Director's Note

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Larry Summers' language learning advice

From discussions about sex differences to how to handle the US financial crisis, former Harvard University President and former Clinton Treasury Secretary Larry Summers can hardly be blamed for shying away from controversy. Summers recently gave a speech at the New York Times Schools for Tomorrow conference, and in it, Summers listed a number of transformations he felt were necessary for higher education to adapt to the changing world (for an essay based on the speech, see "What You (Really) Need to Know," in 01/20/2012 NYTimes.com or http://tinyurl.com/7tx6go2).

As a result of that speech, his opinion that we can rely more and more on English rather than mastering a second language will be included in his catalogue of eyebrow-raising statements.

Summers cited English's emergence as the global language, the rapid progress in machine translation, and the fragmentation of languages spoken around the world to support his contention.

I've already written here about the way particular languages shape patterns of thought, and, by extension, behavior. If part of the mission of higher education is to introduce students to a wide perspective of cultures and thought processes and to bring about a greater understanding of the bases of our own thought processes, it does not take a lot of imagination to understand why language study deserves to be included in a general education curriculum.

Part of the weakness of Summers' recommendation is how, in one fell swoop, he fuses together doing business in Asia, treating patients in Africa, and resolving political crises in the Middle East, implying that in each of those three examples, the use of English would be equally effective. However generalized his brief description of these linguistic contexts are, none is strongly isomorphic with another and each would require specialized linguistic resources. It is not a given that English would be included in any of those resources.

Compare Summers' English-centric future to the passion for language held by linguist Claude Hagège, who has learned more than 10 languages, including English. "What assures English of a dominating (and dangerous) position is that unlike Latin during the time it became a European language, English is a language that is connected to a nation-state." It is the enormity and the power of the means to spread English that worries Hagège, not the language itself. "It's unprecedented in human history." Hagège considers language learning as a fundamental way of demonstrating respect for the diversity of human culture. "Humans have a very strong desire to assert their cultural identity through their language." Which business people in Asia, which patients in Africa, and which Middle Eastern politicians disobey that fundamental rule?

Got Apps?
List of Language Learning Apps

As we see everyday, CU students spend a great deal of time on their cell phone and other mobile devices. This last fall, we surveyed 80 CU language students at random regarding their habits with mobile devices. Of the students surveyed, 97.5% reported owning a cell phone, and 69.6% reported owning a smartphone. As teachers, our typical response to this behavior is to admonish the student when such devices find their way in the classroom. But what if instead, we could redirect this affinity that our students show for their mobile devices and leverage these devices for language learning?

Currently, there are countless mobile apps available to practice language and explore the culture of the languages that we instruct at CU Boulder. In an effort to optimize student use of mobile devices, we compiled a list of mobile apps for the purpose of language learning. Isla Schanuel developed the app pages which can be accessed from the ALTEC website under the "Language Resources" tab. The list is divided into language specific apps as well as general apps for language practice. Courtney Malone is working on the design of app posters which will soon be posted in ALTEC's multimedia library in Hellems 159.

Please explore these apps and come visit Edwige or Courtney Fell if you want some ideas as to how to integrate them into your language instruction. We would also appreciate feedback so that we can continue to expand and improve the app list. Multi-Language Apps: http://tinyurl.com/89fvp7d

Meet Isla and Courtney
We are pleased to announce two wonderful additions to our team.

Courtney Fell was hired as a Foreign Language Technology Specialist. She has a Masters of Arts in Spanish from UCLA where she won the TA of the Year award, and comes with several years of experience as a Spanish lecturer at CU and at Dartmouth College's Rassias Summer Language Program in Segovia, Spain. She is working closely with Edwige Simon to teach workshops, provide one-on-one consultations and participate in the many projects ALTEC is involved in. You can find Courtney in Hellems 147 on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

Isla Schanuel was hired as a part-time IT assistant to replace Jonathan Nickerson who joined a PhD program in astrophysics at the University of Michigan. Isla is a CU graduate in Spanish for the Professions, a former ALTEC workstudy student and she is a first year student in ATLAS' ICTD Master's program. Isla will work closely with Santé Jonker on maintaining the computers in our labs, building our new website, streaming films and many other IT related projects. You can find Isla in Hellems 156 everyday from 9am to 2pm.

Feel free to stop by ALTEC to meet them in person if you haven't already done so.

Tech Update: CU's New VoiceThread Site License

Thanks to a VoiceThread site license that ALTEC and OIT purchased in the fall, all CU instructors are now eligible for VoiceThread Pro accounts. The Pro account allows users to create an unlimited number of VoiceThreads and comes with 10 GB of storage. All CU students are eligible for Basic accounts, permitting them to create up to 50 VoiceThreads with 1 GB of storage. Another component of the site license will be improved integration with CU's Course Management System, D2L. Currently, it is possible to embed VoiceThreads into D2L, but soon users can expect a VoiceThread wiki on their D2L pages and CU instructors will be able to take advantage of the VoiceThread Information System Integration (VISI). Once VISI is up and running, it will automatically sort students and instructors into the correct Course Groups upon account creation through D2L and students will have automatic access to any VoiceThreads that have been shared with their Course Group. In January, we hosted a FLTP workshop on VoiceThread to cover the new functionalities of the upgrade.

If you wish to upgrade to a Basic account (students) or a Pro account (faculty, instructors, TAs) or if you have one or more VoiceThread accounts and wish to consolidate these accounts and then upgrade, email sitelic@colorado.edu. You will now need to use your first.last@colorado.edu email address for your VoiceThread account.

SOCALLT 2012 is in Boulder!

We're please to announce that ALTEC will be hosting the SOCALLT conference on April 13th and 14th, 2012. The South Central Association for Language Learning Technology (www.socallt.org) is a 6-state organization composed of K-12, college, and university language teachers, language/literature professors, language technologists, language lab staff, instructional technologists, faculty trainers, and administrators dedicated to technology integration in the foreign language classroom. This year's conference theme is "Success Stories in the 21st Century Foreign Language Class: Transforming Teaching & Learning with Technology". There will be no Share Fair this spring but a SOCALLT presentation will count towards the FLTP.

ALTEC invited two guest speakers for this occasion and the readings for this year's edition of ALTEC's monthly SLA Reading Group for language instructors are based on the work of the two authors who will make campus visits to CU-Boulder, Kathy Mills and Steve Thorne. Mills is a former primary school teacher versed in the theory of multiliteracies who did extensive fieldwork in one classroom to gather data for her book, *The Multiliteracies Classroom*.

The SLA reading group will also tackle articles by the second SOCALLT keynote speaker, Steven Thorne of Portland State University and the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. All instructors and graduate students are invited to attend the SLA Reading Group. Please contact Mark Knowles (mark.knowles@colorado.edu) for more information.

Steve Thorne, PhD, Portland State University and the University of Groningen.

His talk, "Education in Late Modernity", will address pedagogical bridges between in- and out-of-school literacies and new social media.

Kathy Mills, PhD, Queensland University of Technology.

Her talk, "Multimodality, Media, and Access to Multiliteracies", will address the challenges and opportunities of using multiple modes and new digital media to provide greater access to multiliteracies.
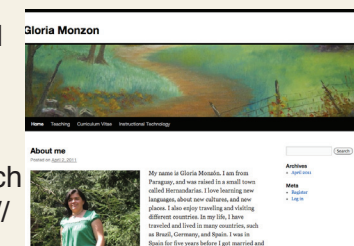
Foreign Language Technology Program

Spring 2012 Workshops

This spring we will be introducing three new workshops: Cloud sharing, Quizzes and Tests through D2L, and the SOCALLT conference.

FLTP Portfolio Completion

Congratulations to Gloria Monzón (Spanish and Portuguese Department) on completing all of the requirements for the FLTP. Gloria used WordPress to display her digital portfolio which can be viewed at: http://gloriamonzon.wordpress.com/.

Summer SLA Workshop

ALTEC will be hosting its third annual SLA Workshop May 10 - 22 (specific dates TBD). This year's workshop will focus on new trends in language teaching that go beyond traditional concepts of "method" and instead concentrate on strategies that enable teachers to evaluate classroom practices and to generate techniques and activities for realizing teaching goals. Some of the specific topics will include "minimizing perceptual mismatches," "promoting learner autonomy," "fostering language awareness," "ensuring social relevance," and "raising cultural consciousness." Those topics will be connected to Second Language Acquisition theory where applicable, and to the connection to new technologies where possible.

ALTEC will not be able to guarantee an unlimited number of slots for the workshop, and we suggest that you RSVP to mark.knowles@colorado.edu as early as possible.

Refreshers

ALTEC's refresher program is expanding! We will be offering French, Spanish, German and possibly Arabic online refresher courses this summer. The refreshers are three-week, non-credit online language courses offered during the summer for a very small tuition. These new courses will allow second year students to review grammar and vocabulary and practice their listening, speaking, writing and reading skills from wherever they are! If you're interested in teaching a refresher this summer, please let us know!

Course Re-Design

Congratulations to Marcello Schincariol (Portuguese instructor), Sangbok Kim (Korean instructor), Patrick D'Silva (Arabic instructor) and Juliette Bourdier (French GPTI) for completing their course re-design projects! The projects will be showcased on ALTEC's new website (coming spring 2012) Unfortunately, this year ALTEC will only be able to fund one course redesign project. The maximum amount you may receive is $850. Priority will be given to those who have never received an ALTEC grant before. Download and fill out the application form from our website (http://goo.gl/dKDkW) and schedule an initial meeting with Mark Knowles by March 15th, 2012.

Swahili Pilot

This spring the ALTEC Directed Independent Language Study program received a major shot in the arm from two donations from two separate programs. A ten-week program for beginning Kiswahili will be funded by the ATLAS Institute, whose Master of Science in Information and Communication Technology for Development has a particular bent for East Africa. Classes are held twice a week at ALTEC, and are open to students from many disciplines both within and outside the ATLAS purview. The Center for Western Civilization is also funding a DILS Dutch class and a DILS Swedish class, both of which are dedicated to two graduate students in the College of Music who need those Germanic languages for their respective Ph.D. research, and who will be working one-on-one with native-speaker language partners who will help prepare them for fieldwork abroad.

News Streaming in the Media Library

ALTEC discontinued SCOLA. We are currently projecting foreign language news in the media library (group area at the back), using http://www.livestation.com/. If you'd like us to project specific news programs at particular times, please let us know. If you know of a better news-streaming site than the one we're currently using, please let us know and we'll switch!

Tech Bits:

- Yabla subscriptions are now available for Chinese and Italian in addition to French, Spanish and German. E-mail Mark.Knowles@colorado.edu to request licenses for you and your students.

- ALTEC added language resources pages for ESL, Hindi and Hebrew. The lists are pretty slim at the moment, so feel free to suggest additions (http://goo.gl/3Aa3x).

- The PCs in the media library have been replaced by Dell Optiplex 990.

- Remember you can check out our portable Smartboard system and turn any classroom into a smart classroom (you'll need a projector and white projecting surface).

- Changes to the current movie streaming setup will allow you to stream movies from inside D2L.