CLEAR was established at Michigan State University in 1996 through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education under the Title VI Language Resource Centers (LRC) program to improve the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the United States. The funding period is for three years, 1996-1999.

CLEAR is a multidisciplinary unit facilitating integrated research, instruction, and training programs. The primary objective is to promote collaboration in foreign language research and teacher education across college, departmental, and institutional boundaries. CLEAR activities and projects integrate the various constituencies involved in foreign language teaching and learning. Projects are divided into five major groupings:

- Research on Learning and Teaching
- Methods and Materials
- Second Language Assessment
- Linking to Teachers and Schools
- Collaboration with College of Education

In addition to conducting conferences and institutes for foreign language educators from secondary through post-secondary levels both on and off the MSU campus, CLEAR publishes and disseminates findings and materials from its projects.

1997 SUMMER INSTITUTES

Materials/Technology Development Workshops for LCTLs
http://polyglot.cal.msu.edu/clear/lctl/workshop.html

CLEAR is conducting a program for teachers to develop additional expertise in Computer Assisted Language Learning for Less Commonly Taught Languages. Fellows will attend a week-long workshop conducted by David Dwyer and Claire Bradin. The workshop will focus on the integration of audio and graphics using generic templates. During the 1997-98 academic year, fellows will plan and develop a set of CALL learning materials at their home institutions. They will return to CLEAR during the summer of 1998 to share materials with each other and with new fellows chosen for the 1998-99 cycle.

Content-Based Instruction Materials Development
http://polyglot.cal.msu.edu/clear/content

CLEAR is supporting secondary school teachers of French, Spanish, or German to participate in a Content-Based Materials Development Project. A total of six teachers—four teachers of French, Spanish, or German, and two additional teachers who wish to develop materials specifically for business German—will be selected to participate. Following an intensive two-day workshop on MSU’s campus June 27-28, secondary school teachers and MSU instructors will collaborate to develop materials for a third- or fourth-year language class. Teachers will pilot materials in their language classes during the fall of 1997 and may return to MSU during the summer of 1998 to lead a larger workshop, hosted by CLEAR, for other secondary school teachers. This project, which is co-sponsored by MSU’s Center for International Business Education and Research, is being conducted by Carol Keiser Bishop, Patricia Paulsell, Charlene Polio, and Amy Tickle.

Distance Learning Fellowship Program
http://polyglot.cal.msu.edu/clear/distance

CLEAR is sponsoring two fellowships for secondary school foreign language teachers to participate in a Foreign Language Initiative for Distance Learning Project. Selected fellows will participate in a one-day workshop at MSU in the spring of 1997 and attend a 10-day distance learning institute at the National Foreign Language Resource Center at the University of Hawaii July 7-18. For a semester during the 1997-98 academic year, fellows will work with MSU foreign language professors and CLEAR staff members in the development and pilot delivery of the distance learning course.

Taos Institute for Language Teachers of French, Spanish, German, and Russian
http://polyglot.cal.msu.edu/clear/taos

CLEAR is sponsoring a 12-day institute, July 20-Aug. 1, for secondary school teachers designed to combine teacher education and training with a
total immersion experience. The program will take place in Taos, N.M. The institute offers teachers a summer opportunity for professional development through exposure to national experts in foreign language methodologies and for improvement of their own language skills. Secondary school teachers have helped establish priorities for the institute, and they have placed national standards, technology, and language across the curriculum at the top of the list. Sessions in the target languages will focus on language and pedagogy and on current political and cultural events. Special sessions on business language will also be offered. In addition to MSU faculty (Marisol Fernández, Susan Gass, Tom Lovik, Patricia Mosele, Patricia Paulsell, George Peters, and Felix Raskolnikov), the following presenters have been scheduled: Marta Anton (IU-Purdue), Olga Kagan (UCLA), Robert Lafayette (LSU), Bernhard Martin (Tufts), June Phillips (Weber State), and Jo Anne Wilson. TILT is co-sponsored by the Centers for International Business Education and Research at MSU and at San Diego State University and by the Language Acquisition Resource Center at San Diego State University.

**Technology & the Internet Institute**

http://polyglot.cal.msu.edu/clear/internet

Following a needs assessment workshop conducted with secondary school teachers in December 1996, the contents of this workshop were developed to include:

- The Internet and its relevance to foreign language learning;
- Finding and evaluating information on the Internet;
- Creating bookmarks;
- Making web pages;
- Preparing graphics and audio files for the web;
- Integrating the WWW into foreign language instruction;
- Using other aspects of the Internet such as e-mail; ftp; Telnet; MOOs, and audio-video conferencing;
- Displaying foreign characters on the Internet.

Claire Bradin will conduct the workshop July 29-August 1 on the MSU campus. The workshop will be followed up during the 1997-98 academic year by linkage through the Internet to facilitate the exchange of materials.

**NEW SPANISH TEXTBOOK**

¿Qué te parece?


Reviewed by Marisol Fernández, Michigan State University.

¿Qué te parece? is a second year (intermediate) textbook designed for use at the college level or in third-and fourth-year high school courses.

In the preface, the authors explain that the study of Spanish in a humanities curriculum "is more appropriately discussed in the context of an individual's general education or 'formación'..." and that the textbook's aim is to contribute "to students' 'formación' as people and as intellectuals [...] by offering integrated materials in the areas of basic language, cultural content, and critical thinking skills" (p.xv). Their success in integrating materials in these three areas is perhaps one of the most distinguished features of this textbook.

The textbook consists of a "Lección preliminar" and six units. Each unit opens with an overview of the unit's content, followed by a "Galería del arte" section, which features fine art related to the unit's topic, and by four lessons of varying length. "Ideas para explorar" functions as the main organizer of the first two lessons of each unit; there are three "Ideas para explorar" within each of these lessons. For example, "El lenguaje y la comunicación" is the main topic of unit 1 and is divided into three "Ideas": "Características de los idiomas," "Cómo interpretar el lenguaje corporal," and "Cómo comunicarse con los ojos.

Each of these sub-topics is explored in a series of communicative, task-based activities.
The activities are structured into "Pasos" (steps), which guide students in the process of finding out and exchanging information about a given topic. The "Pasos" also ensure that an activity flows smoothly and allow the instructor to monitor students' progress. Students work with diverse sources of written and oral information (e.g., oral passages, class surveys, and literary and journalistic readings) and learn strategies for effectively extracting the information necessary to accomplish the task goal. The communicative goal of each activity is made explicit, and useful communication strategies are given at the start of the activities. Attention is paid to the development of critical thinking skills such as evaluating, drawing conclusions, and making inferences. Highlights of the forms and functions of the grammar necessary to carry out an activity are presented in boxes titled "Notas lingüísticas," which are cross-referenced to the Manual where a more detailed explanation of the particular grammatical point and additional grammar exercises are included.

The third lesson of each unit consists of a review of the two preceding lessons and of a composition section. Following a process-oriented approach to writing, this section offers composition topics derived from the unit's theme and presents clearly articulated steps that lead students to consider the importance of audience, purpose, content, and organization. Also included are detailed instructions for drafting and editing and useful cross references to the Manual where reference tools are provided. Suggested criteria for grading of compositions are attached at the end of the text.

The fourth lesson includes a literature section and an art section. The literature section presents unadapted literary selections in an instructional framework that helps students understand, appreciate, and work with the meaning of the readings. The activities help students to anticipate the content of the reading, to get a general sense of its meaning, and, finally, to place what they read in a meaningful context. The Manual contains additional activities that require a more in-depth, detailed reading of the text. The last set of activities of this lesson encourages students to relate to the content of the reading in a more meaningful way by applying the content to their experiences.

The art section refers students to the "Galería del arte," which opens the unit, and presents art appreciation activities to stimulate communication and interaction and to encourage students to relate personally to Hispanic art. A vocabulary list accompanies the art activities to help students express themselves. Useful background information on artists and their works is included in the Instructor's Manual.

Each unit of this textbook pays attention to the four language skills and integrates vocabulary and grammar into communicative activities while maintaining topic continuity through its different lessons and sections. The topics chosen (for example, Language and Communication, Popular Beliefs, Television, and Freedom) will certainly be appealing to students, encouraging them to think and express their own ideas, thus providing a context in which to explore different aspects of the Hispanic world. With ¿Qué te parece?, students can not only learn Spanish and learn about the Hispanic world, but they can also enjoy learning and developing the skills that are necessary to learn more.

PROJECT UPDATES

Research on Learning and Teaching

Two major areas of research are being conducted at CLEAR, with a third area (looking at the role of the native language in the foreign language classroom) to begin next year.

The first focus of study is writing. Charlene Polio and Patricia Mosele, together with research assistant Dominic Ording, have been studying practices and perceptions of foreign language writing teachers. They have been observing high school foreign language classes (French and Spanish) and interviewing teachers (Chinese, German, Japanese, French, and Spanish). They are interested in finding out the needs of foreign language students with regard to writing and how foreign language teachers perceive the role of writing in a general proficiency class. They are also looking at the kinds of activities used in the teaching of writing in foreign language classrooms. As a preliminary observation, they have noted that the needs of foreign language students are not clear. If one does not know what the future writing needs will be, curriculum development is, of course, problematic. A technical report and a bibliography will be available by summer of 1997.

The other area of research began in January with Marisol Fernández, Susan Gass, Alison Mackey, Jennifer Philp, India Plough, Charlene Polio, and research assistant María Álvarez-Torres. There are two projects that are underway. The first has to do with the roles of focus on form and focus on meaning in the language classroom. A classroom experiment is being devised in which these two variables will be manipulated so as to isolate their effects on learning in a Spanish classroom. A second project will investigate the types of feedback (e.g., direct correction and indirect correction) that teachers give in foreign language classrooms and what effects those feedback types might have on learning. The researchers have begun by videotaping an Italian class and will be continuing with more observations and videotaping. Results of these research projects will be summarized in subsequent newsletters.

Methods and Materials

In addition to the Content-Based Materials Project described on page 1 of this newsletter, two other projects dealing with teaching methods and/or materials are underway. David Dwyer, Charlene Polio, and graduate assistant Margo Glew are working on a manual to be used by tutors who teach African languages on-demand. The team has completed portions of the manual and will begin piloting lessons during spring of 1997.

Pat Lunn is authoring "Pronunciación y Fonética," a series of CALL lessons designed to improve Spanish pronunciation. Secondary school teachers can use it themselves to learn how to teach pronunciation, or they can have their advanced students work through the material on their own. Developed in HyperCard, the
materials include basic text in Spanish (with optional supplements in both Spanish and English) and exercises for ear training and oral practice.

Lessons on syllabification, stress, accentuation, vowels, and consonants lead up to an overview of dialectology in which phonetic concepts are used to describe the major modalities of Spanish. The first lessons will be available by the end of summer 1997.

Second Language Assessment

One of CLEAR's L2 Assessment projects is a Video Training Module on "In-House" Test Development. For this project, Gary Cook, Alison Mackey, and research assistant Peyina Lin are creating an interactive videotape series to assist in the development and evaluation of foreign language assessment tools. The series will include three interlocking but independent units: test development, test evaluation, and test analysis. The project team is currently developing the content for the videotapes and an accompanying workbook based on discussions with secondary and postsecondary language teachers regarding their needs and with video recording companies regarding technical logistics. The team anticipates that the video series will be available by the end of summer 1997.

Tom Lovik, Patricia Mosele, Marisol Fernandez, and research assistant Olaf Bohlke are working on a second assessment project, Extended Oral Proficiency Modules. This project addresses the need for more inclusive and economical means to determine sociolinguistic, cultural, and pragmatic competence of learners of German, Spanish, and French. A bibliography on testing and assessment issues related to these three competencies is currently being compiled, in addition to a collection of authentic materials to be used in the German module, which has an expected completion date of fall, 1997. At that time, work will begin on the Spanish module, followed by the French unit.

Does Pair Work in the Classroom Make A Difference?

The following is a synopsis of "Input, Interaction, and Second Language Production," an article co-authored by Susan M. Gass and Evangeline Marlos Varonis, which appeared in Studies in Second Language Acquisition in 1994. The research reported in this article was awarded the ACTFL-MLJ Paul Pimsleur Award for Research in Foreign Language Education in 1995.

The roles that oral input and conversational interaction play in the development of a second language have been the topics of interest of both second/foreign language educators for more than 20 years. While progress has been made in this research area and accompanying improvements in foreign language pedagogy have occurred, questions still remain regarding the effect(s) of input and interaction on the language learning process. With this study, Gass and Varonis have begun the task of determining a relationship between conversational interaction and later language production.

Sixteen pairs of students participated in the study. One member of each pair was a native speaker (NS) of English and one was a non-native speaker (NNS) of English. The students performed an activity in which each member of the pair had a board with the same scene (e.g., farm or beach); one student's board had objects pasted on the board; the identical objects had not yet been placed on the other student's board. The students were seated in such a way that they could not view each other's boards. The goal was to describe to one's partner where to place the objects. Successful performance of the activity was measured in number of errors (incorrect object placement). The students' conversations during this activity were recorded.

The sixteen pairs were divided into categories so that some students were allowed to interact with their partners (for example, ask for clarification or repetitions) and some students were not allowed to interact with their partners.

The experiment contained two trial periods. In Trial 1, all of the NSs of English had boards on which the objects were pasted, and the NSs described their boards to the NNSs. In Trial 2, the roles were reversed, and the NNSs described their boards to the NSs.

One of the most interesting findings of this study is the effect of interaction on a NNS's language comprehension and language production. Non-native speakers were better able to correctly place the objects if they had the opportunity to interact with their NS direction-giver. However, conversational interaction did not seem to help the NNSs to provide more accurate and comprehensible instructions to their NS partner. Finally, if an NS-NNS pair had interacted in Trial 1, the NNS was better able to provide accurate descriptions during Trial 2.

In other words, there seemed to be a delayed effect of interaction.

Why is it that the effects of interaction apparently are not immediate? The authors suggest that a possible explanation is that interaction provides learners with more time to do the activity and thus more time to use the language. Yet, as Gass and Varonis point out, this variable, while necessary, may not be sufficient. Another key aspect of interaction is negotiation. When discourse breaks down and/or becomes "sidetracked" because of lack of comprehension, negotiations focus the learner's attention on the parts of the conversation that are difficult, either from a productive or a receptive point of view. Attention, in turn, is what allows learners to notice a gap between what they produce/know and what is produced by speakers of the second language.

Since this study focuses specifically on the role of conversational interaction between NS-NNS pairs, one may ask how these findings can be applied to a foreign language classroom situation in which students are all non-native speakers of the target language. Results of previous studies investigating NNS-NNS...
discourse indicate that the majority of changes made in a learner's speech are from the incorrect to the correct form. This is clearly seen in the example below taken from an earlier study by Gass and Varonis. Keiko and Ana are both non-native speakers of English. Their teacher had given them the assignment of asking students on campus for directions. They took turns asking people. Here are the questions that they asked each passer-by.

Ana: Can you tell me where is the train station?
Keiko: Can you tell me where the train station is?
Ana: Can you tell me where is the train station?
Keiko: Can you tell me where the train station is?
Ana: Can you tell me where is the train station?
Keiko: Can you tell me where the train station is?
Ana: Can you tell me where is the train station?

Thus, coupled with earlier research, the current study by Gass and Varonis shows that interactive pair work in the FL classroom is indeed beneficial. At the same time, they caution that the potential effect of interaction may not be immediate.

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**A SAMPLE ACTIVITY**

Information gap activities are excellent ways to encourage input and interaction between students. In these types of activities, part of the information is missing and the students must interact in order to complete the task. The exercises can be designed for pair work or small group work. For example, Student A has information that Student B needs, both students have information that the other needs; or each student in a group has information that the others need. The following "game" is an example of an information gap activity that can easily be adapted for the context of any FL classroom. This exercise is adapted from one which appears in *Elementary Communication Games* (Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1984) by Jill Hadfield.

**Materials needed**

A picture of a group of 15 to 20 people. Preferably, males and females of different ages will all be represented in the group and they will not be dressed in identical clothing.

**Preparation**

Make two photocopy "masters" of the picture. If necessary, enlarge it to approximately 6 inches by 8 inches so that students do not have difficulty seeing the different people. On one of the copies, give names to approximately eight of the people by writing a name on or next to them (copy A). On the other copy, (copy B), give names to eight different people and write their names next to them. Copy enough pictures for each student in the class.

**Implementation**

Divide your class into pairs; give one student in each pair picture copy A and the other student picture copy B. The students are not allowed to look at their partner's picture. The goal of the activity is for the students to find out the name of everyone in the picture. To do this, they need to describe a person's clothing, physical appearance and location in the picture. Encourage students to ask their partners questions so that each student is not merely describing.

**Vocabulary/grammar practiced**

Adjectives and nouns describing physical appearance and clothing; prepositions of location; and question formation (e.g., "Do you know the name of...?" "Who is the woman on the chair?")

By choosing different group scenes (e.g., people at a party holding different food items, a montage of people performing different activities like swimming, jogging, riding bikes, boating), this activity can be tailored to provide communicative practice in selected vocabulary items.

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**THE WEB**

**WEBSITES FOR K-12 TEACHERS**

"Foreign Language Links on the World Wide Web" is available online at the following address: http://polyglot.cal.msu.edu/clear/internet/internetlinks.html

This list of links, compiled especially for K-12 teachers, is intended to serve as an introduction to some of the available foreign language resources. It includes general language resources and also websites that could be used for French, German, and Spanish classes.

**Language Learning & Technology**

http://polyglot.cal.msu.edu/lit

CLEAR is hosting the website for Language Learning & Technology, a journal that will be published exclusively on the WWW. The journal, sponsored by CLEAR, the University of Hawai'iNFLRC and co-sponsored by CALICO, EUROCALL, IALL, and the University of Minnesota's CARLA, is a refereed journal with an editorial board of scholars in the fields of SLA and CALL. The focus of publication will be issues related to how the use of technologies affects and/or enhances language learning and teaching.
OTHER NEWS

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT

Susan Gass and Patricia Paulsell, co-directors of CLEAR, together with John Eidie, Dean of the College of Arts and Letters at Michigan State University, attended the HEA-TITLE VI Fulbright/Hays National Policy Conference, held at the University of California, Los Angeles, Jan. 23-25. The Higher Education Act is up for reauthorization in the present Congress, and the purpose of the meeting was to discuss national needs in international higher education, including foreign languages, with an eye toward proposing amendments to TITLE VI legislation. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Language Resource Centers (six of the seven LRCs sent participants), the National Resource Centers (of which Michigan State has three), and the Centers for International Business Education and Research (of which Michigan State has one). There were both plenary and breakout sessions dealing with a wide variety of topics, including undergraduate and graduate education, outreach in international education and foreign language education.

While the broad focus was on international education, there was some attention paid to foreign language education, although, sadly, not as much as we would have liked. The proceedings will be published and a copy will be available in MSU’s CLEAR office. Please contact the CLEAR office if you would like more information or have comments since the reauthorization legislation is important for the future of Language Resource Centers, which are, in turn, important for the future of foreign language education and training in the United States.

CLEAR OPENING RECEPTION

John Eidie, Dean of Michigan State University’s College of Arts and Letters, hosted an opening reception for CLEAR on Feb. 11 at MSU’s University Club. Dean Eidie and CLEAR Co-directors Susan Gass and Patricia Paulsell provided welcoming remarks and brief descriptions of CLEAR projects.

Provost Lou Anna K. Simon; Teresa Plachetka, the district director to Congresswoman Debbie Stabenow; and Giovanna Lammers, an East Lansing (Mich.) High School French teacher who is currently collaborating on the Writing in a Foreign Language Project, spoke on the importance of foreign language education in the United States and the opportunity that MSU has been provided through federal funding to improve that education.

The reception was attended by local high school teachers and administrators, the directors of MSU’s National Resource Centers and CIBER, and CLEAR faculty, research assistants, and personnel.

CONFERENCES

Second Language Research Forum
October 17-19, 1997
SLA Across Languages

Michigan State University is the site of this year’s Second Language Research Forum (SLRF), which is sponsored by the English Language Center with support from CLEAR and will be held October 17-19, 1997. The theme of SLRF ‘97 is “SLA Across Languages.” The plenary topics and speakers are:

Friday, October 17
“Attention and SLA”
Richard Schmidt and Jacquelyn Schachter

Saturday, October 18
“Features and Patterns in the Acquisition of Syntax”
Robert Bley-Vroman

Sunday, October 19
A plenoquium on “SLA and Theories of Mind”
Nick Ellis
William O’Grady
Bonnie Schwartz
Elaine Tarone

Conference fees are:
Preregistration student: $30
On-site registration student: $40
Preregistration non-student: $50
On-site registration non-student: $60

The deadline for preregistration is September 17, 1997. For more information, contact the SLRF organizing committee at slrf97@pilot.msu.edu or visit the committee’s web page at http://pilot.msu.edu/~slrf97/

Information may also be obtained by writing the committee at:
SLRF ‘97 Organizing Committee
English Language Center, 1 CIP
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824
We would like to make a Question and Answer section a regular feature of CLEAR NEWS. Please send questions (and answers!) to the CLEAR office or e-mail us at clear@pilot.msu.edu.

Q: In a recent telephone conversation, a local superintendent of schools asked for information to aid her in making decisions regarding the possible introduction of foreign language into two elementary schools in her district. The superintendent had heard that it was important to begin language instruction as early as possible in a child's education but had no hard data or research results to support that contention. She asked if CLEAR could help her in the decision-making process by providing information on when it is most effective to introduce language study into the curriculum, as well as some literature on different FLES curricula.

A: In this connection, it is interesting to note that the United States is the only industrialized nation in the world in which the serious study of a second language and culture is routinely left until the high school or even college years. There is widespread agreement among experts in child second language acquisition that second language education should begin as early as possible; however, the effectiveness of this instruction can be quickly sabotaged by a number of factors, including, most importantly, the lack of highly qualified instructors and the general lack of support from all quarters.

One thing is certain, however. To insure higher levels of language and cultural competence in the long run, a district must be willing, once quality language instruction is begun, to insure continuity and persistence. Once having begun a language, students should be offered the opportunity to continue that language throughout their schooling and, equally importantly, they should be encouraged by teachers and guidance counselors to persist in that study.

For further information on FLES curricula and issues surrounding age of acquisition of language, the following sources should prove useful:


Q: CLEAR was recently contacted by a person developing the curriculum for a language course for which there are few published materials. Her training is not in language teaching/learning; therefore, she was interested in finding recent publications that provide a fairly comprehensive overview of second/foreign language teaching methodologies that are thought to be the most effective.

A: While there are many useful materials on current methodology, two texts that provide a good starting point are Teaching By Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy (Prentice Hall, 1994) by H. Douglas Brown and Teaching Language In Context (Heinle and Heinle, 1993) by Alice Onaggio Hadley.

Teaching by Principles is a comprehensive text that is based on theory yet focused on practice. The book covers, although is not limited to, teaching the four skills by presenting background research and providing examples of teaching techniques. The book ends with a section on classroom practicalities, including chapters on lesson planning and classroom management. Following an excellent chapter on defining and assessing proficiency, and chapters on the theory behind and the history of language teaching. Teaching Language In Context provides many useful activities for foreign language teaching. Pages of sample activities from a variety of languages are presented, as well as some examples of authentic materials and excerpts from foreign language textbooks.