CLEAR

CENTER FOR LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

20 years

FEATURED THEME

20 YEARS OF SERVICE

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Celebrating Twenty Years of Service to Language Education

by Susan M. Gass and Charlene Polio

It hardly seems possible that 20 years have passed since CLEAR was first awarded funds through the US Department of Education's Title VI Language Resource Centers (LRC) Program. In its early years, CLEAR benefitted from the leadership and dedication of Professor Pat Paulsell, who together with Professor Susan Gass wrote the first grant proposal. Professor Paulsell's vision, activism, and creative activities combined to help put CLEAR at the forefront of foreign language education. Professors Gass and Paulsell co-directed CLEAR for seventeen years. Following the latter's 2013 retirement, CLEAR was joined in its current funding cycle by new co-director Professor Charlene Polio, whose expertise in second and foreign language pedagogy and second language acquisition greatly enhances the center's current projects.

IN 1996, CLEAR JOINED JUST SIX OTHER LRCS.

Today, there are sixteen LRCs across the country, from Washington, DC to Hawai'i. The increase in number and the LRCs' diversity of approaches reflect the changing climate in international education and the growing recognition of the importance of language learning and language teaching. Some centers focus on regional areas (e.g., Central Asia, Africa), others are topical in nature (e.g., assessment, heritage languages), while others, such as CLEAR, serve a broad-based audience. We welcome you to explore the centers' common website at http://www.nflrc.org to learn more about the ventures of our sister centers.

Since its inception, CLEAR has become a leader in the application of technology to the teaching and learning of foreign languages, particularly less commonly taught languages (LCTLs). With our emphasis on technology, CLEAR has been dedicated to a philosophy of supporting all language teachers at all levels as they move their students toward increased levels of proficiency. Despite the fact that some of CLEAR's activities have been language-specific, the bulk of CLEAR's professional development workshops, webinars, and technology-based products are designed such that teachers of any language or level can take advantage of them.

MICHIGAN STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

IS SPANISH *REALLY EASY?*
IS CHINESE *REALLY HARD?*

One of CLEAR's current research initiatives delves into the concept of language difficulty. In a session at the 2015 ACTFL conference, CLEAR's co-director and others presented preliminary information critically investigating the idea that some languages are harder to learn or that they take more time for English speakers to learn.

CLEAR NEWS

SUGGESTIONS WANTED!

We strive to publish *CLEAR News* articles that represent current topics in foreign language teaching, and we want to hear from you! If you have an idea for an article or would like to see a particular subject addressed, please let us know at clear@msu.edu. We will consider your idea for future issues of the newsletter.

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CLEAR News is available in hard copy at conferences and workshops, and in PDF online. Visit our website to download PDFs of new issues as they are published, and to access all archived issues. You can also sign up to be notified via email when a new issue is available for download. To add yourself to our mailing list, click on "Contact Us" from our home page, then create an account for yourself.

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Readers,

Greetings from CLEAR, where we are excited to be celebrating our twentieth anniversary in 2016! We've done a little spring cleaning and are also pleased to be debuting a new look for our newsletter with this issue. Longtime readers will remember some of the previous designs pictured on pages 4-5, and we hope you'll enjoy this updated look. We'll keep providing articles of interest to the language education community in our twice-yearly publications, and look forward to your input on topics and authors you'd like to see in the future.

In this issue, CLEAR's current co-directors, Susan Gass and Charlene Polio, reflect on some of CLEAR's initiatives and accomplishments in its two decades of service to the field. We hope you enjoy learning a bit about the center's history and the many products available to teachers, from projects currently in development to those completed in past cycles but still of use in today's language classrooms.

Five professional development workshops are coming up in July, two of which are one-day offerings. We hope this new option will provide flexibility for teachers to join us for one of these stand-alone workshops or add them onto our traditional three-day courses. The workshops cover a broad range of topics and you can learn more on pages 6-7 of this issue and on our website.

We are entering the busy spring conference season. CLEAR will be exhibiting at the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in Columbus, Ohio in March and we will be hosting the annual conference of the Computer-Assisted Language Instruction Consortium in May. For those of you not on the conference circuit this spring, you can of course always find us at http://clear.msu.edu.

We hope to see you soon, whether at a conference, a workshop, or on social media, and wish you a fruitful spring!

Joy Campbell
Executive Associate Director

Over the years, we have engaged in a range of projects that have provided support for language teachers across the US. In looking at our initiatives over the past two decades, we can see how CLEAR's development paralleled changes in both language teaching and technology.

GIVEN EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN THE USE OF TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING. Early in CLEAR's history was the development of multimedia modules for a range of languages (Arabic, Chinese, German, Korean, Russian, and Vietnamese) that could be used for learning and assessment.

The Rich Internet Application (RIA) initiative, which began in 2006, is unquestionably one of CLEAR's most successful projects to date, with over 38,000 registered users. The suite of RIAs is comprised of free tools that teachers of any language can use to create cloud-based language teaching materials—or have their students themselves create activities. The applications provide functionality that is aligned with mainstream language instruction, second language acquisition theory, and current practices in assessment; they also allow teachers to perform activities that are not possible or practical in conventional classrooms.

The twelve current RIAs include a dropbox for audio files, a program to create asynchronous conversations for language practice, a video repository with functionality such as subtitling, and a character formation tool that allows teachers of non-Roman script languages to teach stroke order and character elements to their students. Thousands of teachers use these tools regularly; for example, there are over 26,000 mashups (multimedia activities such as a YouTube video combined with comprehension activities for students), and over 51,000 audio dropboxes, which allow teachers to collect audio recordings from their students (with over 1.5 million submissions to date). Users need no programming skills to use these tools, and are able to enter their own content for any language and level. RIAs provide teachers

RIAs

Over **26,000** mashups

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51,000+ audio dropboxes with **1.5 million+ submissions** to date

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Enter **your own content** for any language and level

of a wide range of LCTLs the opportunity to create materials for non-Roman alphabet languages (e.g., Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Hindi, Russian). If you are not already using RIAs, we invite you to explore the various possibilities at http://ria.clear.msu.edu/.

Our close connection, especially in CLEAR's early years, with another of MSU's Title VI units, the Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER), yielded many projects that were focused on language for business purposes. These products, still available on CLEAR's website, provide useful language, cultural, and economic resources for Chinese, French, German, and Spanish, as well as general information on how language educators can facilitate connections to the international business community.

CLEAR has also excelled in seeking out new and better ways of providing professional development opportunities for language educators. Since 1997, CLEAR has hosted summer workshops that focus on language methodology, language pedagogy, and on the integration of technology into language teaching. We also have a longstanding outreach program in which personnel provide onsite workshops around the country at the request of various universities, community colleges, and K-12 school districts. All of the workshops provide hands-on opportunities for instructors to try out new teaching activities demonstrated by the program leaders, but perhaps more importantly, these workshops allow instructors to share ideas with each other and to work with teachers of other languages.

In the early years of CLEAR, we joined forces with a sister LRC, the University of Hawai'i's National Foreign Language Resource Center, to support what has now become a major journal in the field of language education, *Language Learning & Technology*. If we consider the state of publishing, the concept of what LLT represents was prescient. The original intent of the journal was that copyright be maintained by authors and that the journal be free and online—a true open access journal. CLEAR is proud to have shown how, at that time, a non-traditional mode of publishing could be done well
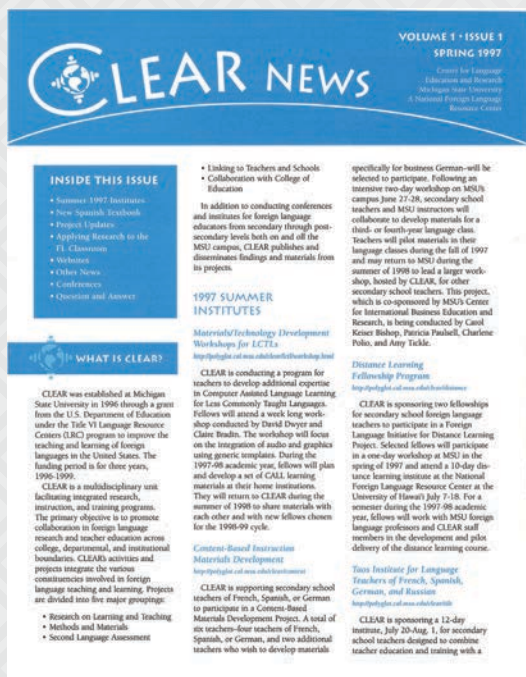
1997

2001

with high standards. The face of the journal has changed, but the high quality has not. New columns have appeared (e.g., action research) and others have remained since the journal's inception (e.g., emerging technologies). The journal now has a readership of over 21,000 subscribers and countless others via the website (http://llt.msu.edu/) and since 2007 has ranked in the top 20 linguistics journals and in the top 20 education journals based on the Thomson Reuters Journal Citation Reports.

CLEAR bases its activities for the 2014-18 funding cycle on the same philosophical foundation as it did back in 1996, namely, to support language teaching and learning at all levels of instruction. In an effort to ensure that we are meeting the needs of foreign language teachers, we have a new advisory committee made up of foreign language practitioners representing a range of languages and teaching responsibilities.

The current grant cycle continues with projects begun in the past as well as new projects. We have made some exciting changes to our summer professional development schedule, adding two one-day workshops (one on differentiated instruction and the other on keeping student and instructor talk in the target language). Other workshops will be conducted on speaking, on writing, and on the use of technology. This spring, our ninth World Languages Day will be held on the Michigan State University campus with sessions for parents and

teachers, but most importantly sessions that will expose students from across the state to languages and cultures of the world. As a testimony to our local impact, we are particularly proud of our World Languages Day event, which attracts hundreds of students and teachers and fills up within hours after registration opens each year.

One research initiative new to the current grant cycle is what we are calling our Language Difficulty Project. The goal is to challenge the under-researched assumptions people have that some languages are inherently more difficult or more difficult for English speakers to learn. It is true that some aspects of some languages can be difficult, but we do a disservice to students when we make assumptions about specific languages as being difficult. The background for this project, which is being conducted with the Assessment and Evaluation Language Resource Center (a consortium of Georgetown University and the Center for Applied Linguistics), was presented at a 2015 ACTFL session with 150 people in attendance. The next step is to begin an empirical study on the issue.

Another new project this cycle is the LCTL Virtual Oral Interview Classroom-based Exam System (LCTL-VOICES), which will be an important resource for researchers and LCTL materials developers around the world. LCTL-VOICES is a public database with oral production data from students of LCTLs. The database is searchable by various criteria (such as age, proficiency, first language,

2004

2011

second language, etc.) that will make it valuable for researchers and pedagogues investigating the acquisition of these languages. The database will be expanded to accept submissions from students from other institutions and a greater diversity of LCTLs. The groundwork for the database is currently complete, thanks to a portion of a 2010 Department of Education International Research and Studies grant, and pilot testing has been done in six LCTLs so far.

CLEAR's successes are due to many constituencies. If any of these pieces of the puzzle were to be lost, CLEAR's impact would be lessened. First is Joy Campbell, who is truly the heart and soul of CLEAR. She not only makes sure that all of us are on track, but she has the best overall view of what we are doing and how that relates to the work of other LRCs. She has also worked with personnel from other LRCs on behalf of the LRC program as a whole, producing publications on the collective efforts of the LRCs and providing feedback to the granting agency on a programmatic level. The affiliated faculty members who actually carry out many of the projects represent another of CLEAR's assets. They work to provide high quality materials that will support the work of others and they work to prepare well-regarded workshops for other language professionals. Third, our programmers, past and present, have worked closely with project leaders and on their own initiatives such as the RIAs to place CLEAR in

a leadership position at the intersection of language teaching and technology. Their work has ensured that CLEAR's products reach the widest possible audience.

And, finally, we would be remiss if we didn't acknowledge you: the many foreign language educators who have used our materials and who continue to let us know of their usefulness. We feel rewarded when you approach us at conferences and delighted when we have teachers return for additional summer workshops. Your comments help us improve and motivate us to keep going. OUR HEARTFELT THANKS TO ALL WHO HAVE USED OUR MATERIALS AND BENEFITTED FROM OUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN OUR FIRST 20 YEARS. YOU HAVE MADE IT HAPPEN.

Susan M. Gass is a University Distinguished Professor in Michigan State University's Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian and African Languages. Her research is in second language acquisition and includes the areas of input and interaction, language universals, and language transfer. In addition to her role as one of CLEAR's founding co-directors, she is the director of the English Language Center, co-director of the Center for Language Teaching Advancement, and director of the Second Language Studies PhD Program.

Charlene Polio, CLEAR's new co-director, is a Professor and Associate Chair in MSU's Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian and African Languages, where she also directed the MA Program in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages for many years. Her main area of research is second language writing and she is particularly interested in the various research methods and measures used in studying second language writing as well as the interface between the fields of second language writing and second language acquisition.

2016 Summer Workshop Preview

This year marks CLEAR's twentieth year of offering summer professional development workshops! We enjoy welcoming language educators from across the country to these courses and are happy to be offering two of our workshops in a one-day format for the first time. Read on for descriptions of our three longer workshops and two one-day workshops to see how they can best fit your summer schedule. We hope to see you in July!

SPEAKING ACTIVITIES FOR ORAL PROFICIENCY DEVELOPMENT
July 11-13, 2016

Workshop Leader: *Julie Foss, Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern Foreign Languages, Saginaw Valley State University*

We want our students to become proficient speakers of the target language, but what exactly is proficiency, and how can we help students achieve it? We will begin answering these questions by identifying what speakers at different levels and sublevels of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines can do, and how the Guidelines can be used to set realistic oral performance and proficiency goals for your learners. After exploring considerations for developing and implementing speaking activities for Novice to

Advanced levels and evaluating a variety of sample activities, you will begin creating activities that target your learners' oral proficiency goals.

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM
July 14, 2016 (one-day workshop)

Workshop Leader: *Julie Foss, Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern Foreign Languages, Saginaw Valley State University*

Each of our students has different needs, levels of readiness, interests, learning styles, and motivations. This one-day workshop is designed to help language teachers meet the challenge of anticipating and responding to these differences. We will examine a variety of ways to differentiate content, process, and product in the language classroom, including planning differentiated units, lessons, activities, and assessments. You will begin putting some of these techniques into action by creating materials for your learners.

KEEPING STUDENT AND TEACHER TALK IN THE TARGET LANGUAGE
July 15, 2016 (one-day workshop)

Workshop Leader: *Charlene Polio, Professor in the Department of Linguistics & Languages, Michigan State University*

Learn more about all of these workshops and find information about accommodations, costs, and discount plans by visiting our website. Go to http://clear.msu.edu and click on "Professional Development" to apply online.

Early application deadline: May 6, 2016
Regular application deadline: June 3, 2016

This one-day workshop will demonstrate ways to increase teacher and student talk in the target language. For beginners, we will focus on teacher strategies for staying in the target language and observe sample lessons for teaching grammar and giving instructions for complex activities. For more advanced students, we will focus on getting the students to use more complex language in a variety of speaking and writing activities.

TEACHING LANGUAGE WITH TECHNOLOGY: BASIC TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES
July 18-20, 2016

Workshop leader: *Betsy Lavolette, Director of the Language Resource Center, Gettysburg College*

Technology can help teachers engage language students and develop 21st century skills, for example, through classroom language exchanges via the Internet. Technology can also help teachers assess students' progress, keep them motivated toward learning goals, and provide students with timely feedback—without burdening teachers with extra grading. In this workshop, you will learn about tools for accomplishing these purposes, such as language exchange apps, in-class response systems, language games, and CLEAR's Rich Internet Applications. You will also have the opportunity to work with these

Each grant cycle, the Language Resource Centers publish a booklet highlighting their work, and we're excited to share this publication with you! This overview of all sixteen current LRCs contains information on CLEAR and its sister LRCs, as well as descriptions of how the LRCs are collectively and individually impacting professional development, research, and materials development for languages in the US.
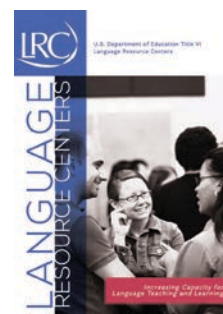
The booklet is available in hard copy from any LRC (watch for us at regional and national conferences on foreign language education) and in PDF on CLEAR's website here: http://bit.ly/lrc-booklet

tools hands-on to develop assessments and activities for your classroom. No tech skills? No problem! You will work with an experienced teacher-trainer who can walk you through the basics.

WRITING IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM
July 21-23, 2016

Workshop Leader: *Charlene Polio, Professor in the Department of Linguistics & Languages, Michigan State University*

This workshop will look at writing from two perspectives: writing to learn and learning to write. First, we will examine activities that facilitate the learning of grammar and vocabulary as well as activities that enhance speaking, listening, and reading. Second, we will examine activities that help students learn to write various genres, from simple to complex, in the target language. Participants will evaluate activities that can be modified for a wide range of levels and languages.

CLEAR NEWS

CLEAR News is a publication of the Center for Language Education and Research and is intended to inform foreign language educators of the Center's ongoing research projects and professional development workshops, to report on current foreign language research and publications and their applicability to the classroom, and to provide a forum for educators to discuss foreign language teaching and learning topics.

The US Department of Education awards grants through Title VI funding to a small number of institutions for the purpose of establishing, strengthening, and operating language resource and training centers to improve the teaching and learning of foreign languages. There are currently sixteen Language Resource Centers nationwide: the ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION LANGUAGE RESOURCE CENTER (AELRC), a consortium of Georgetown University and the Center for Applied Linguistics; the CENTER FOR ADVANCED LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (CALPER) at The Pennsylvania State University; the CENTER FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE ACQUISITION (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota; the CENTER FOR APPLIED SECOND LANGUAGE STUDIES (CASLS) at the University of Oregon; the CENTER FOR LANGUAGES OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN REGION (CeLCAR) at Indiana University; the CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES IN CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY (CERCLL) at the University of Arizona; the CENTER FOR INTEGRATED LANGUAGE COMMUNITIES (CILC) at City University of New York; the CENTER FOR LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (CLEAR) at Michigan State University; the CENTER FOR OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AND LANGUAGE LEARNING (COERLL) at the University of Texas at Austin; the CENTER FOR URBAN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH (CULTR) at Georgia State University; the NATIONAL AFRICAN LANGUAGE RESOURCE CENTER (NALRC) at Indiana University; the NATIONAL EAST ASIAN LANGUAGES RESOURCE CENTER (NEALRC) at The Ohio State University; the NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE RESOURCE CENTER (NFLRC) at the University of Hawai´i at Manoa; the NATIONAL HERITAGE LANGUAGE RESOURCE CENTER (NHLRC), a consortium of UCLA and the UC Consortium for Language Learning and Teaching; the NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR ASIAN LANGUAGES (NRCAL) at California State University, Fullerton; and the SLAVIC AND EURASIAN LANGUAGE RESEARCH CENTER (SEELRC) at Duke University.