



# **Dimension 2012**

## **World Languages: Learners Wanted**

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## Review and Acceptance Procedures

### SCOLT *Dimension*

The steps by which articles are reviewed and accepted for publication in *Dimension*, the annual volume of the Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT), begin with the submission of a proposal to present a session at the SCOLT Annual Conference. Once the members of the Program Committee have made their selections, each primary presenter is invited to submit a manuscript that might be suitable for publication in *Dimension*.

Currently, only those persons who present in person at the annual Conference are eligible to have written versions of their presentations included in *Dimension*. The names and academic affiliations of the authors and information identifying schools and colleges cited in articles are removed from the manuscripts prior to review by members of the Editorial Board, all of whom are professionals committed to second language education. The initial draft of each manuscript is reviewed by at least two members of the Editorial Board, and one of the following recommendations is made: "accept as is," "accept pending revisions," or "do not publish." When revisions are necessary, those manuscripts are again reviewed by the original reviewers before a final decision is made.

Following the 2012 SCOLT Conference in Atlanta, several changes to *Dimension* will take place. First, it will appear every other year as a print publication. Second, editors will accept articles based on conference presentations as well as articles unrelated to a conference presentation for the review process. Authors will be able to submit work for consideration for publication without having to present a workshop/session at the annual conference.

Under the new guidelines, prospective authors interested in submitting original work to *Dimension* can submit directly to the editors via email (SCOLT.Dimension@gmail.com). While it is hoped that interested authors will attend SCOLT's annual conference and make a presentation, it is no longer a requirement for submitting work for consideration to *Dimension*. In order to increase the size and scope of the Editorial Review Board, top scholars and retired professionals with expertise in the related area are invited to serve as reviewers.

Currently, *Dimension* is indexed annually via the ERIC database. SCOLT is investigating additional avenues to make *Dimension* more accessible to the general public.

## 2012 SCOLT Editorial Board

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## Introduction

The Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT) held its annual conference March 22-24, 2012, at the Atlanta Marriott Century Center in Atlanta, Georgia, in collaboration with the Foreign Language Association of Georgia (FLAG) and the Southeastern Association for Language Learning Technology (SEALLT). Those individuals whose proposals were accepted for conference sessions or workshops were invited to submit a manuscript for review and possible inclusion in *Dimension 2012*. The articles selected for the present volume represent two topics of interest to professionals in the field of language teaching.

Lauren Davidson, family medicine resident at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, MA, and Sheri Spaine Long, Professor of Spanish with dual affiliation at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado (Distinguished Visiting Professor), seek to expand the teaching of medical Spanish to medical students. In their article, "Medical Spanish for U.S. Medical Students: A Pilot Case Study," they describe a one-week pilot course at The University of Alabama School of Medicine in January 2010.

The second article, "From Orality to Literacy: A Curricular Model for Intensive Second-Year Collegiate Language Instruction," discusses a curricular reform of the second-year German program in the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. As a response to institutional incentives to intensify and accelerate language programs, the department decided to replace the two three-credit-hour course sequence that previously represented the second year of German language instruction with a single intensive, accelerated six-credit-hour course. Per Urlaub (Assistant Professor of German, University of Texas-Austin) and Jan Uelzmann (Assistant Professor of German, Georgia Institute of Technology), describe the process and provide detailed information regarding the changes.

In the summer of 2010, the SCOLT Board invited Peter Swanson to serve as co-editor of *Dimension 2011* along with Carol Wilkerson. In the fall of 2010, Dr. Wilkerson stepped down as co-editor when she accepted a new position at Washington State University. A few months later Robert Terry (University of Richmond, Emeritus) was invited to serve as co-editor of *Dimension 2012*. Dr. Terry is known in the foreign language community having authored and/or edited more than fifteen books and numerous articles as well as having served as President of ACTFL in 1994.

The editors worked collaboratively with the Editorial Review Board, and they would like to extend their gratitude to them for having shared their time, knowledge, and expertise reviewing the articles submitted for inclusion in *Dimension 2012*. The time required to create each volume of *Dimension* is rather short (approximately 5 months) and working during the summer months can become problematic for a variety of reasons. Nevertheless, the members of the Editorial Review Board worked diligently during the summer and SCOLT sincerely appreciates their commitment to *Dimension*.

This volume of *Dimension* is unique because it features two articles and is provided to readers online for the first time. These articles will also appear in the 2013 printed edition as SCOLT moves to publishing *Dimension* in print every other year. The SCOLT Board feels that opening up the articles included for publication to both presenters and non-presenters, the interests of our language community can be better served. Of course, authors are always welcomed to share their works in person at the conference and receive immediate feedback as well as gratitude for

sharing timely information. Perspective authors are invited to make submissions no later than June of every year with the realization that the publication process is lengthy and that the printed editions will occur in the odd years beginning in 2013.

On behalf of the editorial team, we hope that readers will find the articles in this volume informative and helpful. During the conference, please thank the authors for taking time to write and revise the articles that you are about to read; thank the current and former reviewers for their assistance to their colleagues with the preparation of the articles; and thank the SCOLT Sponsors and Patrons for their ongoing financial support that makes *Dimension* possible.

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# 1

## Medical Spanish for U.S. Medical Students: A Pilot Case Study

**Lauren Davidson**

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### **Abstract**

*In an effort to expand the teaching of medical Spanish to medical students, a one-week pilot course was developed and implemented at The University of Alabama School of Medicine (UASOM) in January 2010. Objectives included offering a refresher course in Spanish for medical students before third-year clerkships and providing a model for medical schools interested in developing medical Spanish courses. The pilot course included the teaching of Spanish language and related cultural information to students at varying levels of Spanish proficiency by an experienced Spanish for Specific Purposes (SSP) instructor. Students completed an evaluation to suggest future directions for the course. The results suggest that a medical Spanish course for medical students can indeed be added to U.S. medical school curricula.*

### **Introduction**

We use language to communicate thoughts and information and to reveal our needs (Modern Language Association, 2007). In the medical field, language is a critical tool for delivering and receiving quality care.

In the U.S., many pre-medical students enroll in Spanish courses in secondary school and in college. Some medical students have taken Spanish for Specific Purposes (SSP) courses prior to medical school, but still lack the specialized vocabulary and specific Spanish language skills or proficiency level needed to interact with and care for their Spanish-speaking patients appropriately. Many medical students with some experience in the Spanish language seek out opportunities to maintain, practice, and expand these skills; however, these students find few options to do so during medical school, as specific courses in medical Spanish are typically absent from U.S. medical school curricula.

A review of the recent literature points to a deficit in high quality health care available to Spanish-speaking patients in the U.S. because of the inability of physicians and other health care providers to communicate effectively in languages other than English (Morales, Cunningham, Brown, & Hays, 1994). As of July 1, 2006, the Hispanic population in the U.S. totaled 44.8 million, which is

14.8% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006), making Spanish-speaking patients a part of any physician's practice.

Medical students have limited curricular and extra-curricular time for formal and informal language acquisition and maintenance. Because of time-constraints, there are few options to add Spanish classes to medical school curricula. To begin to work toward a solution, we developed a brief pilot course in medical Spanish for medical students, which took place at The University of Alabama School of Medicine in January 2010.<sup>1</sup>

A way to develop, fund, and pilot a medical Spanish course at UASOM became available through a program called the Scholarly Research Activity (SRA).<sup>2</sup> The only course length available for medical Spanish elective was a one-week intensive course. A course of this type has yet to be documented in the literature.

## Literature Review

Although the literature pertaining to the success of teaching medical Spanish to medical students is limited, there are a few institutions that have provided models of such courses. No medical schools offered the same one-week format as the UASOM pilot. The following models illustrate the demand for medical Spanish as well as a variety of responses. They show that the Spanish and the medical professions have indeed begun to work together. Because of the scarcity of comparable courses, we include examples that describe Spanish language education targeting undergraduate pre-medical students, medical students, medical residents, and established physicians, although the pilot course at this institution was taught to medical students alone.

The need for improved communication between health care providers and Spanish-speaking patients has been well documented by Morales et al. (1994): "Unsatisfactory communication [...] may result in lower quality of health care and poorer treatment outcomes". (p. 414) Some suggestions for improving communication between physicians and Spanish-speaking patients include "teaching medical Spanish to health care providers, educating health care providers about the health beliefs and practices of their patients, and developing clinical practice guidelines that ensure cultural competence" (Morales et al., 1994, p. 415).

The practice of teaching Spanish to established physicians has proven to increase patient satisfaction as well as decrease physician reliance on professional interpreters (Mazor, Hampers, Chande, & Krug, 2002). As future physicians, medical students should understand the importance of relying on professional interpreters when necessary. "Ensuring adequate clinician-patient communication is the clinician's responsibility, and time inefficiencies or other barriers should not become reasons to carry out inadequate communication" (Yawman et al., 2006, p. 472). At times, physicians may resort to using patients' family members as interpreters. This can lead to a high rate of errors in translation/interpretation, which may or may not have an impact on the medical care received (Prince & Nelson, 1995).

Prince and Nelson (1995) also comment that

Although one possible solution to the lack of interpreters is to increase the number of bilingual health care providers [...] attempts to increase the number of ethnic minorities have not been successful. Another solution would be to train health care providers to speak a second language. Unfortunately, these researchers were unable to find many programs that have implemented such an approach (p. 35-36).

The researchers of this study faced similar difficulties when searching for programs that have implemented Spanish courses, which leads to a belief that additions to the current literature describing courses at such programs would be beneficial to both academic and medical communities.

The literature establishes a rationale to teach medical Spanish to future physicians. Next it became necessary to identify the best way to accomplish this additional instruction. There have been various medical Spanish courses offered in the U.S. during the past few decades. A groundbreaking course in this field is described by González-Lee and Simon (1987) at the University of California in San Diego, School of Medicine, which took place in 1984. The course targeted second-year medical students and consisted of twelve to fifteen hours per week for three elective courses over three consecutive quarters of the academic year. Native Spanish-speaking physician preceptors permitted students to interview four to five Spanish-speaking patients per week, offering opportunities to practice Spanish within a medical and cross-cultural context. They also employed dialogues designed to facilitate the process of obtaining a medical history. This course was beneficial for students with minimal Spanish-language experience as it encouraged the development of skills useful for establishing rapport and thereby improving physician-patient interaction.

Another possible course option includes a longitudinal format that spans the full four-year medical school curriculum. At the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, medical students with intermediate to advanced Spanish language skills took part in didactic sessions, clinical role-playing, service-learning activities, and simulated patient cases. These students felt that the program “helped them to maintain or improve their Spanish-speaking and listening skills and to acquire medically relevant vocabulary” (Reuland, Frasier, Slat, & Alemán, 2008, p. 1035).

At the undergraduate level, universities across the U.S. have expanded their SSP courses to include medical Spanish. These courses are provided for students with previous Spanish instruction who may need to use these skills at a specific professional level in the future. The institution associated with UASOM offers one of the few SSP certificate programs in the nation at the undergraduate level. SSP courses allow the integration of general Spanish language skills with specific, professionally related Spanish instruction (Sánchez-López, 2010).

There are also options for Spanish language acquisition and maintenance in the private sector that are marketed to the medical community. One example is Ríos Associates that has been offering Continuing Medical Education courses in medical Spanish since 1983. They offer both four-day weekend courses in the U.S., as well as eight-day courses in Mexico. They focus on immersion in the Spanish language and include medically relevant vocabulary and grammar taught through games, role-playing, and group activities. Such courses are unique because a third party provider, not an academic institution, offers them. Additionally, they have an enrollment fee associated with them (Ríos Associates, 2010).<sup>3</sup> There are also a number of study abroad providers such as Spanishabroad.com and Amerispan.com that offer medical Spanish abroad to students and health care professionals at a cost to the individual.

Beyond the medical field, there are short courses in Spanish offered in the business field routinely. There are examples of short courses in business offered by a variety of educational institutions including Phoenix College, Boise State and the Community College of Rhode Island, and by employers such as Wachovia (Fajit, 2006; McCain, Ray, & Ellsworth, 2010; Phoenix College, 2008; Sign up for free preview, 2011). However, there is no evidence in the literature of a specific weeklong course in business Spanish for multi-level learners that can provide a curricular model or outcomes relevant to the present study. What stud-

ies in business and medical Spanish do have in common is that they document the need for these types of courses. The demand has been driven by societal needs over the last few decades. Because of the popularity of applied Spanish, there is pressure to simply be able to offer business and medical Spanish classes. Apparently the achievement of delivering these specific types of Spanish classes has overshadowed the necessity to document what they can provide to the learner and how best to deliver them.

Doyle points out the change from a traditional language-literature curriculum to the increasingly popular languages for specific purposes programs, and he traces the development of the business language curriculum during the last twenty years (Doyle, 2010). This shift and the establishment of language learning as a national priority by the Clinton administration have intensified the necessity of providing Spanish in a variety of formats (Coria- Sánchez, 2007). From the viewpoint of the traditional language educator, the unorthodox layout of a one-week language course that focuses on business or medicine is likely to be quickly discounted as an unviable set-up for language learning due to the short length. However, if language educators do not consider the need for non-traditional language learning and learners, the language education field may be missing a critical opportunity to expand (Doyle, 2010). There is a need to offer, develop, and conduct research on short courses in applied medical and business Spanish in order to improve the future curricula and learning outcomes as well as to extend the limited existing body of research.

### **The Pilot Course**

A pilot case study was proposed and formulated at UASOM and was made available to second-year medical students interested in improving their medical Spanish language skills. Students enrolled voluntarily and earned one Special Topics credit for participation in this pilot course.<sup>4</sup> Special Topics courses include mini-courses (one, two, or three weeks each) in many medical specialties and subspecialties, as well as in the arts and humanities. The option of a medical Spanish Special Topics course was proposed by the faculty at UASOM as the only way to add medical Spanish to the curriculum, although only a small number of students would be able to enroll in the course because of individual preferences for competing electives and scheduling restraints. A one-week course was the only format approved by UASOM at that time. The researchers acknowledge that a longer sequence of language instruction is optimal according to second language acquisition research (National Standards, 2006).

This one-week intensive course took place in four-hour instructional sessions over five consecutive days in January 2010. These sessions focused on grammar, medical vocabulary, oral and aural communication, and the integration of culture relevant to Spanish-speaking patients. On each of the five days, equal time (ninety minutes each) was given to teaching specific grammar and vocabulary. Following the direct instruction, students separated into pairs or small groups to focus on specific grammar and vocabulary by practicing dialogues and simulating the physician-patient interaction through role-playing. Instructional tools included one medical Spanish textbook, *Complete Medical Spanish* (Ríos & Fernández Torres, 2004). Topics covered in the bilingual textbook include but are not limited to greetings, chief complaints, body parts, internal organs, food/nutrition, pain, pediatrics, the emergency room, general physical, neurological and gynecologic examination, dermatology, laboratory tests, imaging studies, pharmacy and medications. The instructor also added realia such as visual aids (i.e., body part diagrams) and depictions/descriptions of clinical scenarios as additional instructional materials.

The course took place in Spanish. The instructor reported offering only occasional clarifications in English. During three class segments that were observed by the researchers, the instructor used no English.

Students were evaluated based on attendance and participation in sessions. In addition, a subjective course evaluation was provided to assess effectiveness of the course and to allow students to make suggestions for future course development. There was no summative assessment of Spanish-language skills following the conclusion of the pilot course, as a statistically significant improvement in language proficiency was not expected for a course of such brief length and given the small sample size.

The primary research questions, with the corollary questions were: (1) Can a one-week intensive course in medical Spanish be added to the curriculum at a U.S. medical school? (2) What types of activities would encourage enhanced communication skills of medical students with Spanish-speaking patients? (3) At what level of Spanish can the course be taught?<sup>5</sup>

Because of the experimental nature of the SRA, a formal “needs analysis” was not performed in order to establish goals and objectives. This was the first year of SRA at UASOM as well as the first formal course in medical Spanish taught there. The need for this course was based on anecdotal evidence from experiences of the researchers and faculty at UASOM, as previously described.

Participants included eight second-year medical students at UASOM. The class of 2012 was polled in May 2009 (Appendix A) to determine potential student interest in the proposed course, the availability of dates when the course could be offered, and their self-reported Spanish proficiency level. The students were presented with written descriptions of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency levels for speaking. The researchers recognize that students are not the best judge of their own level of language ability. However, we did not have ample access to the medical students prior to the first day of the course to administer any other type of proficiency level assessment. The course took place in January 2010 as this was the best time period for the SSP instructor’s schedule. Specific student demographic information is not included in this discussion because of the small sample size and privacy restrictions. The majority of students who enrolled identified themselves at the Novice-mid to Novice-high level based on ACTFL Speaking Proficiency Guidelines (1999). Also, all students self-identified as native speakers of English.

The course was taught by a native Spanish-speaking language instructor experienced in both general and medical Spanish with four years of experience of teaching Spanish for Specific Purposes at the same institution as the researchers. There were five main course goals and objectives proposed at the beginning of the SRA (Appendix B). These stated that the students will (1) learn how to conduct a medical interview in Spanish; (2) learn how to perform a physical examination in Spanish; (3) develop cultural competency working with Spanish-speaking patients by learning how to establish rapport with patients in their native language; (4) be able to discern the need for an interpreter; and (5) understand how to work with interpreters.

The researchers acknowledge that it is important to teach medical students and physicians to understand when it is appropriate and necessary to use an interpreter. With medical students at different levels of proficiency, it is essential not to instill a false sense of their ability to communicate and potentially jeopardize the health care of Spanish-speaking patients. Because of the different proficiency levels of the students, it was important to take into consideration the average level of Spanish in the student cohort.

The mini-course was developed with input from a variety of sources. Beginning with the literature review, the researchers isolated salient portions of

similar courses that have been successful in the past. This included targeting second-year medical students, using dialogues for practice (González-Lee & Simon, 1987); history-taking, integrating didactic sessions, clinical role-playing (Reuland, Frasier, Slat, & Alemán, 2008); and utilization of a SSP instructor (Sánchez-López, 2010). Formal interviews were conducted with two experts in the field of teaching SSP and one expert in the field of teaching medical Spanish at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, as well as one expert in the field of minority health at UAB. These interviews helped determine key elements in the course design, including what areas should be focused on or eliminated during the short course. For example, the need for students to understand when and how to use professional interpreters was scaled back due to limited time. Decisions about course curriculum were influenced by the adoption of an accessible and concise textbook and available realia to be used during instructional sessions. Also, the scope and sequence of the pilot course were shaped by the general curriculum used when teaching medical students how to gather patient historical information and perform a physical examination in English in the first and second years at U.S. medical schools.

Each day, the instructor dedicated ninety minutes each of teaching time to specific vocabulary and grammar. This included basic grammar such as verb conjugation, interrogative words, adjectives, pronouns, as well as themed vocabulary (i.e., taking a history, performing a physical examination), and pronunciation. Students were then given specific activities to perform that focused on form such as vocabulary and grammar practice, as well as more open-ended role-playing in pairs and small groups. This basic structure was followed each day during the weeklong course to allow for repetition and recall of learned material.

### **Data Collection and Findings**

Because of the short course length, the small number of participants, and their varied linguistic backgrounds, it was decided that measuring potential language gains would not give an accurate representation of the success of the course. For this reason, the measurement of Spanish proficiency was not a specific goal of this course. It was required that each student have prior experience at the introductory level of Spanish before participating in the course, which was self-reported on a questionnaire (Appendix A). Additionally, basic Spanish language skills were assessed via the online Web-based Computer Adaptive Placement Exam (WebCAPE) Foreign Language Placement Exam (WebCAPE, 2010). This exam consists of multiple-choice items and does not contain an oral or aural component.<sup>6</sup>

Following course completion, review included direct observation of three instructional sessions by one of the researchers who took procedural notes on day three of the course, discussions with the course instructor, and written course evaluations completed by the students (Appendix B). By comparing written comments from students with formal interviews, the researchers were able to triangulate some data and analyze information for future directions of the course. The course evaluations focused on both general questions to assess students' comfort level with their Spanish language skills (both in the medical and non-medical settings), as well as course-specific questions to assess instructional content and procure suggestions for improvement of future courses. In developing this course evaluation, the researchers gathered information from published sources as well as from discussions with faculty in the UAB Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures and the Minority Health and Research Center at UAB.

Other than self-reporting, there were no formal measures of language proficiency levels or gains used in the evaluation of course data. The analysis of

responses from formal interviews and student comments allowed the researchers to give more specific answers to the research questions.

Many medical students have studied Spanish language during their secondary and collegiate education. A course such as this pilot course helps serve as a bridge between these earlier experiences with Spanish and the experiences they will encounter during their third and fourth year clerkships. This course also helps fill a critical language-learning gap and allows students to add to their existing Spanish repertoire and basic understanding of the language by focusing on specific, medically-oriented vocabulary and grammar that can be used when interacting with Spanish-speaking patients. This course also has the potential to improve or, at the very least, help students maintain their Spanish language skills. One key outcome of this small study demonstrates that a medical Spanish course specifically targeting medical students can indeed be added to the curriculum at a U.S. medical school. This is significant because of the history of limited collaboration between faculty in U.S. medical schools and those who reside in language departments.

When comparing the research questions with data received, the researchers found that it was not possible to fully answer the second research question concerning what activities should be used to accomplish the proposed enhancement of communication abilities of medical students with Spanish-speaking patients, because of limitations of the pilot course. Given the information received from interviews with experts in the fields of SSP and teaching medical Spanish, it was clear that the classroom activities (i.e., role-playing, vocabulary practice) for teaching medical Spanish are similar to a general Spanish language course and the identification of new classroom activities for course delivery did not emerge from this study.

Since it was not feasible to split the course into different proficiency levels because of institutional limitations, it was necessary to offer a course that catered to multiple levels of Spanish-proficiency. Students were required to have prior Spanish language experience, were asked to communicate entirely in Spanish throughout the course, and were encouraged to integrate new vocabulary and grammar when simulating patient-physician interactions in the classroom with their peers. Although it was more complex to plan a course for students at multiple levels of Spanish proficiency, the instructor reported that students at higher levels of proficiency aided the students at lower levels of proficiency, which was an unforeseen benefit. The instructor also reported that it might be beneficial to split the course into two separate courses based on proficiency level. This was not possible due to the nature of this pilot course, but may be useful information for future courses. Some students enjoyed the intensity of a course that was taught primarily in Spanish, but also thought it may improve understanding if more explanations were given in English.

When the course was designed, it was decided that the course instructor would be an experienced SSP instructor who is familiar with SSP pedagogy. Another option that was considered for this course was a native-speaking physician. Although a physician would have a medically oriented perspective and would provide valuable insight for a course such as this, he/she would not be well versed in the specifics of how to teach language.

The instructor also reported that some medical students had difficulty pronouncing medical terms in Spanish, as many of these terms are cognates in English and may be spelled similarly but pronounced differently. These are terms that are easy for students to remember when conversing with their Spanish-speaking patients; however, if pronounced incorrectly, patients may not understand.

Each day the instructional session began with a unit of vocabulary, which was presented both directly and deductively, and a unit of grammar, both of which were related to taking a patient history and/or performing part of the physical

examination. Students were then able to practice their communication by employing this specific vocabulary and grammar. This provided direct feedback to students regarding their understanding of the material presented. During this time, students were able to role-play and mimic the physician-patient relationship and practice both asking and answering questions, which allowed them to improve upon their oral and aural communication simultaneously.

The instructor reported that some medical students had to shift their focus away from grammar to communication. A course such as this is different from the traditional Spanish for General Purposes courses that are concerned more with grammar, reading, and writing. In the SSP course for medical students, the focus is shifted to a primary emphasis on specialized oral communication.

Integrating culture into daily sessions is beneficial to understanding the lifestyle and health beliefs of Spanish-speaking patients. In this course, specific time was not set aside to solely discuss cultural information. This information was integrated as students asked questions and as issues arose throughout the course. It is important for students to understand the manner in which their Spanish-speaking patients view society, as well as how they understand the health system in the U.S. The strategy of integrating cultural explanations into vocabulary and grammar lessons allowed for a contextualized and an efficient use of limited class session time.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

This course has clear limitations regarding outcomes because it was a pilot course and there was only one small class of students who were eligible and available to enroll. With certain changes being implemented in the curriculum at UASOM, in future years there could be from one to four classes available to enroll in this course.<sup>7</sup> This may allow for the course to be split into various levels to customize the learning process. It would be beneficial for both the instructor and the students to split the course into multiple levels, as this would allow the instructor to better organize the course to target specific areas of need at each level.

With the time constraints of a one-week course it is difficult to balance time between presenting material and practicing implementation of newly acquired communication skills. Students were able to use class time (one hour per day for five days) to simulate patient-physician interactions. In the future it may be beneficial to add native-speaking physicians and native-speaking patients to this activity to allow students an opportunity for enhanced aural practice and to establish a more authentic context. Along these same lines, students specifically expressed a desire to have native Spanish-speakers available to assist in patient-simulation and physician-patient interaction through role-playing scenarios. It may also be beneficial to include experiential learning opportunities for the students at the conclusion of their one-week course. This may take the form of volunteering at a free clinic for Spanish-speaking patients in the metropolitan area or at one of the local hospitals or health clinics.

Although one of the course objectives was to include a discussion of when and how to use interpreters, this subject was not presented in the actual course because of time-constraints. The researchers understand the importance of such a topic and encourage the implementation of such a discussion in future courses.

### **Conclusions**

Even with considerable interest, it did not prove easy to add a mini-course to the medical school curriculum at UASOM. To illustrate that there was a

history and a desire to enhance medical Spanish on campus, a variety of medical Spanish courses had been informally proposed to the chairperson at the UAB Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at this institution between 2002 and 2009. In 2004, the undergraduate course “Spanish for Health Professionals” organized an informal, bi-monthly medical Spanish table for medical students at UASOM. This table was popular with medical students but was not sustainable over time. The one-week pilot course taught to the students at UASOM does provide one example of how medical Spanish can be taught to medical students. As mentioned previously, examples of medical Spanish courses specifically targeting medical students are rarely found in the medical language learning literature. The case study of a pilot course describing a one-week mini-course in medical Spanish offered to medical students that is embedded in a U.S. medical school curriculum has not been described previously.

Although the conclusions from a brief, pilot course are limited, this pilot course is a pioneering effort in a U.S. medical school with a curriculum that is steeped in tradition and known for excellence. The researchers anticipate that this course will be continued and refined at UASOM. This case study is an example of a starting point for this specific type of instruction embedded in medical school education. The pilot course received positive reviews from the medical students who enrolled. Principally, the students pointed out the benefit that the course had on potentially easing their interactions with Spanish-speaking patients and boosting their willingness to communicate as they look toward beginning their clinical rotations. By enriching medical education with Spanish instruction, we support the overarching goal of enriching the medical community and improving health care in the U.S. for Spanish-speaking populations.

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### **Endnotes**

1. In 2005, as an undergraduate Spanish major at UAB, Long taught a bi-monthly medical Spanish course for medical students as a volunteer and service-learning component of the “Spanish for Health Professionals” course. Some medical students and faculty expressed a desire for additional formal Spanish language instruction as part of the curriculum at UASOM.
2. The SRA is a required component of the third-year curriculum at UASOM, in which each student devotes twelve weeks to research. Goals of the SRA include providing students with an opportunity to employ their unique skills and talents to pursue a project of their choosing under the mentorship of an expert in the field; providing mentorship and guidance for students interested in careers that integrate research, teaching, and clinical service (academic medicine); fostering development of analytical thinking skills, rational decision-making, and attention to the scientific method; enhancing communication skills and self-directed learning (UASOM, 2010). The first author of this article, Davidson, worked with her mentor, Long, to produce this study for Davidson’s SRA.

3. Ríos Associates is a private outsourced option for Spanish language learning used by some U.S. medical schools, residency programs, and physicians.
4. Students at UASOM are required to earn five Special Topics credits during their four years of medical school. Time available for these courses occurs in six different months during their second, third, and fourth years
5. As this research involved the planning of a pilot course, it was difficult to know whether these questions could be answered specifically because specific parameters such as course length, class size, and students' language levels were not apparent at the project's outset. The researchers were intentionally vague when designing research questions at the beginning of the study and for this reason, some questions are not thoroughly answered at the study's conclusion.
6. The WebCAPE was used for screening because of its availability on the UAB campus. Instructors at the UAB Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures administer the WebCAPE foreign language placement test (2010) for placement of undergraduate Spanish students. The majority of students who enrolled in the pilot course placed themselves at the Novice-mid to Novice-high speaking proficiency level, with one student at the Intermediate level, based on ACTFL proficiency guidelines (1999)
7. At the time this course was developed, only second-year medical students were eligible to register. UASOM has changed its policy on Special Topics courses and now allows students in all four years to register for the same courses.

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## Appendix A: Initial Interest Poll

1. Would you be interested in taking a Special Topics course in medical Spanish?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Maybe
2. How much Spanish experience do you have?
  - a. None
  - b. High school - # years \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. College - # semesters \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Travel abroad – Where? \_\_\_\_\_ For how long? \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which week of Special Topics would you prefer?
  - a. July 27 – Aug. 2, 2009
  - b. Aug. 3 – Aug. 9, 2009
  - c. Jan. 4 – Jan. 10, 2010
  - d. Jan. 11 – Jan. 17, 2010
4. How would you rate your Spanish level?
  - a. **Novice-low**: no real functional ability, pronunciation may be unintelligible; may be able to exchange greetings, give identity and name familiar objects

**b. Novice-high:** conversation is restricted to predictable topics necessary for survival; rely heavily on learned phrases and what they hear from others; mostly short or incomplete sentences in the present; can sometimes respond in intelligible sentences but will not be able to sustain discourse

**c. Intermediate-low:** conversation is restricted to some of the concrete exchanges and predictable topics necessary for survival; speech is primarily reactive and struggles to answer direct questions or requests for information, but are able to ask a few appropriate questions; utterances are often hesitant and inaccurate; speech is characterized by frequent pauses and self-correction; can generally be understood by sympathetic listeners, particularly those used to non-natives

**d. Intermediate-high:** able to exchange basic information, though hesitation and errors may occur; able to narrate and describe in major time frames using connected discourse; may exhibit some features of breakdown; may include a reduction in vocabulary or a significant amount of hesitation; can generally be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, although the dominant language is still evident and gaps in communication may occur

**e. Advanced-low:** able to handle a variety of communicative tasks, although haltingly at times, able to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present, future) but control of aspect may be lacking at times; utterances are typically not longer than a single paragraph; structure of the dominant language is still evident in the use of false cognates, literal translations, or the oral paragraph structure of the speaker's own language rather than that of the target language.

**f. Advanced-high:** able to perform tasks with linguistic ease, confidence and competence, able to explain in detail and narrate fully and accurately in all time frames, able to provide a structured argument but patterns of error appear, language will at times break down or prove inadequate, may resort to description or narration in place of argument or hypothesis

**g. Superior:** able to communicate with accuracy and fluency, able to converse about a variety of topics in informal and formal settings, discuss their interests, explain complex matters with ease, fluency and accuracy

(Spanish levels adapted from the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Speaking, 1999)

## **Appendix B: Course Objectives**

The student will:

1. Learn how to conduct a medical interview in Spanish.
  - Chief Complaint
  - History of Present Illness
  - Past Medical History
  - Family History
  - Social History
  - Review of Systems
2. Learn how to conduct a physical examination in Spanish.
  - Naming (body parts)
  - General
  - Vital Signs
  - Skin
  - Head, Eyes, Ears, Nose, Throat
  - Neck
  - Breasts
  - Heart
  - Lungs
  - Abdomen
  - Genitourinary
  - Musculoskeletal
  - Vascular
  - Neurologic



# 2

## From Orality to Literacy: A Curricular Model for Intensive Second-Year Collegiate Language Instruction

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### **Abstract**

*This article documents a curriculum reform of the second-year German program at the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. This curricular reform had two goals: (1) compressing two semesters of intermediate-level language instruction into a single semester; (2) incorporating a strategy-based approach to literary reading in the second language. The article will first compare the previous curriculum and then introduce a conceptual framework for the reform process. This framework is based on three distinct pedagogical principles that the article will outline. Further, the article will describe the planning and implementation stages of the reform and trace decision-making processes that relate to the selection and design of teaching materials as well as teaching approaches that target at the intensification of the second-year curriculum. This approach emphasizes the explicit development of literary reading skills to facilitate the learners' transition into the upper-level curriculum. We conclude with concrete recommendations for departments that embark on similar projects.*

### **Introduction**

In late 2009, the language program of the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Texas-Austin embarked on a reform process of the second year of language instruction. Responding to institutional incentives to intensify and accelerate language programs, the department decided to replace the two three-credit-hour course sequence that previously represented the second year of German language instruction with a single intensive, accelerated six-credit-hour course. This structural change was implemented in the fall of 2010. It provided the opportunity to rethink and re-calibrate educational objectives and teaching approaches to intermediate foreign language education.

The article documents this reform process, which was led by the department's language program director, who was assisted by an advanced doctoral student. In addition to showing the structural differences between the old and the new curriculum, the article describes the conceptual framework that serves as a pedagogical foundation for the new second-year curriculum. This conceptual

framework rests on three pedagogical principles that the article describes. In addition, the article provides a detailed documentation of the planning stages and describes the implementation of the new curriculum. The article illustrates the reform process through a discussion of curricular and instructional materials, as well as an outline of a teaching approach that connects the intensified, accelerated second year of language instruction with the development of critical literacy skills. The article concludes with an outline of the limitations of our approach and provides a summary of our results in the form of a set of recommendations.

### **Structural Overview: Old Curriculum vs. New Curriculum**

Prior to the fall semester of 2010, the second year of German language instruction was organized as a sequence of two three-credit-hour courses. This course sequence was replaced by a single accelerated six-credit-hour course. The total number of contact hours, however, has remained constant at 90 hours of instruction. In the new intensive curriculum, learners meet three times a week for 100-minute lessons, which are twice as long as the 50-minute lessons that the old curriculum used.

### **Conceptual framework**

The new curricular structure also required a new pedagogy and provided faculty with an opportunity to rethink our ideas of collegiate second-year language instruction, to redefine educational goals, and to implement innovative teaching approaches that would help our students meet these new educational objectives. If one takes a closer look at collegiate intermediate language curricula in North America, one quickly discovers that, in contrast to beginning language instruction, there is very little consensus among practitioners about how exactly language curricula at the intermediate level ought to be organized. This lack of agreement is not only evident in the curricular materials published on departmental websites, it also manifests itself in a wide spectrum of intermediate-level textbooks, which use radically different pedagogies. In the case of German instruction in the United States, intermediate-level textbooks range from morpho-syntactic treatments of grammar (Donahue, 2008; Sparks & Vail, 2004), via textbooks that expand and deepen communicative skills developed in the first year (Augustyn & Euba, 2008), to materials that are designed to provide a bridge into a literature-centered upper-level curriculum (Motyl-Mudretzkij & Späinghaus, 2005; Teichert & Teichert, 2005). One of the reasons for this diversity of approaches and materials is the fact that there is no universally accepted model to represent the development of the multiple modalities that constitute intermediate- and advanced-level second-language abilities. As a result, individual departments choose educational goals, teaching approaches, and materials based on a local and often intuitive understanding of the needs of their students. Therefore, the first step of the curricular reform described in this article was a clarification of the goals of the lower-level language program based on the linguistic and literacy skills required of the learner in the upper-level courses. This redefinition had to expand beyond a purely proficiency-oriented model of linguistic skills in order to provide a pathway into the upper-level curriculum. This process resulted in the formulation of pedagogical principles that would guide decision-making processes. In what follows, we share the educational objectives of our second year that reflect the motivational diversity of the undergraduate student population at a large public Research I university that has a foreign language requirement. In addition, we also describe the three pedagogical principles that guided our reform.

*Diverse Educational Objectives as a Result of Diverse Learner Motives*

In our view, the second year of a language program must serve three distinct groups of learners who have somewhat conflicted motivations. The first group, consisting of undergraduate learners who do not intend to continue with the language after the completion of the foreign language requirement, forms the majority of language students in lower-division language classes at virtually all institutions that have a language requirement (Davis, Gorell, Kline, Hsieh, 1992). While some learner may be merely in the classroom in order to fulfill a language requirement, many of these learners nevertheless expect to reach a level of proficiency that will help them use the language in everyday encounters while traveling to countries where the target language is spoken. This pragmatic skill set can best be further developed through a highly interactive, communicative approach that is typical in beginning language learning environments. The language program is committed to serving students who are primarily driven by an instrumental motivation. This pragmatic skill set can best be further developed through a highly interactive, communicative approach that is typical in beginning language learning environments.

The second group includes undergraduate learners who do intend to continue with the language after the completion of the foreign language requirement. These students need to expand their abilities beyond a purely instrumental skill set. In addition to communicative language competencies, these learners need to start developing critical literacy competencies that will enable them to succeed in the upper-level curriculum, which consists of classes in which emphasis is primarily on cultural and literary studies. These students have to begin using language not only as an instrument, but also as an analytical and cognitive tool.

The third group we serve comprises those undergraduate students who have not decided if they intend to continue with the language after the completion of the foreign language requirement. Our goal is to attract undecided students into the upper-level undergraduate program by the selection of compelling content and a pedagogy that convinces learners of the learnability of literary and cultural analysis in the second language. Ideally, learners discover that it is not only possible but also intellectually highly stimulating to develop language skills through the analysis of texts and cultural artifacts.

These three varying objectives and motivations should be integrated in a culture-centered and communication-oriented curriculum, which is based on the following three pedagogical principles.

*Pedagogical Principle I: Advanced-level L2 Literacy is Teachable and Learnable*

Many language programs do not explicitly set a foundation for the development of advanced reading and writing skills at the lower level of the curriculum. Beginning textbooks of modern languages tend to devote very little room for the explicit training of critical L2 reading. These editorial decisions lead practitioners to intuitively assume that literacy skills transfer automatically from the native language into the target language, once the learner has achieved a certain level of linguistic proficiency. This transfer hypothesis, proposed by Cummins (1985), was debunked in the 1990s by Bernhardt and Kamil (1995). Their findings led to the development of the interactive-compensatory model of second language reading (Bernhardt, 2000, 2005, 2011). The model suggests that reading skills do not transfer automatically and effortlessly from the first language into the target language.

Second language reading instruction that focuses on the acquisition of learner strategies can facilitate the transfer process of literary reading skills (Urlaub,

2008). To this end the lead author designed a website (<http://wikis.la.utexas.edu/rcst/>) that teaches learners how to raise critical questions during their interaction with literary and cultural materials in the target language. The fact that in this environment the students learn how to generate questions inverts traditional classroom interactional patterns and thus contributes to the learners' self-reliance. More importantly, Rosenshine, Meister, and Chapman (1996), the National Reading Panel (2000), and Taboada and Guthrie (2006) identified the self-generation of questions in a large variety of educational contexts as a highly effective strategy to help readers critically comprehend written discourse. Specifically, the website designed for this course teaches students to generate four different kinds of questions to analyze literary texts: (1) basic content questions, (2) interpretive questions, (3) intercultural questions, and (4) global questions. The training also teaches learners to use their own questions to organize a critical response essay to literary texts. Throughout the semester, students refine this reading technique by submitting and discussing their questions on the course's online discussion board. Urlaub (2008) has assessed this approach to teaching literary reading in the second language in an experimental setting, and concludes that intermediate-level language learners benefit from explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies. They produce more sophisticated reactions to cultural content presented in the target language compared to learners who do not receive instruction in this particular reading strategy.

#### *Pedagogical Principle II: Skill-Oriented Approach to Cultural Analysis*

In spite of the recommendations about teaching culture expressed by the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (2006), many textbook publishers still design their materials based on the notion that teaching culture is merely the transfer of factual data. Using culture in language classes therefore means for many instructors to simply select, present, and contextualize cultural artifacts that the learner can appreciate with limited linguistic competences and background knowledge. Instructors may teach culture, but they often fail to teach cultural analysis (Galloway, 1998).

In order to teach learners to independently approach cultural artifacts critically, teaching culture must not be solely regarded in terms of appreciation or knowledge of objects, but as the development of an analytical skill. In order to achieve a desired level of interaction, critical cultural analysis—like critical reading—can be taught by means of instruction in the use of strategies. Urlaub (2008) suggests that the strategy-based approach to literary reading described above can also help learners produce more sophisticated reactions to discourse systems other than literature, such as film, visual arts, and music. Therefore, the new course also used the strategy-based approach described above when learners were asked to interact with these art forms.

#### *Pedagogical Principle III: Effective Use of Instructional Time*

The time that learners spend on-task must be managed carefully to help college students learn effectively in intensified, accelerated language learning environments. As a result of the limited amount of classroom space available due to the rapidly-growing undergraduate student body at the University of Texas at Austin, the new six-credit second-year class in German needed to be scheduled as three 100-minute meetings per week. Initially, we considered this situation as a challenge, because we had accepted the frequently repeated "fact" that adult learners have a maximum attention span of 20 minutes. Interestingly, there is no research that clearly establishes the length of the attention span for adult lan-

guage learners. Nevertheless, we concluded that a 100-minute session, even if the instructor schedules a break, could not be organized on the basis of a “warm up/three activities/cool down” pattern typical for beginning and early intermediate language instruction. Therefore, early in the planning stages we decided that the teaching methodology must take the realities of scheduling into consideration. The first half of each lesson, we decided, should be fully dedicated to the development and refinement of linguistic competencies in the form of meaningful grammar activities and the expansion of the learner’s vocabulary in a highly contextualized environment. The second half would allow students, mostly through a general deceleration and longer group-work sequences, to apply and solidify newly-acquired linguistic skills in a culture-centered, literacy-oriented environment.

## Planning

### *Fall 2009*

The planning of the curricular reform began in the fall semester of 2009. As a first step, we adopted — still in the context of the old curricular structure — a new textbook entitled *Stationen* (Augustyn & Euba, 2008). The response was positive among learners, in particular in regard to the textbook’s selection and presentation of socio-geographical content. Instructors also liked to work with *Stationen*, because its modular organization made it relatively easy to add or subtract elements.

### *Spring 2010*

In the spring of 2010, we received a professional development grant from the Texas Language Center that funded our course development activities. We used the spring semester to reacquaint ourselves with the research literature on recent curricular reforms in language programs, most notably the reforms undertaken at Stanford (Bernhardt & Berman, 1999) and at Georgetown (Byrnes & Kord, 2002), as well as publications that theorized and promoted systematic approaches to literacy development in foreign language departments (Maxim, 2006; Swaffar & Arens, 2005).

As Byrnes and Kord (2002) imply, a curricular reform requires the support of the entire department. Lower- and upper-level instruction must be tightly integrated. In order to get a better understanding of the entire undergraduate program, we visited those upper-level courses that most prospective majors and minors take immediately after they have completed the language requirement. Countless conversations with colleagues who teach upper-division courses in the department have refined our understanding of a second-year curriculum that we hoped would prepare and inspire language students at that level for upper-level work.

We continued to hold regular meetings throughout the summer to select cultural materials and literary texts. We also carefully analyzed the textbook and decided to concentrate only on those modules and activities that clearly supported the course’s educational goals. A few days before the first day of instruction, we introduced our course to the teaching staff who had been appointed to teach the accelerated second-year course. All four instructors were experienced graduate-level instructors with research emphases in German literature, cultural studies, and theoretical linguistics. We discussed the underlying principles and encouraged the group not only to make suggestions in terms of the cultural content, but also to further refine the conceptual framework that guided both our initial decisions and the teaching approach we had developed.

In addition, a few administrative processes needed to be completed. The language program director had to harmonize the new curriculum with the existing placement procedure, which at the University of Texas is conducted by a unit outside individual departments. Moreover, academic advisors outside the department had to be briefed about the new curricular structure, because it changed the pathway toward the fulfillment of the language requirement as well as the undergraduate minor or major.

### **Implementation**

#### *Fall 2010*

We phased in the new curriculum by offering three sections of the new course with a total enrollment of 73 students. During coordination meetings the instructors supported each other in the transition toward the revised learning goals and pedagogical principles. The instructors also collectively participated in the selection of reading materials and the design of activities. In addition, we had the opportunity to share the new curriculum at a variety of professional events with colleagues from different departments at the University of Texas as well as with colleagues at the high school and community college levels. The input of colleagues from inside and outside our institution was helpful in shaping our approach and provided us with rich feedback and helped us to adjust the curriculum.

#### *Spring 2011*

The experiences from the fall provided us with three insights. First, the course was successful overall. Performance on newly-designed exams and guided essays indicated that students left the course with a skill set that prepared them specifically for the demands of the department's upper-level curriculum. At the same time, more students moved on beyond the language requirement and enrolled in upper-division courses. Second, although the instructors were satisfied with the new course goals, teaching the course required, an exceptional commitment to teamwork and collaboration in addition to strong teaching skills. The instructors' feedback indicated that more specific pre-semester training was necessary. Third, we felt that there was too much content at the expense of substance. The class moved from one topic to the next in a hectic way. Therefore, we decided simply to skip one more chapter in the textbook and invest the resulting time in activities that intensified the learning and processing of a smaller volume of material. Over the winter, we made the necessary changes in the syllabus and course calendar.

### **From the Classroom**

In this section we share concrete classroom perspectives that relate to two issues: the selection of a textbook and the creation of supplemental the materials; and the research-based approach to teaching literary reading in the second language developed by the lead author.

#### *Teaching Materials & Supplemental Materials*

*Stationen* (Augustyn & Euba, 2008) served several functions for the course. First of all, the second-year German textbook provided the kind of commu-

nicative activities that are relevant both for students with a desire to leave the program after the fulfillment of the language requirement and those who intend to continue in the upper-level curriculum on the department. On the content side, the textbook has an emphasis on socio-geographic issues pertaining to Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. This content proved to be relevant for the majority of students. Students with a more instrumental motive for language study could relate to the idea of future travel experiences. Students who were more attracted to the cultures of the German-speaking countries could extract information that satisfied their interest. However, we were less impressed with the selection of longer texts made by the authors of *Stationen*, and we decided to replace these pages with other supplemental readings and activities. Although we certainly realize that there is no perfect textbook, our classroom experiences and our students' feedback confirmed our expectations that *Stationen* is an adequate textbook for the accelerated and intensified second year of German language instruction at the University of Texas at Austin.

We mainly relied on four kinds of materials and procedures to supplement the commercial textbook: interactive PowerPoint presentations; a parliamentary debate format; web-quests based on the websites of German alternative weeklies; and the *Steckbrief* (portrait) format. We describe these materials and procedures below.

The introductory PowerPoint presentations, eight slides each, present the main cultural topics of the particular city treated in the chapter and thus provide a schema for the students to ease them into the topic during the first session of each new chapter. All presentations have the same basic structure. The slides are of increasing intellectual complexity. The presentation opens with visual input combined with open-ended questions in order to trigger discussion, critical reflection, and communicative group work activities. After providing opportunities to analyze famous quotations about the particular city, each presentation ends with the introduction of phrases that might be used in a discussion that is thematically connected to the chapter. We consciously designed presentations that consistently prompt the kind of communicative activities that provide learners with opportunities to interact with each other.

The communicative skills introduced and practiced through the PowerPoint presentation were reiterated throughout the chapter and took an important role in a discussion format that we designed to conclude each chapter: the parliamentary debate. This format provides a context for an advanced and in-depth discussion of socio-political topics. Students grouped themselves according to political party affiliation, so the classroom became a small version of the German parliament, the *Bundestag*. The instructor took the role of the Speaker of the parliament. Students had to work in their parties on statements and questions regarding cultural topics, such as "Should Germans be proud of their country?" or "Should there be another Love Parade in Berlin?" The focused group activity phase learners presented and questioned these statements in the simulated plenary.

In addition to these two formats, we designed web-quests that provided students with task-based activities to interact with the websites of German alternative weeklies, such as Hamburg's *Oxmox* ([www.oxmoxhh.de](http://www.oxmoxhh.de)) or Berlin's *Zitty* ([www.zitty.de](http://www.zitty.de)). Students had to peruse the website in order to find the answers to questions eliciting very specific information, such as what band would play in a specific venue in Munich that night, or what plays were being shown on Berlin's theater stages during the upcoming weekend.

The *Steckbrief* (portrait) format represents another tool that we designed in order to help students navigate through difficult authentic materials. In this activity, students learn to extract specific biographical information from expository texts that describe celebrities who come from the particular German city under discussion. A worksheet provided students with an advanced organizer. These

exercises encouraged students to generate questions they might ask the famous person in an interview. The exercises helped students develop the same kind of reading comprehension strategies they had learned to apply to the longer readings.

### *Approach to teaching literary reading in the second language*

We decided to replace all the textbook materials for sustained reading with supplementary readings. This decision was based on our experiences with *Stationen* in the previous year. The main disadvantage of *Stationen's* text selection and activities was that they did not help our students develop the literary reading skills required for success in our upper-level curriculum.

We decided to implement an approach to teaching literary reading in the second language based on instruction in reading comprehension strategies. At the beginning of the semester, the learners completed the reading comprehension strategy training described above on the website specifically designed to support the new German curriculum (<http://wikis.la.utexas.edu/rcst/>).

Since the upper-level German curriculum at the University of Texas at Austin has an emphasis on literary and cultural studies, the texts that we selected and the activities we designed needed to fulfill several functions. These texts needed to be compatible with the strategies taught for literary reading. We also decided that in our particular departmental purposes the texts should be part of the literary canon so that learners will enter the upper-level German curriculum with high self-efficacy based on their positive experience with literary discourse in the target language. Finally, the texts should provide a thematic connection to the topic and city discussed in *Stationen*. As a result, we selected the following three texts: A fictional letter from Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks Verfall einer Familie* (1901/1989); Wolfgang Borchert's *Die drei dunklen Könige* (1946/2007); and Heinrich Böll's *Anekdote zur Senkung der Arbeitsmoral* (1963/2006). With this decision, we arrived at an effective course package that aptly emphasized the cultural literacy ambitions of our curriculum redesign.

### **Limitations**

The article offers a limited view of our process, in that it is a descriptive study and does not include quantitative data that empirically demonstrates that the actual learning outcomes of the new curriculum are similar or superior to those of the previous model. Systematic benchmark data did not exist. Moreover, it was the intention of the curriculum reform to change learning goals and to supplement a language proficiency-oriented approach with instruction towards the development of a literacy-oriented skill set. Due to this substantial change in content and learning objectives between the old and the new curriculum, measurements taken before and after the change could not accurately indicate an improvement. For example, if one had chosen a proficiency-oriented assessment tool like the ACTFL scales and procedures to measure oral and/or writing proficiency, this instrument would not have fully represented the broader skill set that the new curriculum fosters. Therefore, the lack of benchmark data and substantial changes meant that our indication for student learning relies exclusively on unsystematic data: the learner's performance on tests and essays, their feedback at the end of the semester, and the comments of their instructors.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Developments that lead to curricular reform in language programs are often perceived as negative events. This was not different at the University of

Texas, where a budgetary reallocation process led the administration to promote the development of intensified and accelerated curricula in individual language departments. Not all stakeholders welcomed this development. In the context of the reform described in this article, however, this seemingly negative situation became a positive catalyst that inspired the department to re-conceptualize curricular structures and pedagogical parameters. The reform we undertook toward an intensified curriculum that more explicitly fosters cultural literacy would not have been implemented so quickly without the input received from the administration and the support of the Texas Language Center.

Reforming the second-year German language curriculum at the University of Texas has not only served the interests of the department and the undergraduate students, it has also provided an opportunity for professional development among graduate instructors. Collaboration with the language program director during the planning and implementation phases has provided graduate instructors with an understanding of the pedagogical and administrative procedures that accompany curriculum reform. These insights are extremely valuable when graduate students apply for junior faculty positions. Therefore, we strongly recommend working closely with graduate students in these processes. Graduate instructors at many institutions carry the bulk of the language teaching load, and therefore are very sensitive to what is best for undergraduate students. Appropriate participation in curricular development serves as a great opportunity to familiarize future professors with the pragmatic aspects of their prospective job.

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