Director’s Note

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The promise and challenge of bilingual immersion schooling

Immersion has become a major educational phenomenon – so much so that in one state to the west of us in Utah, for example, there was a total of 118 immersion schools. In the Front Range, the Global Village Academy schools are beginning to pop up as more and more families are embracing the idea that their children are capable of becoming bilingual as an incidental by-product of doing something as normal and everyday as going to school. This is something that brings delight to the hearts to all those with a stake in improving Americans’ language and cultural skills.

Two-way bilingual education is one type of immersion school that speaks to the promise of some additional educational outcomes beyond traditional immersion, such as social justice and empathy for those recent arrivals to US soil who often find themselves in the unenviable position of marginalized outsiders. According to the Center for Applied Linguistics, “Two-way immersion is a unique kind of language education because it involves two languages in two ways: Two languages are used for instruction, and two groups of students are involved—students who are native English speakers and students from another language background, most often Spanish” (although certain schools in California, say, may feature Chinese and Korean, rather than Spanish).

Professor Kathy Escamilla is one of the country’s foremost experts in bilingual education, and I recently had the good fortune of discussing the history of two-way bilingual education in Boulder County. Escamilla traces the concept of bilingual education to

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the 1960s when thousands of young Cubans – in the throes of Fidel Castro’s overthrow of the Batista government in Havana – landed in America. One particular school in Coral Way, Florida, wanted to make these children feel at home and in the belief that the Cubans would not be here permanently, it instituted a curriculum where the language of instruction was in both Spanish and English. Two populations – both American-born and Cuban-born children – wound up attending that school. While some might say that the rest is history, because of the warp and waffle of US attitudes towards Spanish-speaking immigrants, bilingual education has gone from being perceived as something quite positive to being stigmatized and practically dropped from the educational lexicon.

When Escamilla came to Boulder County in the early 1990s, there were six or seven two-way bilingual schools here. Now there are three (Pioneer in Lafayette, and both Uni-Hill and Columbine in Boulder; all are K-5). While much credit should be given to the Boulder Valley school district and to the amazing teachers within these schools, it might be naïve to believe that the same cultural forces that have affected dual bilingual immersion elsewhere are completely absent here. There can be asymmetrical power relationships with English-speaking kids having the option of opting out of Spanish when the going gets rough. Spanish-speaking kids cannot do the same with English. Spanish-speaking kids also recognize that there is a stigma to speaking Spanish. While dual language schools go a long way to balance the status of languages, kids are in that school for only six hours a day, and Spanish speakers hear the message elsewhere that they have less cultural capital because of their native language.

To complicate matters, at the national level, bilingual education has been undermined by Common Core goals that ignore the nation’s gaps in linguistic and cultural abilities. Escamilla confides her disappointment with today’s political leadership on this point. “Education policy in the Obama administration is no better than the Bush administration. We have no vision. We are told to learn more English language skills instead of becoming bilingual. Bilingual teachers are very courageous in the face of the standardized tests. We need to ask what do we do to raise the next generation of bilingual teachers. We need to consider different educational measures for achievement.”

Associate Dean of Arts and Humanities Valerio Ferme recently reminded people that Boulder County’s average income is well above the national average, but 26% of local residents “live below the national average and closer to or below the poverty level, and this income disproportion is growing wider by the year.” Dual bilingual immersion is no panacea, but as the country’s social fabric becomes frayed through economic and geographic polarization, it might be instructive to review the Coral Way, Florida history and inform ourselves about where we have been and where we might felicitously go again.
“Africa in French” & Other Non-Credit Classes!

This spring ALTEC is offering an entirely new, 10-week cultural class taught entirely in French! Rather than focusing primarily on language instruction, “Africa in French” will feature a content-based instructional method, which is the same concept behind immersion learning and one of the best ways to promote language acquisition. Students will learn about the continent where humanity started, with its many cultures and traditions and discover its varied landscape, peoples and traditions. A low to mid intermediate ability of understanding French would provide you with the best experience. The class will be held Mondays from 5:30-7:30pm with a one week break for Spring Break.

ALTEC will also continue to offer its plethora of other languages this semester including various levels of Chinese, French, Italian, Spanish and Swahili! Classes begin January 25th and are available to CU Staff, Faculty, Graduate Students, Retirees, and their spouses (for a reduced rate) as well as community members!

For more information on current and upcoming classes please visit our website at altec.colorado.edu/languageclasses.

Portfolio Completion

• Kusum Knapczyk
kusumknapczyk.blogspot.com

• Maria Del Carmen Lopez Ramirez
mclopezblog.wordpress.com/

Congratulations to Kusum Knapczyk (Lecturer of Hindi in the Asian Languages and Literatures at the University of Colorado Boulder) and Maria Del Carmen Lopez Ramirez (adjunct in Spanish in the department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures at Colorado State University) for completing their portfolio and receiving the certificate of completion for the FLTP.
For years language learners have been using subtitles to enhance their language learning endeavors. Now language teachers at CU will be able to have a transcript of those subtitles for use in their classes. Please indicate on the movie streaming request form whether you want a copy of the subtitle transcript. The request must be for a DVD and the subtitles must already be part of the DVD. This service is made available by OIT and is part of an ongoing effort to improve accessibility on campus.
Registration open for upcoming Elevate course.

The Elevate graduate certificate is off to a great start! 8 students took the Language & Technology Foundation course first course and 11 students are currently enrolled in the second course (LGTC 5030, Tools in Practice). The next course (LGTC 5040: Virtual Immersion) will run from April 4th to May 27th 2016. It is an 8-week 2 graduate hour course on how to organize, manage and assess telecollaboration exchanges between language students. The course instructor is Dr. Fuchs, telecollaboration expert and ESL professor at the City University of Hong Kong. Registration for LGTC 5040 is now open. CU Boulder language graduate students can take Elevate courses for $70 per credit hour (payable to the Division of Continuing Education). Contact Edwige Simon for more information and to sign up.

Visit the Elevate blog for more information about course offerings and information about the program: http://altec.colorado.edu/php/elevate

Flipped Learning: A Flipped Workshop

In this flipped workshop, participants will analyze quality instructional videos and will learn how to produce videos using a variety of already accessible tools. They will also learn ways to encourage interaction between students and the content, as well as how to plan bulk production in order to reduce average production time. Finally, participants will engage in a series of hands-on tutorials that will allow them to leave this workshop with a sample finished product as well as a plan for implementation in their local context. Engagement with online learning materials before the workshop is required.

**FLTP:** Friday, March 4th, 2016 from 3:00pm - 5:00pm

**K-12:** Saturday, March 5th, 2016 from 9:00am - 2:00pm

Dr. Fuchs, telecollaboration expert and ESL professor at the City University of Hong Kong will teach the next Elevate course.
FLTP News

Sign up today for the workshops you wish to attend this semester. Make it a New Year’s resolution to complete the FLTP in 2016! Join us to learn about universal design, how to unleash the hidden potential of D2L, video production, information overload management, and teaching portfolio design. If you have questions or wish to request a workshop contact Edwige.Simon@Colorado.EDU

Staff Updates

GOODBYE
Courtney Malone,

Courtney Malone left ALTEC to go pursue her passion for zoology. Courtney joined ALTEC as student graphic designer in 2007. After graduation in 2012, Courtney was hired as ALTEC’s Resources Coordinator. We miss her already but are very excited that she found and decided to pursue her calling. CU retiree Lynda Ledbetter will fill in as a temporary aid until the position is filled.

WELCOME
Naomi Wahls!

Please welcome Naomi Wahls who is joining ALTEC as a Language Technology Specialist. Naomi graduated with a BA in International Studies from the University of Colorado Denver in Fall of 2007. She graduated with an MA in Information and Learning Technologies with an emphasis in Designing eLearning Environments in May of 2012. She worked in online learning for the University of Colorado Denver from 2006-2012. In Fall 2015, she graduated with a Masters of Arts in Spanish.