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Distance Learning: Friend or Foe?

by Margo Glew

Technology has allowed the language classroom to expand in many ways. In all its forms, technology has enlarged the “learning space” for language learners, blurring the lines between classroom learning and “homework,” between learning environments at home and abroad, and significantly expanding the number of potential classmates, friends, and conversation partners available to language learners. Few would argue that one field that has been transformed by the technological revolution is distance learning. In its earliest form, distance learning was largely equated with correspondence courses where learners studied course content in a textbook, completed assignments at home, and mailed them in to professors and teachers who would grade the assignments and send them back. Today, numerous technologies are employed to expand the learning experiences of all students.

Distance learning can take many forms. In fact, distance learning represents only one end of a long continuum of course types. Some courses are delivered entirely from a distance, with the instructor in one physical location and learners in other locations. More commonly, however, blended courses provide a mixture of distance and face-to-face learning experiences with learners spending some time in the classroom (sometimes meeting for fewer hours than would be the case in an entirely face-to-face mode), and some time engaged in learning activities online. The technology for delivering the course can also vary. A common delivery mode for distance learning is the online course. One online course that is very popular is Spanish Without Walls (course authors: Robert Blake and Maria Victoria González-Pagani). The newest language course under development in the series is Arabic Without Walls (course authors: Robert Blake, Kirk Belnap, and Sonia Shiri). Using a textbook and its companion DVDs (*Tesoros* and *Al-Kitab* for Spanish and Arabic, respectively) as the foundational resource, these online courses provide the opportunity for distance learners to engage in language learning activities online, chat virtually with other classmates and the course instructor, and watch videos in the target language. Spanish Without Walls has been used successfully for a number of years in the University of California system and other institutions worldwide.

(Continued on page 3)

EDITORS' MESSAGE

Dear Readers,

We hope your second semester is going well. We'd like to remind you that we will no longer be sending out *CLEAR News* via mail, but we hope you will continue to enjoy this publication by reading it online, downloading it, or picking it up at one of the many conferences we attend each year.

This issue's theme is distance learning, a subject that comes up with increasing frequency as technology becomes more and more advanced. We hope that you find the articles on distance learning both interesting and informative. Also included in this issue is an Idea Corner article on using online Mashups to create language-learning materials – no programming experience necessary!

We also highlight the professional development opportunities available at CLEAR this summer, and, as always, give updates on some of CLEAR's latest projects and products.

We hope to see some of you at our summer workshops or at one of the upcoming conferences listed in the announcements section on page 7. Come visit us to say hello and learn about CLEAR in person!

Joy Campbell

Margo Glew



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This publication was produced with support from a Department of Education grant (CFDA 84.229A and P229A060011). The contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and one should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

SUBMISSIONS WANTED!

CLEAR News is published twice a year and reaches thousands of foreign language educators in both hard copy and on CLEAR's website with each issue. If you have an article, a teaching idea, or a materials review that you would like to submit for possible publication, send an electronic copy of your submission to CLEAR.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

Main Article— an article related to current research and/or foreign language teaching issues. (1000–1500 words)

The Idea Corner— a unique activity or teaching idea for foreign language teachers. Must be adaptable for multiple languages. (500–600 words)

Book/Materials Profile— share your best finds with colleagues by telling us about a favorite text,

website, CD-ROM or other teaching material. (100–200 words)

Featured Teacher—have you benefited in some way from a CLEAR workshop or product? Contact Joy Campbell for information on becoming our Featured Teacher in a future issue!

The deadline for submissions for the Fall 2007 *CLEAR News* is July 20, 2007. Electronic submissions should be sent to Joy Campbell at:

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The U.S. Department of Education awards grants through Title VI funding to a small number of institutions for the purpose of establishing, strengthening, and operating language resource and training centers to improve the teaching and learning of foreign languages. There are currently fifteen Language Resource Centers nationwide: the Center for Advanced Language Proficiency Education and Research (CALPER) at The Pennsylvania State University; the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota; the Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) at the University of Oregon; the Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region (CeLCAR) at Indiana University; the Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language and Literacy (CERCLL) at the University of Arizona; the Center for Language Education And Research (CLEAR) at Michigan State University; the Language Acquisition Resource Center

(LARC) at San Diego State University; the National African Language Resource Center (NALRC) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; the National Capital Language Resource Center (NCLRC), a consortium of Georgetown University, the Center for Applied Linguistics, and George Washington University; the National East Asian Languages National Resource Center (NEALRC) at The Ohio State University; the National Foreign Language Resource Center (NFLRC) at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa; the National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center (NK-12LRC) at Iowa State University; the National Heritage Language Resource Center (NHLRC), a consortium of UCLA and the UC Consortium for Language Learning and Teaching; the National Middle East Language Resource Center (NMELRC) at Brigham Young University; and the South Asia Language Resource Center (SALRC) at The University of Chicago.

Another type of distance language course involves sharing courses across multiple locations through televideo. Entire classrooms can be linked via video or individual learners can come together with an instructor online through video-conferencing. This sort of language course is very popular for delivering instruction in some of the much less commonly taught languages (MLCTLs) because televideo allows these courses to reach a wider audience. Many university campuses share LCTL courses this way, delivering language instruction to new audiences who may never have been able to have the opportunity to learn the language otherwise. A case in point is Michigan State University, whose students have been able to take advantage of a televideo language course in Kazakh (offered by Indiana University), a language course that would not have been offered otherwise. Conversely, Michigan State University was able to share instruction in Ojibwe by offering a televideo course to a class of high school students in Milwaukee, WI.

Distance learning and blended courses have positively affected the language teaching field, allowing for new flexibility in the learning experience. Students are no longer confined to the classroom, textbook, and blackboard. The learning environment has expanded, allowing students to participate in a vastly widened

range of activities that were not possible before. Investment in the development and delivery of distance learning options for languages has allowed institutions to expand the reach of language instruction, reaching new audiences of learners who might not have otherwise had the opportunity. Online and blended courses provide learners with multiple environments for learning, increased opportunity to interact with a wider range of partners, including native speakers, and a wider range of activities, thus enhancing the learning process. Furthermore, distance learning, in all its forms on the continuum, has the potential to provide a certain degree of flexibility for the language learner. This is very important given the time commitment necessary to become truly proficient in another language. With the traditional classroom mode as the only option, a large portion of potential language learners could easily be left out. The flexibility inherent in distance learning in terms of when and where learning takes place means that a larger number of learners than ever before can be reached, and for those who are reached, the learning experience itself is vastly improved.

Margo Glew is the coordinator of the Less Commonly Taught Languages Program at Michigan State University and is active in supporting the expansion of language programs at area school districts.

An Inconvenient Truth

by Dennie Hoopingarner

The State of Michigan recently enacted a new law requiring that beginning with the class of 2011, students must have two credits of foreign language in order to graduate from high school. I personally think that this is a step in the right direction, but given the globalization of the state's economy and society the law also amounts to an unfunded mandate for schools that are already struggling to provide the quality and scope of educational services that they currently offer. Not surprisingly, some administrators have been engaging in creative thinking to find a way to meet the new requirements within budgetary constraints.

I recently received an email from a language teacher whose superintendent has a plan to meet two state requirements at once (an additional new requirement is that students take an online class). The superintendent's idea was to have students take online language classes in a computer lab with software and "online assistance." The motivation for this idea was purely cost-savings.

Through follow-ups via email and telephone, I warned both the concerned teacher and the superintendent about falling prey to common misconceptions about technology and language learning. The idea that delivering language instruction via distance learning and technology-enhanced learning is more cost-effective than teacher-fronted classes is a myth. My own professional experience, and that of my colleagues who support distance learning programs, is that trying to save money through distance learning and technology-enhanced learning is misguided, and fails much more often than not. In fact, these initiatives are more costly than hiring a full-time teacher. The point of distance learning is NOT to save money. Rather, as stated in the article above, it is to expand access to those who would not be able to receive instruction except through technology.

Six New Summer Workshops!

Every summer since 1997, CLEAR has offered professional development workshops. Teachers of all levels have come to Michigan State University's campus for these practical, informative and timely courses. Take advantage of this great professional development opportunity and meet foreign language educators from all over the country. Visit our website for more information and to register online. We hope to see you this July or August for one (or more) of our six workshops!

1 Conducting Action Research in the Foreign Language Classroom

July 9-11, 2007

Presenter: Debra Friedman, Asst. Professor in the Department of Linguistics & Languages, Michigan State University

Action research is research conducted by practitioners (i.e., language teachers) with the aim of making positive changes in teaching practices and learning outcomes. This workshop is designed for practicing language teachers with little to no prior research experience who would like to implement an action research project in their own classrooms. Participants will begin by (a) identifying a specific issue that they view as critical to their everyday teaching, (b) formulating a research objective, and (c) creating a research design, including selection of participants, choice of materials, and procedures to be followed that best serves the research objective. Practical advice on how to collect, analyze, and interpret data will also be discussed. We will also explore broader issues related to action research projects, such as the benefits and drawbacks of collaborative research with colleagues, whether and how to involve administrators and other interested parties in the research project, and protection of the rights of students as potential research subjects.

2 Integrating Technology and Assessment for Language Teaching and Learning

July 12-14, 2007

Presenters: Daniel Reed, Assessment Specialist at CLEAR, Michigan State University, & Dennie Hoopingarner, Assoc. Director for Technology Implementation at CLEAR

Advances in technology and developments in the field of language assessment come together in this CLEAR workshop, which is designed for teachers of all languages. The overall goal is to show how technology facilitates assessment, and how assessment in turn facilitates learning. In short, assessment facilitates learning when it provides feedback that is relevant and timely. This workshop introduces easy-to-use technology that can help to make this happen.

This workshop will provide you with the skills to create online assessment activities for reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Special emphasis will be placed on aligning these assessments with state and national standards and the particular curricular objectives of your language program. At the end of the workshop, you will be able to conduct online assessment activities with your students and provide them with feedback that they can use to develop their language skills. There are no technical prerequisites other than basic familiarity with computers. The workshop will be offered in one of MSU's state-of-the-art computer labs. Bring your own portable computer, or use one of our machines. The workshop is hands-on, fast-paced, informative, useful, and fun!

3 Focus on Form in the L2 Classroom

July 16-18, 2007

Presenter: Shawn Loewen, Asst. Professor in the Department of Linguistics & Languages, Michigan State University

This workshop will address the issue of how to integrate attention to accurate use of language within activities that are designed to promote fluent oral production. Many second language classes include activities in which students communicate with each other and the teacher in order to improve their speaking skills. However, the role of attention to accuracy in these contexts is debated. For instance, should teachers correct learner errors during communicative activities? If so, how should errors be corrected? Which errors should be addressed? Should students be encouraged to raise questions about linguistic items during discussion activities? These questions, among others, will be explored in detail during this workshop. Participants will begin by exploring their own beliefs about error correction/focus on form and the impact of these beliefs on classroom interaction. Next, participants will consider the advantages and disadvantages of different correctional options, both from the viewpoint of teachers and learners and from the perspective of researchers on second language acquisition. Finally, specific recommendations that teachers can take to the classroom will be discussed.

4 Keeping Teacher and Student Talk in the Target Language

July 19-21, 2007

Presenter: Charlene Polio, Assoc. Professor in the Department of Linguistics & Languages, Michigan State University

Most teachers and teacher educators believe that maximal use of the target language in foreign language classrooms is best for facilitating language acquisition. Sometimes, however, various obstacles prevent the teachers and students from speaking the target language.

This workshop will have two parts. The first focuses on teachers' language use and describes strategies that teachers can use to teach in the target language, particularly in difficult contexts such as when working with beginners and teaching grammar. In addition, demonstrations of various techniques will be given including how to give directions for complex activities while speaking only in the target language. The participants will act as beginning language learners in these demonstrations. The presenter will also discuss how small amounts of English can be used effectively instead of as something to fall back on when target language use becomes difficult.

The second part of the workshop will focus on student language use. Participants will be provided techniques for beginners to start speaking the target language quickly, in new contexts and using a variety of tasks. Participants will again act as students in various demonstrations of a new language, this time speaking the language. The presenter will then provide sample activities for more advanced students that will not only keep them speaking the target language, but also push them to produce more advanced language.

5 Making the Most of Video in the Foreign Language Classroom

July 30-August 1, 2007

Presenter: Eve Zyzik, Asst. Professor in the Department of Spanish & Portuguese, Michigan State University

Teachers and researchers agree that video materials can enhance the learning environment in foreign language classrooms by providing rich, contextualized input. The combination of aural and visual cues naturally makes video input more comprehensible. However, there are several uses of video that extend beyond listening comprehension activities. For example, video can be effectively used in teaching grammar and in promoting output (both oral and written). This workshop will consider multiple uses of video as well as techniques for adapting authentic materials to learners of various proficiency levels. The workshop will address the following topics: choosing appropriate video materials (authentic versus scripted video materials and appropriate uses of each); sequencing a lesson with video (pre-viewing, during viewing, post-viewing); top-down and bottom-up activities for each stage of working with video; creating selective listening activities for video segments; uses of video without sound; using video to teach grammar; using video to promote output; using video to teach cultural topics; combining video and reading materials; and using DVDs with subtitles.

6 Language Teaching and Technology

August 2-4, 2007

Presenter: Senta Goertler, Asst. Professor in the Department of Linguistics & Languages, Michigan State University

Technology in the classroom can ease your classroom management tasks, provide a change of pace for your students, provide you with an opportunity to include the target community, and provide you with easy access to written documents of students' language production. During the workshop you will learn how to use computer technology such as course-management software, chat rooms, Instant Messaging, and websites. You will experience the technology from a learner's perspective and at the same time you will be provided with activities for your own teaching. Finally, you will also have the opportunity to develop your own materials suited for your class. The workshop will introduce free (in case your district is unable to purchase software) as well as commercially available software programs (in case your district is considering or has already purchased programs).

Learn more...

about all of these workshops, including pricing/discount information and application forms, by visiting our website:
<http://clear.msu.edu/clear/professionaldev/summerworkshops.php>

The \$15 application fee is waived for all applications received on or before the early application deadline of May 11, 2007.

Regular application deadline: June 1, 2007

Apply online at: <http://clear.msu.edu/clear/professionaldev/apply.php>.
You can also print a PDF application from the website or contact CLEAR to receive an application in the mail:

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If Marshal McLuhan was right, that the medium is the message, then nothing says new, current and engaging like online video. Putting a video clip in a web page was impossible in 1995, very difficult in 2000, buggy and unreliable in 2005, and is now easy. YouTube is the next “killer app,” a term that refers to a computer program that by itself justifies the purchase of a computer. It’s not hard to see why. It’s surprisingly easy to upload a video clip to the hosting service, where it is converted to a standard format, and is ready playback within a web page in no time at all. The ease of use is one reason why YouTube is so popular. In under two years, the number of videos hosted on the site has grown to more than 100 million clips, with tens of thousands of clips being added every day.

YouTube in the Classroom

Language teachers are finding interesting uses of online video services like YouTube. Video clips hosted by YouTube reflect the Internet’s global reach by the large and increasing number of video clips in languages other than English. While not intended to be an educational resource, there are nevertheless serious educational applications of these videos, which include video blogs, commercials, and short amateur films. One aspect of the videos that makes them valuable language learning resources is the authentic language they contain. The video clips are not professionally produced, and they are often unscripted, so the language is closer to the way that people naturally speak.

Video as Text

Making effective use of video isn’t hard if you treat a video as a text. When you use a text as teaching material, you use pre-reading and post-reading activities to focus learners’ attention on certain aspects of

the language in the text. At introductory levels, you can focus on more basic aspects of the language, and at higher levels, touch on advanced aspects. In this way, you can use the same authentic material at different levels. You can take the same approach to using video as teaching material. The first step is to put the material in context.

Putting it Together: Mashups

YouTube provides the HTML code that lets you embed the video clip in a web page, blog, or wiki. Simply paste the HTML into your page, and the video becomes part of your website. CLEAR provides a framework for combining video, audio, text and interactive exercises into one web page. This framework, called a “mashup,” is a means to utilize the value of video resources for learning. The service is free, just register at <http://mashups.clear.msu.edu>.

In a short time, you can create a language-learning web page with no programming. After you’ve pasted the HTML code into the page, you can use the text editor to give learners instructions, context, or additional information. You can then create an interactive exercise using SMILE, another free CLEAR application (<http://smile.clear.msu.edu>). When your students load the page, they will see your text, the YouTube video clip, and your SMILE exercise, all on one page.

A Non-commercial YouTube

For more advanced video functionality, try CLEAR’s program Viewpoint. Similarly to YouTube, Viewpoint will allow you to upload video in a variety of formats. The program will convert it to a web-playable format, after which it can be embedded in your web page or a mashup. Viewpoint has a few features that make it stand out.

One is the subtitling function. After you have uploaded your video, you can make subtitles for the video. Subtitles can include glosses to help students understand the language, but you can also add questions, hints, and cultural information.

Viewpoint also lets you record live video using your computer’s webcam. You can record a video to make a “quick-and-dirty” resource. If your computer doesn’t have a camera, but does have a microphone, Viewpoint can record live audio that can be added to a mashup as well.

In addition to teachers creating resources for students to use, it can be motivating for students to make their own mashups. Many students enjoy getting creative with technology, and take great care in preparing their video projects. The idea of students creating exercises might sound strange at first, but what better way is there to show that you know the material, than by trying to teach it yourself?

The technology is easy enough to use that anyone with basic computing skills can create a sophisticated multimedia learning presentation without spending an inordinate amount of time on the nuts and bolts of the software. That allows you and your students to concentrate on learning the language.

Dennie Hoopingarner is CLEAR’s Associate Director for Technology Implementation, and Director of Michigan State University’s Language Learning Center.

Improved Website

To coincide with the beginning of our new funding cycle, we launched a new website in August 2006. The URL remains the same, but we have redesigned the site to make it more user-friendly. If you haven't visited in a while, take a look at <http://clear.msu.edu> and let us know what you think!

Upcoming Conferences

CLEAR will be represented at exhibit booths and/or with personnel at the following conferences this spring. Stop by to introduce yourself and let us show you what we can offer for your language classroom.

- World Languages Day, April 21, 2007, East Lansing, MI
- National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL), April 26-29, 2007, Madison, WI
- Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO), May 24-26, 2007, San Marcos, TX

New Products

Visit <http://clear.msu.edu/clear/store/> for these and other products from CLEAR.

Rich Internet Applications

One of our major initiatives in this new funding cycle is an ongoing project entitled Rich Internet Applications. Two of the new products available in this category are Viewpoint and Mashups.

Viewpoint is a free video repository that allows you to record your videos online using your webcam, or upload existing videos. These videos can then be linked from other sites or embedded inside your own web pages.

The term "**Mashup**" refers to the combination of data from one or more web services with customized functionality or data. In the case of CLEAR's mashups, the term refers to the combination of an audio or video clip with a SMILE exercise and additional text. The idea is to combine media elements to create a new resource for language teaching.

FL-Assessments Listserv

This listserv provides a forum for language educators to discuss current issues in assessment, to share information and resources with fellow professionals, and to encourage collaboration in the area of language assessment.

FL-Assessments is co-managed by Louis Janus and Ursula Lentz, both at CARLA (Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition), with input by CLEAR's Dan Reed and other assessment professionals. The list is jointly sponsored by CLEAR, CARLA, CASLS (Center for Applied Second Language Studies), and CAL (Center for Applied Linguistics).

Hausa Online

This site is a virtual language resource page of multimedia language learning material for intermediate to advanced-level Hausa language learners. Hausa Online provides access to samples of authentic Hausa texts, an image gallery with more than 200 images for use in the language classroom, and a link to a collection of language learning modules that you can complete online. If you are a Hausa language instructor you can register your class and all student work is recorded and reported to you so you can track how your students are doing.

Language Learning Materials for Russian: A Content-Based Course Pack

New modules added! These free content-based modules may be used as an entire course or as a supplement to upper-level and heritage-speaker Russian language classes. By working with these materials, students can gain cultural and literary competence in a variety of fields related to Russia by using the original and authentic materials provided here as well as the interactive language exercises designed around these texts.

CLEAR News Goes Online!

Beginning last year, *CLEAR News* is no longer mailed out. Visit our updated website to download PDFs of new issues as they are published and to access all archived issues. You can also sign up to be notified via email when a new issue is available for download.

CLEAR News

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



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