generation. This is notable considering that there are so few Chuj speakers worldwide, but two were interviewed in this study. But research supports that the Guatemalan civil war severely impacted the areas inhabited by native Chuj speakers, forcing many to flee to the U.S. (Clemens et al., 2011).

The third and fourth most reported languages, Otomí and Zapoteco, are part of the Oto-Manguean language family. Four other languages of this family were reported, Mixteco, Chinantec, Mazatec, and Tlanapaneco, giving the Oto-Manguean language family the highest language representation in the sample. All of these languages have at least 100,000 speakers, according to the Department of Education of Mexico (INLA, http://inali.gob.mx). One language isolate, Purépecha, was reported, with four speakers. The language itself has 120,000 speakers (Chamoreau, 2012).

The results parallel national data referencing the age, gender, and country of origin of a sample consisting of many migrant farm workers. Most U.S migrant workers are from Mexico or Guatemala (Passel, 2006). In fact, the 2007-2009 National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) reports that 68% of migrant agricultural workers were born in Mexico. The survey also reports that the average age of a farm worker is 36 and that 78% are male.

From the data linked to language use, ninety-eight percent of the sample reported speaking Spanish, and one in five reported speaking English. Thus, 80% did not speak English, a result verified by the most common response to when English was used, never. Even among those that did speak English, the second most common response to English use, seldom, suggested minimal interaction in English. However, the third most common response, work, pointed to
economic incentives for English, as does the fourth most common response, *school*. Spanish use was clearly dominant. The third most common response for Spanish use was *always*. Also, Spanish’s most common response to when used was *work*, pointing to economic incentives and its establishment as a dominant language. However, Spanish also showed strong home-directed sentiment, with the second most common response, *home*, followed by *friends* and *family* the third and fourth most common. But Meso-American languages also showed significant home-directed strength with the most common four responses, *home*, and then *homeland* and *family* tied, followed by *friends*.

From the data linked to desire for maintenance, and why, among the majority who wanted Meso-American languages to be spoken by children, there were significantly strong home and culture directed reasons and sentimentalities. In fact, all the coded responses for desire clustered around *family* and *culture* with *homeland* the third most common response. Dissimilarly, Spanish responses were spread out over eight codings. *Helpful* was the most common coding reported for Spanish. In examining the original surveys, the researcher notes that many of the responses coded as *helpful* discussed “helping out with the family” or “helping us” or “helping others.” The coding was clearly home-directed. English responses were also spread out, but less so. *Live here*, *improvement*, and then *work* were the most common responses, and all directly linked to economic incentives and commonly established connections to language dominance.

Actual Meso-American language maintenance for this study was 64%. There was a 16% gap between the desire for Meso-American language maintenance at 80% and the reality of maintenance at 64%. Twenty percent of the Meso-American speakers do not desire or are ambivalent about Meso-American language maintenance, and almost 40% percent report that the languages are not being maintained.

In comparing the results to two similar studies (Gladwin, 2004 and 2010), several noted differences emerged. The sample had more males and more respondents from Mexico. Also, there were more Uzo-Aztecan and Oto-Manguen language speakers. Finally, there were monolingual Meso-American language speakers reported for the first time, and Spanish received a higher desire rating than English. One reason for these differences is the fact that a large percentage of the Colquitt respondents were agricultural workers on a farm. Thus, the
study statistics skewed toward farm worker statistics, more male and more of Mexican descent, as noted in the 2007-2009 National Agricultural Workers Survey. This also supports the finding of the numerical strength of both Uzo-Aztecan and Oto-Manguen languages in the sample, both language families predominately located ancestrally and presently in Mexico. Also, the management of the farm noted that some of their workers participate in the H-2A guest worker program, which permits the legal hiring of foreign agricultural workers on temporary work permits. Thus, they are temporary residents in the United States, although many have been working in the U.S. every year for years, for up to ten months at a time. Having a large percentage of the sample be guest-workers underscores the findings of several Meso-American monolingual speakers and a strong desire for Spanish, as both of these results would be more common in Mexico than in the United States. Finally, both interviewers that went to the farm to conduct field research anecdotally noted that many of the farmworkers specifically mentioned that they were from the Mexican province of Hidalgo. This is a reason for the number of Nahuatl, Otomí, and Zapateco speakers, all languages with a strong presence in the Hidalgo region of Mexico.

**Implications**

The coding data presents a mixed picture. The codings for language use and language desire strongly link English and Spanish to economic and educational factors. These findings support that Meso-American speakers in the United States are surrounded by two dominant languages, English and Spanish, and that language shift will occur over time. The results concerning language maintenance note that such shift is taking place. Meso-American language maintenance was reported at 64%. Gladwin’s 2010 study, a similar albeit smaller sampled investigation, reported an almost identical language maintenance rate of 62%, supporting the reliability of this result. Most likely these languages fall in the stage 2 of language loss, as identified by Schmidt (1993). In this stage the language is being transmitted intergenerationally, but not to all new learners. In Schmidt’s classification stages, stage one languages have strong vitality and stage five languages are near-death.
Thus, there is some language loss and shift; however, the languages are being transferred. The codings showed strong desire for Meso-American language maintenance, four in five wanted children to learn a Meso-American language, and a majority of the children reported were learning one. Furthermore, the codings for use and desire showed strong home-directed, community, and cultural linkages to Meso-American languages. This clearly classifies Meso-American languages as less-dominant, with their connections home-directed and cultural factors instead of socio-economic ones. However, such familial and cultural ties to languages also provide a needed base for language revitalization (Fishman, 2000).

Conclusion

The author forwards two generalizable findings to join the national picture of Meso-American language maintenance among Meso-American speakers in the United States. First, the desired Meso-American language maintenance rate was 80%. Second, the reported Meso-American language maintenance rate was 64%. Language shift is occurring among Meso-American speakers in the United States.

Not only is it difficult to stop language shift, but the thought of systematically seeking to save languages is modern, starting around the early 1990s with the research of Joshua Fishman (Fishman, 1991; Garland, 2006). Institutionalized efforts have followed with schools, specifically bilingual language education, being a vital step in saving endangered languages. Across Latin America, there has been growth in Meso-American language education, as part of bilingual education in community schools (Hornberger, 1988). These have had some successes, and there are now programs in both Guatemala and Mexico that teach the young many of the Meso-American languages recorded in this study (Hornberger & Horn, 1996). Even in the U.S. there have been some, albeit very few, Meso-American language teaching programs established for immigrants at the community level. These programs have proven to be popular, but they are rare, often over-enrolled, and continually short on funds (Brannock, 2003; Driscoll, 2004). There were no such resources found in North Florida or South Georgia. However, after-school programs do exist in communities. For example, the Escuelita Maya in both Lake Worth, Florida and
Boynton Beach, Florida offers Mayan art and dance classes along with Kanjobal lessons for children and adults (Driscoll, 2004). Also, there are a few schools that teach Meso-American languages, such as the community-based charter school Xinaxcalmecac Academia Semillas del Pueblo in Los Angeles, California, in which students receive direct instruction in Nahualt (http://www.dignidad.org).

The researcher hopes this study publicizes these languages as living embodiments of ancient cultures and contributes to raising the status of Meso-American languages. Improving the status of a language is a crucial step in stabilizing language shift. Specifically, those that speak the language must respect it, and the greater community surrounding the speakers plays a role in not denigrating these languages and raising their societal status (Clemens et al., 2011). Meso-American languages are spoken in the United States, and the simple acknowledgement of their existence by those in contact with Meso-American language speakers, such as teachers, contributes to this goal. For specific language instruction, the researcher recommends helping speakers locate resources such as an Escuelita Maya, usually an after-school program, or other community-based center. A recommended website, dedicated to both preservation of and promotion of Indigenous languages is the Native American Language Net, located at (http://www.native-languages.org). This long running website is primarily linked to Native American languages, but the internet site also has excellent Meso-American content, with specific resources for children. Also, Reyhner’s (1997) *Teaching Indigenous Languages* is a useful resource to support, sustain, and build community based, native language, early childhood programs, ideally through two-way or maintenance bilingual programs, but also through other school and community offerings. Teachers play a critical role, through attitudes and awareness, in affirming, or not, heritage language maintenance among students (Lee & Oxelson, 2006). Teachers in particular are also encouraged to help and focus on parents. The role of parents in language maintenance is crucial, to support, value, and use children’s first language (Fillmore, 2000). Losing a language is more than just losing a mechanical skill; these are mystical markers of identity, gifts from one generation to the next (Fishman 1996). Language bestows a sense of community, kinship, and value to a people and its loss is a significant cultural impairment (Fishman, 2000). With the gift comes
the responsibility to pass it on, as the gift is truly a communal wish for continuity only possible by language maintenance.
References


INALI (Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas) is a site run by the Mexican government that houses the Catálogo de las Lenguas Indígenas Nacionales documenting the Indigenous languages of Mexico (http://inali.gob.mx).


