0851

LANGUAGE LEARNING
AND
LIBERAL EDUCATION

PROCEEDINGS OF A CONFERENCE
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
15-17 April 1988

Peter C. Patrikis, Editor

The Chicago Conferences on Liberal Education

and

The Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning

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Preface

Ralph W. Nicholas
Dean of the College
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The University of Chicago is an institution in which liberal education has had a happier history than it has often enjoyed elsewhere in American higher education. We are proud of our undergraduate curriculum -- proud, I fear, sometimes to the point of hubris. Lying behind the College's contemporary core curriculum are fifty years of continuous experimentation in rigorous and demanding courses in the biological sciences, humanities, physical sciences, and social sciences. We have lavished the most exquisite intellectual efforts on these courses; their rationale, organization, and place in the universe of knowledge are almost painfully explicit.

At the same time, throughout this fifty-year period -- in fact, throughout the entire history of the University -- we have offered instruction in foreign languages, usually as a degree requirement, with embarrassingly little clearly stated justification for doing so. Please don't misunderstand me. I know of a number of good -- even compelling reasons -- for teaching foreign languages and for requiring students to learn them, and I exclude for present purposes the arguments from national or business interests that appear to be the only persuasive ones in Washington. It seems particularly appropriate at present that we try to discover the intellectual and pedagogical reasons for teaching foreign languages in American universities in the late twentieth century. I believe that the reasons we have will be different from the reasons that might have been given for language teaching and study in 1948, and that those, in turn, were different from the reasons given in 1908.

Before the First World War, higher education was for a small number of students, mostly from well-to-do families. They needed to know Latin and Greek because higher education was still closely tied to religious education and to a scholarly acquaintance with the Bible. They wanted to know German and French because Europe was the center of the known world and the Continent appealed to all as the home of Western culture. Forty years later, at the end of the Second World War, the Continent was shattered and the known world had grown to include Asia and Africa. German and Japanese were tools of American occupation governments, and few students went beyond Cicero in Latin or studied Greek at all. The student population included veterans of overseas service who had practical reasons for studying spoken languages which they had often learned in a military Pidgin.

In 1988 we have eighteen-year-old students who have, mostly unknowingly, visited the native habitats of five major language families, at least for brief times, never traveling in anything smaller than a 747. Like many of their less well-educated forebears, they are uncertain about what language the Bible was written in, and they do not know that Spanish and French are Romance languages, or that Finnish and Estonian are not. What is a suitable education in foreign languages -- and about foreign languages -- for this generation? They are about to become the preeminent world citizens of a generation, and they are encouraged to believe that everyone will understand English if it is spoken loudly, and distinctly, and slowly enough. We hector them intermittently over four years and declare they will not get a degree until they learn the required minimum of Spanish, but it is clear that we cannot make them learn another language against their will.

Their will, it turns out, is not so different from that of the normal faculty member. All they need is a good reason to learn a language and they will do it. But, can we offer them a good reason?

The conferences we hold at irregular intervals at the University of Chicago, and which we group together under the general head of the Chicago Conferences on Liberal Education, were created to provide an occasional national forum in which difficult questions such as these could be raised and discussed. We don't always agree on the answers, and, of course, there is often more than one answer. The Conference on Language Learning and Liberal Education helped bring to the fore several reasons for teaching foreign languages to American students, including many students who will never use a language other than English as means of spoken or written communication. Each justification for foreign language study in the liberal arts curriculum contains within it a rationale for a somewhat different approach to the teaching of a language. And, since most classes serve several ends at the same time, they use mixed pedagogical methods. There was something in each of the Conference papers for each of our problems.

The Conference on Language Learning and Liberal Education was also a part of another University of Chicago tradition, the Midwest Faculty Seminars. The Midwest Faculty Seminars offer special occasions when colleagues from other liberal arts institutions in the Middle West can meet for a faculty seminar on a special topic of broad scholarly concern. These have been refreshing events for all who have participated in them, allowing us to gain perspectives on contemporary intellectual problems that we do not get every day. As we all know from experience, sometimes changing the context in which we think about a problem helps to get a fresh hold on it and to solve what had seemed insoluble.

The Midwest Faculty Seminar is administered, at the University of Chicago, by the University Office of Continuing Education. This Office extended itself to support the entire conference, which was much larger than the ordinary Midwest Faculty Seminar meeting. I want to express

Overview of the Conference on Language Learning and Liberal Education

Peter C. Patrikis
The Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning

The Conference on Language Learning and Liberal Education had its origin, appropriately enough, in a philological problem. Many colleges and universities have recorded in their course catalogues inspiring statements about the value of the study of a foreign language. A rapid survey of such statements will identify recurring common goals: access to another culture and literature, the opportunity to deepen one's understanding of one's own language, the ability to communicate with others, and professional development. Goals such as these are worthy, and they can be fulfilled with lengthy and profound study. Mastery of a foreign language is, if not a lifelong pursuit, the result of long hours, hard work, meaningful dialogue with native speakers, and the careful reading of works in many domains. Yet the same institutions that profess these elevated goals have language requirements that are usually expressed in terms of "seat time" (from two to four semesters) and a mediocre grade. The wide gap between the ideal and the real, between the goals of a foreign language requirement and the required achievement to reach those goals, is a virtual abyss. It is this discrepancy and the possible ways of addressing that problem that first suggested the need for this conference.

Another stimulus for this conference is the current tendency to conceptualize and organize language teaching and learning pragmatically in terms of professional needs. While it seems evident that many of our students envisage only three possible careers -- doctor, lawyer, and chief executive officer -- we must ask whether professionally oriented instruction is training or education, whether such instruction imparts skills or knowledge and understanding, and whether such instruction is consonant with the goals of liberal, or general, education. In other words, we are looking once again at a perennial tension in American higher education between general and professional education.

The pragmatization of foreign language education is occurring under the impulse of movements in testing and under the guise of the communicative approach. The notion of proficiency, especially of oral proficiency, has gained much currency in the last decade, both among teachers who have sought more clearly defined goals for their foreign language classes and among administrators who find comfort in concrete numerical measures of progress. Apart from a variety of problems that are yet to be resolved -- for example, the implications of proficiency testing for

staffing, training, and budgets, or the political reality of a single national standard -- the notion of oral proficiency has as its ideal and highest level "the educated adult native speaker." Whether that ideal provides a useful, adequate, and acceptable model for undergraduate foreign language courses that fulfill the general education requirement is one question posed by the conference.

The creation of an organization like the Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning reflects the renewed interest in foreign language education that we see around the country. We find obvious evidence of that interest in the rising enrollments in foreign language courses. We see it in the reinstatement of the foreign language requirement in many institutions, in most cases of graduation requirements and in some rare cases of matriculation requirements (e.g., the states of Minnesota and Utah.) We see it in the establishment of foreign language centers at Brown University and the Ohio State University and in the creation of the foreign language faculty resource center at the University of Chicago and the resource center of the Five College Consortium in western Massachusetts. The country is dotted with new language laboratory facilities, and the installation of computers, satellite dishes, and other forms of technology represent significant capital investments at a time of diminishing resources. Many in the profession are pondering the creation of a new federal agency dedicated to foreign languages and international studies. Our journals show evidence of fruitful developments and active debates. The study of language is enjoying a prominence both in the public eye, where newspapers feature upward trends, and in the classroom as well. Foreign languages are "hot" once again, and discussion of foreign language education has also heated up. There are new clichés, new interests, and new sides in new debates about what is good and what is best in the field of foreign languages.

The renewed interest in foreign language brings with it pressure for improvement and, sometimes, novelty for novelty's sake. In times of challenge and change, it is to be expected that foreign language teachers, like their colleagues in all fields, be called upon to make plausible, indeed persuasive, arguments for their courses. Participants in all the discussion groups at the conference reiterated the need they felt to justify foreign language courses: justify them to students, to colleagues in other fields, and to deans. That perceived need suggests a range of problems that extends well beyond the issues of liberal education, but the paper assembled in this volume delineate many of the issues that are both intellectual and administrative. Many of the related issues the Consortium investigated in an earlier conference on the governance of foreign language teaching and learning.[1]

If the study of foreign languages is once again enjoying favored status in colleges and universities, so is general education. Both the general public and faculty and administrators in Academia have read and debated several reports and books over the last decade. The Conference on Language Learning and Liberal Education was one of the first occasions to

look at the two issues together. Because the field of foreign languages and the issues of general education have not been examined together carefully, it is instructive to review briefly how some prominent reports and studies on American education have dealt with the study of foreign languages.

It is best to begin with A Nation at Risk, which was published in 1983 and which remains the touchstone of critiques of American education in the past decade. That report serves as a useful compendium of commonplaces regarding the study of foreign languages, as it echoes the statements in many college and university catalogues. One common justification in that report is the notion of a global village. The term "global village" is a popular oxymoron that indiscriminately combines notions of economy, ecology, politics, and salvation. Yet while it evokes planetary harmony and interdependence through the study of foreign languages, A Nation at Risk also appeals to patriotism in the face of the threat of competition from abroad. This paradox occurs unquestioned and unresolved in other discussions of education in the United States, and it regularly reappears in other foreign language reports. In addition to the forging of the global village, A Nation at Risk also ascribes other virtues to language study:

> the study of a foreign language introduces students to non-English speaking cultures. This is a concern of more than one of the presentations we shall be hearing this weekend.
>
> the study of a foreign language heightens the awareness and comprehension of one's native tongue.
>
> the study of a foreign language serves the nation's needs in commerce, diplomacy, defense, and education.[2]

It should be firmly noted that among the virtues of language learning we do not find the ability to study literature, linguistics, history, religion, philosophy, art history, folkloristics, or many other disciplines of the human sciences.

Regardless of their differing perspectives and political agenda, several other recent reports and jeremiads on American education are harmonious in their neglect of or merely conventional nod of approval to the study of foreign languages. William Bennett's report To Reclaim A Legacy recommends that college students have a "demonstrable proficiency in a foreign language (either classical or modern) and the ability to view that language as an avenue into another culture."[3] Given the emphasis in that report on the close reading of the great texts of Western civilization, the Bennett report does not appear to recognize that relatively few of these great books were written in English. Far from being presentist in its orientation, To Reclaim A Legacy offers us the refuge of an atem-

poral and universal Anglo-American past. The Association of American Colleges released its report Integrity in the Academic Curriculum early in 1985. This report proposes a rigorous basic curriculum and recommends a basic list of "experiences" or skills: critical analysis, literacy, understanding numerical data, historical consciousness, science, values, art, international and multicultural experiences, and study of one subject in depth. Despite the inclusion of the international/multicultural element, the study of foreign languages is not mentioned.[4] E.D. Hirsch's Cultural Literacy: What Every American Should Know covers a wide range of fundamental issues and words that are said to be the basis for cultural and civic literacy; knowledge of a foreign language is not included.[5] In Ernest Boyer's book College there is much about language (by which is meant the English language) and much about international education (by which is meant the study of other countries); there is, however, virtually nothing about the study of foreign languages.[6] Finally, to return to the site of the conference, there is Allan Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind, where once again no specific attention is paid to foreign languages.[7] This conference was intended as the occasion to ask why these various reports show so little understanding of the possibilities of foreign language learning.

As one notes the minor part that the study of foreign languages seems to play in the most recent discussions of American education in general and of general education in particular, it comes as an equal surprise to discover that the issues of general education play an equally insignificant role in the discussion of the study of foreign languages. From the 1976 report of the President's Commission on Foreign Languages and International Studies up to the recent draft legislation for a National Endowment for Foreign Languages and International Studies, the study of foreign languages appears unconnected to undergraduate general education and is linked almost exclusively to the notions of professional training and the national interest. The loaded term "national interest" has evolved of late: originally, it connoted the need for military, diplomatic, and intelligence activities for national defense following the conflicts of the Second World War, the Cold War, the Korean War, and the War in Vietnam. It still retains that sense in many discussions, especially in government circles. In recent years, however, the term "national interest" has been transferred to the domain of economics and trade, and the battle ground has expanded from the Pentagon to include Wall Street and Silicon Valley.

This kind of call for language study carries with it a distinctly nationalist, indeed militarist, orientation. Here is a quotation to consider:

> No region is too remote to be the concern of American diplomacy. And all too frequently American armed forces must ply their trade in lands and among peoples whose very names would have been unknown to an earlier generation.... One would suppose accordingly that many Americans would be equipped with scientific

and detailed understanding of these multifarious cultures, that the United States would lead the world in the study of foreign lands no matter how distant, that no society could be named for which there is no American expert, and that the American academic structure would reflect this world perspective.... Ideological World War III has started and there is no certainty that it is well won yet... In this war for men's minds, obviously the big guns of our armament is [sic] competence in languages and linguistics.[8]

That call to linguistic arms will be familiar to everyone who has read recent reports advocating new language programs. But this passage was written some thirty years ago and is excerpted from the Congressional testimony of Mortimer Graves, then head of the Linguistic Society of America, in his request for increased spending for linguistic research. The study of foreign languages --- potentially the opening of the mind to other languages and cultures --- is becoming part of a new economic and technological nationalism.

Curiously, this pragmatization of language study is counter to the most important movements within professional education. It is occurring at the same moment that many of our leading professional schools are swinging back to liberal education! Medical schools and law schools have made strong statements against preprofessional training in college and in favor of the values of general education. Last year the Massachusetts Institute of Technology revised the curriculum for engineering students so that the study of the humanities and the values of general education would play a greater role in the education of students, even to the possible detriment of professional training! Felix Rohatyn, senior partner at Lazard Frères and head of the New York Municipal Finance Authority when it rescued the city from bankruptcy, wrote an editorial in the New York Times condemning the professional education of business schools; his words echo recent statements from the chief executive officers of General Motors and AT&T.: "I believe that businesses should go back to basics in recruiting, should forget about the business schools and recruit the best young liberal arts students we can find."[9]

The reports on education and the new impulses within the foreign language profession appear to be out of step with each other and even contradictory.

The papers that are included here cover a variety of issues, and their primary purposes was, and still is, to stimulate -- and in some cases, provoke -- discussion. They cannot exhaust all aspects of this ever-widening topic, nor do they pretend to offer definitive solutions to perennial problems. At the conference on language learning and liberal education the papers were presented as the bases for the various discussion groups.

James Redfield of the University of Chicago questions what the native speaker is. In addition, he notes that many foreign language textbooks do not seem to contain personages who talk and act like native speakers and wonders how students might then attain such an ideal.

Albert Valdman of Indiana University responds to James Redfield's provocative paper by focusing on two central factors in language learning that receive too little attention: the student and the target language. Valdman notes the broad range of learning styles and inclinations exhibited by students, a range that is rarely accommodated by language courses at any level. A noted scholar of Creole, Valdman also identifies the problems of the variability of native speaker behavior (sociolinguistic, ideolectical, and dialectical differences).

In his response to Redfield's paper, James Noblitt of Cornell University attacks the "gross mismatch between educational objectives and the instructional environment," the persistent error in debates on foreign language education to confuse professional training and general education. Authenticity, he notes, involves a good deal more than mirroring the behavior of a native speaker and must be given meaning within the understanding of educational goals.

In his open letter to his colleague and friend James Redfield, Kostas Kazasis of the University of Chicago plays with the notions of the native speaker and of fluency in a language and offers a humorous, but stark, challenge to the ideal of the native speaker.

Reviewing current anthropological and sociolinguistic perspectives on discourse, John Gumperz of the University of California at Berkeley adumbrates how foreign language learning can lead to intellectual benefits that go considerably beyond the acquisition of mere task-oriented, instrumental communicative skills. the very contact with a different grammatical and semantic system.

Peter Dembowski of the University of Chicago investigates, through a history and review of <u>explication de texte</u>, the common features of the teaching of a foreign language and of literature in English, and he suggests one kind of solution to the perceived gap between lower (language) and upper (literature) division courses offered by foreign language departments.

Jerrold Sadock of the University of Chicago adumbrates for English at the level of pre-collegiate education some of the issues concerning the place of linguistics in language learning. As has been noted here on more than one occasion, it is commonplace to maintain that foreign language learning enhances a student's knowledge of his own language. This view is posited largely upon the tradition of the study of Greek and Latin. The nature of the enhancement is, however, not clear. What is clear is that few foreign language courses make explicit connections

between languages; few treat language itself as one of the topics of discussion; and few consider the rich possibilities, as Claire Kramsch counsels, of treating language learning as an appropriate topic.

Finally, in her essay on the multiple discourse worlds of the foreign language curriculum, Claire Kramsch of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology challenges the facile dichotomy of skills and content and proposes new ways of construing and discussing foreign languages within the undergraduate liberal arts curriculum.

I hope that the proceedings of the Conference on Language Learning in Liberal Education offer the opportunity to reflect upon these problems and to discuss with colleagues the goals of foreign language education and liberal education.

It is both customary and necessary to thank many individuals for their contributions to the conference on language learning and liberal education. Let me conclude by thanking several associates at the University of Chicago who have made this conference possible. Professor James Redfield, Dean Ralph Nicholas, and Professor Carolyn Killean transformed a few telephone conversations and one lunch into a national event; Becky Chandler and Susan Kastendiek of the Midwest Faculty Seminar organized the meeting with seemingly invisible hands. I also wish to express my appreciation to the following faculty members for leading the discussion groups and for providing accounts of those discussions that have been useful in preparing this essay: Richard Goodkin (Yale University), Ralph Hester (Stanford University), Gerald Honigsblum (the University of Chicago), Robert Hummel (the University of Chicago), Carolyn Killean (the University of Chicago), Karen Landahl (the University of Chicago), Frank Miller (Columbia University), Karl Otto (the University of Pennsylvania), Nicolas Shumway (Yale University), and George Walsh (the University of Chicago). Catherine LeGouis and Brian Carter merit special gratitude for their assistance in editing this volume.

Finally, I would like to thank the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for their generous support of this and other efforts of the Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning.

NOTES

Portions of this essay appeared in "Reports and Reforms: Where are the Foreign Languages?" ADFL Bulletin, vol. 20, no. 1 (September 1988).

[1] Peter C. Patrikis, ed, The Governance of Foreign Language teaching and Learning: Proceedings of a Symposium, Princeton, New Jersey, 9-11 October 1987 (New Haven: The Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning, 1988). This volume contains twelve essays, excerpts from the transcript of the discussions, and a selection of recent job advertisements that reflect the nature of governance in foreign language programs.

[2] A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform (Washington, D.C.: National Commission on Excellence in Education/U.S. Department of Education, 1983), p. 26.

[3] William J. Bennett, To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Humanities, 1984), p. 9.

[4] Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges, 1985).

[5] E.D. Hirsch, Cultural Literacy; What Every American Needs to Know (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

[6] Ernest L. Boyer, College: The Undergraduate Experience (New York: Harper & Row, 1987).

[7] Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

[8] Cited by Frederick Newmeyer, The Politics of Linguistics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 55-56.

[9] Felix G. Rohatyn, "Ethics in America's Money Culture," New York Times, June 3, 1987, p. A27.

NOTES OF A NATIVE SPEAKER

James Redfield
The University of Chicago

My father spoke eight languages. He was, of course, a native speaker of English -- actually of Midwestern American, which he spoke with the accent of the old midwestern families. I never hear the voice of Adlai Stevenson without thinking of him. He also wrote English with elegance and clarity; indeed the only time I ever met either Adlai Stevenson he complimented me on my father's prose style. So, as you can see, my father was a master of the local idiom.

He also spoke Spanish with something like native-speaker fluency and accuracy. He conducted his anthropological fieldwork in that language, but could also converse in Nahuatl, Maya, and Cakchiquel. He spoke French and some German; from his Danish mother he had a smattering of that language, adaptable to Swedish. I have heard him speak Italian. All that adds up to ten, but the figure that sticks in my head is eight; that is one of the things we children knew about my father.

Aristotle says that our inquiry proceeds from those things best known to us in the direction of those things best knowable in themselves. I claim the indulgence of this rather personalistic introduction because the thing best known to me about language is my father's eight languages. They are a sore spot. Mine was an excellent father in nearly every way, and as academic fathers go, unusually able to share his ideas and find something genuinely interesting in mine; about languages, however, he was somewhat competitive. Although he encouraged me to learn them -- superficially -- I believe that at a deeper level he discouraged me. At any rate, it was very early established that "James is not good at languages," and I was not. I spent many miserable hours in the field, watching my father talk and listen, unable to understand anything that was going on or take any part in the conversation.

I am not good at languages. I don't hear them well, and it seems to me that if I miss a few words, I panic; I don't seem to be able to proceed with partial comprehension or to play back the sentence, as I do in English, in order to identify the problematic bit. And I have the same problem speaking; sometimes I lack one word or hit a patch of doubt about the proper pronoun -- "de" or "à" here? -- and get stuck, like Billy Budd, wordless and incipiently violent. My actual production is rather like the way I balance my checkbook; I get within a couple of phonemes of it, and then to hell with it. I then experience the kind of shame and embarrassment about making mistakes which causes one to make more mistakes. I am, in other words, a case of language anxiety.

It was this that in the first place sent me to ancient Greek; whatever problems I had with the ancient Greeks I was not going to have to talk to them or worry about their opinion of me. Besides, it was a high-prestige language my father did not know. (His Latin wasn't bad -- that makes eleven!) Greek was the first foreign language I ever learned -- of course, I am still working on it; to paraphrase Ravi Shankar on the sitar, the ancient Greek language cannot be learned in one lifetime. And I have learned to speak, more or less, a number of modern European languages -- but never with pleasure. That is the great difference; my father enjoyed speaking another tongue, whether with fluency or making use of whatever bits he had. I hate it.

Language anxiety is like an allergy to animal fat or a mild sexual dysfunction; it is not a major handicap but it does cut one off from one of life's significant pleasures. Like any anxiety it distinguishes itself from rational fear by some surplus element; it is one thing for languages to be hard, but quite another thing when we make them hard for ourselves. That surplus element seems to be some piece of us that seizes on our mistakes to beat up on us, to make us feel like a bad person. I suppose Freud would call this the superego; it is our father's voice, or rather the voice of the negative father, mocking and demeaning. Of course it is not really one's father. As Freud says, the superego is immortal, and even if I got it from my father, he got it from his, and so on. It is only that in his case it didn't give trouble about languages but about other things, terrible sleep problems, for instance, and a pathological fear of missing trains. With languages it left him alone.

Needless to say, I have reflected long and hard on this difference between my father and myself. I think it had something to do with his love of playing up to other people, mirroring their body line and vocal rhythms and idiolect. If we had an English visitor to our house in the country, he was soon talking about popping up to the shops in the village. This Zelig-like quality of course served him well in his fieldwork; I remember my horror in early childhood when I saw him among the men of our Guatemalan village on fiesta, apparently as drunk as they, yelling and waving his arms.

All this reminds us that to speak is to play a social role and to speak a language like a native is to play at being a native, to take on some native role. My father loved roles and he played them to the hilt; if he could play some part with accuracy, could become a Maya peasant or a Mexican intellectual or a Parisian <u>bon bourgeois</u> to the extent of one accurately turned phrase, he felt rewarded. With his few hundred words of Italian he could phrase a courtly compliment which would sweep off her feet a Sicilian matron -- whose command of Italian was probably, after all, not that much better than his own. The point of the interchange was not language competence but social per- formance; the two were cooperating in the great charade of polite society, where linguistic

behavior is not so much the exercise of a capacity as it is a type of conformity.

For my father, the reality of language was parole, the actual performance. Therefore he learned a language by speaking it. For those of us who approach the situation of communication with greater distrust, the reality is langue, the underlying system; we want to enter the fray of communication with at least as much confidence (not all that much, after all) as we have in our native tongue. Once we've learned the language, we think, we'll be ready to say something. As you might expect, we do not learn it quickly.

These distinctions, I think, draw the main categorical line among language learners: between those who, in speaking another language, become significantly different people, and those who attempt, with this new imperfectly-mastered instrument, to express the same old self. The first type gains something when it shifts languages: a new persona. The second type loses something: all that is lost in the translation. The first type are relatively ready to mean whatever they can say; the second type are constantly hung up on the problem of saying what they mean. The first use the language to associate themselves with the local people; the second, to individuate themselves among this alien audience. No wonder the first type learns languages readily while we are bad at them. While my father's Spanish was good, his command of all those other languages was actually more or less primitive. But we knew he could speak them because we heard him speaking them: he and his interlocutor were both enjoying themselves and liking each other. If we could figure out how to stimulate this spirit in those of us who lack it, we would have made, I believe, a major pedagogical breakthrough. But this may be a psychotherapeutic rather than an academic question.

In any case, it was, I think, those bad experiences which made me a language teacher, as the handicapped sometimes spend their lives helping the handicapped; I was also led to reflect on the question: what does it mean to be able to speak a language? There are certain things that I can do in five or six languages -- such as buy a round-trip ticket -- and certain things I can do in three or four -- such as understand and respond to the question: what is your current research? But these Wittgensteinian language-games do not feel to me like an ability to speak the language. What does it mean, to "speak it like a native"? Does it mean merely the ability to play the native, to be taken for a native speaker by natives? The natives based their judgments primarily on accent, and then also on some kinds of grammatical accuracy (a native speaker of Italian may be vague about the use of the imperfect, but not the gender of nouns) and collocations, with fluency of production. A speaker who had concentrated on these skills and had an exceptional talent for mimicry could pass as a native speaker with a vocabulary of a few hundred words, provided the speaker never tried to do anything more than make conversation -- indeed, certain products of our Junior Year Abroad programs seem to come out very much like this. My

father's Spanish was certainly much better than that. On the other hand, while he wrote personal letters in Spanish, he did not write in that language for publication. Nor could he do a crossword puzzle in Spanish -- at least, he couldn't do much with the only one I ever saw him attempt. In our own tongue we possess a kind of redundant competence which comes into use only for word games, and perhaps lyric poetry.

Still, it would surely be wrong to say that the native speaker is one who knows the whole language. One can be a native speaker of English without knowing the differential from the alternator, the wings from the flyloft, the sheet from the canvas. Every language has many mansions, and some of these are set aside for those engaged in spe- cific professions or activities. But the native speaker does command a certain kind of variety. Sometimes this is a matter of various languages in the literal sense; to be raised Calabrian, or Maya, or Welsh, or Filipino is to grow up more or less bilingual. The point is that these languages do not normally provide alternative ways of say- ing the same thing -- like those children in Swiss hotels who can produce the same prattle in four or five languages -- but are rather specialized to different uses. Peter von Blankenhagen, who was one of my teachers, was brought up in an East Prussian aristocratic household. He once told me that he was twelve years old before he realized that different peoples have different languages. Until then he thought that Latvian was the language spoken to servants, Polish to coachmen and dogs; German was the language of intimate family life, French of polite society, and English of high culture. The point is that we all command diverse versions of our own language which are specialized in this way. Sometimes it is a matter of self-conscious diglossia -- as in Modern Greek and Arabic; more often this is something we are hardly aware of until we hear it done wrong.

It is interesting to reflect upon what the native speaker knows. One's mother tongue is always a dialect, and one grows up with a more or less fragmentary command of other dialects, which enables us to use meaningfully such expressions as "Ain't nobody here but us chickens," "I made him an offer he couldn't refuse," and "too soon old and too late shmart." Even quite uneducated people have a command of a variety of rhetorics -- a storytelling rhetoric, for instance, and an inferential or persuasive rhetoric. Contrast the shop girl's narrative: "...So then I says to her: 'Mabel,'I says to her, 'you're crazy,' and you know what she says to me?..." with her "..So look; it's your funeral. Right? What am I going to tell you? But if it was my husband, I'll tell you what I would do...." These diverse rhetorics, further, can be adapted to very different levels of formality; the same person who would begin a story told in the course of a job interview, "A very similar incident actually occurred at my last place of employment." would tell the same story in the kitchen, "That's a lot like something that happened on the last job I had." Then there are the ways we talk to whatever gods we have, and to children, and for that matter to coachmen and dogs. Probably educated people have a greater command of this range of

rhetorics -- they are likely to feel more secure than the uneducated at the top of the range, but most of us remember how to get down in the gutter when we want to -- but all native speakers command some of this variety. Then there are what we might call the "Hirsch literacy" factors; we Americans (most of us) know what is meant by "the yellow brick road" and "kill the umpire!" and "I did it with my little hatchet."

Language here intersects with culture, and an authentically cultural approach to language teaching would teach all these things at once, would teach obscenities, slang, baby talk, jargon, high style, and down-home all as part of one great variegated system. Kostas Kazazis actually teaches Modern Greek something like that. It's not the quickest way to pick up the basic structures of the language, but it has an intrinsic interest. Most of the time, however, instruction is not focused on the culture at all, but on basic structures. In order to display them we have invented among ourselves a schematized world, a kind of modèle réduit of the culture and therefore of the language also, and within this artificial environment we carry on our language teaching. If we fail to notice this point it is probably because we all do it in much the same way; as W. H. Auden said of photography, we think a photograph is like nature only because every photograph is so much like every other photograph.

I here enter into evidence four textbooks which I have actually used in my slow but persistent attempts at language acquisition: German, A Structural Approach, by Lohnes and Strothmann; Parola e Pensiero, by Vicenzo Traversa; Adelante: A Cultural Approach, by Neale-Silva and Nicholas; and Demotic Greek, by Peter Bien and others. These books are somewhat different in the approach they take to the language. Lohnes and Strothmann, for instance, makes some effective use of current modes of syntactic analysis; its exercises, on the other hand, tend to old-fashioned sentence translation. Demotic Greek, by contrast, makes extensive use of pattern drills (one of the "others" is John Rassias); in spite of the militant demoticism of its phonology and morphology, however, it relies for its analyses mainly on the categories of katherevousa grammar (as opposed, for instance, to those of Kazazis and Householder). These are the kinds of differences to which we language teachers tend to be alert; we may fail to notice how similar these books are in their presentation of actual linguistic behavior.

All the characters in these books (except for an occasional peddler or waiter) are middle-class, and most of them are young. They have various adventures out in the world, eating in a restaurant, going to the theater, traveling, shopping, everywhere making conversation. The most threatening thing that ever seems to happen in these books is that someone gets lost and has to ask directions. We do not encounter here the language of terror or mourning, nor do they use language to persuade or seduce, to wheedle or denounce. The world of these people centers on objects, not persons; even in relation to objects, they consume but they do not produce. We never hear them talking while

they work, or dealing with any problem of critical importance. They talk about the weather or their schoolwork, not politics or religion or terrorism or the fate of the earth. One young Chicano in Adelante gets in a schoolyard fight, but ends by rather admiring his adversaries. Conflict is attenuated, and the relationships of the textbook characters are relatively superficial. They tease each other, but they never get angry; they go out on dates, but they never make love.

Demotic Greek is in a way an exception, but then proves the rule: its characters are a family, but we hear little of the interior of family life. They go to a restaurant and the theater; Maria, the fat, ugly, prenubile daughter who is relentlessly teased by the characters and the authors, gets lost. O Kurios Pavlakis goes to work, but we never find out what business he is in; his secretary answers the phone, but only to tell her lover not to call her at the office. They do go to Easter service (to my mind this is more "cultural" -- at least from a linguistic point of view -- than anything in Adelante: A Cultural Approach; we do get one snippet of the Orthodox liturgy) and at the end there is a wedding.

In the second volume -- The Flying Telephone Booth -- Peter Bien and others send Maria on a magical tour of Greek history. This results in some extraordinary pattern drills -- I remember one that went "Tongues of flame shot up from the top of the telephone booth. Tongues of flame shot up from the top of the automobile. Tongues of flame shot up from the top of the railway station," etc. -- and does teach us some Byzantine proverbs, shows us the puppet theater, and so forth. There is not much linguistic development, however; the Byzantines do not speak Byzantine, or the Ancients Ancient. Everyone speaks the same middle-class demotic as the family Pavlakis, and since Maria remains the point of view, the whole is seen by an observer who is unperceptive, superficial, and fundamentally unconcerned.

If we ask the sources of this -- which we may call the "language-textbook representation of life" -- they are, I suppose, obvious, and two. One is the American classroom, at least as imagined by the authors of textbooks, who see the class as the teacher sees it. These young people talk about the things our young people talk about, or at least they talk about the sort of things they are willing to talk about in the presence of their teachers. "You taught me language, and my profit on't is, I know how to curse," says Caliban; he would find no profit in our language textbooks. Nor will our young people learn from them how to talk in other languages about the secret history of their parents' divorces, or their own sexual ambitions, or the acquisition and consumption of illegal substances.

The other source is the social situation of tourism -- and this also is derived from the classroom, for it is true that most of our students take modern European languages with some thought or hope of using them while traveling in Europe or Latin America. Our textbooks capture this

fantasy (which is after all far from fantastic); hence all this eating out and travelling in trains and getting lost. We should notice, however, that the textbook speaks to the fantasy, not to the reality: what is presented is a cleaned-up version of European travel. There is far more clear-eyed realism in, for instance, the American Express phrasebooks. One does not learn from these textbooks to say: "I have had acute diarrhea for three days," or "My car seems to have been towed." or "I demand to know the charges against me." Europe is represented rather as on the travel posters: splendid mon- uments, good food, prompt efficient transport, friendly people. Even the "cultural" aspects have a travel-poster look, as a tourist might attend the puppet theater, or a church service, or be invited to a wedding (I don't know if this last actually happens, but it happens on the travel posters).

Adelante: A Cultural Approach again attempts to be an exception but ends up proving the rule. Its authors seem to have spent too many years teaching Spanish to young people who knew little about Latin life and cared less; the book exhorts its readers to do better than this, to be interested in and respectful of the Spanish-speaking cultures. It tells us, however, very little about them -- all I learned from the first half was that many Spaniards have a room in their apartments near the front door where they entertain visitors so that they won't have to let them see how shabby the rest of the apartment is. It is interesting to imagine what an intermediate Spanish book would look like if it contained all the cultural information in, for example, Julian Pitt-Rivers's The People of the Sierra, where he has much to say about the language of honor, and compromise, and courtship, and grief. A book which approached the culture from the point of view of the ethnographer rather than the tourist might even succeed in teaching us something about culture and language.

I suppose there is no real prospect of such a textbook, because there would be no market for it, even among ethnographers. The ethnographer, like everyone else aiming at something like native-speaker competence, has to begin with what these books are teaching. They are not teaching culture or even language in the extended sense, in which the native speaker lives in a language, inhabits at various times many of its mansions, employs it living a whole life. They are interested in basic structures, core vocabulary, a few frequently used idioms -- things that all the versions of the language have in common. The structures to be learned have to be embedded in some kind of linguistic context where they can be exercised, and I suppose the anodyne context evoked by our textbooks, a sort of sanitized classroom hung with travel posters and inhabited by students of good temper, if somewhat limited intelligence, will do as well as any. The ethnographers will learn the language in the field; all they want is that the textbook get them started. And that is of course the advice we would give anyone who really wanted to learn a language: go there! Get a job, take a lover, start reading the newspapers and getting into arguments in bars. Once you start playing some roles you'll have occasion to pick up the

phonology, reduced or hyper-exact, the morphology, literate or down-market, the syntax, simplified and paratactic or hypotactic and finely differentiated, proper to them. You'll have plenty of embarrassing moments, but eventually you'll learn that this is the kind of situation, and the kind of sentence, in which one can get away with using a word like "diacritical," while that is the kind of situation where you can use a word like toichus.

My objection to these textbooks turns rather on the fact that very few of our students will ever take this next step -- which is of course much more than a step: it is a whole staircase. Most of them will stop where we leave them, at most putting the skills we have taught them to use as tourists or as students abroad, rather insulated from the foreign world, living there but only partly living. I don't have any data on this, but I would wager that the majority of college graduates, asked what use they had made of the languages they studied in college, would answer "nothing" or with something that amounts to nothing. More generally, I think it possible that the most positive change in our curricular discussions would be a realization that our students, as they leave those courses which do not have direct professional relevance to them, are generally taking their leave of the materials taught in those courses. What we call "Introduction to the Humanities" is usually a Farewell to the Humanities, the last course in the humanities most of these students will take. For most of them, similarly, the end of the language requirement is the end of language study.

In these terms I am troubled by the idea of language conveyed by these books -- as I am troubled by (a connected point) the idea of the others which they convey. These foreigners, native speakers of European languages, are presented as young people very much like ourselves, pen pals across the sea, as it were -- an illusion which is maintained by constructing a channel of communication in which all the awkward bits are left out. How startling it would be to hear one of these textbook voices declare that free elections are an instrument of the class rule of the bourgeoisie, or that it is God's will that Constantinople be returned to Greece, or that their consumption of milk proves (what was obvious anyway) that all Americans are babies. These others are presented by the textbooks as invariably nice and more than a bit blah -- in fact hardly worth knowing. And they are presented (this is perhaps a more serious point) speaking a language extremely limited in its range, in its ability to engage the passions or the intellect. I don't know to what degree this is a strategic choice by the language teachers, and to what extent it arises from the sense (endemic among pedagogues) that other kinds of language are not nice, not quite proper. Language teachers, after all, spend their time correcting their students. It is all too easy for us to shift from correcting their errors to correcting their attitudes, from teaching them impeccable French to teaching them to be the kind of young person the French call impeccable. Only while making conversation in a middle-class environment will these two enterprises seem to correspond; no wonder this setting is so popular with language teachers.

We have made language study too comfortable for those most comfortable in this setting, and by our emphasis on the "correct" have advantaged those more concerned with conformity than communication. We need to remember that "bad language" is an integral part of the language of Shakespeare (if not of Milton); good language teaching extends our knowledge of the language rather than seeking to restrict our behavior.

I found Kazazis's teaching liberating (even if he did not succeed in teaching me much Greek) because he presented the Greek language as one in which, if I knew it, I could live the kind of life I live at home. In speaking a foreign language abroad I have found it an exciting moment when I can stop being nice, can get that fixed conciliatory smile off my face. I remember such an epiphany my third month living in Florence; I was having some difficulty parking my VW Squareback and a passerby said, quite gratuitously, "You should get a smaller car." "You should get a bigger country," I replied and thought, "I'm actually beginning to enjoy speaking this language."

Then it is also true that the Muse of Fluency has descended upon me in French banks and Greek customs posts and Italian hospitals, at moments when I was backed up against the wall and had to communicate or else. At these moments language anxiety was swept away by realistic fear; probably what I said was full of errors, but I did get through, made my case, stated my needs, and induced people to take pity on me. It is interesting to imagine a language course which would focus on communication rather than conformity. I suppose it would begin with various particular language games -- the round trip ticket or the description of current research or whatever -- and would gradually develop them until they began to link together into a system. That, after all, is pretty much the way we pick up the language in the field. In the process we would give up the pretense of being native speakers -- since out there in the real world, after all, it is obvious that we're not -- and concentrate on becoming effective, if slightly comic, foreigners.

I myself in college turned away from modern languages for a long time and went off in pursuit of ancient Greek. Here I had an entirely different experience. Ancient Greek is taught from literary texts. At Chicago -- not at all atypical, as I have learned -- we teach from an elementary text for four or five months; most of the energy goes into the morphology. Then we begin review of texts; students read some Plato in the first year, and in the second year one play, or two, some Herodotus perhaps, and three or four books of Homer. The texts are decoded sentence by sentence; there is very little attention given to the underlying system. Once the student has derived from the morphemes before him some kind of translation, his work is done. Those commentaries intended for beginning students -- the Bryn Mawr series, for instance -- are focused almost without exception on helping the student turn into English the particular sentence; very seldom do they tell you anything about the language.

I have complained to my colleagues about this pedagogy, and have received a thoughtful response: we do it this way, it is said, because in this way the student does get through a certain amount of Greek text; he has achieved something; namely, he has read the Oedipus Tyrannus in the original. If we taught the system more we would teach particular texts less. I accept this justification -- that is, I accept that it is some kind of justification -- and I am struck by the fact that the classicists, unlike the teachers of modern languages, have made their peace with the fact that few of their students will go on. Their courses do pay cash; there is an encounter, through word-by-word analysis, with some great literature. The alumni are those persons who often introduce themselves after a lecture of mine with the self-qualification "I had some Greek in college." The unsaid corollary is, of course, "and I couldn't possibly do anything with it now."

In its pure form, review-of-text instruction takes the text as a given, without any system or language community behind it -- as the Vedas (the most perfectly classic texts, I suppose) were held by the Brahmins to be older than the world. There is therefore no attempt to reconstruct the author or audience of these words. Whereas modern language instruction tends to assimilate these other language communities to our own, instruction in the ancient languages leaves the text alone in its otherness. The leading symptom is a tolerance for translations so stilted that it is impossible to imagine in what tone of voice anyone anywhere would have said such a thing. We know these from the Housman parodies: "Oh suitably attired in leather boots/Mud's sister not herself adorns your shoes." I assure you that our students produce items at least as extraordinary every day.

I think these two pedagogical traditions have something to learn from each other. I myself in teaching ancient Greek attempt to teach the system, although I am aware that I get through less text this way; my teaching is explicitly aimed at those who will go on, those who will learn to read Greek in the sense that when they want to read a Greek text they simply take the text down from the shelf and read it -- even though I know that very few will ever reach that level. Contrariwise, I think the teachers of modern language might learn something from us, might at least consider analysis of text as a model. I am thinking, for instance, of those who at one time or another have learned Italian in order to read the Divine Comedy. They find that they have not "learned Italian" -- that they cannot, for instance, buy a round trip ticket or describe their current research; the Divine Comedy seems not to be written in Italian but in some private amalgam invented by its author. From the day of its composition its readers have required footnotes. Nevertheless, it is true that with moderate effort undergraduates can in two years learn to read the Divine Comedy (with footnotes) -- and the rest of their lives such students will be able to open the poem, read it, consider it, and be moved by it. I put it to you that such a result is at least as much worth the effort as two years of textbook instruction

resulting in an Italian which will be used only to be a tourist and make conversation. If this is true, why do we not offer such a course, at least as an option?

The aim of this paper has been to provoke thought, and if you have found it mildly irritating, that also was part of its rhetorical strategy. I don't have a lot of wisdom on these topics; I have tried only to irritate others into saying something better. I do not think that we think much about modern language instruction -- that is, I think we think a lot about method, but very little about what we are teaching, and why. A good college course, in my view, does something more than teach a skill; it engages the student in a joint inquiry into the question: what is this we are studying, and why? My own pedagogical ambition is to teach elementary Greek as a discussion course -- and I do at certain moments achieve this ambition; I have found that the categories employed in our standard Greek grammars are, as the Italians say, "Molto discutibile." In such discussions students find themselves reflecting on the question: what is language? I would like them also to reflect on the question of what is the relation between language and culture, and between literary language and colloquial language. I would like the language courses to be places where thinking is going on. But certainly they're not going to start thinking about these issues unless we do.

Variation in Student Orientation and Linguistic Variation in Foreign Language Instruction

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1. Introduction

From the many stimulating ideas introduced in James Redfield's provocative keynote to this Symposium, I would like to select two issues for my comments. First is the need to recognize that in the presence of a wide spectrum of learning styles and inclinations, we must abandon the conventional monolithic language courses and homogeneous teaching materials. Second are the pedagogical dilemmas we face when we recognize the variability of native speaker behavior in target language communities. Not only are all languages variable -- some being more variable than others -- but in some communities, to be a native speaker capable of fully functioning in all spheres of life requires the use of several distinct varieties (as for example, Katharevousa and Demotic in Greece) or even distinct languages (as for example, Creole and French in Haiti).

2. Variation in Student Orientation

James Redfield confronts head-on the Janus-like nature of language proficiency. Redfield _père et fils_ typify the two prototypical categories of language learners, the laid back communicators and the no-nonsense analysts, respectively. Recently, the Canadian psycholinguist James Cummins distinguished between two types of linguistic proficiency: basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP).[1] So Redfield _père_ illustrates an extreme Bicsian type, whereas our keynote speaker appears to fall on the Calpian side of the proficiency spectrum.

In fact, foreign language teachers have long been aware of this polar distinction, except that they have tried to resolve it by setting up sometimes one, sometimes the other of the two proficiency categories as the ideal, or even the only worthy objective. So, for example, if we turn the pages of the history of language teaching back to the turn of the century, we find the following antithetical statements.

In his seminal work, Harold Palmer advocated that:

> A complete and ideal language method has a four-fold object, and this is to enable the student, in the

> shortest possible time and with the least effort, so to assimilate the materials of which a foreign language is composed that he is thereby enabled to understand what he hears and reads, and also to express himself correctly both by oral and written mediums.[2]

A few years earlier, a Columbia University professor named Calvin Thomas adopted a stance labelled by Frank Grittner as "grim humanism."[3] In so doing, Thomas had banished from the list of proper university subjects foreign language learning as conceived in Palmer's terms.

> The ability to speak a foreign language is a matter of practice, not of intellectual discipline. It is a trick, a craft, a technique, quite comparable with the ability to telegraph or to write short hand. It has in itself only a very slight and very low educational value.[4]

The current tendency is to seek in eclecticism a resolution of the dilemma posed by the existence of these two polar types of inclinations among foreign language learners. The setting of a middle course in defining instructional objectives for foreign language teaching is exemplified by the following proposal from Claire Kramsch:

> ...the main purpose of learning a foreign language in an institutional setting is to become communicatively proficient in the language, to gain insights into the symbolic and the communicative functions of the language, and to develop cultural awareness and cross--cultural understanding.[5]

This eclectic position is one which I have endorsed, albeit by scaling down communicative proficiency and upgrading the Calpian objectives. I have suggested that imparting a communicative ability cannot be the central objective of liberal-arts-oriented foreign language programs.[6] Rather, their main function should be to acquaint students with the phenomenon of language and its multifarious links with mind, culture, and society and to introduce them to cultures different from that of their own community.

This attempt to accommodate all types of learning styles and to satisfy diverse -- and often incompatible objectives -- has led to a distressing homogeneity in teaching materials -- duly noted by our keynoter -- and to the attempt to devise a monolithic national metric for the eval- uation of foreign language proficiency, not to mention the ubiquitous lockstep instructional programs.

With regard to textbooks, at the 1988 Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, I was struck by the apparently wide choice of first-year-college French textbooks offered by a leading publisher. But on close inspection, the three choices offered proved to

be disappointingly similar: situational dialogues dealing with the type of touristic and so-called functional topics enumerated by James Redfield; a variety of practice activities, usually ordered in the by now conventional manipulative, meaningful, communicative sequence; and grammatical explanations and paradigms following more or less the same traditional descriptive model. I asked the acquisition editor, whom I knew from past experience to be relatively knowledgeable about matters pedagogical, how sales representatives would show prospective adopters that the three sets of materials provide clear-cut options. "Oh," she replied, "that's easy." Pointing to the first set, she declared: "X [the title of the book] stresses skills acquisition. Note the variety of communicative exercises and authentic readings. Y," she continued, "is a solid, traditional, basic course with a focus on grammar. Now, Z, our newest textbook, follows the natural approach, as you would guess from the name of the senior author. Students are not forced to produce French sentences at early stages of the course, and you will note that the grammar sections appear at the end of each chapter. They're not a central element." Actually, this publisher could have made finer discriminations and added other options: direct method approach, proficiency-oriented materials, and so forth. But none of these variations on a broad common base address a narrow set of foreign language teaching objectives or attempt to accommodate particular learner characteristics and inclinations. At best, differences between current mainstream foreign language textbooks turn on relatively small theoretical or methodological divergences reflecting minor aspects of second language learning. For example, direct method devotees, believing that reference to the first language triggers language interference, insist on the exclusive use of the target language. At worst, they hinge on the use of different buzz words: proficiency-based, notional-functional, natural approach, total physical response, finely-tuned input, and so forth. What they represent is different packaging of a widely accepted invariant set of components.

3. Implications for the Evaluation of Proficiency

Turning now to testing, the immediate product of the proficiency movement is a homogeneous set of criteria for the assessment of foreign language attainment. The widespread adoption of the ACTFL proficiency guidelines and scales has a great potential for homogenizing foreign language instruction and, consequently, for frustrating students whose learning styles and inclinations do not fit the ecumenical, eclectic objectives set by groups of national specialists and experts. The University of Minnesota has set entrance and graduation requirements in terms of levels on the ACTFL proficiency scale for each of the four language skills, as follows:[7]

	Entrance Standard	Graduation Requirement
Listening	Intermediate-Low	Intermediate-High
Reading	Intermediate-Low	Intermediate-High
Speaking	Novice-High	Intermediate-Mid
Writing	Novice-High	Intermediate-Mid

No matter whether they are glib Bicsians or reflective Calpians, all University of Minnesota students will be expected to demonstrate the same minimal levels of attainment in each of the four skills. Note further that this assessment scheme, stressing as it does skill over knowledge or insight, favors students with Bicsian profiles and fails to accommodate students with more Calpian inclinations.

As James Redfield has argued in the paper delivered at the Princeton symposium last November (1987), we are doing college undergraduate foreign language students a disservice in defining requirements in terms of mere **exposure** instead of attainment of a **significant** degree of knowledge, insight, or functional skill.[8] Proponents of the ACTFL proficiency guidelines and scales would retort that the measurement of language study in terms of objectively demonstrable functional use instead of seat time is precisely what they are seeking to accomplish. But let us see what college graduates who have attained the Intermediate High level in speaking can actually do with the foreign language.

ACTFL Provisional Guidelines: French Speaking Intermediate High

> Able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands. Developing flexibility in language production although fluency is still uneven. Can initiate and sustain a general conversation on factual topics beyond basic survival needs. Can give autobiographical information and discuss leisure time activities. To a lesser degree, can talk about some past activities and future plans and non-personal topics, such as activities of organizations, and descriptions of events, although ability to describe and give precise information in these areas is limited. Can provide sporadically, although not consistently, simple description and narration of present, past, future events, although limited vocabulary range and insufficient control of grammar lead to much hesitation and inaccuracy. Extended discourse is largely a series of short, discrete utterances; cannot sustain coherent structures in longer utterances by the use of conjunctions or relative clauses. Some control of the *passé composé* and basic reflexive verbs. May be able to use some direct and indirect object pronouns, although syntax may still be faulty. Is able to use the partitive (affirmative and negative), demonstrative adjectives, most expressions of quantity, most adverbs, and some idiomatic expressions with *avoir* and *faire*. Comprehensible to native speakers used to dealing with foreigners, but still has to repeat utterances frequently to be understood by the general public.[9]

It is the insignificant nature of this accomplishment which leads me to characterize ACTFL's attempt to establish fine gradations between the Novice and Intermediate High levels as "much ado about nothing." Instead of this quixotic attempt at delicate assessment of incipient proficiency, ACTFL would have been better advised to invest its resources in the preparation of a broader-based test battery.

In the best of all possible educational systems, exposure to a foreign language should be the responsibility of the primary and secondary schools. But until such time as foreign language teaching reform permeates these two levels, it will remain one of the fundamental, formative tasks of colleges and universities to guarantee that the youths of this generation do get a minimal introduction to foreign languages. But surely, as we approach the twenty-first century, our colleges and universities have sufficient resources to devise instructional schemes that accommodate the wide range of variation in instructional objectives and student learning styles and inclinations. As a starter, there is no justification for imposing monolithic standards, such as the University of Minnesota definition of the foreign language requirement for graduation.10

Quantified University of Minnesota Foreign Language Standard

	Entrance		Graduation	
Listening	Intermediate-Low	3	Intermediate-High	7
Reading	Intermediate-Low	3	Intermediate-High	7
Speaking	Novice-High	1	Intermediate-Mid	5
Writing	Novice-High	1	Intermediate-Mid	5
		8		24

Instead, I would propose a variable scheme which encourages students to strive for the attainment of significant levels of functional skill and worthwhile degrees of knowledge and insight into language and culture. The proposed scheme would start with a nonlinear quantification of proficiency levels.

Arguably the difference between Novice-level and Advanced-level proficiency in any of the four skills is enormous and is not easily captured by a linearly incremental scale. Instead, the higher the level on the scale, the greater the point differential. For example, whereas levels at the lower end of the scale are separated by two points, the distance increases to three and four at upper levels.

Novice	1
Intermediate-Low	3
Intermediate-Mid	5
Intermediate-High	7
Advanced	10
Advanced-Plus	13
Superior	17

The uniform graduation standard would be abandoned in favor of a variable one which allows students to choose skills more compatible with their educational and career objectives and more appropriate to their position on the BICS-CALP continuum.

Alternative Graduate Profile

	BICS		CALP	
Listening	Advanced-Plus	13	Intermediate-Mid	5
Speaking	Advanced	10	Intermediate-Low	3
Reading	Intermediate-Low	3	Advanced-Plus	13
Writing	Novice-High	1	Intermediate-Mid	15
		27		26

The student who fits the language learning profile and inclination of Professor Redfield père would probably opt for more Bicsian experiences in the foreign language. These experiences, I would add, need not obligatorily include formal classroom instruction but might, instead, involve mainly interactive contact with the target language community. On the other hand, as a student, Professor Redfield fils would most likely have demonstrated the more Calpian profile. I would quickly add that, because of the absence of guidelines and levels relating to cognitive aspects of language and culture, as well as other theoretical and methodological problems pointed out by its critics, the ACTFL guidelines provide an inadequate basis for the type of evaluation I propose.[11]

4. Pedagogical Dilemmas Posed by Linguistic Variation

Another major issue addressed by James Redfield is that of the level of accuracy and authenticity of expression expected of classroom foreign language learners. I have elsewhere argued against the ACTFL Guideline's choice of educated native-speaker speech as the sole model for all types of learners. In particular, I have pointed out that this model eliminates from consideration types of native speech that might serve as more suitable targets for certain learners and for certain situations.[12] Today, I would like to focus on authenticity in teaching materials.

James Redfield's criticisms of the textbooks he used in his attempt to gain a minimal level of communicative ability in Italian, German, Spanish, and Modern Greek bear mainly on the choice of topics. But not only do conventional teaching materials shy away from topics and situations deemed likely to provoke controversy and passion, they fail to illustrate authentic conversational interactions among native speakers as well. They also fail to describe the structural features, the rhetorical devices, and the interactional strategies that underlie authentic communicative transactions.

Typically, in communicatively-oriented materials, situational dialogues serve to model typical speech acts and to present key cultural features.

In audio-lingually-oriented materials, authenticity is sacrificed in the interest of targeted grammatical features. For example, it is clear that the real purpose of Dialogue 1 is to display the present indicative paradigm of the verb aller.

Dialogue 1: Grammar-seeded dialogue

PAULE	Où vas-tu ce soir?
MADELEINE	Je vais en ville avec ma famille. Nous allons au cinéma.
PAULE	Qu'est-ce que vous allez voir?
MADELEINE	Zazie dans le métro. Mes cousins vont voir le même film demain.

With the advent of the notion of communicative competence and the broadening of the scope of linguistics to include the structure of discourse, situational dialogues are drawing closer to real world verbal interactions. Dialogue 2 offers a sample of several important speech acts: fishing for an invitation and saving face when the attempt is rebuffed.

Dialogue 2: Functional Dialogue

PAULE Qu'est-ce que tu fais ce soir?
(Paule cannot assume that Madeleine is going out.)
MADELEINE Je vais au ciné.
PAULE Ah, bon. Quel film est-ce qu'on joue?
MADELEINE Zazie dans le métro.
PAULE On dit que c'est un bon film. Je peux aller avec toi, si tu veux.
MADELEINE Euh...C'est...C'est que j'y vais avec mes parents et aussi avec mon frère et ma soeur. Alors, euh, tu comprends...
PAULE Bon, oui, je comprends. Pauvre vieille, tu ne vas pas t'amuser!

Dialogue 3 serves to show how artificial are the dialogues offered as samples of authentic verbal transactions even in the most sophisticated materials reflecting recent developments in sociolinguistics.[13] In that portrayal of a typical coffee shop interaction, most of the rules of pedagogical dialogue writing are broken: questions are not necessarily followed by answers, sentence fragments predominate, and non sequiturs abound; and well they should, as verbal transactions are heavily context-dependent and determined by implicit cultural conventions.

Dialogue 3: Pragmatic Dialogue

JAKE[1] Hi. What can I do for you?

MIKE[1] You got any hot tea?
JAKE[2] Yeah. Why do you ask?
MIKE[2] I'd like some to drink, please.
JAKE[3] Do you want cream or sugar?
MIKE[3] Want it for what?
JAKE[4] To put in your tea.
MIKE[4] Oh. Yeah. Both thanks.
JAKE[5] [Putting his tea in front of him] Here you are.

Unlike the contrived materials I have presented so far, Dialogues 4 and 5 are actual excerpts from recorded French conversations.

Dialogues 4 and 5: Dialogues Abstracted from Actual Speech

A: j'ai plus de voiture?
B: ah bon qu'est-ce qui t'est arrivé?
A: on me l'a volée...

108F alors j'ai cherché Cresson Cresson mais je j'ai pas fait de chèque à ce nom-là quand même euh
109H nous on vient déposer une plainte parce que... le receveur
110F et puis Cresson c'est sur le moment//j'ai je
111H Non mais attends attends ça ils s'en foutent hein ils sont là ils en ont pour dix minutes à travailler

They illustrate speech features that seldom find their way into language textbooks. Dialogue 4 illustrates the topic/comment structure of conversational turns and vertical construction in which grammatical processes span several sentences. The typical textbook equivalent of A's two turns would have been the neatly constructed sentence:

On m'a volé ma voiture.

Instead, in this authentic sample, A begins by simply introducing the topic, the fact that he no longer has a car. He depends on his conversational partner to trigger the comment which provides the new and important information, the fact that the vehicle was stolen. Note also that, unlike typical textbook pattern drills, clitic pronouns do not occur in question-answer dyads, such as Tu as apporté ton livre? --Oui, je l'ai apporté. Instead, the substitution occurs across several turns, and the anaphoric relationship between the direct object pronoun l' is not transparent, that is, it does not replace the occurring phrase de voiture but an implied ma voiture.

Dialogue 5 demonstrates that unlike ours, French conversational rules permit turn overlap. Not only is it polite to begin a turn before one's conversational partner has completed his, but not to do so would be interpreted as being uncooperative. It also provides examples of the

central role that shifters, phatic signals, and pause features such as alors, euh, et puis, hein play in moving conversation along and in reflecting the speakers' attitudes and interactional strategies.

Now, I am not advocating that we require students to memorize or produce conversational exchanges that mirror native usage. On the contrary, the classroom is not the real world, and it imposes its own constraints on verbal interactions that are authentic and natural in that particular social context. I would only submit that authenticity is not attained by simply reproducing realia, by introducing trendy slang, or even by exposing learners to actual interactions between native speakers while leaving unchanged the traditional grammatical syllabus. To merit the label, authentic teaching materials need not be excerpts from actual native-speaker interactions; they must illustrate the central features of verbal interaction: its rhetorical structure, the basic syntactic and morphological features that stem from its context embeddedness. In this regard, Dialogues 2 and 3 are as authentic as Dialogues 4 and 5.

The variability inherent in authentic language places difficult choices before language teachers. Not everything that native speakers say is fit for foreign learners. It is not only the Japanese who are uncomfortable with foreigners who sound too native. From a different perspective, learners find it difficult to relate variable features to appropriate stylistic and social factors. Yet it is as much this ability to establish precise correlations and to make right choices as it is accentless speech that defines near-native proficiency. To guide learners in acquiring this aspect of linguistic competence, I have put forward the notion of **pedagogical norm**. Pedagogical norms are approximations to native behavior which gradually introduce a moderate amount of variability into learners' speech. I will only briefly illustrate this notion with a notoriously variable grammatical feature of French, interrogative structure (for a detailed discussion see Valdman).[14]

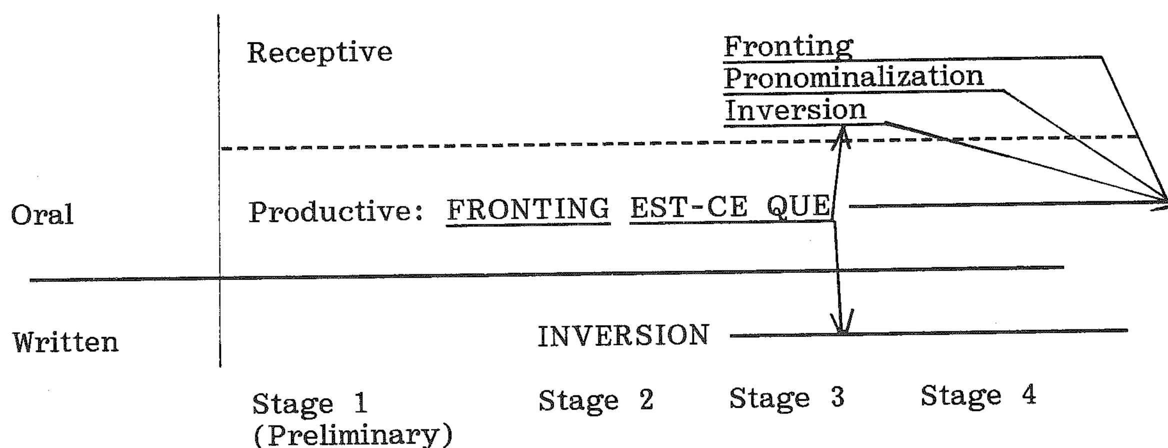
In Table 1 below, I reproduce data on the use of partial questions by a representative group of French speakers belonging to two social groups, workers (labeled Français populaire) and the middle class. The latter were recorded in two different types of situations and the speech collected labeled informal and formal standard French. Teachers of French who teach only Inversion and Est-ce que questions will be surprised to learn that these two interrogative types account for less than 20% of all partial questions produced in the everyday speech of middle-class speakers. This does not mean that classroom learners of French should necessarily be taught the more frequent types, Pronominalization and Fronting, for, as the perception figures show, these two structures are stigmatized by the very speakers who produce them in 80% of their questions. They will either deny ever using them or will begrudgingly admit that, although these structures are frequently heard, they are incorrect, and, of course, unsuitable for foreign language learners.

Table 1
Relative frequency of the distribution of interrogative constructions in a representative corpus of spoken French (Behnsted 1973)[15]

	Production			
	Français populaire	Informal Standard French	Formal Standard French	Perception
Pronominalization Tu vas où?	12%	33%	25%	20%-
Fronting Où tu vas?	36%	46%	10%	30%-
Est-ce que Où est-ce que tu vas?	8%	12%	3%	20%(+)
Est-ce-que variants Où c'est que tu vas?	45%	4%	-	
Inversion Où vas-tu?	9%	15%	62%	30%(+)
	N=587	N=446	N=436	

Another important piece of data needed to formulate a pedagogical norm is that the stigmatized Fronting construction occurred in nearly 75% of the partial questions produced in a test situation by beginning French learners who had only been exposed to the more proper Inversion and Est-ce que questions. On the basis of the sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic data I have put forward, I would propose the pedagogical norm represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1
A proposed pedagogical sequence for the presentation of French interrogative constructions



A distinction is made between written and oral usage and between receptive and productive activities. Oral production would be targeted on the neutral and easily learnable Est-ce que variant and written use on the more formal Inversion type. To what extent learners would be exposed to and encouraged to produce the stigmatized constructions would depend on the factors that guide the selection of course content, namely, course objectives, the teaching context, and, most importantly, learner characteristics.

5. Conclusion

The lesson to be drawn from the keynote address is that foreign language teachers are faced with multifarious variation: diverse learner characteristics (age, learning styles, academic background), a multiplicity of worthwhile objectives, variability in the target language, and the culture of the target community or communities. This multifaceted variation is incompatible with teaching materials that are becoming more uniform, with monolithic test batteries, and with instructional programs that set unique objectives and seek standardized teaching approaches. Ways must be found to fit learner to objective and instructional program to both. But flexible teaching schemes and custom-made materials require skilled teachers (who are in rare supply) and more appropriate governance patterns that still need to be implemented and instituted.

NOTES

1 James Cummins, "Language Proficiency and Academic Achievement," in J. W. Oller, ed., Issues in Language Testing Research (Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1983), 108-29.

2 Harold Palmer, The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages (London: Harrap and Co., Ltd., 1917).

3 Albert Valdman, "Grammar and the Foreign Language Teacher," in Frank Grittner, ed., Student Motivation and the FL Teacher (Skokie, IL: National Textbook Company, 1974), 66-80.

4 Calvin Thomas, "Observations Upon Method in Teaching of Modern Languages," Methods of Teaching Modern Languages (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1983).

5 Claire Kramsch, "Foreword," in Bill VanPatten, et al., eds., Foreign Language Learning: A Research Perspective (1987), vii-x.

6 Albert Valdman, "Toward a Modified Structural Syllabus," Studies in Second Language Acquisition 5 (1982), 34-51.

7 Dale Lange, "Developing and Implementing Proficiency Oriented Tests for a New Language Requirement at the University of Minnesota: Issues and Problems for Implementing the ACTFL/ETS/ILR Proficiency Guidelines," in A. Valdman, ed., *Proceedings of the Symposium on the Evaluation of Foreign Language Proficiency* (Bloomington, IN: Committee for Research and Development for Language Instruction, 1988), 275-90.

8 James Redfield, "The Politics of Language Instruction," in Peter Patrikis, ed., *The Governance of Foreign Language Teaching and Learning. Proceedings of Symposium* (New Haven, CT: Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning, 1988), 34-46.

9 American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, *ACTFL Provisional Proficiency Guidelines* (Hastings-on-Hudson NY: Author, 1982).

10 James Redfield, op. cit.

11 Albert Valdman, *Proceedings of the Symposium on the Evaluation of Foreign Language Proficiency* (Bloomington, IN: Committee for Research and Development for Language Instruction, 1988).

12 Albert Valdman, "The Problem of the Target Model in Proficiency-Oriented Language Instruction," in A. Valdman, ed., *Proceedings of the Symposium on the Evaluation of Foreign Language Proficiency* (Bloomington, IN: Committee for Research and Development for Language Instruction, 1988), 133-49.

13 Lawrence Bouton, "A Cross-Cultural Study of Ability to Interpret Implicatures in English," *World Englishes 7* (1988).

14 Albert Valdman, "Toward" and "Problem."

15 Peter Behnsted, *Viens-tu, est-ce que tu viens, tu viens? Formen und Strukturen des direkten Fragesatzes im Französischen* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1973).

AUTHENTICITY AND THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CURRICULUM

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I am inclined to take rather literally my role as respondent to Professor Redfield's thoughtful essay on the place of foreign language study in a liberal arts curriculum. The style and content of his remarks reflect a personal involvement with the topic at hand which is both stimulating and instructive, despite his announced intention simply to be "irritating." If we adopt the convention of a debate on curriculum -- a fiction inspired in part by our meeting here in the amphitheater of the University of Chicago Law School -- it is because we wish to address the same issue, as many have done before us, from different points of view.

Let it be noted that we attempt to focus on curriculum rather than governance, as we have both had a forum the expression of our views on that subject, through the good offices of the Consortium hosting the present symposium.[1] Even so, it is well to remember Professor Redfield's previously stated position in this matter: "Our curriculum problem with modern languages has a political source...."[2] I agree fully with this observation, and would like to submit that the cause and effect relationship between curriculum and governance is the underlying issue for the debate at hand. What elements of the foreign language curriculum are determined by institutional rather than academic considerations?

Our major concern with foreign language study -- expressed here and in the national press -- is that it somehow lacks authenticity as an academic undertaking, at least in its present form. Professor Redfield searches his experience for explanations and produces a complex analysis which may be viewed as an examination of two fundamentally different approaches to foreign language education. One stresses the ethnographer's emphasis on oral forms of expression as a key to participation in a culture; the other stresses the philologist's emphasis on literate forms of expression as a key to understanding a culture, sometimes remote in time or space.[3] This debate is sometimes called "second language" versus "foreign language" study, and the issue is assumed to be "integrative" versus "instrumental" motivation for learning another language.

Professor Redfield reports in his "notes of a native speaker" that nothing in his formal training gave him anything like the command his father had over foreign languages in their spoken form. The difference in ability might be attributed simply to individual variation, but this leads directly

to considerations of language aptitude in curriculum design. That is, should we routinely require spoken mastery of a foreign language for degree candidates who ostensibly lack the requisite ability? Oral proficiency seems to require a "social performance" on the part of a "new persona." The dilemma is that the issue of authentic second language competence may represent, to use Redfield's words, "a psychotherapeutic rather than an academic question."

Certainly, appearing to "pass" as a native speaker, whatever that may mean, smacks of inauthenticity. (The younger Redfield seemed troubled by his father's ability in this regard.) Learning the formal attributes of a foreign language does not necessarily contribute to a meaningful educational experience. One must go outside of language per se to attain a bicultural point of view, what Redfield calls "redundant competency." This line of reasoning may lead to the conclusion that an oral command of a language makes demands on the curriculum that cannot be honestly met within our system of education.[4] One would have to address problems of real life (an "authentically cultural approach"), introducing the various registers of speech ("diverse rhetorics") which permit one to function in society.

Using his criteria for cultural authenticity, Professor Redfield turns his attention to the spoken language textbooks at his disposal and finds them sadly lacking; they seem to represent the point of view of the tourist rather than the ethnographer. A reduced and schematized world is presented which substitutes stereotypes for points of view and concerns which are authentic in the foreign culture.[5] The educational impact is particularly dramatic in this culture, as most graduates make no further use of their foreign language training: "The end of the language requirement is the end of language study." The interesting point raised here is the suggestion that current textbooks may actually contribute to our students' failure to pursue foreign language study.

Having found nothing of interest at the elementary levels, they simply let the subject matter drop. It is not difficult to reject out of hand pedagogical materials which fail to offer or lead the student to authentic contact with primary observed data. But this is not cause enough to reject approaches based on the spoken language, especially since the new technology can offer exposure to authentic samples of sight and sound from foreign cultures. Our error may lie in thinking that our choices are determined by the dichotomies of the debate. Are we really trying to decide whether an oral or literary approach is better?

Professor Redfield provides a surprisingly brief discussion of the philological approach to foreign language study. The study of ancient Greek provided him with "an entirely different experience" from the study of modern (spoken) languages. One may assume that he finds classical pedagogy more satisfying, even though he is distressed at the amount of time spent on morphology in traditional methods. Although the faculty expects few students to go on in their studies, text-based

pedagogy assumes that reading (or decoding) an original text is fully justified as an educational undertaking. The enterprise is thus presumably more authentic, but Professor Redfield concludes by saying that both oral and literate pedagogies must go beyond the teaching of "skills." The student must address the deeper epistemological questions of what is being studied, and why.

One senses possible contradictions in the lines of reasoning explored by Professor Redfield. He is of course correct to have misgivings about the feasibility of authentic foreign language learning in a liberal arts curriculum if the criterion of success is full bicultural and oral bilingual ability as he defines them. The scope of this kind of foreign language education entails the equivalent of professional training. But is this the intent of language study in general education? In other subject matters we are satisfied if our students are aware of the telling questions in a discipline and have a good working knowledge of what expertise consists of. The criterion of success emphasizes understanding of content over mastery of form. We do not ask physicists or historians or mathematicians to accept the judgment that they have failed as educators if their students no longer "use" the skills they were taught in class. A requirement for usable skills applies at the professional -- not the general -- level of education.

Our sense of "inauthenticity" may result simply from a gross mismatch between educational objectives and the instructional environment. Indeed, most cultures devote six to eight years of foreign language instruction for what Americans attempt to accomplish in two or three. I doubt that anyone is prepared to fund such an undertaking in this country; but, more importantly, it is damaging to the self-esteem of language teaching professionals to aspire to impossible educational goals. It should suffice that our students have "elementary" knowledge -- perhaps one should say "elemental" knowledge -- and sufficient skill to demonstrate critical thinking about the subject matter. The proper educational debate should center around our definition of what we consider the elements to be, as pointed out nicely by Claire Kramsch in her paper for this symposium. We cannot accept uncritically the notion that advanced levels of skill are the only criterion of success in our profession.

The entire educational community is currently being subjected to exhortations to excellence based on arguments for making this nation more "competitive." A philologist, I would venture, should have preferred a better word from the same Latin root, "competent." Indeed, one misses distinctions, in discussions of curriculum design, which differentiate even simple concepts such as "training" and "education." An educative process leads to the ability to acquire skills as necessary to achieve a self-defined goal. A training process goes directly for useful skills as defined by someone else.[6]

The problem with arguments defending authenticity, or skill, or competence, is that one hardly wishes to go on record as being against

them. And yet each of these concepts, if carefully examined, requires careful attention to the context which determines what is authentic, what is skillful, and what is competent.

In my opinion foreign language study (as defined) can be fully justified as an authentic offering in our curriculum. We naturally need qualified language teachers who know how to introduce monolinguals to linguistic and cultural diversity and sharpen their students' insights into the workings of language. They then create a pool of potential professionals by helping students to discover wherein their aptitude lies and by encouraging further development, just as in any other subject. The competence of these educators lies in their ability to participate in human development as well as master their subject matter. They should not be distracted from their jobs by stressing high levels of skills training which substitute for understanding and enrichment.

The notion of skillful behavior, let it be noted, is not a trivial matter to define. Rote training (i.e, limited to imitation) fails to account for commonplace learning events such as improvisation. Even if one learns to repeat perfectly an improvisational performance, one has not learned to improvise. Language learning requires just this kind of ability. Our daily improvisations are ordered around the fulfillment of a role in society, as Professor Redfield notes. If there are questions of a role in society for effective language learning, who shall determine this role for a student in a liberal learning environment? Are we really prepared to replace "language anxiety" with an encounter with "the language of terror or mourning" and that host of issues raised by a full functional syllabus? Is our society prepared to spend its resources on promoting authentic contact with other cultures?

"Authenticity" has deep meaning for educators, as anything less in an educational enterprise smacks of fraud. Once the issue is raised, one has to follow the argument to its logical conclusion, refusing to waive one's hands over the difficulties. For example, if textbooks are inadequate, then scholars should be personally involved in making a contribution to their content. It is simply irresponsible for academics to criticize pedagogical materials when they are unwilling to cooperate in their production or give academic recognition for those who do. If the curriculum does not function as intended, it is important to address the issue as an institutional problem and to insist on adequate resources to effect meaningful reform.

Professor Redfield no doubt speaks for many when he recounts the feelings of frustration in his personal experience with the study of modern foreign languages. He is altogether justified in criticizing a curriculum which offers little sense of empowerment for those who participate in the educational process. My concern is that we envisage reforms which treat "authenticity" as a context-sensitive concept. Our debate on foreign language curriculum should be informed by an understanding of educational purpose which goes beyond skills training; it should

incorporate an understanding of variation in individual learning and development, in addition to subject matter expertise; it should examine the underlying epistemology of what we consider primary data. Until we have a better understanding of the context for curricular change, it will be very difficult to reach consensus on what constitutes authentic course content.

NOTES

1 Peter C. Patrikis, ed., The Governance of Foreign Language Teaching and Learning: Proceedings of a Symposium, Princeton, NJ, 9-11 October 1987 (New Haven, CT: The Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning, 1988).

2 See his "The Politics of Language Instruction" in Patrikis, op. cit.

3 New insights synthesizing a broad range of scholarship have been brought to bear on the issue by Walter Ong, Orality and Literacy (London: Methuen & Co., 1982.)

4 A similar conclusion was reached in the Coleman Report, University of Chicago, 1929. The report suggested that a reading knowledge (only) was the only practical solution for foreign language study.

5 I have used the term "pedagogical polyester" to describe textbooks which insulate the student from contact with the original object of study by substituting contrived materials for authentic data. See Harriet Tyson-Bernstein, A Conspriacy of Good Intentions: The American Textbook Fiasco (Washington, D.C.: Council for Basic Education, 1988).

6 Alvin Toffler, in The Third Wave (Bantam, 1980) p. 29, comments as follows:

> Built on the factory model, mass education taught basic reading, writing, and arithmetic, a bit of history and other subjects. This was the "overt curriculum." But beneath it lay an invisible or "covert curriculum" that was far more basic. It consisted -- and still does in most industrial nations -- of three courses: one in punctuality, one in obedience, and one in rote, repetitive work.

Culture and Society in the Foreign Language Classroom: An Open Letter to James M. Redfield

Kostas Kazazis
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Dear Jamie,

You lucky bastard! Yours is the only paper that will have had not one, not two, but three responses. Someone once asked a centipede to explain -- and demonstrate -- how it managed to coordinate its many legs when it walked. The centipede replied: "It's very simple. All you have to do is er..., er...." And not only could it not tell how it managed to walk but neither could it move a limb. It just stood there, frozen, as if stricken by paralysis.

I sympathize with that centipede. When this conference was still in the distant future, you said that I had a lot of worthwhile ideas to convey to the participants. I'm freely paraphrasing what you said, for you used more flattering terms, which self-knowledge, rather than modesty, forbids me to repeat; this is after all an open letter. You knew something about my language-teaching style, since about ten years ago you sat in on my courses in Elementary and Intermediate Modern Greek, where you were the star student. I assured you that I did not know what worthwhile ideas you were talking about and suggested, perhaps only half-jokingly, that you should write my paper for me.

You eventually told me in a few words what you had in mind, while I was jotting it down. Many weeks later I realized that I had lost those notes. Maybe Providence was trying to tell me to just forget the whole thing. If so, I chose to ignore that warning. Exactly two weeks ago, I confessed to you that I had lost my notes. You patiently repeated over the phone more or less what you had said the first time around. Although I did not lose my notes this time, I feel more strongly than ever than I'm the wrong person to be making this presentation. Especially after hearing your own paper, in which you deal with most of the points you said I should talk about, and do so very eloquently indeed.

I had to provide a title, so I finally settled for "Culture and society in the foreign language classroom." That's a grand-sounding title. You must have attended enough conferences by now to have noticed that the grandest thing about many papers is their title. So let's forget the title and let me fill this letter with some remarks that are largely anecdotal,

overwhelmingly autobiographical, partly self-flagellatory, and perhaps distressingly truistic.

We linguists are trained to concentrate on what are, perhaps ignorantly, called "pure linguistic" data, if need be to the exclusion of cultural and social considerations. Yet we find that both as students and as speakers-listeners of language we are the poorer for that exclusion. When I start studying a language, I find that I want to read about the history and the folklore of the people who speak it. I want to read some of their literature right away, in translation. My first four or five batches of students in Modern Greek had to read Henry Miller's The Colossus of Maroussi -- an idea I owed to Andreas Koutsoudas. I eventually stopped asking my students to read that book, since I did not share Miller's blind enthusiasm for most things modern Greek. To this day, though, I continue to pester the students in my foreign language classes with all manner of cultural and sociolinguistic information.

Of course, I can do that more competently for some languages than for others. Furthermore, my task is simpler than that of our colleagues who teach, say, Korean or Yoruba, for I've never taught what is Eurocentrically called an "exotic" language. All of the languages I've taught are European, either Eastern or Western. That goes even for the "Afrikaans for Linguists" course I taught two years ago. In fact, for me the sociolinguistically most exotic language that I've ever attempted to teach was Ancient Greek. And it's probably no accident that I have felt more out of place teaching Ancient Greek than any other language -- even Afrikaans, in which I can barely utter a sentence without committing some Dutch mistake. (Not that my Dutch is much to write to Athens about.) You say it was your language anxiety "that in the first place sent [you] to ancient Greek; whatever problems [you] had with the ancient Greeks [you were] not going to have to talk to them or worry about their opinion of [you]." I, on the other hand, feel largely helpless in that language, because I cannot be creative in it, as I try to be in a number of modern languages. This may be partly because I never had an old-fashioned English-type of training in the Classics, with heavy emphasis on composition, and where one is made to translate into Greek or Latin Shakespeare, Matthew Arnold, and newspaper editorials. But it's more likely that I've never managed to develop an attitude that would allow me to innovate in Ancient Greek and to experiment with it,[1] because there were no native speakers around on whom I could try my linguistic tricks.

I can only agree with you that "the ancient Greek language [like the sitar] cannot be learned in one lifetime," but I would add the rhetorical question: Can any language?

I recognize the usefulness of a middle register for foreign learners of a language. But, like you, I too get annoyed at the often bland and stylistically neutral variety of the target language that many textbooks still peddle exclusively. In fact, some Modern Greek textbooks provide

an additional source of irritation, for their authors seem to be linguistically insecure native speakers of the language -- that is to say socially insecure people. So I try to protect my students from some of the inanities, oversimplifications, overcorrections, and other infelicities they'll find in their textbooks by introducing them to the various levels of discourse available to them. From day one, I try to tell them something about the multiplicity of styles and registers that make up a language. The trouble is, I don't merely tell them "something" about those things but in fact a great deal. So I end up doing most of the talking in class -- a pedagogical no-no. For instance, I may spend ten or fifteen minutes of class time explaining why a middle-class Greek writer may very well use fancier language in his casual speech, like when talking to his wife, than on more solemn occasions, like when addressing a gathering of fellow writers. By "fancier language" I mean of course language that contains more Atticisms and other learnedisms than so-called "literary demotic Greek." I suppose I could save some class time by having my students read a paper I once wrote on that very topic, namely "A superficially unusual feature of Greek diglossia,"[2] but you know very well that's not my style of teaching.

As you know, for Modern Greek I also like to write my own readings. Those take a long time to prepare, but where else can my students find heavily annotated monologues and dialogues depicting Greek speakers as they really are, or at least as I think they are? I try to depict them as ordinary people: generous or tightfisted, tolerant or bigoted, tender or cruel, liberal or politically antediluvian, cosmopolitan or hellenocentric and xenophobic, wearing their hearts on their sleeves or buttoned up, "liberated" or phallocratic. I put them in situations likely to provoke controversy, anger, or passion. The dialogues sometimes involve only Greeks and sometimes Greeks and Americans debating aspects of their respective cultures. My characters tease each other, disagree politely or have shouting matches on such topics as politics, their lovelife together, their attitudes towards Blacks, Jews, Turks, the non-Greek-speaking minorities in Greece, or whether "your little bitch of a daughter is still seeing that jerk from the Agricultural Bank" ("Well, she's your goddamned daughter too, you know!"). Note, by the way, that what I've just said is partly programmatic, since I haven't yet done readings that cover all the situations I've mentioned here. If you remember, we also read corrected and annotated versions of some of the best Greek efforts of the students themselves, past and present. Your own pieces were almost invariably circulated and read in class, for although they did sometimes deal with a day in the country, they did so as in real life: some people had a good time except that there was that misunderstanding with the waiter, others got drunk, relatives humiliated one another in public, and parents cried at their children's wedding -- and not only with joy.

Alas, you are right when you say that this "is not the quickest way to pick up the basic structure of the language." To that extent I may well be a wretched language teacher, but that's the only way I enjoy teaching

languages. Sometimes my hapless students learn how to whine excuses to a traffic cop in Greek, Italian, Rumanian, or Albanian before they've learned to form the pluperfect in those languages. Just as I resolve to be good and stick to the "material" -- whatever that means -- I am time and again tempted to tell my students: "You shouldn't think even for a moment that this is the only way we can express this particular message." And so I drift into my habitual monologues, in which I provide stylistic alternatives, complete with facial expressions and body language, in an effort to bridge the gap between formality and intimacy, or between the way a tight-arsed conservative jingoistic lawyer from Salonika and the way his rebellious left-winger of a daughter might express themselves.

Or take friendliness. To paraphrase what you said yesterday, the typical foreign language textbook portrays the natives as mostly friendly. Well, we know this is often sheer propaganda. Remember those TV commercials for Olympic Airways: "Please, no dancing in the aisles!"? Reality may be brutally different: unsmiling, tight-lipped, curt, permanently annoyed hostesses that make you wonder what kind of strings they must have pulled to land a job for which they are so ill-suited. "No dancing in the aisles" indeed! Oh, the natives may be anything from friendly enough all the way to embarrassingly friendly to their friends, superiors, creditors, or to the obvious foreigner. Especially if that foreigner is trying to speak their language, and especially if that language is not one of the commonly taught European ones. One can speak rotten Rumanian and still be complimented on one's mastery of the language -- of course after the natives have ascertained that one is not a member of some alloglot resident minority. In some cultures, people are as a rule quite rude to one another. As you know, I try to prepare my students for that, even at the risk of overstating the case. Especially vulnerable are those who acquire a native-like accent. I don't know if I ever told you that I've been treated rudely in both Rumania and Italy for asking questions the answers to which seemed self-evident to the natives. The attitude of my interlocutors would invariably improve upon my stating apologetically that I was a foreigner, just off the plane or the motorscooter. If the truth be known, I've been treated like a congenital idiot for asking the same sort of questions even in my native Greece. There of course I cannot say that I'm a foreigner; I just tell them that I've been living abroad for many years. You may remember that I tell my students that it is sometimes to their advantage to retain or fake a nonnative accent and in general to give some early hint that they are nonnatives.

In 1988-89, I'm planning to teach Modern Greek again, after a three-year lull, and I've been toying with the idea of spending the first quarter covering essentially the material in, perhaps, Hugo's Modern Greek in Three Months, and only then start fooling around with the so-called many "languages" that Modern Greek consists of. It's going to be hellishly hard for me, but it might be fun watching an old dog trying to teach

himself new tricks. Maybe I'm telling you this so you'll say: "Oh no, Kostas, don't! We love you just as you are!"

In reality, all foreign language teachers end up talking about culture and society anyway. Clearly this is more true of those who teach their native language or a language in which they have near-native competence. Since a language is part of a culture, and since that culture is one of the components of a society, competent language teachers cannot help dealing with so-called "extralinguistic" matters, whether they do so by design or not. Remember how Edward Sapir put it a long time ago: "Language has a setting....[It] does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives."[3] Sapir was saying these things in 1921. By now, probably most anthropologists, and fortunately many linguists as well, have come to realize that much of what we conventionally distinguish as "language" or "culture" in reality "constitutes a single universe that we might call [with Paul Friedrich] 'linguaculture.'"[4]

Since the days when you graced my classroom, I've been making a heavier use of literature in my foreign language classes as a means of teaching the foreign culture and society. I rely largely on low-level technology in my language teaching: I encourage my students to expose themselves early on to literary recordings in the target language. (I assume that by now any serious student of foreign languages has a cassette recorder, preferably a walkabout one.) I also encourage them to read many times the works they listen to. Quite apart from any esthetic considerations, literature can not only help the students understand the foreign culture and society but can also help hammer in much of the basic structure of the foreign language.

I'm a linguist who likes learning languages, not a literary scholar or professionally trained language teacher. I read a good deal of literature, but little of the scholarship that comes out about either literature or language teaching. So don't be surprised if what I say about literature in the foreign language classroom sounds trite or old hat. In the following lengthy excursus on that topic, I plagiarize from some remarks I made recently to a group of University of Chicago foreign language students. I do so only because you encouraged me to include those remarks in my presentation, when we talked over the phone two weeks ago. (Here I go again, blaming you for my troubles!) One can look at these musings either as shameless padding of a presentation devoid of content or else as a salutary means of keeping the participants in one place and out of mischief.

Foreign language teachers typically want their students to learn the target language as fast as possible, so they can move from the drudgery of early foreign language learning on to more exciting things. The obvious problem facing the teacher who wishes to introduce his students to foreign language literature in the original is finding readings of high

literary quality that are not discouragingly difficult for students at the early stages of language learning. Some textbooks introduce relatively difficult poetry very early in the curriculum. Now, a teacher fluent in, say, both Modern Greek and English can always try to explain difficult readings to his students. The question is whether beginning students are using their time optimally when they spend some of it learning rare literary words. I had that problem some years ago in my elementary Modern Greek course. An otherwise linguistically simple poem included the Greek word kalokyrades. Although I knew that poem from my high school days, I'd never had to understand what on earth kalokyrades meant. The textbook glossed that word as "queens." An excellent monolingual Modern Greek dictionary (Dimitrakos), on the other hand, tells us that kalokyrades can mean either "fairies" or "noble ladies" ("arx-ntissew"); not a word about "queens" in that dictionary. So here I was, a native speaker of Greek, wasting what is optimistically called "valuable class time" on an obscure word that surely cannot be found in anyone's list of the 1,000 most frequently used Modern Greek words -- or 2,000, or 3,000, for that matter.

Such problems are common if one is to use "authentic" literary texts, that is, texts that have not been tampered with for pedagogical purposes. I for one am mildly against using expurgated or simplified literary texts in language teaching. If we look hard enough, we will find texts that are both interesting and sufficiently simple for virtual beginners.

Even so, some impatient teachers may be dying to introduce more difficult literary texts relatively early in the foreign language curriculum. Is that an entirely quixotic idea or is there anything such teachers can do to satisfy their impatience without jeopardizing the interests of their students? I believe there is. I wish I could claim some originality here, but the few devices I use in this domain are well-known to language teachers.

One way to introduce difficult literature early on is to teach songs whose lyrics are good poems or fragments of good poems. Among other things, this method has the advantage of sweetening the pill: it's more fun learning a song than learning a poem by heart. Sure enough, singing songs is time-consuming: it takes a great deal longer to sing a song based on a poem by Jacques Prévert than to read the poem itself. It takes time, but it may be well worth it. By the way, songs are an almost foolproof way of exposing also the native speakers of a language to good poetry. Mikis Theodorakis, for instance, has set a number of first-class contemporary Greek poems into eminently singable music. Next time you hear a Greek cleaning woman sing the verses of an esoteric poem by George Seferis or Odysseas Elytis, bear in mind that were it not for Theodorakis she would probably not have known that those poems even existed.

Another way to teach literature while teaching the language is through translations. Wouldn't it be nice if we had a few more bilingual texts, with the foreign language and the English texts on facing pages? So what if the students read the English first before they tackle the foreign language? I am assuming, of course, that we are talking about highly motivated students and not about a bunch of bums who'll skip the foreign language text altogether.

One type of bilingual edition that will do just fine in a pinch but which has not quite come out of the closet yet is the English classic with the target language on the opposite page. It is immaterial that such editions are designed to teach English to speakers of the foreign language, rather than the other way around, as long as we harbor no illusion about teaching the foreign culture and society through translations of English classics. The first time I read some of Oscar Wilde's stories for children was in such a bilingual edition, aimed at students of English whose native language was Serbocroatian. I eventually got around to reading the Serbocroatian translations, but only after I had zoomed through the English original -- don't be fooled by appearances: linguists are human too.

All we need are recordings of a few short stories, some short poems, and a couple of plays. What's important is not necessarily to expose the students to a great amount of literature but rather to expose them to death to a small but, we hope, carefully chosen literary corpus. Why "to death"? Because, in language learning, after motivation, there are few things that work as well as repetition. There were some good things in what the proponents of "overlearning" of almost a generation ago had to say. Except that here we are no longer talking about overlearning the trivialities of very early language study but rather the nontrivial stuff that makes up worthwhile literature.

Many years ago I learned a great deal of Rumanian by listening to "A Lost Letter," an extraordinary nineteenth-century play by Ion Luca Caragiale. I listened to it again and again, almost every evening for months, while doing the dishes. I used neither an annotated edition nor a dictionary, but I confess that I had first read the play in an Italian translation, at a time when my Rumanian was still almost non-existent. Unfortunately, when I got to Rumania for the first time, I realized that the play in question had done me in. My Rumanian, while reasonably fluent, was in several respects identical to the speech of nineteenth-century Rumanian fishwives -- of both sexes. My speech was cute all right, and Rumanians congratulated me for knowing so well one of the masterpieces of their national literature. But somehow I didn't quite cut the professorial figure that my interlocutors had expected. That's why I said earlier that we should choose carefully the texts we're going to have our students read or listen to death.

But enough about literature. You asked me to talk, among other things, about what it is to know a language. You said I should talk about what

a native speaker knows, since that's what you think I try to teach my students in Modern Greek. That is for me an extremely tall order, for ever since my late teens I have been constantly frustrated by language or, to be more precise, by linguaculture.

Around campus, I have the reputation of knowing many languages. Whether I deserve that reputation or not depends on how one understands the notion of "knowing a language." I suspect that some of our colleagues are overly impressed because I am apparently fluent in about half a dozen languages, because I can fake a native-like accent in a few more, because I don't exhibit too many painful hesitation phenomena in any language, and because I dare take the plunge and try to speak some languages I hardly know at all. A good accent even in a language one speaks miserably will get one a long way, as I discovered last December during a flight from Athens to Chicago, on which I spoke only Dutch to the KLM flight attendants, making sure they knew I had never set foot in the Netherlands.

I also enjoy playing with language. I like to experiment with distorting my usual speech on several linguistic levels. I do imitations of regional, ethnic, and other subgroup accents, as well as foreign accents, and use nonstandard morphology and syntax. Our colleague Tony Brinkman and I used to spend long stretches of time speaking with a heavy stage-German accent, and my wife and I do the same with stage-French and, I'm embarrassed to say, stage-American accents. I tell my students that in order to perfect their Greek pronunciation they should sometimes try speaking English with a Greek accent. I deliberately choose inappropriate registers, or mix registers. Some people become slightly distressed at such antics. When I ask my wife something like "Whar am dem knives?," my mother-in-law might exclaim half in earnest: "Kostas, how can you use such dreadful language!" And sometimes my interlocutors don't perceive my attempts at linguistic humor for what they are and will try to help me improve my speech. Years ago, we had a departmental secretary who suggested I go to her native Seattle over the spring break. I told her I couldn't afford the airfare. She kept insisting that some flights were relatively inexpensive. So finally I said: "I ain't got no money, woman!" Whereupon she told me that the correct way to say that was "I haven't got any money" or "I have no money." Is that by any chance what you had in mind the other day on the phone when you said that I like to reach "the outer limits of language"?

I rather like the way you divide language learners into "those who, in speaking another language, become significantly different people, and those who attempt, with this new imperfectly-mastered instrument, to express the same old self." You say: "The first type gains something when it shifts languages: a new persona. The second type loses something: all that is lost in the translation. The first type are relatively ready to mean whatever they can say; the second type are constantly hung up on the problem of saying what they mean. The first use language to associate themselves with the local people; the second,

to individuate themselves among this alien audience." Much as I like what you say, however, I still wish you had acknowledged overtly that there may be transitional types between the two extremes you describe. Surely we are dealing with a continuum: it is a matter of "more or less" rather than one of black and white, of "either or." No doubt, I belong essentially to the first type of language learner. When I shift languages, my cultural persona shifts too, especially if I shift into a language I know pretty well: for instance, I move and grimace quite differently when I speak French from when I speak Greek or Italian. And although I am sel- dom "ready to mean whatever [I] can say," I am sometimes vain enough -- or enough of a coward -- to say only what I can say correctly. I do that primarily during the early stages of learning a new language. Instead of using the microdialogues we find in textbooks and cassettes, I try to set the stage for real-life microdialogues. Those consist largely of clichés and more or less short prefabricated blocks, as elementary microdialogues inevitably do. I use prefabs of the type "Oh, I couldn't agree more," "That's a matter of opinion," "Surely that's no problem," "I've learned to live with it," "Is that so?," "Yeah, that's an unfortunate state of affairs," and so on. Of course I'm embarrassed to engage in sometimes lethally boring small talk. In fact, I often express those feelings to my interlocutors. I tell them, as well as I can manage: "I feel awful talking such drivel, like a small child or an idiot. But unfortunately I don't know your language well enough yet to express any complicated thoughts in it." Jamie, you know I don't try "to associate [myself] with the local people" at all costs. If anything, I probably err in the opposite direction, by "individuat[ing myself a bit too much] among...alien audience[s]." Far too often, I do so even when trying to speak a language in which I'm a novice, with the painful results that you know so well from your own experiences. But when it comes to languages in which I can express myself relatively freely, there are few limits to my self-expressing acrobatics. Such acrobatics can be culturally quite inappropriate. When I first went to England, at age eighteen, I had a couple of exchanges that went something like this:

> Shopkeeper: Lovely day today.
> Me: You call this a lovely day?

Whereupon I'd be asked where I was from. I'd say: "I'm from Greece," and the poor, brutalized English being would agree that, well, of course, for a Greek the weather probably wasn't so lovely after all. Surely that's pushing nonconformity a trifle too far. "In light of all of the above," as they say, it is easy to see why some people stand in awe before my alleged linguistic prowess.

The reality is somewhat more sober. I too am subject to severe language anxiety. Take German, for instance, a language I've never studied formally. Four years ago, we were visiting some relatives of my wife in Germany. At some point I was talking away unconcernedly to two aunts of hers, when a younger relative suddenly exclaimed in a stage whisper: "He's speaking German!" At that, I froze.

I feel reasonably at home in five languages. These are, in the order in which I learned them: Greek, French, English, Italian, and Swedish. As you'll see in a moment, it's not out of modesty that I say I feel "reasonably at home" in those languages, instead of "entirely at home," which would most certainly be empty boasting. If knowing a language means merely to have a good grasp of its basic grammatical structure and basic vocabulary, then I suppose I "know" those five languages. But surely there is more to knowing a language than that. Admittedly, what I lack in those languages is mostly vocabulary. But isn't it precisely in the vocabulary that linguaculture mostly resides? You realize of course that I use the term vocabulary in the broadest possible sense, to include not only words but also lexical items consisting of idiomatic or slangy expressions, sayings, proverbs, and that sort of thing.

Although some of my friends may perceive me as a professional Greek, I perceive myself as someone with probably no native linguaculture at all. Maybe that's why I've spent so much of my life constantly investigating how native speakers make the shifts they do, and how nonnative speakers may acquire nativelike language etiquette. Yes, Jamie, it looks like I'm not a native speaker of anything at all. So how on earth can I talk about what it is that a native speaker knows? At most I could say something about what a non-native speaker does not know. And although my powers of introspection are as limited as the next fellow's, I propose to do so by talking about my own case. Until the age of eighteen, I was a speaker of Greek and French. (By the time I was sixteen, I had also become fluent in English, but I've always regarded English as a foreign language. I'll tell you later why.) In the eyes of a less demanding observer, I still am, for all practical purposes, a native speaker of Greek. But I left Greece at eighteen, and have only visited the country for short periods ever since. My longest stay there was in 1987, when I spent three and a half months in Athens. I once spent sixteen and a half years without once returning to Greece. However much one may call oneself a Neohellenist, one does lose touch, especially as regards vocabulary. Need I mention more than slang? I'm often confronted with initially befuddling new Greek slang, sometimes merely consisting of old words in new meanings. Or else I may use stale slang myself, only to be told by some old lady friend of my mother's: "Bless you, son! I hadn't heard that expression for years." I have met about a dozen American and European Neohellenists who seem to control some aspects of Modern Greek linguaculture far better than I do. On rare occasions, they might commit a grammatical faux pas, whereas I would not. Still, I envy them, for even though I have a native command of the Modern Greek lingua, I have my share of problems with Modern Greek linguaculture, which for a Neohellenist is embarrassing.

But that is nothing compared to the abysmal gaps in my other near-native language, French. I began using French at the age of four, first with my governesses and later on with a teacher who came over three times a week to give me private lessons. Although it was clearly

a good idea to have me learn a second language in early childhood, there were problems. For one thing, it was demeaning to be told that French was more logical than Greek. I couldn't see as a child why "I must wash me the hands" (Je dois me laver les mains) was more logical than "I must wash my hands" (*Je dois laver mes mains). I still can't. Until I left Greece, I had never spoken French to any native speaker of that language that wasn't old enough to be my parent. Finally, at age eighteen, I met my first French-speaking contemporaries, at school in London. It was a partly humiliating experience. I could express myself fluently in a few styles, but my French and Belgian classmates told me that I talked like a book. Now, the only French word for "book" I knew was livre. But what they said was: "Dis donc, Kostas, tu parles comme un bouquin!" I'd never heard the word bouquin before, so I asked what it meant. Whereupon they snickered. That launched me on my long and initially frantic catching up on colloquial French, which included a four-and-a-half-year stint in French-speaking Switzerland and still continues to this day. My stay in Lausanne, where I got my undergraduate degree in political science, did good things to my French: I wrote term papers in that language, I delivered and defended them in public, I talked to landladies, shopkeepers, cops, dentists, and, most importantly for me, to people of my own age. Not to particularly many Swiss people of my own age, mind you, for the Swiss were then, and probably still are, rather reserved towards foreigners. But Lausanne had a lively French student colony, whose members were considerably less reserved, so I would often hang out with them. That may partly explain why I never picked up some features of Swiss French, such as intonation or vocabulary. I say "may partly explain" because another important factor must have been snobbism: we arrogantly viewed the French of our Swiss hosts as at best provincial and at worst ridiculous. I remember a Swiss neighbor of mine inveighing, in my presence though ostensibly not addressing me, against people who had been living in Switzerland for years but who still insisted on saying soixante-dix, quatre-vingts, quatre-vingt-dix -- instead of septante, huitante, nonante, as the local idiom required. But despite my many years in Switzerland, I probably missed the boat to French linguaculture irretrievably, by spending my childhood interacting exclusively with older speakers of that language and by growing up in Athens, rather than Paris, Brussels, or Geneva.

So much for my earliest two languages. The plot thickens when we turn to English. To be sure, in some registers I can function better in English than in any other language. After thirty years in America, first as a graduate student and later as a university teacher, I can now write expository prose in English with greater ease than in French or Greek. My first papers in English were studded with French-inspired turns of speech. But if I tried today to write a linguistic piece in French, it would certainly betray that its author had first thought it out in English. That was the good news. The bad news is that I still have a devil of a time with English prepositions and English vocabulary. After all these years in an English-speaking country, I still fumble for words and misremember idioms and other set phrases. I still have great

difficulty with English colloquialisms, including colloquial syntax. And since I prefer to express myself informally even on rather formal occasions, I'm always tempted to use colloquialisms. How can anyone call me a good language learner when it was only two years ago that I began to learn the rules governing abbreviated questions in English? I mean questions like "Seen Doug lately?," "Picked up your mail yet?," "Your paper been getting you down?"[5] I have long envied those fellow-non-native-speakers of English whose only apparent linguistic shortcoming is that they speak English with a foreign accent that's heavier than mine. Not that I don't have trouble pronouncing English. For one thing, I've always found stress-timed languages, like English, very hard to pronounce in a way that does not betray my early exposure exclusively to syllable-timed languages, once again Greek and French. And I still have trouble with some English vowels: you must have heard me say "still meals" when I meant "steel mills."

Admittedly, it's not only because I'm a poor language learner that I still have some trouble with English. One reason for my lexical and grammatical difficulties in that language must surely be that I lived in a primarily Swedish-speaking household for more than twenty years. When I went to the supermarket, my shopping list was in Swedish, not English. On several occasions, I returned home minus an item that I couldn't find on the shelves and whose English name I didn't know so I could ask about it at the courtesy booth. Once or twice I was rescued by Scandinavian fellow-shoppers of my acquaintance, mostly women, who happened to know either the location of what I was look- ing for or the English name for it. There are many registers in which I feel as much at home in Swedish as in any other language. In some other registers, though, my skills are almost exclusively receptive. For instance, although I understand without any difficulty technical linguistic papers written or delivered in Swedish, I could not produce such a paper myself without spending an inordinate amount of time preparing it and consulting with Swedish-speaking fellow-linguists.

The same can be said of Italian, which along with Swedish is my other strong language that I've never studied formally. You can imagine, then, with what perverse satisfaction I announce that fact to my Italian classes here at the University. At the initial stages, I learned a great deal of useful Italian by reading as my first Italian book Giovanni Guareschi's Mondo piccolo: Don Camillo. I also learned a great deal of less useful Italian by reading -- and finishing -- as my second book in that language Alessandro Manzoni's I promessi sposi. But it was virtually in the streets that I really learned Italian, during several mostly very short stays in Milan and a six-week vacation in Rimini. My models were mostly students or at least contemporaries of mine. They often could not resist the temptation to teach me some pretty crude words and expressions, including a number of blasphemous expletives. At the beginning, these were sometimes the only ones I had at my disposal in order to express certain concepts. When a Milanese friend once asked me to dinner, he cautioned me to speak French with his parents. I

said I'd do nothing of the sort: I wanted to practice my Italian. He replied: "Never mind your Italian. Just stick to French." I complied. But in retrospect I think he underestimated his parents, for they turned out to be the sort of people who might be more amused than scandalized at my preferring the expletive "porco Giuda!" to the milder "accidenti!" -- I say "porco Giuda!," rather than the far more blasphemous stuff my friends had taught me, once again because this is an open letter; ober du weys vos ikh meyn!

As you see, even if I were able to consolidate my knowledge of my strongest five languages into one single language, I would still fall short of achieving the communicative competence of a full-fledged native speaker. If there's a moral to be drawn from this outburst of logorrhea, it may be the anticlimactic and commonplace one that linguaculture is indeed such a multifaceted thing that in trying to acquire or teach a foreign linguaculture we should be prepared to settle for far less than the stars, while never ceasing to reach for them.

In closing, I want you to know that I am flattered that you thought I had something to contribute to the conference, though I suspect that what I wrote in this letter is not what you had in mind. I'm sorry if I've disappointed you, but you know I got into this kicking and clawing. Bear me no malice, friend.

Yours,

Kostas

NOTES

1 To paraphrase Wilga M. Rivers, Communicating naturally in a second language: theory and practice in language teaching (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) p. 53.

2 Kostas Kazasis, "A superficially unusual feature of Greek diglossia," in Papers from the Twelfth Regional Meeting, Chicago Linguistic Society, April 23-25, 1976 (Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society, 1976) 369-75.

3 Edward Sapir, Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1921) Chapter X: "Language, Race, and Culture," 207.

4 Susan Paulson, "Changing Socio-political Identity in Bolivian 'New Towns': A Discussion in Theory and Method," manuscript of a paper presented at the University of Chicago Workshop on Language and Politics, on February 22, 1988, p. 12.

5 My teacher in this was a textbook we use in our introductory linguistics courses: Adrian Akmajian et al., Linguistics: An Introduction to Language and Communication (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1984) second edition, 303ff.

Language Instruction and Crosscultural Awareness

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Language instruction in the United States has been subjected to recurrent attacks ever since the first decades of this century, when some educators began to object to classics curricula on the grounds that they were irrelevant and took time away from more practical subjects, and when defenders of these programs countered by claiming that learning Latin or Greek grammar promotes rational thinking, intellectual flexibility, or better knowledge of one's own language. I am not going to discuss these claims here. What I will argue is that, given the right kind of instructional program, one informed by current anthropological and sociolinguistic perspectives on discourse, foreign language training can bring about intellectual benefits that go considerably beyond the acquisition of mere task-oriented, instrumental communicative skills. The mere experience of undergoing language training, of having to come to terms with different grammatical and semantic systems may provide learners with at least some of the adaptability or cognitive flexibility they need if they are to be able to deal with the demands that the ever-increasing cultural diversity of the environment in which we all live imposes upon us.

What I have to say comes under the heading of what in the literature on language instruction is commonly referred to as "teaching language in its sociocultural context" or "language and culture." This topic is one that regularly comes up in the increasingly voluminous writings on strengthening our language teaching capacity to meet current national needs that have been appearing in disciplinary journals as well as in general social science publications. Some of the program improvements proposed there, especially those advanced by area specialists who themselves have little or no first-hand experience with classroom instruction,[1] have been criticized because, while they call for more attention to nativelike verbal ability in the foreign language, they take an overly instrumental and technical approach to teaching and fail to take account of the real difficulties that language instruction encounters when faced with our historically given monolingual attitudes and our ambivalence towards the immigrant languages in our midst.[2] I agree with these criticisms. It is difficult to see how foreign language teaching can flourish in an "English only" atmosphere which, while paying lip service to tolerance and social equality, decries the linguistic and cultural heritage of our immigrant past. Language teaching cannot be divorced from intrasocial issues of linguistic diversity. But, assuming we accept this point and decide to incorporate culture into our foreign language

teaching program, what do we teach? The recent literature on language pedagogy is of very little help here.

If we consider the innovations that are proposed by some of the authors in the Lambert volume, we note that, in spite of many shortcomings, discussions of purely linguistic matters such as grammar, lexicon, speech acts, and matters of pedagogical strategies are at least presented with sufficient concrete detail to enable us to get some idea as to what it is that is to be taught. This is far from true for culture. What we find are a series of highly general statements such as the following, cited in Larsen-Freeman's survey of innovations in language teaching. "The culture of the speakers of the language is inextricably woven in the language".[3] "Culture is integrated with the language."[4] "The culture that students learn concerns the everyday life of the people who speak the language."[5] "Culture is the everyday lifestyle of the people who speak the foreign language natively."[6] If culture is "in languages" as the first two quotes suggest, how does it enter into "everyday life-styles"? Is it the content of what we say that reveals culture or the form that is the way in which we say something? How do we distinguish culturally shared from individual characteristics or from panhuman universals? Another contributor to the same volume, Lange, who writes on the language teaching curriculum, cites suggestions to the effect "that the cultural syllabus should contain elements that can be observed, examined and analyzed," and "that there are three or four possible approaches, one is the adoption of classification schemes of cultural information and behavior, another could be developed from those topics said to have particular educational value, from student interests or both."[7] No additional specifics are given. In a paper which explicitly deals with the issue of making language teaching culturally relevant, Lehman, leans heavily on the writings of Eugene A. Nida, whom he quotes as classifying "problems of (cultural) equivalence across languages under five rubrics: (1) ecology, (2) material culture, (3) social culture, (4) religious culture, (5) linguistic culture." Lehman describes variation in "material cul- ture" in lexical terms as differences in such matters as ways of telling time, stock terms for meals, etc. "Social culture," on the other hand, is said to be "so complex that the handbooks may be excused from attempting even an elementary presentation."[8]

The best one can say for such statements is that they treat culture almost exclusively in programmatic terms. To the extent that it is discussed at all, culture becomes identified with descriptive information about such matters as lexical usage, ways of living, geographical environments, beliefs, customs, and an indeterminate range of other matters. No wonder "social culture," which is hard to fit into this approach, comes to be seen as difficult to deal with and difficult to integrate into curriculum planning.

Needless to say, such notions are far from what we find in anthropological writings in which culture has been a key topic of intellectual debate

for the last decades. What the language teaching literature reflects are the views of nineteenth and early twentieth century ethnographers who, in their studies of geographically isolated and technologically simple face-to-face societies, used culture as a loosely defined concept, that is, as a mere cover term to capture what it was that the ethnographer found unusual and thus needed special description about a particular group. Most of what has happened in anthropological research in the post-World War II period can perhaps best be characterized, in Clifford Geertz's words, as an effort to "cut the term down to size," that is, to make culture studiable by empirical, ethnographic means.

One of the most influential moves in this direction was Ward Goodenough's suggestion that definitions of culture be patterned on the linguists' notion of grammar: "what an individual has to know to behave in ways that are characteristic of members of a particular group." Culture here becomes a form of abstract knowledge akin to grammatical ability, knowledge that guides our interpretation of the world around us. The reference is not to what people say they think or believe but to the often unstated and subconsciously internalized premises that guide action and affect our evaluation of what we see and hear. Goodenough's early definition has been criticized as much too narrow, and has been replaced by a series of more broadly defined views, ranging from culture as "socio-economically or ecologically conditioned" to culture as "folk models of behavior" or to culture as "symbolic knowledge," "metaphor," or as situated "discursive practices." There is no time here for detailed discussion. Suffice it to say that, while theories vary in many important ways, there is general agreement, regardless of what anyone's particular view is, that much of what we refer to as culture reflects underlying standards of evaluation or unstated, taken-for-granted premises by which we judge behavior, not what we do, or report about what we think or believe.

I would like to argue that it is this perspective on culture as implicit knowledge we rely on to interact with others in daily life that language teaching programs need to adopt or at least consider if they are to give learners access to the native's world. But before going on to illustrate what I mean, let me add some additional remarks concerning the notion of cultural differences and the distribution of cultural knowledge in human populations. In the pedagogical literature the phrase "cultural differences" commonly refers to distinctions among geographically separate populations whose ways of living and viewing the world have been established and reinforced through years of historically specific experience. I do not need to argue that this is no longer the case. There is abundant evidence around us to show that the urban environments in which we live are by no means culturally uniform. We are all aware that our own formerly relatively homogeneous and largely monolingual European-based societies are well on their way to being transformed into systems resembling the multicultural environments known to us from the anthropological descriptions of Caribbean, Southeast Asian, or African societies. To quote just one set of demographic

projections from California which are beginning to assume more and more importance in local educational planning: by the year 2000 linguistic minorities will outnumber monolingual English speakers among school populations, so that more than fifty per cent of our students will have encountered more than one grammatical and cultural system as part of their home or peer group socialization experience.

What is true of industrialized environments is also true of previously isolated third and fourth world settings. As populations become integrated into national and world market systems and English and other regional languages spread as media of education and official communication, and as the influence and homogenization of radio, television, and other mass media increases, internal cultural diversity becomes a major issue. People adapt to such changes in sociocultural environments by adapting their lifestyles and acquiring new languages or new modes of discourse. Surface symbols of linguistic and cultural distinctness may disappear. But behavior becomes situationally differentiated and significant differences in underlying cultural assumptions may remain and give rise to serious, often undiagnosed, communicative problems.

Learning a foreign language is not merely something we do to travel and interact abroad. We need to know how language and cultural differences work if we are to deal with communicative problems in our own as well as in other societies. How do we isolate underlying differences in cultural assumptions from everyday discourse? My own work on this question focuses directly on indepth conversational analysis of situations of interethnic and intercultural contact. The data collection strategy is akin to that of the linguist who compares grammatical with ungrammatical utterances. But rather than asking participants to assess samples of speech, I take advantage of the fact that inter- cultural communication is often plagued with misunderstandings. By systematic comparisons of such situations with similar encounters where culture is shared, it is possible to derive stable hypotheses about what cultural differences are involved and how they affect the outcome of the encounter. Let me now turn to some concrete illustrations.

The first set of examples comes from a dissertation by Charles Underwood, The Indian Witness: Narrative Style in Courtroom Testimony, University of California, Berkeley (1986).

> Testimony in direct examination of Native American elders not thoroughly familiar with courtroom discourse style in a court case involving land rights.
>
> Q: What I want to know...what is, what is the meaning of the sacred hoop, to the best of your understanding?
> A: The best of my understanding is that my grandfather told me when I was a boy, when I was still very young, back when I was first hearing about these things, my grandfather told me about the meaning of the sacred hoop.[9]

Compare the answer (A) with the attorney's question (Q). The elder begins by repeating part of the attorney's last phrase as if he were about to respond as expected, but then he launches into a seemingly rambling and somewhat repetitive narrative which, when judged in terms of our own middle-class American standards, is clearly not responsive to the attorney's question. If this were an isolated case, one might assume that the witness simply did not understand the question, although his English is quite grammatical. But let us look at the next few examples:

Second witness (similar background).
Q: We have been using the word Sioux and the word Lakota. Will you tell us what you understand them to mean?
A: First of all I've heard from the grandparents that the Sioux word was really not a word the word was more or less given to us by identifying us...the white people. But we are Lakota which is the Sioux nation now known...Lakota nation.

Third witness.
Q: Now what did that treaty mean to the persons who signed it according to your oral history?
A: From what was told to me is that the Lakota nation as what it was known at the time -- we were a nation -- we are a nation and the government had attempted prior before various things. These are -- I think some of those were mentioned already, but as far as the 1968 treaty, it was a treaty between the United States government and our Lakota nation.

Fourth witness.
Q: Will you tell us what the oral history is that you have been given?
A: Well, when I was a child and my mother died and my grandfolks were raising me, and I used to go around with them, I traveled all over with them; and this treaty was signed by the chiefs and the government promised to support the Indians, lay down their arms and there would be peace.

And the government promised the Indians that they will support them, send them to schools, and feed them until the last Indian survived and not even a, and even their animals which they left in their homestead were still alive until the rest of them, until the end of the world would come, that's what they told me.[10]

These are just a few extracts from the lengthy transcript of testimony by Indian witnesses delivered on separate days over a considerable period of time. Note that all passages show considerable similarities, that is, they fall roughly into a general pattern of delivery. Each answer is couched in the form of a narrative which begins with a ref- erence to how the knowledge was acquired and by whom the witness was told, as if the speaker needed to cite authority for each statement. Those parts of the answer that contain material relevant to the question that was

asked are embedded in the narrative, as if responsibility for the answer were not the individual's but the group's. The first witness's initial phrase is interesting in this respect. The speaker begins as if he were about to respond directly but, after repeating the attorney's phrase, he immediately and without lexically marked transition shifts into a narrative which is similar in form to that of the other witnesses.

Now consider some answers by outside experts.

> Professional anthropologist of Native American parentage.
> Q: And in the course of the learning of your oral history and your studies, can you tell us what the tradition -- well putting it in its simplest terms, tell us what is meant by a phrase the Lakota way of life?
> A: This is a life style that has allowed my people to maintain their integrity and their way of living as a distinct culture despite various efforts to change us. Our maintenance as an ongoing cultural group in our own way we see our life style is what we know as the Lakota way of life, and we call it Lakota -- we live this a Lakota people.
>
> American anthropologist.
> Q: Well what do you think the Indians understood it when they said they acknowledged themselves to be under the protection of the United States?
> A: It is my understanding that they simply understood this to be the same kind of kinship metaphor which they used in any kind of interaction between human beings, whereas the government was using it as a cliche in the most offhanded manner and not really meaning anything by it, not implying the moral relationship between a grandparent and grandson that would be implied in the relationship as the Sioux understood it.[11]

The two parties were using terms that happened to translate into English the same way but their understanding of these terms was totally different.

The two answers differ in that the Native American clearly signals his identification with his people while the other anthropologist refers to them as "they." Yet both provide some insights into what the court's "folk model" is, i.e., what the court expects and what the standards are by which it is likely to judge the witness's testimony. One way to characterize the expert testimony is by the old adage, "Say what you're going to say, say it, and say what you said." There is a preamble which acknowledges the question, then an explanation, and then a summary. Moreover, each speaker uses covert lexical devices to distinguish between his own understanding and what has been heard from others. This contrasts with the Native American lay witnesses' way of embedding the entire testimony in narrative and leaving the listener to infer whose opinion, conclusion, statements are being expressed.

To some extent the first expert's explanation to the effect that, for the Native Americans concerned, the words used have different meaning than for the governmental official captures what is involved here. But this is not everything. It does not account for the lay witnesses' seeming unwillingness to say what they themselves think and their tendency to put their answers into others' mouths. Native American culture as reflected here seems to have its own norms as to who can make public statements and how they are to be made. The unstated assumption is that such statements must reflect the authority of the group and must be ratified with reference to that group and cannot be given by any one individual. Narrative forms here serve as a verbal strategy to conform to such norms, a conventional rhetorical means of foregrounding the fact that what is said reflects the tribe's position, not any one person's beliefs or opinion.

Support for the view that Native Americans have culturally specific ways of defining interactive situations comes from independent work by anthropological linguists like Sally McLendon,[12] Tedlock,[13] and others. Scollon and Scollon (1981) in their work on narrative literacy and face in interethnic communication, furthermore, point out that Native Americans, including those who no longer speak their own language well, frequently transfer rhetorical preferences characteristic of their own native languages into their English. What is at issue in this case, therefore, is not that one set of speakers, the Native Americans, talks oddly but that both sets, legal professionals and laymen, rely on their own culturally determined standards for deciding what to say and how to behave in these situations, and that what these standards are can be inferred from systematic differences in their choice of discourse strategies.

The second set of examples comes from a study of the English communication styles of overseas Chinese entitled Unveiling Chinese Inscrutability by Linda Young, to be published in book form by Cambridge University Press in 1989.

> Tape recording of a discussion, part of a management training session in Hong Kong. The chair is Chinese, as are the other discussants. The topic is "What qualities are desirable in a good salesperson?"
>
> Chair: Oscar, anything else to add? Your line of business is, again, quite different from what PK and Tony have. And, in your line of business, I presume market information will be quite important.
> Oscar:...My business is textile, the salesman is...the quality of the salesman, need something different. Because the volume of making a sales is about, at least to over ten thousand U.S. dollars, sometimes. So that is the problem. That is, whenever anybody who makes a decision to buy such...willing to pay such amount, we'll make sure their financial aid is strong and, then, such...sometimes the market may suddenly drop in textile. Maybe we're willing to buy one month

ago, but may not be buying...want to buy...things like that. So, the, so, for a salesman, always have to understand about the financial situation and things like that. Management training: budget meeting.

Chair: I would like to have your opinion on how we should utilize the extra amount of one hundred eighty thousand pounds to improve.
(Beta is the second participant to offer a suggestion.)
Beta: As you know, I have spent five hundred and seventy thousand pounds last year to on the machinery and components. And, ah, if, ah, if Mr., ah, Lincoln would like to increase the, ah, production in ah, through the coming year, I think we have to make our budget ten per cent on top of the amount five hundred and seventy thousand pounds because there will be a ten per cent on uh increase in price on average. And, uh, in other words, I need another sixty thousand pounds to buy the same material to buy the same material and quality. And, as you know, whenever there's a shortage of components on the ( ) amount of time, and, ah, although we have arranged delivery of normal supplies for for for at least six months, but we still need ah an extra money to buy ah the replacement, which cost us five hundred more. So, in other words, I need at least six hundred thousand, sorry, six hundred thousand pounds for an extra uh extra money for the for the new ah budget for for our component.

Tape recording of a discussion following a public talk at UCB. The speaker (C) is Chinese; the audience (A) is American.
A: How does the Nutritional Institute decide what topics to study? How do you decide what topics to do research on?
C: Because, now, period get change. It's different from past time. In past time, we emphasize how to solve practical problems. Nutrition must know how to solve some deficiency diseases. In our country, we have some nutritional diseases, such X, Y, Z. But, now, it is important that we must do some basic research. So, we must take into account fundamental problems. We must concentrate our research to study some fundamental research.

Tape recording of an oral history interview with (C), a Chinese man in his seventies, resident in the U.S. for more than forty years. The interviewer (A) is American.
A: Do you have any opinions about intermarriage or interracial dating and marriage?
C: Ah, well, this is very hard to say. Because to the Chinese, if you want to keep it to the Chinese culture....I am in favor of the Chinese married to the Chinese. But, on the other hand, to the individual, for the one that you love, it doesn't make any difference. Ah, because if you find a Chinese wife, and if she doesn't love each other, well, it's not going to be a happy family. So, the intermarriage will come in, ah, much better. So, it depends on which point.[15]

As with the first set of examples, it is not easy to see at first how the answers and questions are related. Respondents seem to rely on listing

facts which, while loosely related to the question's topic, do not overtly respond to what the questioner wants to know. Note that in each case this listing concludes with the conjunction "so," which is then followed without any additional overtly lexicalized transition by a generalization which more directly responds to the question. This last generalization is what, based on our own conventions, we would expect to see at the beginning of the answer rather than at the end.

Young's dissertation provides detailed evidence to show that verbal strategies like the above directly reflect Chinese norms of rhetoric embodied, for example, in the well known "eight legged essay" and folk sayings such as, "When you paint a dragon, you start with the tail and end with the eye," as well as the Chinese view of how interpersonal relations are to be articulated. She goes on to say, "What matters above all to the Chinese is the ritual playing out of interpersonal relations," that is to say, there seems to be a rhetorical principle to the effect that face-preserving strategies must be put on record. Thus, the emphasis is on providing background information and the seeming failure to come to the point in the above examples can be seen simply as a conventionalized way of conforming to these norms. The strategy is frequently used by native Chinese working in the United States whose English is otherwise excellent. When presented with alternate ways of saying the same thing, informants report that they know what the relevant American English strategy is, but they claim they prefer their own practice, which comes more naturally to them.

The third and last set of examples consists of extracts from counseling sessions recorded in England involving native speakers of South Asian languages communicating with native English-speaking counselors.

> Interview between an Indian English-speaking man (A) and a female native British counselor (B). The recording begins almost immediately after the initial greetings. B has just asked A for permission to record the interview, and A's first utterance is in reply to her request.
>
> 1. A: exactly the same way as you, as you would like = to put on
> 2. B: = Oh no, no
> 3. A: there will be some of = the things you would like to
> 4. B: = yes
> 5. A: write it down
> 6. B: that's right, that's right [laughs]
> 7. A: but, uh...anyway it's up to you
>
> <1 sec>
>
> 8. B: um, [high pitch]...well... = I I Miss C.
> 9. A: = first of all
> 10. B: hasn't said anything to me you see
>
> <2 sec>
>
> 11. A: I am very sorry if = she hasn't spoken anything
> 12. B: = [softly] doesn't matter

13. A: on the telephone at least,
14. B: doesn't matter
15. A: but ah...it was very important uh thing for me
16. B: ye:s. Tell, tell me what it = is you want
17. A: = umm
18. Um, may I first of all request for the introduction please
19. B: Oh yes sorry
20. A: == I am sorry
<1 sec>
21. B: I am E.
22. A: Oh yes = [breathy] I see...oh yes...very nice
23. B: = and I am a teacher here in the Center
24. A: very nice
25. B: == and we run
26. A: == pleased to meet you [laughs]
27. B: == different courses [A laughs] yes, and you are Mr. A?
28. A: N.A.
29. B: N.A. yes, yes, I see [laughs]. Okay, that's the introduction [laughs]
30. A: Would it be enough introduction?[16]

The example has been transcribed in some detail using a transcription system that reveals how speakers use pausing and prosody to chunk their talk into clauses to indicate interclausal coherence and to mark transitions between turns. If we look at the interactional dynamics of the encounter, we see clear signs to the effect that both speakers are relatively ill at ease. There is a great deal of overlap, and speakers frequently interrupt each other. The initial sequences are devoted to B's attempt to secure permission to record. Beginning in turn 9 then, B seeks to open the interview by mentioning that Miss C. (the person who referred A to her) has not told her anything about the case. A's answer "I'm very sorry..." sounds odd to say the least. He insists on continuing to express his disappointment even though B keeps saying it does not matter. When B then asks "tell me what it is you want," A asks for an introduction in a way which, from a native English-speaking perspective, sounds odd for someone who is seeking advice. B then gives her name and A replies with "I see, oh yes, very nice" which is again not the kind of response a native English speaker would give in a counseling situation. There follows a rather tense sequence which ends with A's question, "Would it be enough introduction?" The evidence here shows that, in spite of several attempts, both interactants fail to negotiate a suitable relationship for the conduct of the interview.

Why the Indian English speaker is behaving in a way that native English speakers find odd and inconsistent is hard to explain. Are we dealing with systematic crosscultural differences? The following example suggests that this may indeed be the case and gives some illustration of how South Asian bilinguals may view such situations.

Recorded in an advice center associated with a neighborhood housing association in an industrial city in the English midlands. Speaker A, a South Asian native who has lived in Britain for about ten years, is a householder whose property adjoins the housing association. He is coming to report that the boundary wall which he shares with the association has been blown down in a storm and to find out if the association is willing to share the cost of the reconstruction. Speaker B is an employee of the advice center whose family is of North Indian origin but who is a native speaker of English.

1. A: (name) Arundel Street
2. B: 39 Arundel Street
3. A: == yes/ I got walls, tumble down/...Friday...eh, Saturday night yeah/
4. B: the walls tumble down, you mean they fell down/
5. A: fell down yeah/...fell down/ but could you tell me which/...that's my wall, ya somebody else wall/
6. B: hm well is your wall here?
7. A: both sides/...and the front of that/
8. B: here here and here/
9. A: hm yes/
10. B: aha um there would be,
...it would be a party wall between you and your next door neighbor here/ this guy here and this guy here/
11. A: yes but see next door/...I think is your house/...Calmore center's/
12. B: Calmore center/
13. A: yes,...forty-one/...and thirty-nine mine/
14. B: hm
15. A: but that up there, Lisit...Lisit's garden/
this...Cambridge street here/ and eh I want to know...
16. B: you want to know who's responsible to put them back up/
17. A: up for this front one/
18. B: I see/...so if you want that/
...so if you want that,...un that wall to be put up/
19. A: only here/
20. B: this one here/
21. A: un up there yes/
22. B: you want to know if you are the only one who is liable to pay for it/
23. A: pay for it/ that's what I want to know//[17]

Speaker A begins with a brief narrative account of what happened on the night of the storm. B counters by repeating A's statement and asking for clarification. A answers and then goes on with a question of fact about the owner of the wall. There follows an exchange in which B seeks to find out where the wall is located. The exchange continues

until B takes the initiative and poses the question which is the one that A had come to the center to ask in the first place. As in the previous example, the client's verbal behavior seems at first quite odd. Without stating his problem, he begins with factual matter the relevance of which is hard to see. He then asks a question about the ownership of a wall -- something that he as a local property owner should certainly know. Whereas the first counselor had refused to respond to her client's odd answers and countered with new questions of her own, the second counselor by repeating the client's words seems to accept the answers and then proceeds to make his own inference as to what the relevant issue is. Note moreover that while the first interaction is marred by interruptions and a great deal of excessively long conversational overlap, the second proceeds quite smoothly and the two participants clearly understand each other. This type of exchange is typical of a number of counseling exchanges involving speakers of South Asian languages I have studied. These exchanges are marked by strict role separation between client and counselor. It is the client who presents facts and the counselor who defines the problem at hand. In our American tradition, this is done in medical diagnosis, but in counseling, clients are expected to present their own problems and the counselors are discouraged from making indirect inferences lest they be accused of putting words into the client's mouth.

Let me point out that these are not isolated anecdotes. The transcripts come from a large body of case study analyses collected through long-term ethnographic fieldwork in the Goffmanian tradition, where participant observation is employed to discover key interactive situations that demonstrably play an important role in the populations' daily life. What occurs in such situations and how interactants deal with them thus has clear cultural relevance.

The significance of such analyses for second language instruction becomes apparent if we consider that the language is English and look at individual participants as learners in different stages of language acquisition. The bilinguals have good working control of English grammar but they rely on rhetorical conventions characteristic of their own native languages and distinct from those used by native English speakers in similar settings. Such rhetorical conventions constitute systems of structural principles which, on the one hand, closely reflect basic cultural norms while at the same time governing everyday language use and discourse interpretation. By learning what these conventions are and how they differ, learners not only improve their ability to communicate but also acquire something of an implicit understanding of how the culture works.

We can understand what kind of learning is involved here if, instead of looking at communication from the perspective of individuals conveying information or producing grammatical or situationally appropriate utterances, we adopt a dialogic perspective of speakers cooperating in the production of conversational exchanges, by means of strategies similar

to those of musicians playing ensemble or ball players moving the ball across the field. Participants in such team endeavors must of course know the basic rules before they can take part. But once the play begins, any one individual's moves are made in concert with or in relation to other players' moves. This requires timing and strategic planning in the sense of predicting what is to come. Conversing, when seen in this perspective, is not simply a matter of putting one's ideas into words, what is communicated or accomplished in any one encounter is significantly affected by how others interpret one's words and by what can be achieved under the prevailing circumstances.

There is one important respect in which the conversationalists' task differs from the game players'. In a game we can assume that the basic rules are known to all and that role allocation is agreed on beforehand. In conversation this is the case only for the most formal situations. Elsewhere rules and expectations are negotiated as part of the interaction. To be sure, we do not enter into an encounter with- out at least some knowledge of what to expect. The schemata we have learned through previous socialization prepare us for what is to come. But such expectations are always subject to change through negotiation. Negotiation processes are in turn cued by means of verbal, prosodic, and nonverbal signs or contextualization cues which function as part of the rhetorical system.[18] The "so" examples are examples of such cues. Note that their use to indicate that the main point is about to come is a peculiarity of Chinese-English strategies. When knowledge of contextualization cues is not shared, communication become difficult and encounters are often unsuccessful.[19] This is the case in the next-to-last example. A closer analysis of the two participants' use of pausing and stress shows they interpret individual cues quite differently. Consequently smooth turn-taking is impaired and misunderstanding, as a result of different culturally-based presuppositions, is aggravated.

Because of their highly context-sensitive character, rhetorical strategies must, for the most part, be acquired through interpersonal contact. It is only through conversation that the relevant strategies are learned. They cannot be taught through formal instruction. Perhaps this is the reason why language learners vary so greatly in the extent to which they manage to acquire a nativelike proficiency in discursive practices. The bilinguals in our examples are typical of large classes of language learners who, although they have an instrumental control of the second language, for a variety of reasons never acquire the ability to enter into intensive close contact with natives.

I believe it is possible to give even beginning students some sense of rhetorical strategies with instructional materials that are properly selected to reflect events typical of experiences that learners and those who must interact with them encounter. Through discussion and through systematic analysis of one's own interaction in culturally diverse situations, one can become aware of differences in rhetorical strategies. In the most general terms, what this analysis involves is learning to

separate discourse level form from discourse level content, somewhat in the way that I have tried to do it in my examples. There is some evidence, however, to suggest that by having been exposed to language learning experiences a person gains a better sense of how to go about doing this and thus to learn from interactive experience. It is in this sense that language instruction may prepare us for meeting the cognitive demands of multicultural environments.

NOTES

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LITERATURE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING APPROACH

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Like many distinctions that shape our daily lives, the distinction between teaching language and teaching literature is, from the vantage point of pedagogical theory, quite artificial. More precisely, it is a distinction of degree often raised by administrative exigencies to a distinction of kind. These administrative exigencies, such as the seemingly unbreachable gap between the lower (language) and the upper (literature) division courses offered by a given foreign language department, prevent us from realizing how much teaching of foreign language and of literature in English have in common.

In real life, that is to say, in our academic life, the awareness of the dichotomy between "language" and "literature" teaching usually comes in the moment of a crisis resulting, for instance, from various sallies of practitioners of lower division into the areas "reserved" for upper division. Thus, for example, the third quarter program in French can offer as reading material an "easy" poem of Apollinaire, if there is such a thing, or a specially edited story of Marcel Aymé. Such sallies are usually tolerated as sound pedagogical devices, but in departments where the distinction between the lower and upper division is more jealously protected by proprietary rights, they must be carefully explained as being of purely linguistic character, the usual phrase being that "we study Apollinaire or Aymé for language only."

I do not intend to speak here about the various difficulties in integrating "language" and "literature" materials in foreign language programs. These difficulties do not stem from any theoretical problems. Except for exclusively oral/aural approaches (and, to the far lesser extent for the "civilization courses," where the texts read are "literary" but not belletristic), the integration is, generally speaking, feasible. The problems concern the all-important questions of when and how. Let me simply state here my own preference in order to help understand the ideas which contribute to the organization of our humanities sequence, the chief subject of this paper. I am a maximalist: I favor the introduction of literary texts as soon as possible and as lavishly as possible. My position is based on the premise that foreign language teaching is an integral part of the humanities, and that the chief aim in the teaching of a foreign language is to impart the speaking, understanding, reading, and writing skills of the educated native of that language. I do not wish to denigrate the already mentioned exclusively "oral/aural" approaches with their strictly "practical," that is, limited aims, or nonacademic

language programs which try to give a smattering of a language for practical purposes of tourism or business. I do not consider them the subject of our seminar, precisely because they are too limited.[1]

The main purpose of this paper is to explore some specific aspects of pedagogy which are really common to language and literature teaching. I wish to do it not as an exercise in pedagogical theory, but rather as a discussion of actual practice, that is to say, of pedagogical experiences of college courses, which, administratively speaking, lie outside the foreign language programs. This, I believe, is crucial. Now, when many colleges and universities begin to plan common humanities core courses, it is important that the foreign language faculty participates in planning and implementing of these courses. The second aim of this paper is to reopen the discussion of the theory and practice of explication de texte. The latter is important, first of all, because the practice of explication resembles very much the practice of language instruction, secondly, because it is primarily deductive, while practically all the domains of the humanities find themselves at present in a predicament caused by a massive injection of various ideological approaches, largely inductive. As such they are basically inimical to a common agreement as to what should be taught in the humanities core courses and how it should be done?

Bearing these larger issues in mind, I wish to discuss with you certain approaches and techniques which we use in an introductory, first-year college course in the humanities. As I promised, I shall try to be concrete and factual in description of the actual three-quarter sequence of this particular humanities core course currently taught in the University of Chicago.

Some ten years ago, a group of faculty chiefly from the departments of Romance and Germanic Languages and Literatures were asked to offer a new humanities core sequence based on a rather ill-defined idea of teaching "works in translation." This choice was, I believe, quasi-automatic. When confronted with what we think is hostility, i.e. the muted accusation of "irrelevance," we in the foreign languages tend to fall back on the literature in translation approach, in which we avoid addressing ourselves to the specific problems of translation, but rather consider Madame Bovary as part of "world literature." Only later did we find what every freshman has always known: that "world literature" is English literature.[2] Our new sequence was added to other humanities core sequences such as "Greek Thought," "Human Being and Citizen," "Philosophical Perspective in the Humanities," etc. It is perhaps interesting to observe that our sequence was and is the only one which has the term "Literature" in it.

The choice of translation as the binding principle for five sections soon proved itself to be unfortunate. From the very beginning, we realized that any meaningful discussion of translation requires a considerable degree of bilingualism on the part not only of the teacher, which was not

a problem, but of the student, which certainly was. Since we did not have a good theoretical underpinning, our sequence, "Readings in European Literature," quickly became de facto four different sequences. The fact that we could agree neither on a common approach nor on common readings did not necessarily stem from any fundamental perversity of the academic mind (the existence of which I would be last to deny), but rather from lack of agreement on a theoretical basis for the desired aims and therefore practical means of the sequence. Here, I believe, lies the first important lesson which can be drawn from the application of language teaching techniques to the introductory courses in literature. Just as an individual course should make theoretical sense to students, so not only should the multi-sectional sequence of courses make sense, but there should be an agreement on this sense between the sections composing the sequence. Precisely because this agreement is relatively easy to achieve in language teaching, the language courses could be used as models for achieving agreement as to the aims and means of humanities courses.[3]

When "Readings in European Literature" finally became a common sequence in name only, and, it must be said, became quite demoralized, we decided to reorganize it. Our perestroika was to be based on two principles, different in nature but convergent in practical application: (1) the sequence should have an easily perceivable philosophy, i.e., a simple theoretical basis, grosso modo acceptable in all the sections; (2) the sequence, like its predecessor, should profit from the expertise of language teachers, for the very existence of the sequence has always been predicated upon the desire and desirability of involving if not exclusively, at least preponderantly the members of foreign language departments in the teaching of the core.

The reformed sequence, "Readings in Literature," (note the dropping of "European" from the title) is, like the original, a three-quarter sequence. It has been in existence for five years. It has five sections involving some one hundred twenty students. The majority of instructors are drawn from foreign language departments, but we also occasionally have lecturers who happen to be ABD's, that is, graduate students who are writing their dissertations in the department of English. The fact that we have not had any ABD's from foreign language departments does not stem from any theoretical impediment to such employment, but rather from purely practical considerations: these ABD's are needed for the teaching of the introductory language courses. Since the sequence is organized in such a way as to allow the use of an instructor either for the whole sequence or for one or two quarters, we draw also on the academic talents of fully qualified PhD's whose chief university involvement lies in administration. In order to integrate successfully such persons into the sequence, the relatively simple theoretical underpinning of it is again de rigueur.

The important feature of our sequence is the presence among us of advanced graduate students, who, like the instructor, participate in all

the class work, discuss the grades with the instructor, participate in class discussion, and occasionally teach the class in the presence of the instructor. They are called "teaching interns," and, I believe, the name reflects quite correctly their role in the sequence.

Teaching internship is a rational way to offer first teaching experience to good ABD's. In our sequences of the core they certainly play an important role. Their presence helps us to convince some of our old and distinguished colleagues to join a given sequence as instructors. For an old and highly specialized professor, the interns can be a go-between, a dragoman, in a freshman class. They help in the most important but, alas, most difficult task of correcting papers. It goes without saying that it is far easier to read a freshman paper which has been already corrected by a good intern than to read it alone. The instructor reads not only the paper but the corrections made by the intern. Both the instructor and the intern discuss each paper and assign the grade. (The grade, however, is, legally speaking, the sole responsibility of the instructor.) Since the interns are relatively young, they very often have an easier rapport with the very young freshmen. In this capacity they often serve as "interpreters" between the often heavily specialized instructors and eager but certainly not "specialized" freshmen. Everybody needs a dragoman. And, after all, training more or less proficient dragomen is, in the broadest sense of the word, the main calling of foreign language departments.

In "Readings in Literature," teaching interns play an additional but equally important role. Since instructors in this sequence are by design drawn from the foreign language area, some of them are not native speakers of English. We know that the foreign-born often speak with an unpleasant accent and that in speaking they commit various solecisms. But because we are teachers of foreign languages, and because we have discussed the problems of native and nonnative speakers at this seminar, we know the difference between linguistic competence and linguistic performance. Saint Paul's Aramaic accent and his Hebraicisms in Greek doubtless impeded his influence among the Greeks, perhaps as much as his views on the resurrection, but, since we know that he certainly was an effective teacher, we must believe that he was capable of recognizing errors of Greek syntax and diction not only in speech, but above all, in the writing of others. Similarly most of us foreign-born teachers of foreign languages recognize very easily incorrect English.[4] But the presence of a teaching intern, who is a native speaker of English, facilitates not so much the actual correction of this or that English infelicity of language or style, but the communication to and the acceptance of these corrections by the often otherwise argumentative student. In a sense, the teaching intern plays a role in our sequence similar to that of a native informant in well-constructed courses in difficult and rare languages, in which the linguistically trained instructor explicates the language structure, while the native informant offers the authentic samples of the language, justifying, so to speak, the correctness of the analysis. High degrees of collaboration between the

instructor and the native informant must be achieved. The same applies, of course to the collaboration between the instructor and the teaching intern.

So much for the obvious aspects of the organization of the sequence. More important are, of course, its desired theoretical bases. What gives our sequence its basic "foreign language" approach is the method of explication de texte applied with some necessary modifications to the texts which form a common teaching agreement.

What is explication de texte? I use the French name for it, not because I am a teacher of French and, I believe, a loyal explicator of the language and culture of France, but rather because the explication in its methodical and, so to speak, pristine French form has not really been successfully transplanted to other cultures. The closest term for it in English is probably "close reading." But even if the explication de texte (known at its inception some hundred years ago as explication française) has not really been implemented lock, stock, and barrel outside the French educational system,[5] it has exercised a profound influence not only on the teaching of literature but on the practice of literary criticism. Before going any further, let me stress that I speak here about explication de texte in the broadest sense. I do not wish to discuss this approach as a specific feature of academic curriculum widely applied to teaching of French literature. Neither do I want to assess it as a basic French critical method. The nature and evolution of this French method used in the academic world of France and French departments throughout the English-speaking world have been critically analyzed by William D. Howarth and C. L. Walton in the introduction to their book of explications.[6] Merely for the sake of local patriotism, let me mention that, as we shall see, the University of Chicago played an important role in the development and diffusion of explication in this country.

The explication is basically a theoretical and practical reaffirmation of the primacy of a specific text, over any more or less a priori conceived literary history or literary esthetics. It is a fundamentally deductive method applied to literary texts. The very influential historian of French literature, Gustave Lanson, who, probably more than any other scholar, had been responsible for introducing this teaching method into the official curricula of literary studies of French lycées and universities, after many years of both propagandizing and using this method, asked again the question "Quel est donc le but de l'explication de textes?" His answer was: "C'est bien simple. Par explication un professeur de lycée ou d'université se propose d'apprendre à lire à ses élèves. L'instituteur apprend à lire l'alphabet, et le professeur de lycée ou d'université apprend à lire la littérature"[7] (author's emphasis). The only "simplicity" in this prescription lies in the philosophical clarity with which it is stated. We know that there is nothing simple in the application of any such desiderata. (Note also in passing the "intellectual" justification of

the dichotomy of "lower" and "upper" divisions in the French educational system.)

By "teaching to read," Lanson meant something absolutely opposite to both the doctrinaire, systematic ideological interpretation and the subjective reading into the texts things which exist only in the reader's heart. The ideal definition of the desired aims of explication was restated by Lanson as follows: "L'exercice de l'explication a pour but, et, lorsqu'il est bien pratiqué, pour effet, de créer chez les étudiants une habitude de lire attentivement et d'interpréter fidèlement les textes littéraires. Il tend à les rendre capables de trouver dans une page ou une oeuvre d'un écrivain _ce qui y est, tout ce qui y est, rien que ce qui y est_" (author's emphasis).8 In other words, the explicator must understand what the text says and how it says it, and then he must voice clearly and coherently his understanding. Again, there is nothing really simple or simplistic about the recipe of _le texte, tout le texte et rien que le texte_, (as Lanson's slogan has been usually rendered). Or rather it is simple, but only if we can see it analytically (in abstraction) and not experimentally (in practice). All the difficulties of pedagogy lie in this distinction.

I think that it would be good at this juncture to consider, paradoxically, the early history of _explication de texte_. I say paradoxically, because in spite of the fact that the spirit and method of explication came to be conceived as antihistorical, it has its own history, and our understanding of it would certainly help us to grasp the very nature of this pedagogical tool.

For it should be remembered that the explication was invented not as a "breakthrough" approach in theory (or in the Theory, as we call it now) but foremost as a teaching device. It was invented, or more correctly, reinvented[9] in the first decade of the French Third Republic. There is no difficulty in realizing why it happened that a first formal _Traité d'explication française, ou Méthode pour expliquer littéralement les auteurs français_ was published in 1880[10] and that it was followed by a series of short explanations and illustration of the method[11] as well as by monographs offering either introductory (pedagogical) or illustrative materials or both.[12] The obvious historical reasons are not difficult to find. The Third Republic with its republican minority (fighting the royalists, Catholics, and Bonapartists, as well as its own radical factions) simply did not possess a coherent and, above all, universally agreed upon doctrine of literary history, when it was decided, in about 1875, to put literary history into the programs of lycées. But no one could impose the sort of official version of history of literature which apparently existed under Napoléon III. The inability to accept an official _Cours de l'histoire littéraire_ is plainly visible in the discussion I cited in my notes.[13] The official favoring of _explication_ was thus a practical way of avoiding difficult political and ideological struggle.[14] But, and this is particularly important for our subject today, the propagators of

explication were in no sense antihistorical. All of them were in fact capable literary historians. Some, such as Gustave Lanson and Ferdinand Brunetière, seem to us now as quintessential historians of literature. The simple explication of the history of explication is this: from its very inception it was considered as nothing else but a pedagogical tool, as a way of introducing the student to the power and beauty of literature. It was not thought of as a method of studying literature per se.

But it is important to notice that in the United States in general and in the University of Chicago in particular, the method of explication did become a basis for the practice of the Chicago School and its New Critics with their concomitant strong antihistorical bias. I believe that there is ample proof that such Franco-American cultural developments often follow a certain pattern. A French idea, conceived in the climate of disputations, or one of those highly formalized querelles (or in the case of explication also an administrative compromise), arriving on our shores loses its sociohistorical formative aspects and is transformed into a full-fledged "Theory."[15]

The important date for this development is 1927. My predecessor Robert Vigneron, an enthusiast of the French educational system, published at that time an explicatory and programmatic article "Explication de Textes and Its Adaptation to the Teaching of Modern Languages."[16] Vigneron summed up in it all the findings and prescriptions made by all the French since the 1880's, but he followed most closely Gustave Lanson. It is important to note that Vigneron, again, insisted on the purely pedagogical role of his method, but he was obviously aware by then that explication had become something more than teaching, or more precisely more than the preparing of students of literature for oral and written examinations. He must have been aware that la méthode was becoming a theory.[17]

What does all this have to do with the application of foreign languages to the teaching of freshman literature courses? Very much. Taken as a guiding principle rather than as a minute prescription (if not proscription!) elaborated not only by wise Lansons and Brunetières but also by many of those diabolically systematic French pedagogues, it is still an important pedagogical tool for us, and let me add again that I am thinking here about its application outside the academic study of French literature in France and abroad. It is important if we understand that "le texte, tout le texte et rien que le texte" has to be understood as a maximum desideratum, as a slogan, as a battle cry, and not as a practical guide. It is most important right now when we find ourselves, like the French corps d'enseignement of the Third Republic, in the bewildering array of divergent approaches to literature, most of them masquerading as avant-garde and therefore unassailable, many of them idiosyncratic, many of them wearing a constantly changing mantle of Theory. Close and careful reading of literary texts can give us agreement in teaching far more easily than choosing this or that fashionable trend as a basis for this agreement. A practitioner of close

reading in humanities core courses can hardly be dismissed as a "reactionary," or even, in 1988, as an antihistoricist. Close reading is not trendy, for the decades of French debate give us necessary theoretical (not to mention practical) bases for its implementation. Unlike so many other trends and -isms, it probably will not become *post-explication*.

What does *explication* have in common with teaching of foreign language? Again, I believe, very much. The basic assumption in the *explication de texte* is that its practitioner looks at the passage in front of him as if it were in fact a text in a foreign language. Nothing is assumed as really known. One must not only suppress (temporarily at least) the immediate reaction (*ach, wie schön*!), but, above all, one must pay attention to the details of the text, as if it were a foreign text. This close attention in the learning of a foreign language comes, so to speak, "naturally." The beginner in German has a natural barrier between him and the German phrase just cited. He might not yet understand "instinctively" many shades of the interjection *ach*, the meaning of *wie*, and the function of the zero-ending adjective *schön*. Confronted with an English phrase or passage, he must control his native command of the language. Nothing must be grasped simply and instinctively, or rather, the instinctive grasp (native intuition) must be intellectualized and expressed in a impersonal, objective, analytic language. Very soon a student realizes that not only Shakespeare but 19th-century poem has in fact (a) special meaning(s) different from his own immediately grasped and recognized perception. He will find very soon that it is not a disgrace but a legitimate language learning process to consult the dictionary, not only to find the meaning of an obscure word but also to ascertain different shades of meaning of a familiar term. The student will realize very soon that a modern, well-written essay contains not only words and phrases, an inner organization of a paragraph and, so to speak, an "outer" organization of several paragraphs quite unlike his own everyday native speech. Most of all, he will find out that there is a psychological parallel between learning how to say simple things in, for example, Russian: *Bol'šhoe spasibo, ia očhen' spokoiny*, and learning how to verbalize in one's own language the reactions, views, and impressions of a close reading in a way that does not resemble a private and self-indulgent reverie on the text. If anything, he will find that it is easier to begin to learn Russian than to start to reflect upon his reactions and to make them both explicit and objective. He knows that the Russian language is not "his own," that he has no right, even if he "feels like it," to stress other than the second syllable in the first two words, to add a -j to the end of the adjective, or to interpret it to mean anything else than "peaceful," "serene," "untroubled." Likewise, an explicator of an English text must learn that the passage studied, loved or hated, is really not his own. It belongs to all of us. It is a possession of the English cul- ture ("English" in its linguistic meaning). The invitation to learning is an invitation to partake of it individually.

This does not mean that the method of close reading ignores specific, subjective, or even idiosyncratic readings. We know very well that the phrase Arbeit macht frei means different things to a former prisoner of a concentration camp than to a historically uninformed reader of German. But here we must make a working and democratic assumption (in my more private language, "an act of faith") that a truly good writer writes for the whole culture, that true art transcends the individual, and therefore a well-conducted study of literature should reveal, paradoxically, both private and personal reactions as well as a more objective (i.e., more "cultural") consensus of the sense of a given passage. Close reading, like its French parent explication, does not intend to eradicate the individual, private, or even idiosyncratic reading; it wishes to: (1) identify such readings as private, or idiosyncratic; (2) to examine critically and to strengthen the idea of consensus.

Time does not allow us to develop even superficially the problems inherent in the method of close reading and objectivized reporting of this reading. Suffice it to say that it is not an end in itself, but it leads to further study of literary texts. Let us return to our humanities core course. We introduce close reading most overtly in the autumn quarter, when we read and discuss short, or relatively short pieces: poems, essays, short stories, and one-act plays. And of course we write short essays which ideally should reflect the explication approach followed. Here, of course, we are far from the France of 1902. We do not wish to cry "the text, all the text, and nothing but the text!" What we say, and this depends on our own abilities and training, is, "the text and above all, the text."

We do, of course, encounter difficulties in this overtly textual autumn quarter. First of all, there are some students who have been encouraged to study literature as "appreciation," to experience "feelings" and vent them in a highly individual manner. Often such students tell us that they like "Dover Beach," but they do not like to "dissect" the poem. Here, it must be pointed out with patience, humor, and tact (because there is a genuine feeling involved) that they should not be afraid of analysis, that a Shakespearean sonnet is never really found wanting even by the most determined of French explicators, but that Joyce Kilmer's "Trees" (with its "nest of robins in her hair," and its mouth sucking the earth while looking up the sky) does become visibly shoddy if not after the first, at least after the second close reading, and this despite the fact that "Trees" has been "one of the most widely known poems of the twentieth century."[18] Furthermore, such students should be forcefully, but tactfully, reminded that by talking about dissecting a poem, they do use the fundamental rhetorical device of metaphor. In a close reading analysis, dissection means cutting something inanimate or dead, and thus they liken, willy-nilly the poem to a cadaver. And no passage of good literature is a cadaver to be cut, but a work of verbal art to be understood, appreciated, and, if ever possible, loved, that is to say made one's own.

More difficult are the objections of students, who find ten weeks of reading and analyzing discrete short literary pieces a little "boring," or worse, "lacking cohesion." I think that such objections are to be expected. They should be answered by a simple <u>défense et illustration</u> of the close reading methods and objectives. One should stress over and over again the pedagogical aspect of close reading. This method, like any worthwhile thing -- a foreign language, for example -- is not easily assimilable. The instructor should point out that if it takes at least a week to learn how to use a word-processor, it is worth one's while to take ten weeks to learn how to read better a good literary text.

In the winter quarter, without abandoning the <u>explication</u> mode, our sequence goes on to studying longer texts, that is, novels and plays. The main thrust of the second quarter is textual, but in a somewhat broader sense. We try to point out to the students that many secrets of literary art (therefore many secrets of effective writing) are revealed not only in a detailed analysis of relatively short passages, but also in the way the literary work is put together and organized. The important thing is to demonstrate that the elements of narration, (structure, chronology, point of view, etc.) of the whole work contribute to the way this work communicates its message to us, to the way we react to the work. As is easily seen in the teaching of a foreign language, form is also content.

Some warning should be sounded here. We must avoid, to begin with, being overtly theoretical in our approach. The good rule to follow is to avoid not only jargon (ephemeric, pseudo-technical vocabulary) but also such perfectly good general terms as "structure." In a humanities core course it can easily become a label which covers up a complex reality. In fact the various structural and narratological problems should be pointed out and explained <u>in situ</u>, but, aside from purely generic consideration, we should avoid generalizing and theorizing about structure and form. Again, text is the thing!

The intellectual connections between the fall and winter quarters lie thus in the very method of <u>explication</u>. After all, a very important part of this exercise of literary analysis lies in "situating the passage" in its broader context. Ideally speaking, in the second and third quarters the instructor should be explaining this placement of passages we examined in given texts in its broader context.

If in the winter quarter this context is the whole play or novel (with its concomitant and historically determined exigencies of the genre), the spring quarter finally does what an inexperienced student would like to do in the first place: to study it for its "content." For us who accept the textocentric method of <u>explication</u>, this "content" can be defined as situating the text either in the largest possible referential field of easily recognizable human experience, or (if you suffer from agoraphobia) in the intertextual considerations of a common <u>theme</u>. For the last few years, the theme chosen has been the hero. We start with the medieval

German Parzival, in which a close reading of many passages reveals to us that the idea of a hero both born to heroism and receiving the status of hero through a series of testing adventures was certainly taken for granted not only by the author, and the conventions of the genre in which he wrote, but also in all probability by the reader. This belief, this literary and probably also preliterary myth,[19] is examined by reading more recent works which exploit the theme of the hero: Hamlet, with its protagonist incapable of living up to the expected role of a tribal superman; Candide, in which Voltaire uses the partly heroic, partly anti-heroic conventions of the novel of adventure to propagandize his own social and philosophical ideas; and finally The Stranger, which explores Albert Camus's presentation of a totally unheroic, modern hero.

In the second and third quarter of the sequence, we thus attempt to "situate" (in the broadest sense of the term) the texts that we discuss. We do not start with the psychology of Hamlet, with the anti-Leibnizian philosophy of Voltaire, or the existentialism of Camus. We discuss the heroism of those heros, and we try to be deductive, for this is the sine qua non of the explication de texte. We try to keep as close as possible to the text. What we say about the organization of the classical comedy of Molière comes from the passages of Tartuffe examined in class. What we say about the modern anti-hero comes from the commentary on the specific "purple patches" taken from The Stranger.

Most important, we try to impart this habit to our students. We insist that they be textocentric in the class discussion, and that they be so in their essays (in the whole sequence they write twelve four-page papers). Over and over again, we insist that the proof is in the text, and that this proof must be found in a well-chosen and clearly explicated passage or passages.

At the closing of my remarks, it would be quite legitimate to ask ourselves about the pedagogical success of the sequence. I think that it is good to approach the question of pedagogical success from our point of view, from our experience as foreign language teachers. Since achievements in foreign language learning are easily verifiable, we tend to be more realistic about the results of our pedagogical accomplishments than our colleagues in other fields. Most of us do not promise our students that they will easily become "educated and literate native speakers." I know that some of them in fact reach this elevated goal, but many of them do not. Testing of achievements is, of course, more difficult in a core sequence of humanities than in second-year French. My appraisal of these achievements must remain, therefore, somewhat impressionistic. The ultimate aim of the course -- reading and understanding literary works as well as being capable of translating this understanding into clear and objectiv(ized), critical language -- is reached probably by no higher percentage of students, than is reached by fully successful students in a foreign language program. A rather rough idea of students' achievements is given to us by their class participation and, above all, by their papers. I know, therefore, that even those numerous stu-

dents who did not reach the ultimate goal, do write better about serious texts at the end of the sequence than they did before. This is perhaps the most that we can say without falling into the role of educational hucksters.

In teaching basic courses either in languages or in the humanities core, there is a danger in expecting, and, above all, in promising too much. We should be mindful of G. K. Chesterton's famous advice that "if the thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly."[20] Close reading of this statement reveals that it is not merely witty, paradoxical, or flippant. Following the good advice of the _explication_ method and placing it in its proper context, we realize that Chesterton was speaking here about teaching, more precisely about education of women. His flash of wit stresses above all the fact that education (for us, education in foreign languages and in general humanities) is "worth doing." And "doing badly," that is to say, having only a limited success in it, means simply "practicing it." All of us know that in foreign languages and in _explication de texte_ "practice makes perfect," but the very fact that we are still practicing means that we are still imperfect.

NOTES

1 I might even add that purely "practical" approaches seem to me often really not very practical at all. At least my personal experience, however, both as a prison camp interpreter or peacetime tourist, lead me to believe that the best linguistic-cultural go-between, the best dragomen, are not graduates of any strictly "practical," "crash" courses in interpretation, but rather broadly trained humanists.

2 Occasionally, we should not be afraid to state an unpleasant truth: the interests of English and foreign language departments do not always coincide. It would be imprudent, for example, to count on the support of an English department in establishing a common core course in humanities not administered by that department. There is no reason to delve into this matter here. Suffice it to remind ourselves that during the last campaign to retain foreign language requirements, generally speaking, we did not receive much help from English departments. What is distressing is the polite silence on the subject within our common Modern Language Association.

3 It must be added here that the lack of such an agreement causes serious practical problems not only for the teachers but also, more importantly, for the students. It is difficult for any teacher (except a guru, not an ideal mentor for a basic humanities sequence) to impart the general sense of the course if this sense is not shared, so to speak, from Section 1 to Section 5.

4 The only exception that I know are those now rare native language teachers who do not wish to do so. They pretend that they do not wish to learn English lest they lose the purity of their native language. I used to know such French teachers in my youth. Except for that minority of students who really think that they can "become French," such teachers are really not very effective, outside the strict oral-aural drills. After a while a less francophile student is bound to ask the question: "How can I learn French in California, if M. X. has not learned English after twenty-seven years in the same California?" We all know about special issues and problems in some Spanish departments. Their mission within our institutions should be clearly defined.

5 The closest adaptation of the method outside the French-speaking countries took place in the Spanish world. See, e.g., two pedagogically slanted manuals: Eduardo A. Dughera, Eugenio Castelli, Una Explicación de textos. Teoría y pr ctica (Buenos Aires: Huemul 1964; 2nd ed. 1968) and E. Correa Calderón, Fernando L zaro, Come se comenta un texto literario (Salamanca, Anaya, 1966). The periodical Explicación de Textos Literarios, published since 1972 by the Department of Spanish and Portuguese of California State University at Sacramento, practices, of

course, literary criticism based largely but not exclusively on the close reading principle. A minimum but essential residue, so to speak, of the method is the insistence that the title of the periodical expresses the necessity of "substantiating ideas by the specific citations taken from the literary works discussed"; see the "Declaración de principios" on the inside cover of each issue.

6 Explications. The technique of French Literary Appreciation (Oxford: University Press, 1971). Introduction (pp. ix-xlvii) is probably the best critical survey in English of the evolution of this method.

7 "Quelques mots sur l'explication de textes: esprit-objet-méthode," Méthodes de l'Histoire littéraire (Paris Les Belles Lettres, 1925), 39. (This pamphlet, pp. 39-58, was republished by the Société de Professeurs Français en Amérique. The first version of this article was published in the Bulletin de la Maison française de Columbia University, II, 1919. It was a reply to questions concerning the value of explication made by American professors.) A close reading of this text reveals a certain defensive tone in it. This is not Lanson's first formal statement concerning the method. Already in 1892 and 1893 he had published two formal "Explications françaises" in the official Manuel général de l'instruction primaire.

8 His statement is worth quoting now, for large areas of literary criticism have surrendered again to something which seems to partake of both self-indulgent subjectivity and systematizing ideology: "J'en [literary critics] connais - et d'illustres - qui n'ont jamais fait autre chose que chercher dans les auteurs des passages conformes à leurs jugements préconçus, et qui pouvaient leur servir à construire l'édifice sévère de leur doctrine. D'autres appellent «lecture» leur habitude de rêver sur les pages d'un livre, où ils s'imaginent parfois avoir trouvé, comme Diderot, ce qui n'a jamais été que le jeu de leur fantaisie ou l'émotion de leur coeur. Ils lisent en eux-mêmes, alors qu'ils croient lire l'auteur qu'ils ont sous les yeux" (p. 40).

9 Similar methods are as old as the study of literature. More precisely, it parallels in many ways medieval and post-medieval exegesis of sacred and classical texts; see Howarth and Walton (above, n. 6), pp. xii-xiii.

10 Auguste Gazier, (Paris: Belin, 1880; (8th ed. 1908).

11 Such as an influential 23-page pamphlet by Gustave Allais, Esquisse d'une méthode de préparation et d'explication des auteurs français (licence littéraire et agrégation de lettres) (Paris: Delalain, 1884); and above all the articles which propagandized and exemplified the method appearing in the official publication of the Ministry of Education, Revue Universitaire: Ferdinand Brunetière, "Explications françaises: Observation générales," IV, 1 (1895), 113-28; "Explication françaises: Début de la IXe satire de Régnier annotée en vue de l'explication," IV,

1, 263-87; René Pichon, "Les explications d'auteurs et l'histoire littéraire (avec l'explication d'un texte de Victor Hugo)," IV, 2 (1895), 239-46; or an example of an examination based on the method: A. Dubrulle, "Examens et concours. Explication française: Le lion et le moucheron," IV, 2 1895, pp. 71-82.

12 A. Dubrulle, Explication des textes français (principes et applications), (Paris: Belin, 1900; 4th ed. 1910); Gustave Rudler, L'Explication française, principes et applications (Paris: Colin, 1902; 9th ed. 1952); Marius Roustan, Précis d'explication française, méthodes et applications (Paris: Delaplane, 1911); Joseph Vianey, L'Explication française au baccalauréat et à la licence ès lettres (Paris: Hatier, 1912; 7th ed. 1934). We can see that these early monographs were frequently reedited. They were also followed by such new ventures as: Servais Etienne, Experiences d'analyse textuelle en vue de l'explication littéraire - travaux d'élèves (Liège Faculté de philosophie et lettres), (Paris: Droz, 1935); Pierre Pouget, L'Explication française au baccalauréat (Paris: Hachette, 1952); Raymond Cortat, L'Explication de texte (Paris: Bourrelier, 1957). Between 1959 and 1978 appeared annually Cahiers d'analyse textuelle, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres). In English-speaking academe there appeared books of explications of French texts in which this approach is treated as a basic critical method. The best known (although far from satisfactory) is the work of the transplanted European scholar Helmut Hatzfeld. In 1922, he published his Einführung in die Interpretation neufranzösischer Texte (Munich: Hueber), which he reworked later in French as Initiation a l'explication de textes français (Munich: Hueber, 1957, rev. ed., 1966). An excellent collection of individual explications of French classics by various American scholars is Jean Sareil, ed., Explication de textes (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967); see also, Howarth and Walton (above, n. 6)

13 See, for example, René Pichon's opening remarks in the article cited above, n. 11. More importantly, Gustave Lanson led the attack on a certain kind of literary history in the lycées, which he saw as "pleins de petits Brunetières qui débitaient en tranches nos quatre siècles de littérature moderne" in his "Quelques mots" (above, n. 7), 55. This is, of course, not only a defense of the explication, but an expression of the central tenet of his philosophy of literary study. In the preface to his Histoire de la littérature française (originally written in 1894) he makes his position clear: "Par une funeste superstition, dont la science elle-même et les savants ne sont pas responsables, on a voulu imposer la forme scientifique à la littérature." This scientism (very much alive today) led the student to "résumés et manuals" rather than to the works themselves. This was and is wrong since "Pour la littérature comme pour l'art, on ne peut éliminer l'oeuvre, dépositaire et révélatrice de l'individualité. Si la lecture des textes originaux n'est pas l'illustration perpétuelle et le but dernier de l'histoire littéraire, celle-ci ne procure plus qu'une connaissance stérile et sans valeur." (Paris: Hachette, 1951), vi-vii.

14 Although widely practiced in French lycée and university system well before that date, formal approval of the explication method by the Ministry of National Education came only in 1902.

15 Heterodoxical society in search of orthodoxy? Heterogeneous, liberal, and permissive academe in search of dogma? Perhaps. Consider, for example, the 1988 status and influence of, say, Jacques Derrida in Paris and in American graduate schools.

16 Modern Language Journal, XII (1927), 19-35. The article received much attention especially when it was reprinted as a pamphlet, by the University of Chicago Press in 1928.

17 We know this from the testimonies of our older colleagues who were students of Vigneron; we also know it directly from him: "Professor Ronald S. Crane, now of the English Department, University of Chicago, has been using the similar method in English, for nearly ten years..." Explication des Textes, p.8. It is obvious that Crane, the father of the Chicago School, did not merely use explication for the purpose of training and examining his graduate students. He considered it as a serious method of research.

18 At least according to the "authoritative" opinion of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, XIII (1973), 349.

19 To place Parzival in its broader generic context, we also read at this juncture a chapter of Cecil M. Bowra's Heroic Poetry (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961), 91-131, discussing the myth of the hero in its intercultural, "primitive," perhaps preliterary dimensions, as well as a chapter from Charles Moorman, A Knyght there Was (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1967), 27-57. The latter analyzes the courtly transformation of the hero, who now must also be a successful and steadfast lover. These chapter-essays are treated by us also as materials for an explication approach. It is good to remind the students that close reading is not a "belletristic method," but can and could and should be applied to expository, analytic prose itself. After all, we hope that our students express their close-reading finding in such prose.

20 Collected Works (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987) IV, 199.

Dispelling Myths About Language

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Language is that aspect of our nonphysical selves about which we have the greatest detailed knowledge and the deepest understanding. Two hundred years of scientific inquiry have revealed important and intrinsically interesting truths about the history of languages, about the acquisition of language, and about its form, function, and use. Yet the level of ignorance about language among the general population is astounding.

Numbers of people seriously believe that Shakespearean English is alive and well and living in Appalachia; that Eskimo has twenty-six (or fifty-six, or a hundred and six) words for snow, but no single word for the concept; that the use of a double negative is illogical; and that languages deteriorate with time and are corrupted by contact, and hence should be prevented by force of authority from wavering from the ideal pattern set by our ancestors of a few generations ago. Certainly the majority, if not virtually the entirety, of the American population harbors the erroneous and socially harmful idea that there are superior languages and dialects, and inferior ones, and that the speakers of inferior dialects are inferior people with inferior intellects. The average American believes that French is a beautiful language (implying that German is not), that Latin is a logical language (implying that English is not), and that there are primitive languages on earth, with simple structures and relatively few words.

Now we would scarcely allow educated people in our society to believe that gravity operates more strongly on dense bodies than on light ones, or that life springs spontaneously from putrefying flesh. Yet what passes for knowledge about language, the gift that makes us human and distinguishes us from all other species, is as far off the mark as these medieval fallacies, even among those who have made a formal study of another language. Though a basic grasp of the nature of language is of at least as much commercial and social value to the average citizen as a basic grasp of chemistry, hardly anyone comes out of the university with the slightest understanding of the relation between language and thought, between language and writing, between language and society, or between one language and another.

This know-nothing attitude is reflected in the fact that the language pundits in our society are not those who study language from a scientific point of view, but journalists like William Saphire and Edwin Newman. Their principal qualification for the job would seem to be that they are

professional users of language. We might just as well anoint Julia Child an expert in chemistry, since she employs it to such good effect in her work.

When it comes to grammar, the level of misunderstanding and misinformation among the general populace is truly spectacular, and no wonder, considering the fact that grammar is taught from books that bear a stronger resemblance to the Baltimore Catechism than to a chemistry text. The subject is transmitted by teachers who in most cases are more misguided than the innocents they are supposed to be edifying because of the very fact that they themselves have been through the same indoctrination and have apparently come to believe what they are preaching.

As an example of why children do not understand grammar, and rarely realize that it is not an artifice invented to make them feel inadequate, consider the way the knowledge of "parts of speech" is standardly transmitted. This first dose of hard-core traditional grammar is administered in the fourth or fifth grades. Nouns are always introduced first (they are said to be easier). Half a dozen fifth grade texts that I have consulted contain almost exactly the same formula, some version of "A noun is the name of a person, place, or thing."

For example, in Language for Daily Use, 5, we hear this more-or-less familiar litany:

> A noun is a word that names.
>
> It may name living things ...
>
> It may name places ...
>
> It may name things ...
>
> Or, a noun may name a feeling, such as comfort.[1]

The untraditional fourth class that we find here was necessitated by the fact that the illustrative reading passage from Tolkien's Hobbitt happened to contain the noun comfort. Never mind that in the following reading such nouns as colors, middle, and laughs are to be found, which are not clearly living things, places, inanimate things, or feelings.

This supposed definition strikes the scientific grammarian as being at the very least unhelpful, and probably something more like gibberish. For starters, what's a name? Well, it's something like "Melvin Lapidus," or "West Hooterville," or "The Queen Mary." You don't have to take my word for it: this very text book contains seven two-page sections on "Names in Our Language," with dozens of examples altogether, every one of them of the kind I just illustrated. Now naming expressions are, first of all, not nouns, but noun phrases. Noun phrases may name, nouns

may not (unless they happen also to be noun phrases). Secondly, these are all proper noun phrases, though the examples given to illustrate the class of "naming words" had all been common nouns.

The distinction between common and proper nouns is, in fact, almost always the next item on the grammatical agenda. Again from Language for Daily Use we find this version of the standard wisdom on the subject, in which, notice, the authors silently return to orthodoxy by mentioning exactly the three traditional semantic classes. We will find no comfort in this definition.

> - A noun that refers to any person, place, or thing is called a common noun.

Let's consider this a moment. What words can we think of that refers to any person, place, or thing? About the best I can come up with are person, place, and thing, since all other common nouns are restricted in referential potential.

The opposing class, that of proper nouns, is also standardly described:

> - A noun that refers to a particular person, place, or thing is called a proper noun.

The authors proceed to give five examples of each of the contrasting kinds of nouns. The first proper noun they mention is the plural Indians, which does not fit the definition just given, since it is obviously not the name of a particular person. The fourth and fifth examples are President of the United States and Declaration of Independence. The student is asked to count the number of words in each of these "proper nouns," though "noun" was earlier defined (correctly) as "a word." Thus proper nouns need not be nouns according to the conflicting claims that are being foisted off on the hapless fifth-grade readers of this and similar texts.

I could go on, pointing out further inconsistencies, such as the fact that the definition of a singular noun as a word that names one person, place, or thing, seems to imply that all singular nouns are proper nouns. But I think my point is made. Given false, contradictory, or nonsensical drivel such as this, it isn't any wonder that the only thing the vast majority of people know about grammar is that they don't like it. It isn't any wonder that grammar has become a dirty word. One methods book for teachers of "language arts" that I consulted, Chenfeld's Teaching Language Arts Creatively, doesn't use the word at all in the text.[2] The word grammar appears only in the index, where the reader is referred to skills. I went to a grammar school; my son goes to a lower school, and some of his friends to primary schools. The terminological shift is revealing.

But the worst of it is that in order to swallow incoherent formulations such as these, a student is forced to give up any critical sense for language -- forced to believe, in essence, that the structure of language can only be elucidated by certain initiates who can divine its mysterious properties. The impression is never conveyed that in reality language is an aspect of the natural world, susceptible to scientific study and possessed of remarkable and beautiful assemblages of structures and principles.

As an example of the total abandonment of critical ability that mastery of school grammar demands, let us take the rampant, and wholly erroneous belief that speakers who say "I didn't see nobody" instead of "I didn't see anybody" are poor thinkers, since two negatives make a positive, and such a statement ought therefore to mean "I saw somebody."

Many grade-school texts contain simple blanket proscriptions such as "This is wrong," "Avoid double negatives," or "Never use two no-words in the same sentence." A typical example is the following from Dawson's Language in Daily Use,7:

> Some people make the mistake of using two negatives in a sentence. When they do this, they spoil the meaning of the sentence and are using substandard English. Do not use two negatives in a sentence.[3]

The message here seems to be that some forms in common use are better than others -- that some are to be embraced and others shunned. We are warned against "making mistakes," "spoiling our meanings," and "using substandard English." But we are not told what the problem is. In other works, we learn that certain forms are "ungrammatical," where this apparently means either lacking in grammar or counter to the rules of grammar, implying that certain people speak without benefit of rules, and others willfully flout them. People who speak "ungrammatically," i.e., people who don't happen to speak the standard dialect, are lawless or lawbreakers.

This is the Jewish Mother method of teaching. It works by instilling nameless guilt, rather than by elucidating a principle, let alone by inspiring a student to think about a problem and perhaps come to a reasonable solution of it. But this guilt-trip method is widespread. Harper and Row's Basic Language: Messages and Meanings contains an "enrichment" exercise to teach abhorrence of the double negatives. It says:

> Draw a cartoon that shows people getting rid of double negatives in some way, such as by tossing them into a bonfire, putting them down the incinerator, or into the garbage disposal unit, burying them,...[4]

But to be fair, this text is one of the minority of language arts books that offers a reason to refrain from using multiple negatives. Whenever an explanation is given, however, it is always the same: two negatives make a positive. In Basic Language: Messages and Meanings, the lesson is also taught by means of a cartoon. (This book is big on cartoons -- they make grammar fun!) Two boys appear in the picture. Over the head of the boy on the left appears the auto-metalinguistic observation "You don't never hear many sentences like mine!" The boy on the right thinks "Hurray for that fact!" The lesson is explained below:

> What is wrong with the first speaker's sentence?
>
> Can you see that putting don't and never together makes it mean just the opposite of what he is trying to say? It does![5]

No, I can't see that. The boy is saying just what he means. Furthermore, the authors understand what he means perfectly well. The so-called double negative has been around since at least the time of Alfred, and all English speakers since that time have understood it. How else would the authors of Basic Language have known what the boy in the cartoon was trying to say? After all, if two negatives make a positive, the message would be "One sometimes hears many sentences containing multiple negatives," which is both sensible and true.

The problem with multiple negation is entirely sociolectal, not logical or grammatical. It so happens that the sociolects in which multiple negation is grammatical are those of the less educated and less well-to-do members of our society. Those varieties of the language that are spoken by the powerful are praised as correct, grammatical, and logical. Those varieties spoken by the powerless are damned as wrong, ungrammatical, and illogical. This fosters the feeling that the less favored among us have visited a linguistic misfortune upon themselves by speaking so poorly; that if only they took the time to say what they meant, they wouldn't be nearly as downtrodden as they are. The idea that people belonging to a certain group systematically say just the opposite of what they mean is not only ridiculous, but pernicious. It unjustly impugns the intelligence -- perhaps even the moral fiber -- of the members of that group.

To show that the problem is sociological rather than logical, let's change the cartoon slightly. We'll make the linguistic offender recognizably Latin American, something that is common in up-to-date school books. In the balloon above his head, we'll substitute the Spanish sentence "Yo no hice nada," which morpheme for morpheme is something like "I didn't do nothing." Let's modify the caption only as necessary. Now it will read:

> What is wrong with the first speaker's sentence?

> Can you see that putting no and nada together makes it mean just the opposite of what he is trying to say? It does!

But of course it doesn't. This sentence means just exactly what the Spanish speaker is trying to say, and is the only grammatical way of putting it. Claiming the opposite is now shockingly ethnocentric, and that is just what it should have been in the previous case.

School books get into some fairly amusing trouble because of their notion that the double negative is a sign of poor thinking, rather than a grammatical principle with an impeccable pedigree that just happens not to characterize the prestige language of our society. The rule for the distribution of negatives in the standard dialect is in fact quite subtle and, in any case, well beyond the grammatical acumen of most authors of language arts or skills books, who tend to be curriculum planners, English teachers, or librarians(!), but are almost never linguists.

Certainly the following ludicrous rule and unhelpful explanation from New Voyages in English 7 don't come close to characterizing the real facts:

> When a sentence contains a negative such as not, or never, use anything to express a negation.
>
> Thus we say "I didn't do anything" to show that we did not do anything. If we say "I didn't do nothing," we really mean that we did do something.[6]

Lacking the grammatical equipment to specify precisely the class of indefinite expressions that differentiate the standard and nonstandard dialects, the writers of this text are forced to say something silly. The word anything does not express a negation, and in any case, there is no need to use that word whenever we wish to express negation. (From the title page of this book, by the way, we find that it was written by "Francis B. Connors and a committee of English teachers." It certainly has all the earmarks of a book written by a committee.)

Simple blanket pronouncements like "Do not use two negatives in a sentence" are, of course, wildly over-restrictive, since they stigmatize such perfectly normal sentences, with unspoiled meanings, as "He doesn't know that I have no degree," or "Fred doesn't smoke, and doesn't eat meat." Dawson's Language for Daily Use, 7 is one of the very few texts that recognizes this serious problem with the sweeping generalization. Immediately after outlawing all double negatives, they are forced to make an embarrassing retraction: "The introductory word 'No', as in 'No, I didn't see him,' is an exception."[7]

One complication in describing negation in English is that there are grammatical double negatives preserved in the standard language, the neither -- nor construction being a notable example. Here the standard language

is inconsistent in requiring nor with neither, but forbidding it with any other negation. We are supposed to say "I neither smoke nor drink," with two negatives, but we are told not to say "I don't smoke nor drink." The authoritarian rule would have us say either "I neither smoke or drink," which is unpredictably substandard, or "I either smoke nor drink," which is not English of any kind. Those dialects that allow both "I don't smoke nor drink" and "I neither smoke nor drink" are in fact more "logical" (in the sense of being consistent) than the standard language.

There are other examples of correct double negatives in the standard language, such as "Not in my house, you don't."[8] Strict adherence to the no-double-negative rule would command us to say "Not in my house, you do." But in any case, the utter falsity of the Aristotelian account of the absence of the double negative in Standard English should be apparent, upon reflection, to anyone: If two negatives make a positive, then three ought to make a negative again, and thus "I didn't do nothing to no one" ought to be fine, standard English. But since it isn't, the inadequacy of the logical account of the anti-double-negative taboo is clear and available to anyone whose curiosity about language has not been stultified by terrible teaching.

Now my aim in this paper is not, or not merely, to castigate our primary school establishment, but to document the fact that there is an entrenched and dismal ignorance about language in our society. What substitutes for knowledge of the nature of language is a body of traditional mythology that not only has no basis in linguistic fact, but is actually highly misleading, and in some cases socially harmful. This brings me finally to the theme of this conference: What is the role of language instruction in liberal education?

From my point of view, one of the most important things that a student might be expected to get out of the study of a language other than his or her own would be a partial filling of the abyss of ignorance concerning mankind's unique intellectual gift. I would hope that to some extent, at least, someone who has studied a foreign language might be expected to have abandoned a few of the fantasies about language that are foisted off on students under the banner of "Language Arts", especially if those myths and fantasies are at odds with the facts of the foreign language under study. I would hope that some students of foreign languages would develop an appreciation for the fact that language exists as a brute feature of the natural world endowed with an exquisite natural structure; that language is a vehicle for thought, and not thought itself, and that every language, no matter how humble its speakers, is governed by fixed and intricate principles. I would hope that some students might even realize that language is something that can be thought about and studied in the same way as one studies physics and chemistry - a feature of the world around us, about which discoveries like those in the physical sciences can be made.

Perhaps the study of a foreign language could teach, if only by example, that grammar is real, not made up; that there is no one right way to say something; and that differences in language are distinct from differences in people. It's probably too much to hope, but it would be awfully nice if the study of another language brought students a little closer toward an understanding of grammatical concepts such as the notion "noun."

I decided to perform an experiment designed to reveal whether students of foreign languages do manage to divest themselves of the folklore about language that they have come to college with. My idea was this: a student of a language with grammatically obligatory negative agreement -- Portuguese or Spanish, for example -- might be expected to have come to the realization that negative agreement is merely a grammatical option that some languages and dialects exercise, and others don't.

But the informal experiment I ran indicated quite clearly that this does not happen. My henchman in running the experiment was Alexander Caskey of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Chicago. I thought it would be best just to ask about a single English example like "I didn't do nothing" and see whether students of Portuguese or Spanish had any greater unconscious insight into the nature of the construction than their other schooling would have given them. But Sandy, in his zeal, could not resist the temptation to point out that the foreign language being studied in the class demanded the supposedly forbidden spreading of negatives. Surely performing the experiment in this way should have forced to consciousness an awareness of the independence of negative marking in natural language from Aristotelian logic. To my amazement, it didn't.

Out of forty-nine responses to the question, thirty referred in one way or another to the aphorism "two negatives make a positive." Eight students said only that the English example was ungrammatical, improper, or used some other undiluted pejorative in describing it. Several had answers that were difficult to classify, and at most seven had something like the right answer. Of the seven students who could charitably be said to have been on the right track, one was an advanced graduate student in linguistics, and another mentioned Chomsky and Wittgenstein in his answer.

A few students worried explicitly about the contradiction between the schoolbook tradition and the facts of the Romance language they were learning. Some of these came to the conclusion that a different arithmetic principle operated in Romance languages, an additive one according to which two negatives make a strong negative, whereas in English the principle is multiplicative, so that two negatives cancel each other out. Exactly one student had the originality to notice that the "double negative" taboo extended to more than two negatives. He wrote: "Two or more 'no' in a sentence translates into a positive," invoking by implication some as-yet-undescribed algebraic operation.

Now if this fairly straightforward lesson is not learned subliminally in the foreign language class, what about deeper and more important ones? I can hardly imagine that the average student will ever grasp the empirical nature of language from the study of one whose rules are in fact made up, as far as that student is concerned. It is hard to believe that the essential independence of language and society will come through in the foreign language class when, quite appropriately, the cultural milieu in which a language is spoken is adumbrated along with the grammar. I do not suspect that the basic equality of all languages is likely to be divined in a classroom dominated by someone who, it is profoundly to be hoped, has a special fondness for the particular language being taught. Since writing a language correctly is an essential part of what the foreign-language student is supposed to master, the lesson concerning the primacy and autonomy of the spoken form is almost certain not to be conveyed either.

I am forced to conclude that, in all likelihood, nothing much happens in the foreign language class to correct the erroneous views on the nature of language that are common in our society. Students will probably leave the classroom as ignorant about this mirror on mind and humanity as when they entered it.

I am not even sure that it could be otherwise. On reflection, there is no greater reason to expect that language instruction per se will be any more effective as a vehicle for teaching the science of language than, say, cooking lessons would be as a means of teaching chemistry. First of all, the instructors are themselves not necessarily, or even preferably, masters of the underlying science. Secondly, the deeper discipline is so remote from the practical aims of the classroom that it would probably do nothing to help in their achievement, and might actually impede the mastery of the practical skills. When an attempt was made to incorporate some of the insights of transformational grammar into the foreign language curriculum, the result, I understand, was an unmitigated disaster.

There is no contradiction here. It is quite possible to learn a language without learning anything about it, let alone about language in general. The native speaker knows his or her language as well as possible, but generally hasn't got the slightest notion of its structure, beyond what he or she has been explicitly taught, and that, as we have seen, is likely to be incorrect anyway.

The reverse equation is also perfectly consistent: someone can know all about a particular language without knowing it at all. At the University of Chicago we teach several courses on the structure of exotic languages. It is not uncommon for students who have been immersed in this sort of study for an entire academic year to be unable to say or understand anything at all in the language. Such students know all about the language but they don't know the language. This is partly for the rather trivial reason that they have not been asked to learn vocabulary. We linguists have believed since Plato that there is nothing particularly to

be gained from knowing how some language's word for "sky" sounds. There are many interesting facts about words, but what a word is, is not one of them. The fact that there is a single Eskimo word for the general concept of snow is an interesting fact, because most people believe that there is no such word. The fact that that word is <u>aput</u> is of no particular interest at all.

The language classroom is where one learns vocabulary, paradigms, idioms, and all the other boring bits one needs in order to actually use a language. But in our academic milieu, only a class in linguistics could provide a therapeutic introduction to the nature of language. In the 40's and 50's it was, in fact, the practice at the University of Chicago to require of every student taking a foreign language a one-quarter course in linguistics where the student was offered the rudiments of phonetics, syntax, morphology, and historical linguistics. I believe that such a course is as necessary today as it was forty years ago.

But such a course is unlikely to have much impact except when combined with the intensive study of a foreign language. Chemistry is unlearnable without a laboratory. Who would believe in the little gremlins that chemists have postulated, or the abstract laws that govern them, if there were no means of demonstrating that there are surprising and unguessable facts of the real world that they explain? In precisely analogous fashion, language science is unlearnable without facts of the real world to back up the abstruse constructs that linguists have dreamt up and the mysterious rules that we claim they follow. In order to impart anything of what has been gleaned from two hundred years of empirical linguistics, there must be a laboratory, and as I see it, the language classroom is that laboratory. Here a student is provided not only with an entrée into a different society and a different literature, but also with the data that are prerequisites to an understanding of the nature of language.

True, everyone speaks at least one language, and every language is rich enough to provide the examples required to dispel every myth. But the native language has a special, privileged status. Its patterns and its vocabulary are so automatic as to defy introspection. Its habits are so natural to the native speaker that it can appear to contain no interesting features whatsoever. But any foreign language will differ in significant and enlightening ways and can therefore serve as a stimulus to rational inquiry into the structure and properties of language in general. I therefore believe that if the lamentable intellectual void that exists in our society in place of accurate knowledge about language is ever to be filled, if social inequities based on false assumptions about language are to be avoided, and if students are ever to be made aware of the fascinating facts concerning this complex and magnificent gift of ours, foreign languages must continue to be taught.

NOTES

1 Mildred A. Dawson, Marian Zollinger, M. Ardell Elwell, and Eric W. Johnson, Language for Daily Use, 5, (New York: Harcourt-Brace & World, 1985).

2 Mimi Brodsky Chenfeld, Teaching Language Arts Creatively, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978).

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BEYOND THE SKILL VS. CONTENT DEBATE: THE MULTIPLE DISCOURSE WORLDS OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CURRICULUM

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In the U.S., doubts as to whether the study of a foreign language is anything more than the acquisition of a skill or whether the endeavor has any "humanistic content" have turned mostly into a political issue. On the federal level, arguments that learning a language is roughly like learning, say, how to ride a bike or play tennis have prompted the National Endowment for the Humanities to discourage proposals that relate primarily to the teaching of modern foreign languages. In order to compete successfully, the NEH guidelines apparently require such proposals to link the study of language to "intellectual content" in culture or literature. In Washington, foreign languages are generally seen to be of value for our economic, political, and military security, not for the better education of our citizens. Federal programs for foreign language studies currently have the support of the Secretary of State, not the Secretary of Education. In a similar manner, academic institutions draw a distinction between skill courses and courses with intellectual content to rationalize such diverse measures as the exclusion of basic language subjects from general education requirements, or the establishment of two classes of citizens among foreign language departments' staff: those who teach language and those who teach literature and cultural subjects.

I would like to scrutinize the intellectual arguments underlying the skill/content dichotomy, examine how useful this dichotomy is for discussing the role of language study in a liberal arts education, and suggest alternate ways of viewing the foreign language curriculum.

SKILL VS. CONTENT: AN AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL DEBATE

The distinction between skill and content made recently by Education Secretary William Bennett for the purpose of raising academic standards must be viewed in the context of this country's historical debate about the unique function of public education in American democratic society. During the nineteenth century, when business criteria dominated American culture almost without challenge, an immediate engagement with the practical tasks of life was held to be more usefully educative than intellectual and cultural pursuits. It was assumed that schooling existed not to cultivate certain distinctive qualities of mind but to make personal advancement possible. Skills were "in," even if foreign language skills were not in particular demand.

The skill ideology was counteracted for a time at the end of the nineteenth century by the university professors gathered in the National Education Association's Committee of Ten around 1893. The members of that committee, chaired by Charles William Eliot of Harvard, insisted, for example, that subjects taught in an academic setting had intellectual content, "if they were all taught consecutively and thoroughly,...all carried on in the same spirit...i.e., used for training the powers of observation, memory, expression, and reasoning."[1] This academic training would be a good preparation for the duties of life as well as for continued study in college. In this statement, content is taken to mean mental discipline or training of the intelligence. This mental discipline is traditionally seen as quite close to moral rigor. Later, for example, following the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik in 1957, when "the United States embarked on a program to upgrade human skills"[2] or "mental competences," statements from Curriculum Committees in secondary schools reminded the American public that there were "other goals of education...besides informing the mind and developing the intelligence, namely preparation for citizenship, occupational competence, successful family life, self-realization in ethical, moral, aesthetic and spiritual dimensions....[3]

The link between academic content and moral values has always been very much in the foreground of the skill vs. content debate. The term "skill" carries in the American educational imagination connotations of value-free learning and occupational training. By contrast, the term "content" evokes mental training and moral discipline. In his recent book, Integrity in the College Curriculum, Frederick Rudolph makes a list of mental contents or fields of learning that should be developed in college. They include "abstract logical thinking, critical analysis, historical consciousness," but also "values...and the capacity to make informed and responsible moral choices."[4]

In addition to the notion of mental content, there is another view of content, held recently by William Bennett, that echoes earlier conceptions framed by scholars at Columbia, Harvard, and the University of Chicago. This view holds that there is a tradition of learning, derived from the central texts, which must be transmitted for moral and historical reasons. While skills are certainly essential in this view, they are seen as means to an end, namely, the formation of students' moral character through the analytical reading of classics of the Western world. William Bennett even goes so far as to say that content *rather* than skills must form the basis of any serious curriculum.[5]

THE SKILL/CONTENT DICHOTOMY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

Applied to the study of foreign languages, the dichotomy of skill vs. content -- i.e., the occupational/value-free/mechanistic vs. the men-

tal/analytical/moral tradition -- has taken on an interesting twist in the light of recent national developments. If in 1893 the Committee of Ten could justify recommending four years of foreign language study at the secondary level because it helped develop the students' "mind culture," independent of its practical utility, President Carter's Commission some eighty-seven years later definitely linked the study of foreign languages to its practical uses. In its 1980 report, the Commission made it clear that it is "our lack of foreign language competencies that diminishes our capabilities in diplomacy, in foreign trade and in our comprehension of the world in which we live and compete." The Commission report further spells out what those foreign language skills are to be used for: "At a time when the resurgent forces of nationalism and ethnic and linguistic consciousness so directly affect global realities, the US requires far more reliable capacities to communicate with its allies, analyze the behavior of potential adversaries, and earn the trust and the sympathies of the uncommitted...."[6] Linguistic competence is clearly linked in the Commission's mind to the ability to make moral distinctions between the "good guys" and the "bad guys" of this world and to engage in political action. It is also linked with the mental abilities needed to think globally, to collect and exchange information, to analyze behavior, promote viewpoints, persuade, and convince. More recently, Bennett has called on colleges to assess their performance in the development of these abilities. His question here is not: what texts can your students read in the foreign language? or: how has that reading forged their moral character? but: what can students <u>do</u> with the foreign language outside academia, and how can they accomplish the very complex tasks, required, for example by the President's Commission? The question is an ambiguous one. If language learning is nothing but a mechanistic, value-free activity, it will certainly fall short of the Commission's lofty goals. If all the learners do is analyze the classic texts, even if in the original, they might be able to understand the world of their allies and adversaries, but they will not be able to communicate with them and negotiate treaties. So it seems that colleges do have to impart both content and skills.

And yet, as James Redfield has pointed out,[7] the fact that, unlike math, history, or science, foreign languages are learned by their respective native speakers without the mediation nor the sanction of academia, renders the question of the academic validity of foreign language study particularly acute. After all, an academic education must justify its costs and legitimate its existence on the educational market. Whereas the reading list of a philosophy or sociology course purports to tell you at a glance whether the course has "intellectual content" or not, the syllabus of a language course rarely does. And yet we all know that studying philosophy means not only reading the philosophy of others but engaging in philosophical thinking, studying sociology includes learning the textbook and doing fieldwork as well.

The skill <u>versus</u> content dichotomy rests on a series of four naive hypotheses that I will examine and refute in turn.

Hypothesis I: Learners' needs

Whereas history, literature, or math courses are seen to be of general and timeless relevance, the acquisition of a second language is thought to be justified exclusively by the need to use that language for specific purposes in and outside academia. Hence the frequent complaint: "I had four years of French and I still can't ask my way around Paris." Rarely do you hear: "I had four years of math and I still can't balance my checkbook" or "I had three years of history, but I still don't understand why the French make such a fuss about Lafayette."

Although an education centered on the learner seems, on the face of it, to form a plausible starting point for syllabus and curriculum design, a narrow definition of learners' communicative needs does not do justice to the reality of an undergraduate education. Unlike immigrant workers within the European Economic Community who need to function at a threshold level of proficiency,[8] and unlike state department employees and professionals who have to meet very specific technical demands, most undergraduate students in the United States have both future professional needs and immediate general educational interests, and consequently different motivations and abilities. For example, a survey taken in 1985 at MIT among some 300 foreign language students showed that they have a wide range of interests in languages: some students are interested in "cracking linguistic codes," others in reading literature in the original, others take pleasure in the esthetic aspects of the language or in the cultural insights they gain into the society that speaks the language. Recent studies suggest even that female students might have a more integrative, male students a more instrumental motivation in learning foreign languages.[9] Since it is the role of academia not only to respond to needs but to spark interests, foreign language study has to be sensitive to a variety of interests among learners of different personal and social backgrounds.

Hypothesis II: Linear acquisition

Learning a foreign language is seen to progress in a linear fashion, from cognitively more simple to conceptually more complex structures, right up to the native speaker ideal. Like all skill-learning, language competence is viewed exclusively as the fruit of drill and practice, not of intellectual effort.

This hypothesis is outright wrong. If there is one insight we have gained from second language acquisition research in recent years, it is the complexity of the terms "progression" and "language competence." Studies on the natural progression in the acquisition of basic grammatical structures show clearly that the textbook linear order of presentation does not represent the learners' built-in syllabus or natural order of acquisition (see Long and Sato 1984 for a critical survey of the relevant research),[10] not to mention their personal agenda.[11] Moreover, because

learners develop not only linguistic but communicative competence, we now realize the importance of the social interactional context for language learning. The idea that children and adults learn languages -- and acquire the ability to speak and use languages in social settings -- by sheer imitation, repetition, and manipulation of individual forms and sentences has been proven false again and again. Mastery of syntactic and lexical forms and the ability to produce them on a test are no guarantee whatsoever of the ability to use these forms correctly and appropriately in real-life situations.[12] Unlike baseball statistics or historical dates, children and adults learn linguistic structures together with their use in discourse.[13] They do this on a grid of interpersonal interactions that serve as scaffolding both for the development of cognitive structures and for a general socialization into the group that speaks that language, even if only in the simulated cultural environment of the classroom. The learning and communication strategies that learners put to work are complex and more often than not they are, in adults, the object of conscious mental and intellectual effort (see, for example, Faerch and Kasper 1983).[14]

Hypothesis III: Hierarchy of skills

The skill vs. content dichotomy implies also a cause/effect relationship between the mastery of the skills and the ability to master the content. It is believed that you first acquire the structures of the language (for instance, in the first four semesters), then you learn the information the language conveys (for instance, in the literature and civilization courses). This hierarchical model rests implicitly on the conduit metaphor, described first by Michael Reddy, that considers language as a mere conduit for the transmission of information, like a water pipe or a tobacco pipe.[15]

This hypothesis is far too simplistic to be valid. A recent statement by the Modern Language Association shows the changes that have taken place over the past decade in the way linguistic and text theory view language:

> Rather than abstract paradigms and systems of slot fillers, language is viewed now as discourse between speakers and hearers and between readers and texts. Seen from this syntagmatic perspective, grammatical paradigms and lists of vocabulary may be useful as tabular abstractions in grammar textbooks, but what the language really consists of, and what the student must really learn, is a set of prototypical contexts for each of the forms. Grammar is then based on sequences and connections within discourse, not on hierarchical alignment.[16]

For example, even in the basic language courses, you have to learn not only how to speak grammatically correct and well-pronounced French, but you have to learn when to say what to whom in which situation, to fulfill which intention and to achieve which effect. In this regard, texts (oral or written, literary, expository, or technical) are objects of the same kind as the language itself.

> Between a literary text and everyday conversation, there are differences in degree, in complexity, concreteness and fixedness, but not in kind. Literature, in this view, is the culturally selected and sanctioned set of the best realizations of a culture's unwritten abstract genres and abstract text types. To study a national literature, then, is to study a culture as it has chosen to present and transmit itself.[17]

This statement shows the interrelatedness of language, culture, and literature at all levels of the curriculum.

Hypothesis IV: General learning ability

In the adult learners we deal with in college, the cognitive and social structures of their mother tongue are taken for universal structures. Thus, knowledge of a foreign language is seen as the linear extension of knowledge acquired in other subjects. In this view, all students need to do in order to be able to read and understand foreign texts and to communicate with foreign interlocutors like native speakers, is map foreign linguistic structures on to the structures of their native language.

This view is erroneous. Recent research done in linguistic theory and second language acquisition shows that learning a language is not like learning other subjects, but, rather, is domain-specific.[18] Even if some grammatical parameters are universal, learners have to reset the values that these parameters have in their native language in ways which cohere with the foreign language. These values are set by experience and through the interaction of speakers with their natural environment. Thus, more than in math or history classes, the conditions of the input, i.e., instructional environment and style of interaction in foreign language classes, are absolutely crucial to the appropriate resetting of the necessary foreign parametric values.

BEYOND THE SKILL VS. CONTENT DICHOTOMY

Thus the four assumptions of need, linearity, hierarchy, and general learning ability that underlie the skill vs. content dichotomy do not reflect accurately the reality of language study. In particular it cannot accommodate the four basic principles that link the acquisition of language forms and the mastery of their use in social contexts. These principles are as follows:[19]

1. The language that people use and the way they use it reflect some of the attitudes and values of the social group they belong to. Bourdieu went so far as to say recently: "If a Frenchman talks with an Algerian, ultimately these are not two people talking with one another, but France talking with Algeria, two histories in dialogue, a whole colonization, a whole history of economic and cultural domination. And the same is true between an American and a Frenchman."[20]

2. Learning new words and how to use them in communication is learning a new socially encoded system of meanings which Geertz calls "the imaginative universe within which (people's) acts are signs."[21]

3. Learning to communicate in different ways requires learning to think in different ways. As Roland Barthes said in Critique et Vérité: "To write is already to organize the world [to learn a language is to learn how to think in that language]. It is thus useless to ask people to rewrite themselves if they are not ready to rethink themselves."[22]

4. To understand new social meanings one must both remain in and step out of one's own cultural frame of reference.

These principles are not captured by the unidimensional and quantitative skill/content perspective on language learning. Therefore, instead of this rather agrarian image of tool and container, I would like to propose Willis Edmondson's metaphor of "coexisting discourse worlds," that could be more appropriate to our modern times of exploration and simulation.[23] It could in particular offer a multidimensional model of what goes on at all levels of the curriculum and capture the variety of educational purposes language study fulfills in a liberal arts education.

In a recent attempt to describe the different ways in which learners and teachers interact in the language classroom, Edmondson uses the phrase "discourse world" to characterize the interaction between speakers and recipients based on intended meanings and a shared set of presuppositions in communication. In the foreign language classroom, the foreign language may be the content of instruction, the goal of instruction, the medium of instruction, the medium of classroom management, the medium of everyday (nonpedagogic talk), and the medium for practicing target discourse (so-called "authentic" language use). More often than not, a specific utterance in the foreign language will necessarily carry more than one of these functions at the same time. Edmondson shows that we can understand the structure and coherence of classroom talk by reference to different discourse worlds that coexist in the classroom. Thus, for example, a piece of memorized dialogue enacted by two students in front of the class can be both a public performance that constitutes an instructional content for the rest of the class ("Here's how you say these things") and an instructional goal ("Practice this dialogue in pairs"), i.e,

it can be both a simulation of everyday nonpedagogic talk and a means for practicing certain linguistic structures.

I would like to expand Edmonson's model of coexisting discourse worlds to the foreign language curriculum as a whole. For it seems to me that besides the material that textbooks tell us to teach, readers to read, and syllabi to cover, we are engaged at all levels of the curriculum from the beginning stages of language teaching to the upper literature and culture classes, in the teaching of foreign forms of discourse within the discourse framework of an American educational culture. These multiple discourses potentially overlap or enter into conflict with one another.

MULTIPLE DISCOURSE WORLDS

If we abandon the skill/content metaphor, we realize that in the foreign language curriculum the foreign language may be used for a variety of purposes that can be attributed to at least four different types of discourse: instructional, transactional, interactional, and critical. I will consider each of these in turn and assess how and to what extent language study can play a role in each of them within a liberal education.

1. In the instructional discourse world, the foreign language is used to regulate the instructional procedure of language study itself. At American institutions the teaching of foreign languages is usually managed according to schooling rules that are familiar to the learners. This is the discourse world of homework deadlines, syllabus design, grading procedures, expectations of course work, but it is also the world in which students are socialized into a certain educated behavior, initiated to a certain intellectual dialogue, a certain way of thinking, and inculcated the unwritten rules of power, distance, and solidarity in American academia -- even though all this takes place in the foreign language. It is this discourse world that forms a cultural unity between the language class and all other classes in a student's day. By giving language study the stamp of approval as a subject worth learning, academia both fosters its delivery and, at the same time, imposes on it its own intellectual style.[24]

What can the study of a foreign language contribute to the instructional discourse of a liberal education? Inasmuch as the purpose of instructional discourse is to demonstrate a certain way of approaching a body of knowledge, of framing the questions that best further its acquisition, instruction in a foreign linguistic and cultural framework provides an opportunity to suspend traditional forms of instruction and experiment with new ones. Beyond the usual teacher-centered grammar drills and structural exercises, foreign language study plays a role in the cultural diversification of instructional formats for the development of communicative competence. This is to be done by introducing types of procedure that serve as alternatives to the traditional delivery of knowledge: alternative conversational styles -- according to national or social groups,[25]

or to gender,[26] alternative interaction formats -- dyads, triads, small groups, lectures,[27] alternative learning styles -- oral/literate,[28] analogical/analytical,[29] contextualized/decontextualized,[30] alternative rules of social distance,[31] of rhetorical structure in expository prose.[32]

Instructional forms of discourse serve as the matrix in which the three other discourse worlds can be explored, and, in particular, the discourse forms used for the transaction of knowledge.

2. In the transactional discourse world, the foreign language is used to transmit and receive information about the foreign language, culture, and literature. It serves to gather and display facts about the foreign language code itself or "meta-talk"[33] (for example, about grammar and vocabulary), but also about the content of readings, the gist of audio-recordings, facts and figures about the history, the society, the culture of the country, topics and ideas, characters and plots in literature. This knowledge constitutes the most explicit aspect of the instructional content, the one that can be listed in syllabi and course catalogues and that can be measured and tested in the usual manner .

What can the study of a foreign language contribute to this type of discourse, is overwhelmingly that of all other subjects in the undergraduate curriculum? As a gateway to a foreign culture and society, it can and should offer a multiplicity of perspectives to achieve what Paul Friedrich has called a language and culture "parallax".[34] For example, it gives the opportunity to learn German cultural facts as seen both from the inside (through the reading of texts produced, say, for Germans in Germany) and from the outside (texts written for students of German in the US), contrasted with American cultural facts seen both from the outside (texts about the US written in English or German for German students of English in Germany) and from the inside (texts about the US written in English for Americans). Gordon Wells warns against the fallacy that language study in itself can bring about such a parallax: "The mere mastery of a language for everyday communication is not sufficient to guarantee that it will be exploited to any significant extent in the organization and manipulation of the experience that it encodes."[35] as Brière wrote recently: "The study of a foreign language does not, in itself, automatically offer a way out of ethnocentrism. It is a mistake to believe that contact with a foreign world automatically brings cultural understanding. On the contrary...contact simply deepens the feeling you already have. Therefore, an explicit intercultural approach is essential..."[36]

Foreign language study should make students reflect on the social meanings of words in use, not only on their all-purpose dictionary definition, which as Bourdieu says, "has no social existence." These meanings should be contrasted consciously with the social meanings of lexical equivalents in American English. For example, the word <u>game</u> in American English is associated in its social context mostly with the words

sports, competition, win, lose, team, rules, whereas the word jeu is associated in the French cultural imagination mostly with such words as loisir [leisure], s'amuser (to have fun), enfants [children], pas sérieux [not serious], contraire de travail [opposite of work]. Game might be the dictionary equivalent of jeu but it is certainly not its cultural equivalent. Likewise, reading of foreign texts should not focus only on their different linguistic code, but on their different intellectual style, their discourse structure designed so as to meet the expectations of foreign cultural readers.

The danger in foreign language study is not the bandwagon methodologies of instructional discourse, but the takeover of exclusively transactional forms of discourse in the classroom. In a recent paper, entitled "A Metaphor for Literacy: Creating Worlds or Shunting Information?" Frank Smith writes: "Our perceptions of literacy are narrowed if not distorted by the pervasive tendency, in education as well as in language theory and research, to regard language solely as the means by which information is shunted from one person to another."[37] Smith echoes here the concerns of other linguists such as Joshua Fishman, who regrets the absence of language consciousness in American educational culture: "In our popular culture and even in much of our intellectual culture, language is viewed as merely a means of communication."[38] In language study, as in all other parts of a liberal education, it is this reductionist view, not the skill issue, that is the real danger. This is where foreign language study can help us stay in touch with the third discourse world, that of interactional forms of discourse.

3. Interactional discourse. In the language classroom, the foreign language is used to enact natural forms of social interaction that are characteristic of the learners' or of the target culture. Thus, as we have seen, dyadic conversations about events related to students' lives, small group task-oriented activities, whole group discussions according to American interactional norms, and also creative writing -- all have meaning within an American interactional discourse world. In addition, the foreign language is used to enact and display natural forms of interaction that are characteristic of the target culture. Functional and situational role play, simulation activities, and also stylistic exercises "à la manière de" have meaning within a target -- albeit simulated -- interactional world. In addition, of course, any interaction with target native speakers outside the classroom, any immersion experiences and exposure to target culture forms of interaction in the foreign country are but variations of the interactional discourse world of the foreign language curriculum.

How does foreign language study contribute to interactional discourse education? Interactional discourse distinguishes itself from transactional discourse in several ways. Transactional views of language study consider language as a product fixed by usage, and language study as socialization into fixed forms of behaviors, with emphasis on bringing messages across with as much precision, accuracy, and speed as pos-

sible, the teacher fulfilling mostly the role of covert orchestrator of students' training. By contrast, in an interactional discourse world, language is viewed as a variable process that changes according to its users. Meaning is in the users, not in the words and the sentences.[39] Teachers miss precious opportunities for developing interactional forms of discourse if they don't build on their students' meanings. For example, in a third semester German class, an American student who had chosen to select, as the item of vocabulary for the day, the word "Herausforderung," looked up the meaning in the dictionary, and wrote on the board a sentence of his own making: "Ich mag Herausforderungen, aber diese Klasse ist lächerlich", meaning to say "I like challenges, but this class is ridiculous." This was a welcome opportunity, not only to discuss pace and workload in this class, but to compare the cultural worlds that separate the American concept of challenge, commonly associated in a positive manner with competition and tests of strength, and the German concept of "Herausforderung," negatively associated with defiance and contempt, and to show why the German sentence, as such, made no sense in a German cultural universe.

Language study is not only socialization, but enculturation to other attitudes and modes of thinking. Focus here is on the different cultural styles of oral and written texts, on language as a means of expression, not only as transmission of information. The teacher is not a Socratic midwife, but a facilitator of the interaction between multiple worlds of meaning: 1) the variable personal meanings expressed by the students, 2) the social meanings that are fixed by a society's history and traditions but vary with the interlocutor and with the situation, and 3) the linguistic meanings that remain frozen between the covers of the dictionary. Interactional discourse must complement, not supplant, transactional discourse in language study. The danger here is not the acquisition of skills, but too much emphasis on interaction or too much on transaction and too little critical rigor. We therefore turn now to the fourth discourse world, that of critical discourse, that offers rigorous reflection on the three other worlds.

4. Critical discourse. Inasmuch as reflection and critical thinking form the essence of academic learning or socialization into a literate social group, critical discourse should be an essential component of language learning in an academic setting. And indeed metatalk forms the bulk of foreign language instruction. But the paradigmatic view of language and language learning I mentioned earlier has generally prevented foreign language pedagogy from making that discourse world accessible to learners. Critical discourse has not been, except for advanced literature seminars, part and parcel of language study. Furthermore, if reflection does go on in foreign language classes, it pertains generally to linguistic or textual phenomena as products, not as discourse processes between speakers and hearers, readers and texts. Thus this reflection is embedded once again in a transactional discourse world, where the educational currency is the transmission of information.

The critical discourse that foreign language study is uniquely suited to foster is a reflection on the very processes of communication through oral and written texts. Besides communicative activities that exercise spontaneous speech, foreign language study should provide an opportunity for systematic observation and discussion of the way oral and written texts are created -- how students participate in conversations, take turns at talk, manage topics, and repair failures in communication -- and of the way they interact with their teacher and their peers for the acquisition of knowledge.[40] These functions of discourse reflect personal, social, and national cultural features in the presentation of self through language (see, for example, for French: Charaudeau 1984).[41] They should be made explicit. Similarly, as students are asked to read texts that were written for readers from a different culture, they should use their foreigners' perspective to critically assess both their presuppositions and those of the author. To use Louise Rosenblatt's terminology, teaching techniques that promote "esthetic reading" to supplement "efferent or fact-finding reading" can help them in this regard.[42]

Observation of intermediate and advanced language classes show an enormous amount of missed opportunities in this regard. For example, in a fifth semester German class, American students who were reading Kant's essay "Was ist Aufklärung?" [What is Enlightenment?] were asked by their teacher, "Nun, was ist Aufklärung?" For a while there was silence in the classroom, either because no one had read the assignment, or because the answer could be simply lifted off the page. The teacher having repeated her question, a timid finger was raised, and the student muttered a response that had to do with "Freiheit" and the ability to have "Kontrolle" over one's life. The teacher exclaimed, "Was? Kontrolle? Nein! What does that have to do with Aufklärung? Look at your text," whereupon one student picked up the lead and answered, reading from the text, "Es ist der Mut, sich seines Verstandes zu bedienen." [It is the courage to use your reason.] "Gut!" said the teacher. "Es ist die Fähigkeit, sich seines Verstandes zu bedienen," and she passed to another topic. The first student's misperception of what enlightenment meant for Germans in 1783 would have been worth a critical comparison between commonly held American views about freedom of action and eighteenth-century German views about freedom of the mind. Recent research in reading shows the dramatic discrepancies that exist between what we think the students have understood and what their cultural world leads them to understand.[43]

The four discourse worlds we have just explored should coexist in each course syllabus and at each step of a well-designed foreign language curriculum from the very first lesson. Whereas the first two are the standard fare of any subject taught in an academic setting, the third -- interactional discourse -- has been the object of much attention within communicative approaches to the teaching of foreign languages. Indeed, it has brought into focus the performance aspect of language-in-use, its experiential learning base (learning by doing), that supplements the competence-based, cognitive type of learning traditionally favored in

academia. The fourth type or critical discourse has been lacking up to now. It needs to come to the fore, as insights gained in discourse analysis and text theory have important implications for language teaching and for the teaching of other disciplines as well.

CURRICULAR IMPLICATIONS

The unique way in which study of a foreign language forces upon learners the need to frame questions differently, and see concepts that were taken for granted in a different light, can lead us to examine the curricular implications of the ideas that I have expounded.

1. Language in discourse. Students who major or minor in a foreign language should be initiated into the principles of language in intercultural discourse through a required interdisciplinary course on the subject, extended over a whole term or concentrated in a few weeks, or interspersed in the regular language course over a period of one or two terms. This course should draw on work done in a variety of disciplines as they relate to the "total verbal experience of the learner".[44] The names given in parentheses are meant to serve as inspiration, not as a blueprint for syllabus design:

- critical theory (e.g., Fish, Kristeva, Iser, Jauss, Ricoeur)
- cultural anthropology (e.g., Levi-Strauss, Douglas, Geertz, Goffman)
- discourse analysis (e.g., van Dijk, Becker, Polanyi, Quasthoff, Charaudeau)
- ethnography (e.g., Heath, Hymes)
- linguistics (e.g., Lyons, Halliday, Sapir, Whorf, Buehler, Leech)
- pragmatics (e.g., Brown, Levinson, Wunderlich)
- psychology (e.g., Leontiev, Galperin, Vygotsky)
- semiotics (e.g., Jakobson, Barthes, Scholes, Foucault)
- sociolinguistics (e.g., Gumperz, Labov)
- sociology (e.g., Berger, Habermas)

It would deal with such issues as:

- the nature of language and language in use
- the nature and structure of discourse
- oral and literate, verbal and nonverbal, spoken and written forms of discourse
- conversational style; intellectual styles; the discourse of the disciplines
- language acquisition; socialization and the acquisition of literacy in a second language.

2. Textbooks. Second- and third-year texts should present the language with a different pedagogical focus from the first year and provide not only the facts but their social meaning and their cultural history.

In the presentation of linguistic facts, the focus should be no longer purely structural, but pragmatic/sociocultural: semantic associations or associograms to get a grasp of the social meaning of words in context; discourse value of features of grammar and syntax. For example, how does the foreign language express interior and exterior points of view, or establish foreground and background when you want to tell a story? How does it establish prominence and news value when you want to convey information? How does it ensure coherence and cohesion when you write a paragraph? How are certain grammatical structures used to avoid threatening others and to save one's "face" and that of others? How are power, solidarity, distance, imposition, and other culture-specific aspects of socialization expressed in and through the language? This is not to turn our textbooks into anthropology texts, but to use the appropriate terminology to describe language not only from a grammatical but also from a social point of view.

For the teaching of culture, foreign language textbooks should offer, in an appendix or in a supplementary booklet, the American culture analogues to the facts given about the foreign culture, to allow contrastive learning in that area, too. Whatever the students' degree of American cultural literacy in the sense of E. D. Hirsch,[45] if they have not reflected on their own culture in a critical manner, they cannot appreciate the differences when presented only with the foreign cultural facts.[46] Moreover, cultural information should be presented along the multiple insiders' and outsiders' perspectives I mentioned earlier, and not only the target culture seen from an American point of view (for examples, see Kramsch 1988, Brown 1988).[47]

Emphasis on interactional and critical forms of discourse raises of course the question of what culture to teach: the culture of which Latin-American Spanish-speaking society? Of which social group in that society? As in grammar, this culture should not be set exclusively at the surface structure level of foods, customs, and ways of life, but at the deeper level of traditions and values, intellectual styles and political beliefs forged by centuries of history and systems of education. For example, one common denominator of all French-speaking countries is a shared history and a shared sense of the importance of that history. Similarly, all Americans belong to a society that shares some historical links to Europe and to a system of values that it has partly inherited and partly rejected in the course of its history. An emphasis on interactional forms of discourse can allow us to teach not only how our students and speakers of other languages act and think now, but how they came to act and to think that way. It can bring into the curriculum, through the catalyst of a foreign language, a historical cultural dimension that is often missing.

3. Use of technology. The new syntagmatic, nonlinear view of language learning I described in the beginning echoes the revolution in learning style introduced by the computer. As, for example, MIT's Athena Language Learning Project shows,[48] both for the teaching of writing and

for the teaching of foreign languages, or Noblitt and Sola Système D shows,[49] the exploratory, multidimensional, inductive learning modes made possible by computer and interactive video technologies clearly serve to enrich the multiple discourse worlds of a liberal arts curriculum. A word of caution is in order, however, concerning the use of foreign video texts made available through satellite technology.

By making foreign television easily accessible on American screens, satellite technology brings the authentic foreign cultural environment right into the classroom and provides the richest possible context in which to learn both the language and its use in multiple forms of discourse. However, if foreign television broadcasts are used only for their information content or their entertainment value, they can either reinforce ethnocentric stereotypes or discourage students because of their foreign cinematic style. For example, American students tend to find German television films too slow, French talk shows too stilted. Cross-cultural research done on the discourse of film and television shows that various interviewing techniques, various speeds of exposition, choice of shots, choice of topics, and treatment of these topics are tailored to the expectations of different viewers from different societies.[50] Our students either underestimate or overestimate cultural differences if they do not know and understand how they have been conditioned since childhood to a very American type of television discourse. In addition, media technology creates and perpetuates the belief that national societies can no longer function as the reference point in the construction of cultural meaning, that instead, modern managerial, commercial, scientific cultures have superseded historical or humanistic cultures in the supranational "global village."[51] Cultural communities risk being replaced by communities of interests and pragmatic needs that do not always have a common natural language or a common historical tradition. For example, ads for McDonald's hamburgers or Irish Spring soap on German television seem to reinforce this belief. Moreover, the multiplicity of different cultures that separate people who speak the same language, e.g., French in the francophone world or Spanish in Latin America, lead some people to the conclusion that the teaching of any deep national culture should best be abandoned and replaced by the multinational culture of pragmatic needs with superficial variations.

Such ethnocentric perspectives can best be counteracted by a pedagogy that emphasizes interactional and critical forms of discourse and that helps students understand the unavoidable cultural subjectivity of the TV medium and use this insight constructively.

CONCLUSION

If we remain locked in the simplistic polarity of skills vs. content in language study, we cannot hope to get a grasp on the very complex issues of language learning in institutional settings. I have therefore suggested the metaphor of multiple and coexisting discourse worlds. We

have seen that language study can contribute in various ways to all the discourse worlds of a liberal arts curriculum, in a manner that is magnified and enhanced by its avowed association with several national cultures and its unique mandate to teach foreign forms of discourse within an American cultural discourse framework.

In this sense language study can, in my view, express the essence of a liberal education, whose major role is to reinstate language as central to the human experience and essential in the social legitimation of the transmission of knowledge. This means several things: (1) accept the multiplicity of coexisting and equally valid discourses, (2) make this often conflicting multiplicity educationally productive by reflecting upon it, and (3) help students establish links between their courses, making maximum use of what Graff calls "moments of intersection"[52] and thereby make sense out of overlapping contexts and disciplines in their curriculum.

I do not need to add that it is these moments of intersection, where students combine the foreign and the known to make sense of their and others' worlds, that will enable them to find out who their allies and their adversaries are, to communicate with both, and to negotiate the appropriate treaties.

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