FEATURED THEME

LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TOLERANCE

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

How Learning a New Language Improves Tolerance

by Amy Thompson, University of South Florida

There are many benefits to knowing more than one language. For example, it has been shown that aging adults who speak more than one language have less likelihood of developing dementia.

Additionally, the bilingual brain becomes better at filtering out distractions, and learning multiple languages improves creativity. Evidence also shows that learning subsequent languages is easier than learning the first foreign language.

UNFORTUNATELY, NOT ALL AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES CONSIDER LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES A WORTHWHILE INVESTMENT.

Why is foreign language study important at the university level?

As an applied linguist, I study how learning multiple languages can have cognitive and emotional benefits. One of these benefits that's not obvious is that language learning improves tolerance.

This happens in TWO IMPORTANT WAYS.

The 1st is that it opens people's eyes to a way of doing things in a way that's different from their own, which is called "cultural competence."

The 2nd is related to the comfort level of a person when dealing with unfamiliar situations, or "tolerance of ambiguity."

Gaining cross-cultural understanding

Cultural competence is key to thriving in our increasingly globalized world. How specifically does language learning improve cultural competence? The answer can be illuminated by examining different types of intelligence.

(Continued inside)

UNTIL OUR STUDENTS STEP OUT OF THE CLASSROOM TO APPLY THEIR. . . LANGUAGE SKILLS, THEY DO NOT HAVE A SENSE OF HOW SPECIAL IT IS TO BE ABLE TO CONNECT WITH ANOTHER LANGUAGE [AND] CULTURE. . .

. . . At World Languages Day, students are not only able to meet others with their language skills, but they get a fun peek into the rich variety of world cultures that exist." (Christa, a teacher from Bay City, Michigan, after participating in CLEAR's World Languages Day event)

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,

Spring greetings from the campus of Michigan State University! In this issue of *CLEAR News*, we feature an article by University of South Florida faculty member and MSU graduate Dr. Amy Thompson about how learning a new language can improve tolerance. Written to be easily accessible for a lay audience, Thompson's article gives a clear rationale for the importance of teaching world languages. We hope this will be a helpful resource as you speak with administrators and parents about the significance of what you do – opening your students' eyes to the world around them. Tolerance of things new and different is a valuable trait in today's diverse world, and language educators have a crucial role in shaping their students' attitudes.

This year's summer workshops will be offered in two blocks, a departure from past years that we hope will fit more neatly into your summer schedule. Three workshops will take place in late June: a three-day course on assessment and two one-day workshops. The first of these will be on ACTFL's Core Standards and the second dovetails with that topic but goes into greater detail on unit design. At the end of July into August, we will offer a three-day workshop on language education technology, and an encore of the one-day unit design workshop.

We will be out and about on the conference circuit this spring, exhibiting at the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in Chicago in March and in Flagstaff, AZ at the annual conference of the Computer-Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO) in May.

Finally, we deeply regret that the termination of our Rich Internet Applications program has caused so much disruption in their users' classrooms and curricula. We had no advance notice when they were taken offline and were not able to warn our users. We are working to find solutions; please see the announcement inside for more details.

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

Psychologist Robert Sternberg's research on intelligence describes different types of intelligence and how they are related to adult language learning. What he refers to as "practical intelligence" is similar to social intelligence in that it helps individuals learn nonexplicit information from their environments, including meaningful gestures or other social cues.

LANGUAGE LEARNING INEVITABLY INVOLVES LEARNING ABOUT DIFFERENT CULTURES. STUDENTS PICK UP CLUES ABOUT THE CULTURE BOTH IN LANGUAGE CLASSES AND THROUGH MEANINGFUL IMMERSION EXPERIENCES.

Researchers Hanh Thi Nguyen and Guy Kellogg have shown that when students learn another language, they develop new ways of understanding culture through analyzing cultural stereotypes. They explain that "learning a second language involves the acquisition not only of linguistic forms but also ways of thinking and behaving."

With the help of an instructor, students can critically think about stereotypes of different cultures related to food, appearance and conversation styles.

Dealing with the unknown

The second way that adult language learning increases tolerance is related to the comfort level of a person when dealing with "tolerance of ambiguity."

Someone with a high tolerance of ambiguity finds unfamiliar situations exciting, rather than frightening. My research on motivation, anxiety and beliefs indicates that language learning improves people's tolerance of ambiguity, especially when more than one foreign language is involved.

It's not difficult to see why this may be so. Conversations in a foreign language will inevitably involve unknown words. It wouldn't be a successful conversation if one of the speakers constantly stopped to say, "Hang on – I don't know that word. Let me look it up in the dictionary." Those with a high tolerance of ambiguity

would feel comfortable maintaining the conversation despite the unfamiliar words involved.

Applied linguists Jean-Marc Dewaele and Li Wei also study tolerance of ambiguity and have indicated that those with experience learning more than one foreign language in an instructed setting have more tolerance of ambiguity.

What changes with this understanding

A high tolerance of ambiguity brings many advantages. It helps students become less anxious in social interactions and in subsequent language learning experiences. Not surprisingly, the more experience a person has with language learning, the more comfortable the person gets with this ambiguity.

And that's not all.

Individuals with higher levels of tolerance of ambiguity have also been found to be more entrepreneurial (i.e., are more optimistic, innovative and don't mind taking risks).

In the current climate, universities are frequently being judged by the salaries of their graduates. Taking it one step further, based on the relationship of tolerance of ambiguity and entrepreneurial intention, increased tolerance of ambiguity could lead to higher salaries for graduates, which in turn, I believe, could help increase funding for those universities that require foreign language study.

Those who have devoted their lives to theorizing about and the teaching of languages would say, "It's not about the money." But perhaps it is.

Language learning in higher ed

Most American universities have a minimal language requirement that often varies depending on the student's major. However, students can typically opt out of the requirement by taking a placement test or providing some other proof of competency.

In contrast to this trend, Princeton recently announced that all students, regardless of their competency when entering the university, would be required to study an additional language.

I'd argue that more universities should follow Princeton's lead, as language study at the university level could lead to an increased tolerance of the different cultural norms represented in American society, which is desperately needed in the current political climate with the wave of hate crimes sweeping university campuses nationwide.

Knowledge of different languages is crucial to becoming global citizens. As former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan noted:

OUR COUNTRY NEEDS TO CREATE A FUTURE IN WHICH ALL AMERICANS UNDERSTAND THAT BY SPEAKING MORE THAN ONE LANGUAGE, THEY ARE ENABLING OUR COUNTRY TO COMPETE SUCCESSFULLY AND WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH PARTNERS ACROSS THE GLOBE.

Considering the evidence that studying languages as adults increases tolerance in two important ways, the question shouldn't be "Why should universities require foreign language study?" but rather "Why in the world wouldn't they?

Amy Thompson is an Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of South Florida. She is a graduate of the Second Language Studies PhD program at Michigan State University.

This interview with Amy Thompson on the "Matt Townsend Show" gives a good overview of tolerance and language learning. It could form the basis for a language class discussion, reaction paper, or a listening exercise in an ESL classroom (interview begins at 16:40 mark).

* For links to further reading or viewing, please see the PDF online and click on the text in purple.

Rich Internet Applications Offline

We regret to announce that CLEAR's RIAs are no longer available. We understand that as an educator and user of the technology, this is upsetting for you and your students, and we sincerely apologize for the distress and frustration this has caused our users.

MSU's College of Arts & Letters reached the difficult decision to discontinue the RIAs in January 2017. Underlying technological issues (e.g., aging server infrastructure, potential vulnerabilities and compatibility issues inherent in Flash) required the College to act quickly and there was no warning to CLEAR or ability for CLEAR to notify our users prior to the shutdown.

RIGHT NOW OUR FIRST PRIORITY IS FIGURING OUT A WAY TO GET OUR RIA USERS THEIR MATERIALS. We will be posting announcements and instructions on our website as soon as we have further information about how this process will work. Your files are still on our server; nothing has been deleted or lost.

We are also curating a list of alternate tools which may be used in place of some of the functionality the RIAs provided. A preliminary list is now available on our website. We will be providing periodic updates and will be asking for feedback throughout this process.

2017 Summer Workshop Preview

This year marks CLEAR's 21st year of offering summer professional development workshops! We enjoy welcoming language educators from across the country to these courses and hope the new split schedule will afford some flexibility as you make your summer plans.

ASSESSMENT IN A PROFICIENCY-BASED LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

June 26-28, 2017

Workshop leaders: *Matt Kanefsky, Assistant Director of Instruction—French, and Walter Hopkins, Assistant Director of Instruction—Spanish, Michigan State University*

Are you teaching for proficiency but still giving discrete-point grammar tests? At a loss for determining if your students are meeting proficiency goals? Just interested in better ways to assess your students' proficiency? If so, this is the workshop for you! In this three-day foray into ways of assessing proficiency, we will look at not only how to develop better formal tests, but also how to integrate oral instruments like can-do statements and oral proficiency interviews (OPIs). Further, we will discuss how testing fits in with the ACTFL standards and what levels of proficiency can be realistically attained in both standard high school and university programs. As participants, you are encouraged to bring assessments that you have used in the past as this will be a hands-on workshop on developing proficiency-based assessments.

INCREASING PROFICIENCY THROUGH WORLD LANGUAGE CORE PRACTICES

June 29, 2017 (one-day workshop)

Workshop leader: *Erin Parris-Dallia, Plymouth-Canton Community Schools; President Elect, Michigan World Language Association; Fellow, Leadership Initiative for Language Learning*

Looking to up your proficiency game? World Language Core Practices, recently published by ACTFL, are research-supported "teacher moves" that support language learners in gaining proficiency. The practices include using the target language, providing interpersonal communication tasks, employing functional goals and objectives, teaching grammar use in context, using authentic texts, and providing appropriate feedback. Participants in this full-day workshop will explore the reasoning behind World Language Core Practices, and the how-to of using them, and planning for nurturing more proficient world language students.

REACHING 21ST CENTURY LEARNERS THROUGH UNIT DESIGN

June 30, 2017 (one-day workshop, section 1)

August 3, 2017 (one-day workshop, section 2)

Workshop leader: *Kellye Guzik, Glenbrook North High School, Chicago, IL; Fellow, Leadership Initiative for Language Learning*

How do you design units that are relevant and engaging for your students? Is it sometimes a challenge? In this workshop, participants will hear about a successful unit design model used in the language department at a Midwestern high school that decided to ditch their text. The presenter will walk you through the essential questions you need to ask before embarking on unit design, cover performance-based and formative assessments you can use to make sure the students are on track, and discuss authentic activities to keep students engaged. Effective tools including Interactive Notebooks and the TALK system (Talk, Accuracy, Listen, Keep it going) will be introduced. Finally, the presenter will offer suggestions on how to convince colleagues to come on board with creative unit design, and how to implement unit design techniques while still using a preordained text. Come ready to learn and share!

TEACHING LANGUAGE WITH TECHNOLOGY: BASIC TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

July 31-August 2, 2017

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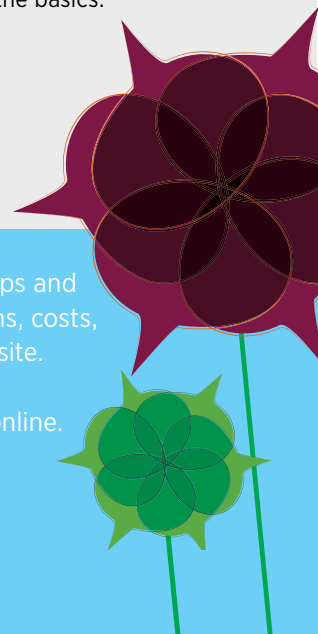
Learn more about all of these workshops and find information about accommodations, costs, and discount plans by visiting our website. Go to http://clear.msu.edu and click on "Professional Development" to apply online.

Early application deadline: May 5, 2017
Regular application deadline:
    June 2 for first set
    July 7 for second set

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.

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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.