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General Information

The Reading Proficiency Interview (RPI): A Rapid Response Test Development Model for Assessing Reading Proficiency on the ILR Scale

Lauren Kennedy and Charles W. Stansfield*

The Reading Proficiency Interview (RPI) is a new reading proficiency test format that was created in response to the US government's need to rapidly produce a cost effective and credible reading proficiency assessment format for small-population languages. The RPI was developed in response to a requirement by the National Language Service Corps for an instrument that could be rapidly developed for small volume languages, including those where the need for the testing capability might be short lived. This article discusses the format, development and piloting of the RPI in a language for which no existing proficiency test exists. The format can be applied to other languages, while what was learned from the piloting should be useful to those who apply the format to languages where few highly literate native readers are available.

Project Background

In the 2006 Defense Authorization Act, the US Congress called for the Secretary of Defense to initiate a pilot program to determine the feasibility of establishing an organization of Americans who speak languages other than English to support Federal agencies in times of crisis or national need. A pilot project was funded and placed within the National Security Education Program (NSEP). NSEP then published a request for proposals and eventually General Dynamics Information Technology (GDIT) was awarded a contract to manage the development and pilot testing of the program, which was named the National Language Service Corps (NLSC).

The purpose of the ongoing multi-year Pilot program is to develop, test, and evaluate the NLSC concept of operations (CONOPS), and to develop plans and recommendations for a fully operational NLSC in FY 2010. The Pilot phase includes the goals of recruiting, evaluating, and enrolling 1,000 Charter Members and activating 20 to 30 of these Charter Members in three activation exercises with federal agencies.[1] The Pilot is also limited to ten languages that represent languages spoken in Africa (Hausa, Swahili, Somali), Asia (Hindi, Indonesian, Mandarin, Thai, Vietnamese), Eastern Europe (Russian) and the Pacific Islands (Marshallese). Within a few years after full implementation, the NLSC is expected to include up to 30,000 members in over 150 languages (NLSC, 2009).

As indicated on the NLSC website, the following criteria were established prior to selecting the Pilot languages:

1. The languages should be critical to the short and long term needs of US national security.

2. There must be a sufficient number of persons residing in the US who are proficient in these languages.

3. For some languages, it must be difficult to locate and recruit speakers with the necessary skills.

4. For each language, listening, speaking, and reading proficiency tests must be available. (NSEP, 2008).

5. The NLSC should identify members with high level language skills.

As stated above, one of the languages chosen was Marshallese. Although Marshallese does not fulfill all of the above criteria, it does fulfill some. Also, a government agency, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), agreed to participate in an activation exercise if Marshallese was chosen. One problem for Marshallese was that no language proficiency tests were currently available in the language. Another was that it is difficult to locate high proficiency users of the language, especially within the US. Given the discrepancy between the above requirements and the language chosen by the Department of Defense (DoD) for inclusion in the Pilot, it was necessary to develop a reading proficiency test for the language. It was also determined that the situation presented an opportunity to develop and pilot a new test development capability, for languages like Marshallese, where no proficiency tests exist.

The Marshallese Language

Marshallese is one of the two official languages of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), the other being English. There are about 54,065 native speakers of Marshallese living in the RMI (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2009). In addition, a considerable number reside in the United States. While estimates vary considerably, there is agreement that the largest number of Marshallese reside in Arkansas, followed by Hawaii, and Oregon. In Arkansas alone, there are as many as 12,000 Marshallese (Wood, 2008), while the number living in Hawaii and Oregon is much smaller. Most Marshallese in Arkansas and Oregon work in the poultry industry.

Marshallese belongs to the Austronesian family of languages, which includes most Polynesian languages. The two major Marshallese dialects are Sunset, the more prestigious dialect spoken in the capital and on the western islands, and Sunrise, a dialect spoken on the eastern islands; other minor dialects are spoken on remote islands that are part of the RMI.

Until recently, Marshallese was largely a spoken language with no standardized grammar, vocabulary, or spelling. Efforts to standardize the grammar and spelling system with the use of diacritics have met with limited success. For example, diacritics are still not used by the Marshall Islands Journal, the major newspaper on the islands. Due to lack of standardization, it is not uncommon to find words spelled in a different manner from island to island, or even from school to school. There are also quite substantial differences in usage across dialects.

The language of education on the Marshall Islands is English. Although elementary school students receive some education in Marshallese, most elementary and all secondary education is in English, and all textbooks are in English. Similarly, the language of instruction at the RMI's only post-secondary institution, a community college, is English. As a result, while the Marshallese are comfortable speaking their language, and most can read it to some degree, their literacy in Marshallese varies considerably. Also, comparatively few texts are written in Marshallese, even on the RMI.

Thus, educated Marshallese are often more comfortable reading or writing in English than in Marshallese. On the other hand, those with only an elementary school education are often more comfortable reading in Marshallese than in English.

NLSC Pilot Program Language Testing Requirement

The requirement for a language proficiency test in NLSC Pilot languages is crucial since, "the NLSC certifies the language skill proficiency levels of its Members who must generally possess ILR [Interagency Language Roundtable] 3/3/3 Proficiency (Listening/Reading/Speaking) in a foreign language and in English" (NLSC, 2009). Indeed, the principal purpose of the NLSC Pilot application document is, "to allow U.S. citizens 18 years and older with language and special skills to self-identify these skills by completing NLSC Self Assessments as an initial indicator of language proficiency. Those selected for activation and deployment will be officially tested and certified to validate NLSC Self-Assessment skills and to satisfy external requirements" (Department of Defense, 2008).

In the fall of 2008, the NLSC received an invitation from the CDC to participate in a simulated health emergency activation exercise. The simulated emergency would involve an outbreak of avian flu in Arkansas affecting many Marshallese workers and their families. During the exercise, Marshallese interpreters would be needed to assist the CDC in communicating public health messages to the Marshallese community. The NLSC was to provide a member with the requisite language proficiency, i.e., an ILR 3/3/3/ in Marshallese and English. In order to provide such a member, it would be necessary to test proficiency in both English and Marshallese.

Because no proficiency measures existed for Marshallese, the NLSC requested the assistance of ACTFL (the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language) and SLTI (Second Language Testing, Inc.) to develop the capability to certify NLSC members' proficiency in Marshallese Speaking, Listening, and Reading up to ILR Level 3. The NLSC's second goal in requesting the assistance of ACTFL and SLTI was to develop methods, procedures, and test formats to rapidly produce cost effective and credible Speaking, Listening, and Reading proficiency assessments for small-population languages on the ILR scale that could be replicated for other test development projects once the NLSC becomes fully operational. The rapid development of testing capabilities in Marshallese was viewed as a model that might fit many other languages in the future.

ACTFL and SLTI worked together to propose to the NLSC how to handle such a requirement. It was decided that precedents for the model exist within the ILR system as used over the years by different government agencies. These precedents involve the use of interview formats for assessing all three skills. In years past, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) used the oral proficiency interview format to test both listening and speaking proficiency. Thus, the same interview produced both a Speaking rating and Listening rating on the ILR scale. The interviewer (or "examiner" as they are called at the FSI) focused on the interviewee's listening comprehension during the interview in addition to their speaking proficiency. Indeed, some question types, such as the descriptive prelude which focuses on listening comprehension, remain a standard part of the ACTFL/ILR Oral Proficiency Interview (hereafter OPI).

The OPI is a standardized procedure for the global assessment of functional speaking ability. It is a face-to-face or telephonic interview between a certified ACTFL tester and an examinee that determines how well a person speaks a language by comparing his or her performance of specific listening and speaking communication tasks with the criteria on the ILR scale. ACTFL currently uses the OPI to assess candidates in 48 languages (LTI, 2009) for US Government agencies and contractors and is constantly increasing the number of languages in which OPIs are available. Normally, only a rating for Speaking proficiency is given as part of an OPI. However, as part of this project, OPI testers were trained to provide a proficiency rating for Interactive Listening. The OPI takes approximately 15 to 35 minutes to administer depending on the listening and speaking proficiency of the candidate.

ACTFL and SLTI agreed that the OPI should be utilized to obtain both a Speaking and Listening proficiency rating. ACTFL and SLTI also decided that SLTI should develop an interview-based reading test, which could be administered immediately following the OPI by the same trained OPI interviewer. Thus, the solution proposed by the two organizations was to train a small number of highly proficient and literate bilingual speakers of English and Marshallese to become OPI testers and for SLTI to develop an interview-based reading test and train the same OPI testers to administer this newly developed reading test. The resulting reading test format, the Reading Proficiency Interview, or RPI, is the focus of this paper.

Review of Existing Proficiency Test Options

While the ILR skill level definitions (SLDs) for reading describe the reader's comprehension at different levels on the ILR scale (ILR, 1985), the SLDs do not prescribe how reading shall be tested. There are three ways that this has been done in the US Government language teaching and testing community: multiple-choice testing, constructed response testing, and an oral interview format.

The current iteration of the Defense Language Proficiency Test 5 (DLPT5) employs a multiple-choice format for most languages in which reading is tested. As Child (1988) noted, in the multiple-choice format, we are not able to actually see evidence from the student that he or she comprehended the text. Instead, the student shows this indirectly, by marking the correct answer on an answer sheet or on a keyboard or computer screen.

For small volume languages, the format of the DLTP5 is a constructed response test (CRT). In this case, the examinee writes answers in English, the native language of most examinees who take the DLPT5, to written questions that follow each reading passage. The CRT consists of several passages and a total of 60 items. Written answers are scored dichotomously (as right or wrong) by a human rater. The rater must determine for each answer whether the examinee demonstrated the comprehension of the text that was requested by the question. Most answers are short, but some can be described as extended responses. Still, regardless of response length, all items on the CRT are scored dichotomously.

For a few years the DLI used a two-skills interview to validate an earlier version of the DLPT. In the reading comprehension component of the DLI two-skills interview examinees were asked to read texts and then answer particular questions about it. Interviewers rated responses similarly to how rating is done in a CRT, but, unlike in

a CRT, interviewers were allowed to ask minimal follow-up questions, and the test was adaptive. For more information on the DLI two-skills interview, please contact the Test Development Division, Evaluation and Standardization Directorate, DLIFLC. Because this test is no longer in use, it was not a candidate for assessing the reading proficiency of NLSC applicants.

The DLI has also used a reading interview as part of a Diagnostic Assessment (DA) to support classroom instruction. It is especially useful with students at higher levels. In this procedure, the DA reading interview follows an OPI. Thus, the tester has some knowledge of the examinee at the start of the reading interview. This knowledge is used to select the first text, which is normally chosen at the examinee's estimated level of proficiency. Three texts are used, and the second and third texts often progress in level of difficulty. The student reads the text silently, and then answers questions about the text. Because the interview supports follow-up classroom instruction, the tester may ask the student specific questions to identify which aspects of morphology, syntax, structure, vocabulary, idioms, or sociolinguistic background the student doesn't know. While based on proficiency concepts, the purpose of the interview is to gain specific knowledge of the examinee's weaknesses and to use this information dynamically to develop an instructional packet for subsequent use. More information on the DA reading interview can be found in Cohen (2003).

A formal reading proficiency interview has been used for many years at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI). The FSI reading test is generally administered at the same time as the FSI listening and speaking proficiency tests. The FSI reading test involves a face-to-face interview between an FSI Testing Team (TT), consisting of a FSI-trained Examiner and Tester, and an examinee. During the test the examinee is required to read a number of texts in the target language in specified time periods and then report on their content orally in English to the TT. During the test, the TT may elicit further information from the examinee through a form of indirect questioning about the reading texts to determine the examinee's level of comprehension. At the end of the test, the examinee leaves the testing room and the TT evaluates the examinee's performance against specific FSI criteria and determines a level of proficiency relative to the ILR reading proficiency SLDs. Once the TT reaches a consensus on the appropriate ILR rating, the TT delivers the test results directly to the examinee, providing not only the ILR proficiency level, but also feedback on the examinee's strengths and weaknesses in comprehending reading texts in the target language.

None of the above options was available for Marshallese. No texts had been selected or leveled and no interviewers had ever been trained for this language.

Method

At the outset of test development, SLTI identified project specific and logistical constraints that influenced the eventual format of the RPI. These constraints are summarized below.

1. Maximum of eight weeks to develop the test and train testers to administer the test.
2. Test administration is over the telephone and/or internet.
3. Test administration time is a maximum of 25 minutes.

4. Reading texts are rated at ILR Level 2 or 3.
5. Test content represents a range of topics of interest to the target culture and a general audience.
6. The examinee reads a minimum of two and a maximum of three passages during the test.
7. Test question are written in the target language.
8. The tester immediately scores an examinee's performance using a holistic scale and answer key.
9. The tester can adapt the test to the reading abilities of the examinee to establish a clear 'floor' and 'ceiling' of consistent functional reading ability.
10. The test produces scores that are convertible to and interpretable on the ILR scale.
11. Final test scores range from a minimum of ILR Level 1+ to a maximum of ILR Level 3.

Participants

Test development team at SLTI

The lead RPI test developers were the authors of this study, Dr. Charles W. Stansfield and Lauren Kennedy of Second Language Testing, Inc. Both Dr. Stansfield and Ms. Kennedy have been trained in the ILR scale by the Defense Language Institute and have worked with the ILR scale in other US government language testing contexts.

Marshallese language informant

A Marshallese-English subject matter expert (SME), who is a translator and the Marshallese language arts coordinator for the RMI Department of Education, assisted SLTI during test development. Before test development began, SLTI staff trained the SME to use the ILR scale using benchmark English texts.

RPI Testers

Four native speakers of Marshallese were trained to be RPI testers at a 2.25 day training session at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Testers were selected based on their professional and education background, duration of education and professional experience in the RMI, contact with the Marshallese communities in the RMI, Hawaii, and Arkansas, and availability to attend the training session in Hawaii. The three female testers selected worked as English-Marshallese court interpreters in Hawaii. The one male tester was retired and lived in the RMI but frequently traveled to Hawaii. He had previously held public office in the RMI and worked as a native Marshallese informant for a University of Hawaii study of the Marshallese language. These same testers were also trained as OPI testers by ACTFL immediately prior to being trained as RPI testers. All Testers were compensated for their participation in OPI and RPI training.

Instrument Development

RPI Reading Passage Development

There are very few texts in the Marshallese language above ILR Level 2. This is because on the Marshall Islands most primary and all secondary education occurs in English. Furthermore, until recently there was no standard written Marshallese, and there remains no widespread acceptance or use of the standardized alphabet, spelling system, and grammar that has been proposed by linguists. Combined, these factors made passage selection for the RPI difficult.

To address these difficulties, SLTI used three methods to select reading passages for the RPI.

1. Locate authentic Marshallese texts and modify these texts (as needed) to conform to the new standards of Marshallese spelling and grammar.
2. Locate authentic English texts about issues on the Marshall Islands written for a Marshallese audience, and translate these texts into Marshallese using standard Marshallese spelling and grammar.
3. Locate authentic English texts of interest to a general audience, and translate these texts into the Marshallese language using standard Marshallese spelling and grammar.

Only texts rated at ILR Level 2 or 3 were considered for inclusion in the RPI since the NLSC has little interest in individuals with proficiency below ILR Level 2, nor does it need to certify proficiency above Level 3.

To help find authentic Marshallese texts, SLTI relied on its Marshallese SME. After being introduced to the ILR scale using benchmark English texts, the SME searched the Internet and his personal files for Marshallese publications that would be appropriate for the Marshallese RPI. To ensure the Marshallese texts were at the appropriate ILR level and contained appropriate content, he sent English synopses of Marshallese texts to SLTI before preparing a full translation of the text. If the language and content appeared appropriate to the ILR level, the SME was then authorized to prepare a full translation of the text into English. After receiving the English translation, Dr. Stansfield and Ms. Kennedy decided whether to include the text in the bank of approved RPI texts. Three of the final eight Marshallese RPI texts were selected using this method.

To find English texts intended for a Marshallese audience, SLTI searched the Internet for English passages that could be translated into Marshallese. The most relevant source found was the weekly bilingual *Marshall Islands Journal* (www.marshallislandsjournal.com) which prints news items of interest to the Marshallese community in English and/or Marshallese. Some news items in this journal appear in both English and Marshallese, although most appear only in English. Once the English texts were selected, the SME translated the texts into standard Marshallese. Four texts in the RPI text bank were selected from the Marshall Islands Journal using this method.

One text in the RPI text bank was selected from general-interest English language materials. This text was chosen for its content, length, ILR level, and relevance to a general audience. Once approved by SLTI, the SME translated this text into Marshallese.

RPI Reading Comprehension Question Development

Short-answer questions, similar to those found on the CRT format of the DLPT5, were developed for the RPI.

First, SLTI wrote seven to twelve reading comprehension questions per text in English using the English translation of the reading texts. SLTI also prepared an answer key consisting of a list of possible answers to each question. Following an internal process of review and revision, SLTI worked collaboratively with the SME to revise and translate the reading comprehension questions and the key.

The SME first reviewed the English questions for cultural bias and sensitivity and for their translatability into Marshallese. Questions that did not pass this review were either revised or removed based on the SME's feedback. Next, the SME translated the questions and answer keys into Marshallese, and recommended revisions based on his knowledge of the Marshallese language and culture. Finally, the SME reviewed all questions and answer keys to confirm that the reading comprehension questions remained appropriate measures of Marshallese reading comprehension at ILR Levels 2 and 3.

To ensure different reading skills and levels of comprehension could be captured by the RPI, the accepted reading comprehension questions were divided into four categories, *Warm-up*, *Phase I*, *Phase II* (using Level 2 or 3 texts), and *Wind-down*. These categories became the sequential administrative phases of the RPI.

The Warm-up phase elicits an examinee's global understanding of the text. Three Warm-up questions, only one of which is asked during RPI administration, permit the evaluation of global understanding and general comprehension of the initial Level 2 text.

Phase I, the second part of the RPI, is more or less similar to the Level Check phase of the OPI. Phase I questions assess the main idea, supporting points or details, and basic connections between information on the initial Level 2 text. Phase I questions also assess general vocabulary knowledge related to the topic of the text.

Phase II, which for the successful reader of the initial Level 2 text is administered using a Level 3 text, is more challenging and therefore closer to the Probes phase in an OPI. Phase II questions are higher level questions that require knowledge of specialized or technical vocabulary, the ability to make connections between information presented in the text, and make inferences related to passage content, author(s) attitudes, and author(s) purposes for writing the text. Ten to twelve high level questions accompany each Level 3 reading text, although the interviewer must ask a minimum of six questions from two categories during this part of the RPI.

The final Wind-down phase, normally comprised of one question, is an easy text-specific vocabulary and/or key point question. One or two Wind-down questions were created for each reading text.

The number of reading comprehension questions per reading text is provided in Table 1. For each text introduced, the examinee may walk the interviewee through all required phases, including Warm-up, Phases I and II, and Wind down. The warm-up and wind down are largely for psychological purposes and contribute little to the measurement value of the test. Nonetheless, they take little time and contribute to the overall success of the procedure.

Table 1: *Number of Reading Comprehension Questions per Marshallese RPI Reading Passage*

Reading Text	ILR level	Warm-up*	Phase I	Phase II**	Wind-down*	Total
A	2	3	6		1	10
B	2	3	5		1	9
C	2	3	7		1	11
D	2	3	6		1	10
E	2	3	5		1	9
F	3	3		10	1	14
G	3	3		11	2	16
H	3	3		12	2	17

* During the test, the tester selects one question from the provided list of possible questions

** During the test, the tester selects six to eight questions from the provided list of possible questions

RPI Rating Scale and Rating Procedures

During the RPI, the tester considers the examinee's responses to the reading comprehension questions focusing on the examinee's global performance over the

course of the test. With the aid of an answer key, the tester evaluates the examinee's understanding of the reading texts and calculates the final rating.

The Marshallese RPI was designed to follow the general approach of the Marshallese OPI, in that it assesses Marshallese reading proficiency at ILR Levels 1+, 2, 2+, and 3, although ratings reported by the RPI are:

- Below ILR Level 1+
- ILR Level 1+
- ILR Level 2
- ILR Level 2+
- ILR Level 3 or Above

Although the RPI could be used to assess other ILR levels, developing a Marshallese reading proficiency test at the bottom (0 to 1) and top (3+ to 5) of the ILR scale was beyond the needs of NLSC.

To rate examinee performance, the tester uses a score sheet to record the examinee's responses to the Level 2 texts questions as *Below Level 2*, *At Level 2*, or *Above Level 2*. Similarly, the tester rates the examinee's responses to the Level 3 texts' reading comprehension questions as *Below Level 3*, *At Level 3*, or *Above Level 3*. As the tester listens to the examinee's response to a particular question, he or she rates the level of the response. Once all required reading comprehension questions have been asked, the tester globally evaluates the examinee's overall performance on the ILR scale and

uses the information recorded on the score sheet to obtain an overall rating for each text administered during the RPI.

While the rating is holistic in nature, raters are initially assisted by the following general guidelines. In general, the examinee must answer at least 70% of the reading comprehension questions on the Level 2 text *At Level 2* or *Above Level* 2 in order qualify for receiving a Level 3 reading passage from the tester. Similarly, the examinee must answer at least 70% of the Level 3 reading comprehension questions *At Level 3* or *Above Level 3* to receive an ILR rating of 3 or above. An examinee who responds to less than 70% of the Level 3 reading comprehension questions *At Level 3* or *Above Level 3* may receive an ILR rating of 2+ or 2, depending on his or her overall performance on the Level 2 and Level 3 passages. To receive a rating of 2+, the examinee must respond correctly to half of the items on the Level 3 text, while to receive a rating of Level 2 rating, the examinee would respond correctly to less than half of the items on the Level 3 text, while still having answered correctly at least 70% of the questions on the level 2 text. To receive a rating of 1+, the examinee must respond correctly to between half and 70% of the items on the Level 2 text, and to receive a rating of *Below 1+* the examinee would respond to less than half of the items on the Level 2 text (see also Table 2).

Table 2: *Approximate Scoring Guidelines on the RPI*

Final Rating	Level 2 Question Performance	Level 3 Question Performance
Below 1+	< 50%	n/a
Level 1+	50% - 70%	n/a
Level 2	> 70%	< 50%
Level 2+	> 70%	50% - 70%
Level 3 or Above	> 70%	> 70%

Despite the apparent precision of these percentages, the rating remains an overall, holistic judgment of the examinee's performance on the reading texts and reading comprehension questions.

The final RPI rating is recorded by the tester on the score sheet and is not released to the examinee at the conclusion of the test. Additionally, the examinee does not receive a sub-score for each passage or reading comprehension question; rather the examinee receives an overall reading proficiency level rating on the ILR scale several days after test administration. The proficiency level rating is also reported to the NLSC.

RPI Test Format

The RPI follows a standardized interview structure and elicitation protocol with minimal variation between administrations. Throughout the RPI the examinee and tester maintain a live Internet and telephone connection. Reading texts are accessed through a secure, password-protected Internet site and the tester and examinee communicate orally through the telephone. The RPI is designed to last 10 to 25 minutes, depending on the proficiency level of the examinee.

The RPI follows the general outline below:

1. The tester gives the examinee a password to access a Level 2 reading text on a secure Internet site.
2. The examinee reads the text on his or her computer screen under timed conditions.
3. The tester asks the examinee reading comprehension questions based on the text in the target language. The examinee orally responds to the tester's questions in the target language. There are three questioning phases associated with the initial Level 2 text
    a. Warm-up (1 question): General comprehension question.
    b. Phase I (5-7 questions): Main idea, supporting point or detail, vocabulary, and informational questions.
    c. Wind-down (1 question): Easy vocabulary or supporting point question.
4. Phase II. Depending on the examinee's performance on the initial ILR Level 2 text, the tester may grant the examinee access to an ILR Level 3 text or the tester may administer a second Level 2 text. A second Level 2 text is only administered if the examinee has an overall rating of *Below Level 2* at the end of the first Level 2 text. In the event a second Level 2 text is administered, the tester repeats steps 1 through 3 with a different text. If a Level 3 text is administered, the tester proceeds to step 5.
5. The examinee reads the provided Level 3 text under timed conditions.
6. The tester asks the examinee reading comprehension questions based on the target language. Again, the examinee orally responds to the tester's questions in the target language. There are three questioning phases associated with a Level 3 text:
    a. Warm-up (1 question): General comprehension question.
    b. Phase II questions (6-8 questions): Main and supporting points, technical or specialized vocabulary, connections between information, inferences, or author's purpose questions.
    c. Wind-down (1 question): Easy vocabulary or supporting point question.
7. The tester assigns a rating by determining the highest level at which the examinee can perform. If it is determined that the examinee cannot perform at ILR Level 2 then the highest rating he or she can receive is 1+; while the lowest rating an examinee can receive is *Below 1+*. Provision of the second passage at ILR Level 3 gives the examinee the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency at Level 2+ or 3. If the second passage is at Level 2, then the examinee has another opportunity to demonstrate Level 2 skills or provide further evidence that he or she merits a 1+ rating. The failure to achieve the 1+ rating on the second text would produce a rating of Below 1+.

RPI Tester Training

Since ACTFL and SLTI were working together to meet the language testing needs of the NLSC, ACTFL and SLTI decided that OPI and RPI tester training should occur during the same week in January 2009 at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Also, since the same four highly literate, native Marshallese speakers were to be trained by

ACTFL and SLTI, consecutive sessions for OPI and RPI tester training were scheduled. This reduced the logistical arrangements for the Testers and both organizations.

Marshallese RPI tester training was held immediately following OPI tester training. OPI tester training occurred on days 1 through 4 and RPI tester training on days 5 and 6, although homework relevant to RPI tester training was assigned on days 3 and 4.

Tester training began with an introduction to the process of ILR passage rating and explanation of appropriate ILR Level 2 and 3 reading comprehension questions using a different set of authentic English texts and questions as examples. Following the explanation of ILR passage rating and the difference between Level 2 and 3 passages and questions, the trainees began working with the Marshallese RPI passages and questions.

Training continued with a discussion of the English translation of the Marshallese RPI texts and questions. After being shown the English version of the Marshallese RPI passages and questions, trainees suggested rewording several reading comprehension questions and answer keys to improve the Marshallese RPI.

During RPI training, the trainees worked in pairs or as a group to revise the reading comprehension questions and answer keys to the satisfaction of the group. Then, the group selected one Level 2 and one Level 3 passage to administer as their first RPI to a volunteer interviewee. Although the first administration was somewhat awkward due to the trainees' unfamiliarity with the script for the directions for administration and with the scoring sheet, the general feeling was that the first administration of the Marshallese RPI had gone well.

During the final stage of RPI training, trainees conducted seven practice telephonic RPIs with volunteer test takers using all eight RPI texts. The trainees critiqued each other in terms of how well they conducted the interview, and then discussed each test taker's performance on the questions. Finally at the close of training, all trainees completed an OPI/RPI training evaluation form.

After training, the RPI underwent another round of review and revision, and the Marshallese RPI passages and reading comprehension questions were professionally formatted by SLTI to look like authentic documents. They were sent to ACTFL, which delivered them to the NLSC.

Results

Responses to the OPI/RPI training evaluation form were key-entered and ordered by question.

The aspect of the RPI training that trainees most often felt required improvement was the Marshallese passages and their translations. One participant stated, "the passages could be improved." And another commented on the "poor interpretation of the texts."

Participants felt that the most useful aspects of the RPI training were "the training materials" and "the interviews themselves." Only one trainee noted an aspect of the training that could be improved, "testing materials." Again, this was a reference to the reading texts. One participant commented that the "trainer's expertise" was one of the most helpful aspects of the training.

Three of the four participants felt that there was enough practice conducting an RPI and assigning a reading proficiency rating. However, one participant felt that there was not enough practice. Still, she felt that she "will manage with the good training we had."

Participants felt confident in their ability to assign a reading proficiency rating based on the ILR scale and cited the "practice test" or "practice sessions" as the reason. One participant commented that she was "not quite" comfortable "but with the practice sessions ahead, I'm confident it will all turn out well."

The test takers thought that the passages "represented Marshallese culture and language" although some improvements to "language flow" were required. Test takers felt that the questions were appropriate to the passages, and that with sufficient time they could find the correct answer. With regards to timing, two test takers felt "rushed" when reading the ILR Level 3 passages and wished they had more time to fully comprehend the passages. Several reported that reading Marshallese was "challenging," and that they found reading the passages aloud improved their comprehension and ability to decipher unfamiliar words. Most test takers reported that the test was a "good" and "interesting" experience and that they would be willing to participate in field testing again if asked. Finally, when asked if the test fairly assessed their level of Marshallese proficiency, all volunteer test takers reported that they thought the test was a "fair test."

All of the trainees felt that the RPI is a good and fair measure of a person's reading proficiency in Marshallese. One trainee commented that "It's really made me conscious of how to read in my own language." Additional comments made by participants included, "The ILR & RPI will be of good use for Marshallese language."

Responses to the questionnaire, administered at the conclusion of RPI Tester training, showed that in general, the trainees felt that the ILR Reading Scale was helpful, and they understood it very well or fairy well after the training. They felt that the scale was "easy to follow." Overall, evaluations of the RPI and the RPI training were positive, "a result echoed by the volunteer test takers' responses who felt that taking the RPI was a positive experience that fairly assessed their reading abilities in Marhallese."

Following tester training, an official Marshallese OPI/RPI was administered to at least one NLSC member before the NLSC Centers for Disease Control (CDC) exercise in Atlanta. The feedback from the CDC on the language proficiency of the Marshallese speaker, and the other NLSC members who spoke Russian and Mandarin, was positive, "Our three members participated in a pandemic flu exercise, and helped the CDC with the content on the organization's non-English web pages [Marshallese, Mandarin, and Russian]. The CDC was quite happy with the work, particularly because our members went beyond just offering translation assistance to offer cultural insights that will make a difference" (NLSC, 2009b). Reflecting on her participation in the CDC exercise with the NLSC, the Marshallese speaker reported, "I welcome any opportunity to use Marshallese, especially when it helps the people I love so much" (NLSC, 2009c).

Discussion and Conclusions

The difficulties encountered during the development of the Marshallese RPI are not unique to Marshallese. Other test developers working with small-population languages without a well-established writing system are likely to encounter similar challenges. With higher level texts, there can be a different approach to expressing academic concepts

and terminology, and approaches can vary by individual or group. Trainees may not feel comfortable with the texts and may wish to spend valuable training time revising the texts make them more like spoken language, or more like some perceived written standard. Translation can also be a problem, particularly for languages that are distant from English. Trainees may become interested in improving the translations. Concerns about English translations can be a distraction, since examinees do not read translated texts. The strategies SLTI used to overcome some of these difficulties might be useful to other test developers working with small-population languages. These strategies include allowing trainees to spend some training time making revisions, and committing to another iteration of review and revision prior to operational implementation.

Testers' initial reactions to the RPI reading texts captured during training and questionnaire responses were likely due to a number of factors inherent in testing small-population languages without a strong written tradition. These include dialectal variation within the islands, the limited number of texts in Marshallese that are read on the islands, changes within the language, recent changes to the writing system, and lack of recent residence in the RMI on the part of some trainees. However, as training progressed, they became more comfortable with the texts and ultimately made no additional recommendations for revision.

The RPI test development procedures and format could be modified by language teachers for use in the classroom to benefit instruction. For example, teachers who have difficulty locating authentic reading passages can use techniques similar to the ones SLTI used to select, locate, adapt, and translate RPI reading passages. In order of preference, the authors recommend classroom teachers use the following methods to adapt or translate reading passages for classroom use, especially if text authenticity is a concern:

1. Locate authentic texts in the target language and modify these texts (as needed) to conform to the standard spelling and grammar of the target language.

2. Locate authentic English (or non-target language) texts about issues in the target culture, country, or geographic region written for local audience with some background knowledge of the issues, and translate these texts into the target language using standard spelling and grammar.

3. Locate authentic English (or non-target language) texts of interest to a general audience, and translate these texts into the target language using standard spelling and grammar.

Once classroom teachers have located suitable texts in the target language, teachers can develop and categorize reading comprehension questions using the same categories developed for the RPI: Warm-up, Phase 1, Phase II, and Wind-down. ILR Level 2 passages used in classroom exercises that contain Warm-up, Phase 1, and Wind-down questions, and ILR Level 3 passages that contain Warm-up, Phase 1, Phase II, and Wind-down questions help ensure that multiple aspects of reading comprehension are targeted within one reading comprehension exercise. In addition, the pattern of beginning an exercise with relatively easy questions that gradually increase in difficulty, and then concluding an excise with several straightforward questions, can help test takers and students feel more comfortable about their performance. In general, test takers and students are more positive at the conclusion of an exercise if they believe they responded to the final task or question correctly.

The success of the Marshallese RPI contributed additional evidence to support the use of interview-based reading tests. Although many classroom reading activities involve students responding to reading comprehension questions in writing or by selecting a multiple choice option, teachers should be encourage to experiment with a variety of questioning and elicitation techniques, such as asking a question aloud and requesting an oral response.

Finally, this paper presents a model that test developers and curriculum developers who do not speak the target language can follow to develop educational materials in a language they do not speak, so long as they work in close collaboration with SMEs and allow adequate time for an iterative review and revision cycle. Although the success of this model is highly dependent on the experience of the people involved, we believe that the right combination of collaborators with complementary skills and abilities can produce language tests that have a high degree of acceptance within the target language community.

In this project, ACTFL and SLTI worked together to develop a test that was able to meet the test development needs of the NLSC. They did this in less than three months. The existing OPI testing format was able to meet the NLSC's needs for a speaking and participatory listening proficiency assessment in Marshallese. The NLSC's need for a reading proficiency assessment in Marshallese was met by SLTI's development of the RPI testing format and Marshallese reading texts and questions. In addition, the guide for administering and scoring the RPI in Marshallese can serve as a guide for the development and administration of RPIs in other languages. The test development methods and tester training procedures could be easily employed with other languages. The format piloted here of using the OPI to assess both speaking and listening worked well, and can be applied to future language proficiency assessment projects. The RPI, described herein, can serve as a prototype for future reading proficiency assessment projects that must be developed quickly for very low volume languages.

Notes

[1] At the time of this writing (March 2010), the NLSC had 1,229 Charter Members and had completed four activation exercises. Legislation to make the NLSC a fully operational corps is expected in 2011 or 2012.

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Passage Rating
Level *4* versus Level *5* Characteristics in the Russian Text Typology

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This article outlines the findings of typological differences between the Level 4 *(L4) and Level* 5 *(L5) of the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) in the Russian passages, as explored through the comparative linguistic and content analysis of highly abstract and idiosyncratic philosophical, literary and colloquial perspectives on culture, politics, technology, economics, society, and law. Having reviewed over 100 written and spoken samples from classic and contemporary Russian authors, including literary prose, poetry, dissertations, scientific presentations, debates, satirical pieces, and passages of slang-based correspondence via the internet, we found the ILR-relevant features that would help target language (TL) instructors rate the L4-higher passages for Reading and Listening.*

Working *L4* and, consequently, **desired** *L5* has appeared to be a realistic consideration in the Diagnostic Assessment (DA) provided by a Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) specialist to US Government seasoned linguists. Therefore, ILR-related accuracy in relevant passage rating, both for Reading and Listening parts of the DA Interview, becomes crucial for creating Learning Plans for highly proficient TL learners. The challenge comes from the following fact: The differences between *L4*, *L4+* and *L5* ILR descriptors are so strongly related to the nuances of a particular TL, that the available English guidelines and samples may be interpreted differently, while being referenced within the context of a TL-Text typology. Based on that premise, and correlating the foundational statements in the ILR-*L4, L4+*, and *L5* guidelines with authentic Russian passages from well-educated native speakers and writers, we conducted a study in order to outline the answer to the following question: What exactly are the *typical* characteristics that make a rater qualify? Russian passages as of …*greater abstraction, more syntax used with virtuosity*, *more (highly) individuated, more (highly) idiosyncratic, more (highly) esthetic, more (highly) dense culturally, more (highly) embedded and elliptical,* and more of *Special Purpose,* than *Projective*? (Child, 1998, 1999; Lowe, 1988, 1998)? Emphasizing the word *typical,* we considered hallmark patterns that refer both to written and spoken passages across Foreign Language Objectives (FLO)-related lexical/topical domains. The results of the study were compared to the relevant responses by learners and native speakers of the Russian language that contributed to the validity of the findings. Although not a full-scale fundamental research effort, this study provides guidelines for DLIFLC TL instructors, curriculum developers, diagnostic assessment specialists and test writers involved in higher level passage rating.

Hypothesis

1. Among linguistic properties and beyond-the-lines of the *L4-higher* passages there may be the following typological features – the ones that:

• are relevant to both written and spoken passages;
• prompt a rater to limit the level of the passage, impacting the one's decision to consider it as of a *L4- projective mode* only;
• prompt a rater to raise the level of the passage, impacting the decision to consider it as of a potentially *L5-special purpose mode*; and
• reflect a combination of *L4* and *L5*-relevant features that may influence the rater's decision to assign *L4+* to the passage.

2. Any linguistic or beyond-the-lines feature may be considered typological only if it is identified:

• both in written and spoken passages;
• as the one repeated across the topics (at least in two different lexical/ topical domains); and
• in an abstract that is part of multiple abstracts by the same author, whose written works and/or oral presentations are constantly published, well-known, cited, and impact the communication patterns of at least one major age, social, or professional group.

Method
Materials

According to aforementioned approach, we selected to review the following *L4-higher* materials used in teaching Russian refresher programs and ICAS Seminars for U.S. Government linguists:

• Literary prose, including drama, by classic and most published or most popular modern Russian writers (see Appendix A);
•. Literary criticism by the most prominent Russian critics and scholars in Russian Literature (see Appendix B);
• Philosophical perspectives on Law, Economics, Society, Military, and Culture (see Appendix C);
• Classic and modern Russian poetry (see Appendix D);
Satirical pieces by leading Russian short-story writers and presenters (see Appendix E);
• Dissertations, debates on research and development issues, and academic presentations on science, technology and economics (see Appendix F);
• Religious epic and modern literature; archaic law and fiction literature (see Appendix G); and
• Slang-, dialect- and sociolect-related monologs (including *creatives*) from the Internet blogs and forums (see Appendix H).

Procedure

The study comprised the following three consecutive steps:

Step1. Selection and rating of the written and spoken passages on the following basis: (1) *L4, L4+*, and *L5* entries of the Text Type column in *Functional Trisection of Reading Proficiency* and *Functional Trisection of Listening Proficiency* (Lowe, 1988,1998); (2) *L4, L4+*, and *L5* characteristics of the *Density & Syntax* Table (Lowe,1998); and (3) *L4, L4+*, and *L5* columns of *Basic Worksheet for Rating English Reading Passages* (Lowe, 1988, 1998); and (4) Child's Text Models compared to Proficiency Levels (Child, 1987, 1998).

Step2. Comparison of the linguistic properties, genre-distinct characteristics, cultural features and degrees of abstraction, idiosyncrasy and esthetics in the passages rated as *L4, L4+*, and *L5*.

Step3. Identification of typological, i.e., repeated features encountered across topical/lexical domains and forms of language production, i.e., spoken and written passages.

Results

When presenting the results of the study, one has to emphasize the following:

1. As the passage rating is not a mechanical addition of the ILR-Level relevant characteristics, the ones reviewed below can not be considered as a self-sufficient reason to rate a passage. Keeping this in mind, we choose to call these characteristics as the ones *in favor of rating as Level 4,…4+, and…5,* avoiding such references as *determining, or defining* the level of the passage*,* etc., of any kind.

2. In disputable passage rating cases, the prevalence of certain features, mentioned below, may become crucial for upgrading or downgrading the level to be assigned to the passage.

3. Acknowledgement of the *4-higher* level characteristics, mentioned below, has paramount pedagogical importance for covering gaps in TL-learners' proficiency at each respective level, which is the common objective in TL-instruction and in Diagnostic assessment.

Degrees of Abstraction and Idiosyncrasy (individuation)
in L4-*higher Properties*

All the passages were reviewed against the following linguistic properties: allegory, analogy, aphorism, cliché, idiom, imagery (including periphrasis), malapropism and annomination, oxymoron, proverb, pun, purple passage, sarcasm, spoonerism, understatement (including rhetorical litotes), hyperbolic metaphors, synonym usage, word play (including anacoluthon), inversion (including syntactic and strophic-syntactic anaphor, and hyperbaton), rhetorical questions, rhetorical apostrophe, antithesis (*i.e.,* rhetorical contraposition), stylistic gradation, paralipsis, decussation and chiasmus, antonomasia, extended metaphor. Each of the aforementioned properties appeared to have three degrees of abstraction and/or idiosyncrasy, in other words, the three degrees of potential complicity for understanding. Compare, for example, the linguistic and cultural implications of the entries within each graph of the following table.

Table 1. *Examples of Abstraction and Idiosyncrasy in L4-higher Properties.*

Property	First degree (*less* abstract, less idiosyncratic)	Second degree (*more* abstract and idiosyncratic)	Third degree (*ultimately* abstract and idiosyncratic)
Oxymoron	...**Этот бедный богач Бил Гейтс** (This poor rich Bill Gates). See, for example, the citations in the blogs of "computerra. ru"(2008a); "zhurnal. lib.ru" (2008e); and "diggreader.ru" (2008c), Appendix H.	... **православный коммунист** (Christian orthodox communist); **православный сталинизм** (Christian orthodox Stalinism). See, for example, the citations in the blogs of "cprf.info. ru" (2008b); and "strana. borda.ru" (2008d), Appendix H.	Смотри, **ей весело грустить,** такой **нарядно обнаженной...** ([lit.:] Look, she is having fun of being sad, while so elegantly dressed in nudity - said with an allusion-related reference to A. Akhmatova's (1996) "Tsarkoselskaya statuya", Appendix D). Continued on Next Page
Proverbs	**Тише едешь – дальше будешь** (the slower you move, the further you reach).	**Не плюй в колодец, пригодится воды напиться** (Do not spit into the well: one day you will need to drink out of it).	**[Он]... уходил как кур в ощип** (*archaic;* [he] ...found himself as a chicken in the midst of poultry processing shop).

Mala-propism	**Прихватизация предприятий** (the mix of *приватизация* [privatization] and *прихватить*[to grab - … often illegally].	**Первый блин кригом** (the mix of *Первый блин комом* [the first fry is bound to be a flop]and *блицкриг* [blitzkrieg, i.e. large-scale military offense]). V. Pelevin. *Chisla* (2005, see Appendix A).	**Книжечки... книжоночки... книжулики... все жулики** (small books- tiny books – tiny-books-crooks – all people are crooks i.e., development of thought from the notion of *books* up to the notion of *crooks*). A. Raikin. *Dom bol'shoi* (2007, see Appendix E).
Cliché	**От всего сердца** (From all [my] heart).	**Превед медвед** (morphologically modified "Hello, bear": popular *creative*-slang).	**Ничтоже сумняшеся** (*archaic:* having no doubt at all). Continued on Next Page

Allusion	**Трусливый и безвестный воин, Ленивый и лукавый раб** (coward and unremarkable warrior lazy and cunning slave). A. Block (2008, see Appendix D).	**Умом Россию не понять, а другими местами - очень больно!** (One cannot comprehend Russia rationally [lit.: by the brain], while the comprehension by other parts of the body [other than the brain] is very painful). V. Shenderovih (2008, see Appendix E).	**А пара десятков йеху из правящего прайда в тот же день устроили гульку** (And couple of dozen of yahoos from the "ruling" pride arranged a little party the same day). V. Shenderovih (2008, see Appendix E).
Aphorism	**Любовь к родине часто бывает несчастной** (One's love of the Motherland often happens to be unanswered).	**Хочешь быть именем существительным - склоняйся** (If you want to be a noun – decline)!	**Пренебрегающий нетленным ради бренного теряет и то, и другое** (One who neglects the imperishable for the sake of caduceus loses both.
Idiom	**Ангельское терпение** (angel's patience).	**У чёрта на куличках** (at the end of nowhere).	**Притча во языцах** (the talk of the town). Continued on Next Page

Spoonerism	**Тин-Пу… Тсин-Ел… Во-Двор-На…** (Chinese-sounded restructuring of Putin's, Yeltsin's and Novodvorskaya's names). M. Galkin (2007a, see Appendix E).	**вагоноуважаемый глубокоуважатый** (the intermix of "train operator" and "deeply respected"). S Marshak (2007, see Appendix D).	…императрица Екатерина заключила **перетурие с мирками** . (i.e., the intermix of the words "Turks" and "truce"). M. Frai (2007, see Appendix H).
Word Play	**Коррупциоёмкость…** ([lit.:] corruption capacity), used as the focal point in the passage of political philosophy (e.g., Glinkina, 2008; Neklessa, 2008; see Appendix C).	**Хропопут, хроника позднего путинизма…** ([lit.:] Chronicle of the latest putinism) used as the focal point in the passage of political philosophy (Bykov, 2007, see Appendix C).	The word **эмобой** ([lit.:] fight with the *EMO*-youth) used as the title to the poem formatted as a newspaper article (Bykov, 2007, see Appendix C).

First degree (*i.e.,* less abstract, less idiosyncratic) may be applied to a property, when each component of the written expression or utterance denotes a well-known, "shared" value, phenomenon, object, activity, emotion, event or person. In such a case the speaker or writer has not likely been the inventor of the word combination or text. Such language expressions can be translated word-by-word without losing its cultural connotations. For example (see the *first-degree* oxymoron in the above table), most people on Earth share the understanding of what *poor* and *rich* are, and who *Mr. Bill Gates* is. The meanings of *slow, far, to go* and *to be* in the above example of the *first-degree* proverb are "part of everyone's schemata" as well.

Second degree (more abstract and idiosyncratic) refers to the following two occurrences:

a. Unlike the *First Degree*, the wording implies a deep knowledge of TL cultural detail and/or history. Translation of these types of properties is usually literally, and translators reasonably prefer to come up with a meaning-appropriate equivalent from their native culture. (See, for example, the translation of "Первый блин комом" in the graph of malapropism).
b. The written expression or utterance was introduced by the author innovatively by combining previously unmatchable references, where each separate reference may be understood by a well-educated native speaker. For example, in a case of allusion, when one statement unexpectedly combines a reference to F. Tutchev's "умом Россию не понять" (one cannot comprehend Russia rationally [lit.: by the brain]) with the elliptical colloquialism of "другими местами - очень больно!" (the comprehension by other parts of the body is very painful) one may assume that a well-educated native speaker has come across both of them (*e.g.,* F. Tutchev's poems have been part of the Soviet secondary school program, while various unpredictable forms of elliptical colloquialisms has become widely used since early 90s).

Third degree (ultimately abstract and idiosyncratic) refers to the following:

a**.** Archaic expressions, consisting of words that are not used in modern language, other than in that particular combination, and/or that denote a non-existing thing, like *ощип* (*archaic:* an ancient analog of the poultry processing shop). In order to use such an expression, an author provides readers or listeners with some unique semantic links to the rest of the passage's content. Therefore, one may refer this type of property to the ultimately idiosyncratic.
b**.** Unparalleled lexical and syntactical innovations introduced by the speaker or writer, which can be acknowledged (*i.e.,* rather *emotionally felt* than *adequately understood*) only through perception of all individual features of the author's style, register, and socio-cultural references, reflected in that particular passage. For example, it is impossible to accurately interpret Raikin's word of "книжулики" in "...книжечки-книжоночки-книжулики-все жулики", unless one's comprehension adequately reflects the features of the authorial style and register and covers everything, which has been beyond the lines (Raikin, 2007, see Appendix 5). Conclusively, the more linguistic properties of the *second* and *third* degree there are in the passage, the more reasonable is the rater's decision to rate the passage as *L4+* or *L5*. Consequently, if the passage

includes exclusively *first* degree properties, it may be a good sign of a Level 4 sample. The aforementioned review of *L4-higher* properties relates to the observation of what might be conventionally called the *factor of authorial persuasion.* The proficiency-relevant significance of this factor is based on the premise that the author is unlikely to be ultimately idiosyncratic and/or abstract once pursuing the goal of making his/her point of view clear enough to be understood and followed.

The Factor of Authorial Persuasion

The Russian language passages, characterized by the ultimate degree of abstraction and idiosyncrasy do not include any message-conclusive statements or implicit references to suggest any authorial push for an action, or some prescribed way of readers'/ listeners' thinking. None of the *L5* passages, without exception, in terms of genre, topic, style, and subject, are persuasive, and reflect no authorial guidance to any decision or solution. As D. Dutton said, "To ask what this means is to miss the point. This… beats readers into submission and instructs them that they are in the presence of a great and deep mind. Actual communication has nothing to do with it" (Dutton, 2001). These passages have to be comprehended differently from those *L4* debates, tailored pieces and presentations, in which the idea of proving a point appears to be the dominant factor. For example, even those very few *L5* abstracts that have a sort of conclusive statement in the end (most of *L5* passages don't have any conclusive statement) provide readers or listeners only with such hypothetical orientation as: «Возможно, это наиболее сложная проблема....» (Probably, it is one of the most important problems…; Neklessa, 2008, see Appendix C); or «Возможно, это может вывести нас на новый уровень целостности гуманитарного знания» (Probably, it can lead us to the new level of integrity of the humanitarian knowledge; Neretina, 2007, see Appendix C). Concluding the aforementioned part, one may suggest that, same as in art or music, lack of any "authorial pressure" on the audience's views relates to the features of the ultimately idiosyncratic and abstract works, when the author reserves for the reader or listener the right to enjoy the power and virtuosity of an authorial mind in someone's own way.

Esthetic Properties of the Passages

Referring to one of the foundational characteristics of the L5 Special Purpose Mode (*e.g.,* Lowe, 1998) this title may be applied to the detectable features of the *L4-higher* Russian text typology. Our findings were made by checking *L4-higher* written and spoken passages against *seven universal signatures in human esthetics (i.e., aesthetic universals; e.g.,* Pinker, 2002). Extending the definitive descriptors of these signatures to ILR-relevant characteristics of text typology, we came up with the following summary:

Table 2.

Universal Signature (Number, Title & TL-Relevant Meaning)	Points of Reference in Russian Text Typology
1. Expertise or virtuosity Writing and Speaking skills (including technical sub-skills) are recognized and admired.	Number and depth of references to the relevant subject matter; variety and appropriateness of the linguistic properties; unpredictable turns of thought and ellipses; redundancy; parenthetical words; number and logical sequence of references to the different subjects; grammatical imperfections; typological/technical errors.
2. Nonutilitarian pleasure Listeners and/or readers enjoy the passage for "art's" sake, and don't demand that its message keeps them advised or somehow directed for certain practical decisions.	Topic and subject of the passage that has no relevance to practical issues; and purely philosophical and/or artistic approach to the topic or subject that is commonly associated with practical issues.
3. Style Subject and form of language expression satisfies rules of composition that place them in a recognizable style.	Correlation of topical, situational and linguistic characteristics of the styles and registers in the passage and distinct features of the individual style and register of the author, that makes his/her works recognizable and distinguishable from any other author (assuming citation of the author's speech for speaking passages).
4. Criticism Listeners and/or readers make a point of judging, appreciating, and interpreting the passage.	Features of personal perspective: values, approaches, methods of research that have not been shared by society in general, or within relevant professional groups – although prominent enough to be appreciated and discussed by well-educated readers and/or listeners.
5. Imitation The passage simulates experiences of the world.	The aforementioned points of reference reflect or may be reasonably applied to such real-life phenomena, activities, events, and spiritual experiences that are part of the schemata of a well-educated native speaker.

6. Special focus The content of the passage is set aside from ordinary life and makes a dramatic focus of experience.	Language and composition-related nuances that make reader or listener think more about emotions over some specific subject and/or its evaluation, rather than about the reasonability of existence of this and other subjects referenced in the passage.
7. Imagination Author and his/her audiences entertain hypothetical worlds in the theater of the imagination.	An image (or a mental picture) created through writing or speaking requires reader's or listener's imagination to be seen, adequately understood or interpreted as such. Understanding of lexical and syntactical nuances aloneis not enough to comprehend the author's message.

Illustrating this summary with examples, one may provide the answers to some practical questions the rater usually faces.

1. *Expertise or virtuosity (including technical subskills of presentation).* A well-educated native speaker rater may not necessarily be an expert in global economics or nanotechnology, but one would realize that Dr. Neklessa makes references to at least 12 different economic phenomena (2008, see Appendix C), and that A. Putilin speaks about 11 nanoproducts related to different areas of nanotechnological applications (2007, see Appendix F), which in both cases brings the reader or listener to a conclusion about the respective expertise of the authors. At the same time, while Dr. Neklessa's passage has no single "extra" word, Dr. Putilin's presentation includes a noticeable number of parenthetical embeddings, which makes the latter passage less esthetic as per the universal signature, referenced. In this regard, classic Russian literature brings similar examples, *e.g.,* initial pages of Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (2007, see Appendix A) that have been commonly criticized for being a "translation from French," while the initial pages of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (2007, see Appendix A) have been commonly regarded as the sounding model of the Russian Language. The aforementioned features do not undermine the virtuosity of the authors, but they may crucially impact the rater's selection of passages with ultimately high and not so high esthetic quality.

2. *Nonutilitarian pleasure.* Reading about Moscow's subway in Pelevin's *Podzemnoe Nebo* (2001, see Appendix A), in which the author is philosophically comparing Stalin's architectural symbolism with that of the Egyptian pharaohs, one is not looking for any travel advice, but for the artistic connection to relevant historic parallelisms. Similarly, reading Plevako's philosophical legalese (Smoliarchuk, 1989, see Appendix C), one may hardly expect practical advice on litigation or filing a suit against a troublemaking neighbor. Similarly, the same signature will always be found in the presentations on fundamental scientific research, *e.g.,* presentations by famous Russian academics, such as V. Fortov (2006, see Appendix F), J. Alferov (2005, see Appendix F).

3. *Style*. The following two examples from religious literature and biology-related presentations illustrate the language relevance to the situation and topic:

a. Flowerily describing the heavenly nature and the process of Orthodox liturgy, reverend G.S. Debolsky writes: «Священнослужение совершается на земле по чиноположению небесному. Ибо не человек, не ангел, не архангел, и не другой кто-либо из сотворённых, но Сам Утешитель учредил сие служение , и людей, еще облечённых плотью, содеял представителями служения ангелов» (The sacred liturgy is conducted on Earth according to the heavenly ceremony. Not a human, an angel, nor anyone created, but the holy Paraclete himself has established that service, and He made people, still covered with flesh, to be representatives of the angel's liturgy. (Debolsky, 1993, see Appendix G.) The use of *облечённых плотью e.g.,* instead of *имеющих плоть* or *тело*, *сие i.e.,, это, ибо* instead of *поскольку, сотворённых* instead of *рождённых* illustrate the style-specific correlation of the topical, situational and linguistic characteristics.

b. Using the words *воровство* (theft) and *жертва* (victim), S. Popov (2007, see Appendix F) put them within such a lexical and structural environment, that the listener would immediately conclude that they were being exposed to biological research, not in a criminal story, *e.g.,* :«...Исследователи имели дело с нетипичной ситуацией, возникшей в результате резкой смены качества местообитаний (например, необычный всплеск численности жертвы), в результате которого воровство стало очень выгодным» (Research dealt with an untypical situation that occurred as result of the harsh change in quality of the habitats, *e.g.,* unusual burst in victims' quantities, hence theft becoming very lucrative; Popov, 2007, see Appendix F). See, for example, the terminological *качества местообитаний* (quality of the habitats), and the use of a Genitive singular *жертв**ы*** instead of the relevant "crime-related" plural of *жертв* (victim) after the noun *численность* (quantities) (Popov, 2007, see Appendix F). At the same time, only in relatively few instances one may find certain distinguishable features of the author's individuated esthetics (*e.g.,* no well-educated native speaker would mix the register of V. Vysotsky and A. Akhmatova (see Appendix D); or the style of I. Bunin and V. Pelevin (see Appendix A). The features of individuation are very unlikely to be found outside literary passages, *e.g.,* many other reverends may use the same language as Rev. G. Debolsky, while many other biologists would use S. Popov's structures from the above examples. Therefore, a topic- and situation-related style should be considered as a rating related feature, while an individual esthetic style may not be a factor of reliable guidance to the rater.

4. *Criticism.* Questions such as "Who launched Kerensky?", "What do the words 'fantastic' and 'artificial' really mean in terms of someone's political career?", *etc.,* are subject to readers' judgment and interpretation of the following metaphoric statement in the story by M. Zoshchenko (1999a, see Appendix A): «Он, как, ракета, по законам пиротехники, взвился в небо, засверкал фантастическими искусственными огнями и, моментально сгорев, стал стремительно падать» (He, like a rocket following the rules of pyrotechnics sailed up into the sky, shined with the fantastic artificial lights, and having burnt out momentarily, started his fall down. (Zoschenko, 1999a, p. 741, see Appendix A). Although the analogical examples can hardly be found in non–literary works, a rater still has to assume that all *L4-higher* level non-literary works should be characterized as well as the esthetic signature of criticism. For example, if there had been nothing to interpret, to question, or to judge in the scientific presentations by A. Putilin

(2007, see Appendix F) or S. Popov (2007, see Appendix F), then these presentations would not have been introduced, published and discussed as relevant to the innovations or new discoveries.

     5. Imitation. In *Sv'ashchennaya Kniga Oborotn'a*, V. Pelevin (2004, see Appendix A) presents the two equally phantasmagoric stories: description of the contacts between a reincarnated fox (werefox) with Chinese monks thousands years ago, and a description of the praying ritual by a werewolf, who was a KGB-FSB general. Comparing the two from the perspective of esthetical *imitation*, one would conclude that the second abstract matches the criterion, as in that case the author's imagination reflects the post-soviet realities. In contrast, the werefox's Chinese fantasy has no reference to any objective reality, and therefore may not be considered as highly esthetic from the point of the *imitation signature*.

     6. Special Focus. The following emotional reference makes thereader think of the speaker's emotions and not about the physiological processes related to drinking vodka: «…Хлебнуть бы сейчас!. Достанешь из-за пазухи родимую... чтобы само полилось, в самую глотку, чтоб слезу выточило» (If I could nip now! You retrieve a dear one from your bosom… to have it flowing by itself deep into your throat…. to have a tear grinded out; Strugatsky & Strugatsky, 2000a, p.27, see Appendix A). In non-literary works this esthetic signature is reflected as well, as long as the subject of the passage is set aside from ordinary life and the author makes a dramatic focus of specific scientific observation, experiment, hypothesis, formula, conclusion, etc (see Appendix F).

     7. Imagination. The message of the following literary statement about Bunin's language might not be understood without imagining the flavors of the fruits and environment of the village: «Рассказ пронизан острым ароматом яблок и другими запахами – земли, крестьянской жизни, быта, труда» (The story is filled by the strong flavor of apples and by the other flavors – of the ground, of the peasants' life, routine and labor; Kruk, 1987, p.599, see Appendix B). Referring to non-literary passages, one should note that similar mental mechanisms have been evoked in the comprehension of the invisible nanometers and fullerenes, physical comparisons in Perelman's interpretation, Puankare's formula, etc.

     In summary, *L4-higher* raters should consider the following:

     1. The higher the esthetic value of the passage is, the more universal esthetic signatures are distinguishable in the passage, and there are more reasons to rate the passage as the one of having esthetic properties [*i.e.,* "in favor"] of Level 5.

     2. The presence of the first signature should be associated more with *virtousity* for literary passages and with *expertise* for non-literary ones.

     3. The signature of *style* should be regarded as a correlation of topical, situational and linguistic characteristics of the content, but not as a combination of the language expressions that may be recognized as distinct for a particular author.

     4. Since evaluation of the esthetic signatures, especially in the non-literary pieces is likely to be highly subjective, one may reasonably posit the following esthetic-related criterion: If any only two of the four signatures are not evident,then the passage does not meet parameter of being as highly esthetical as that of the Level 5. (Remark: The reference to *two* signatures instead of just only *one*, makes rating more reliable.)

Extension of the Message-related Deviations
from the Anticipated Forms of the Language

In a course of this study, we came across one Russian text typology phenomenon that is related to the ILR-indicated features of *nuance* and *unpredictable sequence*. One may conventionally call it as the above subtitle, wherein the word *anticipated* refers to culturally appropriate semantic limits for the relevant discourse, and not to a predictability of a more concrete, straightforward and factual language of the lower levels. Although, figuratively speaking, the more idiosyncratic language is, the more lexical, cross-topical, or style- and register-related surprises are likely to be there for the recipient; one would still hardly expect to find mathematical formulas in a love story, or a dotted line in place of the pre-declared conclusion. When that kind of unexpected becomes a part of the authorial message (*i.e.,* the core of the *4-higher* passage, not its periphery), it complicates comprehension and consequently, flags about the feature *in favor* of Level 5. Multiple examples of that phenomenon in literary and non-literary Russian works can be grouped in the following manner: *lexical deviations*; *topic-related deviations*; and *deviations in style and register.* The first can be illustrated by V. Pelevin's use of the word "*джедай*" (jedi) in the reference to the two Russian banks in his "Числа" (The Numbers) novel: « ...и даже крышевал их один и тот же *джедай*» (the same *jedi* provided cover for them; Pelevin, 2005, see Appendix A). Being outside the co-occurrence range of the verb «крышевать» (to illegally provide cover for someone's business in Russia), "jedi" in reference to the word that not only makes a reader pause comprehension for rethinking of this metaphor, but also becomes a subject to different interpretation of the author's message.

A non-literary example of a *lexical deviation* can be provided from the A. Putilin's highly personalized scientific perspective on nanotechnology, concluded by the statement that include: «… границу между ныне существующим человеком и *человечностью*…» (…the border between the existing *human* and *humanness*), where the word *человечность (humanness)* denotes an abstract spiritual human quality, which is not something to be expected in continuation of "molecular sub-microns", "nanometers", *etc.,* of the specific scientific wording in the preceding part of the article (Putilin, 2007, see Appendix F).

*Topic-related deviati*ons refer to the unpredicted change of a topic in the passage. V. Pelevin, for example, speaking about human emotions in the aforementioned novel, refers to the issue of the international oil-export operations, describing relevant economic coefficients and even the formula of «*Сф3,68 (s2-s1)*…» (Pelevin, 2005, p.279, see Appendix A). Analogical observations relate to V. Urazaev's scientific article-presentation of "TRIZ v electronike" ("Teoriya Resheniya Izobretatelskix Zadach", *i.e.,* Theory of Solving Innovative Problems in Electronics), in which the author unpredictably addresses the topics of family relations, health care, sports, and politics (Urazaev, 2005, see Appendix F). In some of those instances, a reader may even find humorous aphorisms, allusions and anecdotes, which are used as the epigraphs to the paragraphs focused on purely scientific content. In that case, one may deal with not only *topical deviations*, but also with the *deviations in style and register,* coming across the feature- *in favor*- of the higher level. Although educated native speaker is familiar with shifts in style and register in Russian satire (*e.g.,* the short-story presentations by M. Zvanetsky, 2007, see Appendix E) the following expressions of ellipsis and cross-style patterns in the other genres may "catch

one off base": dotted lines that replace the conclusion in the highly philosophical piece of literary criticism *e.g.,* E. Antipov (2008, see Appendix B); space-outlined digits that brake between two parts of a cohesive flowery paragraph, *e.g.,* that are emphasized by an unexpectedly different voice pattern in the corresponding audio-book (*e.g.,* V. Pelevin, 2001, 2004, 2005, see Appendix A); formulas and graphic symbols inserted into philosophical reasoning on the page of popular military monthly edition (*e.g.,* "Voennaya Mysl", 2008; see Appendix C); insertion of the dialog-relevant colloquial phrases into the written monologues, *e.g.,* E. Antipov's "Все-все, умолкаю", *i.e.,* Ok-Ok, I am shutting my mouth (2008; see Appendix B). The above examples are relevant to the meaning of the word *extension* in the subtitle, which refers three types of deviations to the different *extent* of potential difficulties for comprehension of the aforementioned three types of the deviations:

1. Misunderstanding of a *lexical deviation* is not an obstacle for showing the 80% mastery in comprehension of the passage. In this case, having answered most of the DA-RC/LC *passage-cover sheet questions* correctly, the assessee may add that he/she did not understand why the author had used «джедай» (jedi) instead of the expected «чекист» (chekist), «начальник» (boss), «авторитет» (criminal authority), *etc.*

2. Misunderstanding of a *topical deviation* is more proficiency-significant, as the learner may end up with only 50% of mastery in comprehension, which in the above context could be referenced in the following way: "…More or less, I was able to understand the technological principles and philosophy of implementing nanotechnology, but, speaking honestly, those ambiguous references to soviet-era medical and political realities confused me".

3. Misunderstanding of a *deviation in style and register* would show a break down in comprehension. In the above context, had the assessee not able to answer why the author repeatedly cut the development of his thought, first by dot-line, secondly, by the dialogue-like excuse of «Всё...я умолкаю» (That is it, I am shutting up), it means that the one fails to answer the first DA-RC/LC *passage-cover sheet question* of "What is this passage about?!

The Irrelevance of Genre in 4-higher Rating: Rating Poetry

Our findings from the Russian text typology and corresponding learners' response showed that there is no direct rating-related link between the genre *per se* and the level of the passage. A passage appears to be rated at certain level not due to its relevance to a specific genre, but due to the degree of the aforementioned linguistic properties, character of deviations from the anticipated forms of language expression, and esthetic signatures and other ILR-related criteria, which may be expressed by the other genres as well. For example, one may find very similar abstracts of imagery, allusion, allegory, strophic-syntactic anaphor and understatements in V. Sorokin's [Bolshoy's] *Deti Rosentala* (2005, see Appendix 1), Sorokin's epistolaric letter of *Serdechnaya pros'ba* (2005, see Appendix A), Zhvanetsky's satirical pieces of *Pisma v teatr* (2007, see Appendix E), V. Shenderovitch's radio-show *Vse Svoboddny* (2008, see Appendix C), A. Piontkovsky's political novellas from *Nelubimaya strana* (2007, see Appendix C), V. Pelevin's *Svyashennaya kniga Oborotnya* (2004, see Appendix A), B. Akunin's essays on his personal web-site (2008, see Appendix C), and G. Kasparov-led debates of *Democracy-light* (2008, see Appendix C**)**, *etc.* The same rating-related similarities

are found in modern Russian interpretations of epic songs ("bylina"), literary prose of *Molenie-Daniila Zatochnika* (2006, see Appendix G), archaic and newly-edited prayer-books, and archaic legalese articles of *Russkaya Pravda* (2007, see Appendix G).

These findings are also supported by the traditional and growing popularity of hybrid-genre literary forms (*i.e.,* tragicomedy, prose poem, combination of prose and poetry, *etc.*), the very existence of which proves that one and the same message and text mode may be represented by different genres, or "split/shared" between the ones in an extended discourse.

To further support the aforementioned statements with examples, one may refer to the ILR-related typology of poetry. Although poetry has always been considered as relevant to an exclusively supreme levels of language production (*i.e.,* Special Purpose Mode, *e.g.,* Lowe, 1998) above the DLI's TL levels; notwithstanding currently prose-poetry hybrids are exploding in FLO-relevant authorial perspectives on politics and societal issues. Keeping the latter in view, we observe poetry from the same ILR-perspective, as the prose was viewed. The following table illustrates the ILR-level differences and pedagogical irrelevance of syllabic and rhythmical features in the three poems, which uniquely identify the respective authors:

Table 3.

Features	Russian	English
Unique Simple *Metaphor*	У меня *растут года*: Будет мне семнадцать. Кем работать мне тогда? Чем мне заниматься? В.В. Маяковский *Кем быть?*	My years grow I will become seventeen. What should my job be then? What should I be occupied with? V. Mayakovsky *Who should I be?*

Unique Imagery *Highly Dense Culturally// Cultural Load* <u>Semantic pleonasm</u>	...Там чудеса: там *леший* бродит, *Русалка* на ветвях сидит. ... *Избушка* там *на курьих ножках* Стоит без окон, без дверей. ... Там *ступа* с *Бабою Ягой* <u>Идёт, бредёт</u> сама собой. А. С. Пушкин. Пролог к поэме *Руслан и Людмила*	…There are miracles there, a forest-goblin roams there, a mermaid sits on the branches. …there stands a hut on chicken legs, without windows or doors. ... there is a mortar with (*i.e.,* carrying) Baba Yaga, moving, plodding/staggering along all by itself. A. Pushkin. Prologue to *Ruslan and Ludmila*
Unique Flowery Language *Archaisms* *Metaphor*	Восстань, пророк, и *виждь* и *внемли*, *Исполнись* волею моей, И, обходя моря и земли, *Глаголом жги сердца людей.* А.С. Пушкин. *Пророк*	Arise, my prophet! See and hear, have you fulfilled with my will! And crossing the lands and seas, burn people's hearts with your words. A. Pushkin. *The Prophet.*

Following Table 3 from top to bottom, one may find the increasing complicity and impact of the *L4-higher* linguistic properties. The abstract from *Кем быть? (Who should I be?)* has only one metaphor, the misunderstanding of which would not lead to a breakdown in comprehension of the message, *e.g.,* (see the second line of this poem), which considerably compensates for the potential loss of the metaphoric idea from the first line (Mayakovsky, 2007, see Appendix D). The imagery of the second abstract is built upon extended cultural references, although the word-summary *of чудеса (miracles)* may help in identifying the main idea of the passage; this is not the case for the *Пророк (Prophet)* passage, where flowery language is expressed by archaisms, which meanings are essential for the understanding of the message (Pushkin, 2006, 2007, see Appendix D).

Noticeably, all the aforementioned characteristics do not relate to the specific characteristics of poetry as a genre:

• All the above references may be found in prose, drama and other genres;

• Being the defining features of Russian poetry, the rhymed words and syllabic verse forms are usually not the ones that reflect *L4-higher* characteristics (*e.g., семнадцать-заниматься; года-тогда;* and *моей-людей* in Table 3; and

When a rhymed word represents an *L4-higher* feature, e.g., *внемли* (the archaic imperative form of *to listen)*, it relates exclusively to the meaning of the word or word combination, but not to the one's function of being rhymed, or being part of a syllabic verse. For example, the restructuring of the original *Восстань, пророк, и виждь и внемли* into *Пророк, восстань, внемли и виждь* would not affect any ILR-relevant characteristics of the language expression and comprehension.

• The similarity in syllabic and rhythmical concepts between English and Russian poetry may be regarded in the above context as the main reason to consider this genre as of no TL-culture-specific obstacle for comprehension of that literary format.

The Ultimate Authorial Virtuosity and Idiosyncrasy versus Less Complicated Comprehension

Reviewing the passages of the most prominent Russian writers and speakers of all time, one often has a reasonable sense of facing the ultimate authorial idiosyncrasy about the referenced subject, and the ultimate appropriateness of the language expression to the situation of discourse (i.e., L5-likely characteristics). In many instances, however, further textual analysis may prove that to be premature, when viewing it from the point of ILR-descriptors for L5 Reading and Listening comprehension. Figuratively speaking, it often appears to be the case, when it's much easier to drive a car than to build one. There are two phenomena to be addressed in this context:

1. Predominance of said high-level linguistic properties that ease comprehension of the author's idea, logic or philosophical point in Reading and Listening; and

2. *Guaranteed familiarity with everything, which could potentially be there beyond the lines.*

The first may be illustrated by use of decussations and chiasmus, which are extremely common for the idiosyncratic expression in a Russian intellectual environment. Those linguistic properties make language look extremely flowery, and precise, but at the same time, they do not complicate comprehension, for they refer to universally understandable notions. For example, «Делить веселье все готовы: - Никто не хочет грусть делить» (Everyone is there to share joy, while no one wants to share sorrow; M. Lermontov, 2008, see Appendix D); «Самый лучший человек тот, кто живет преимущественно своими мыслями и чужими чувствами, самый худший сорт человека - который живет чужими мыслями и своими чувствами» (The best person is the one who lives predominantly by his own ideas and by the emotions of the others.) The worst person is the one who lives by the ideas of the other people and follows his own emotions; Tolstoi, 2007, see Appendix A); «В Рссии две напасти: Внизу –власть тьмы. А наверху – тьма власти» (There are two problems in Russia: on top there is the power of darkness, and at the bottom there is the darkness of the power; Guilyarovsky, 1997, see Appendix D). These citations may be understood without linking them to surrounding text, and in most instances they actually ease comprehension of the rest of the passage, as confirmed by learner's response.

The second point is a phenomenon, which refers to the superbly virtuous literary sarcasm about top political figures of Russia, *e.g.,* works by V. Shenderovitch, D. Bykov, and A. Piontkovsky (see Appendixes A, C and D) The rater's concern might

be that all the relevant passages have been addressed, and will likely be addressed in the future, but only the issues that DLI-customers deal with on daily basis. Therefore, every second learner's guess about the nuances, subtleties, and unpredictable sequence of the authorial remarks about Mr. Putin would correctly match the author's philosophical point. Figuratively applying an ILR terminology to the above examples, a passage rater would conclude that L. Tolstoy, M. Lermontov, V. Guilyarovsky, V. Shenderovitch, and other authors demonstrated L5 proficiency in Writing and Speaking, but the passages they produced are likely to be rated at lower levels (*i.e.,* L4 or L4+) from the standpoint of Reading and Listening text typology.

Conclusions

1. *L4-higher* Russian language passages have such distinct typological cross-topical and cross-skill characteristics that a rater may find sufficient linguistic, esthetic and cultural references to identify *L4, L4+* and *L5* samples in all relevant genres and types of authorial expression.

2. Applying the foundational principles of *L4-higher* passage rating (outlined in ILR-descriptors, works of leading US scholars in the field, and DLI-FD, DA, OPI, and ICC manuals) to the Russian Text Typology, a rater may follow the checklist, where content refers both to the written and spoken passages, while irrelevant to the genre, topic/ literary and professional authority of an author:

Checklist for the "L4-higher" Russian-Language Passage Rating

1. What degree of abstraction and/or idiosyncrasy does each *linguistic property* represent:
> • Does it refer to a well-known concept (*i.e., first degree*/ less idiosyncratic/less abstract)?
> • Does it reflect one of the following:
>> a. reference to TL-cultural and historical detail; or
>> b. innovative combination of previously unmatchable words and/or structures? (*i.e., second degree*/ more idiosyncratic/ more abstract)?
> • Does it represent one of the following:
>> a. words that are not used in modern language and that denote nonexistent things; or
>> b. language innovation by the author (*i.e., third degree*/ultimately idiosyncratic/ultimately abstract)?

2. Does this passage include the message-related deviations from the anticipated forms of the language expression? If "Yes", are they:
> *lexical* (*i.e.,* less unpredictable sequence/turn of thought);
> *topic-related* (*i.e.,* more unpredictable sequence/turn of thought); or
> *in style and register* (*i.e.,* ultimately unpredictable sequence/turn of thought?)

3. Does the message include any explicit or implicit push/prompt for certain specific action, decision or way of thinking, or does it look more like a show of philosophical and/or literary virtuosity to demonstrate an imaginable view over the subject of the passage?

4. Does this passage include a highly abstract and/or idiosyncratic property that helps in understanding a considerable part of the passage's content (*e.g.,* if "Yes", the highest level of proficiency may not be required to understand such a passage)?

5. Is this passage about someone or something, who/that has been described and/or referred to for many years on daily basis by multiple authors nationally and internationally (*e.g.,* if "Yes", the highest level of proficiency may not be required to understand such a passage)?

6. Does the passage represent all seven esthetical signatures? If not, what and how many signatures are missing?

Discussion

Relevance of the Study to Other Target Languages

Although referenced by the Russian text typology, the aforementioned conclusions can be considered for the passage rating in other Target Languages, due to the universal nature of such criteria as (1) lexical components, cultural load, degree of abstraction and idiosyncrasy of the linguistic properties; (2) lexical, topical, and style/register-related characteristics of the unpredictable turns of authorial thought; (3) main idea and purpose of the message; and (4) references to national figures, or commonly discussed things and phenomena.

Subject for Further Research

A rater, usually a well-educated native speaker, although with no professional expertise in law, philosophy, hi-tech, and literary criticism, is likely to have the following three questions answered:

1. How can one be sure that a particular work on philosophy, law or a hi-tech related issue is really *highly individuated*, and *highly original* and not a compilation of the writings, produced many times by other authors (*e.g.,* Lowe 1988, 1998)? This may become an important consideration in selecting passages for the DA of seasoned linguists with strong focus on relevant specializations. For example, once a compilation issue (*e.g.,* quite common in Soviet and post-soviet academic research) is disregarded, a TL learner, i.e., an expert in the subject matter, comprehends the passage with the already familiar "idiosyncratic expressions" and consequently responds adequately to the L5-relevant questions, while not actually having that level of proficiency. In some cases, this problem may also lead to the following dilemma: rating the sample as just a projective mode passage on the issue pertinent to professional needs of a learner (*i.e., L4*), or, considering the passage as an ultimately individuated perspective on the subject (*i.e., L5*).

2. What are the language-relevant (vs. *personally esthetical*) criteria to consider someone's *style* and *register* to be *absolutely appropriate* (*e.g.* Lowe 1988, 1998)? Often literary critics have an opposing opinion about style and register appropriateness in the works of famous writers and speakers.

3. What is the extension of the expected Russian well-educated speaker's competence in dealing with the regional and illiterate dialects, archaisms, internet *creatives* (*e.g., medvedkovsky creative*, *padonkovsky creative*, *etc*.), jargons, sociolects, hi-tech, philosophical, legal matters, and various types of slang? The answers to these questions

have commonly reached intuitively, and are worthy of further research and discussion for a consensus.

Appendix A

Literary Prose and Drama by Classic and Modern Writers

Akunin, B. (2005). *Leviafan.* Moscow: Zakharov.

Bunin, I. (1983b). Molodost' I Starost'. *Rasskazy* (pp.438-441)*.* Moscow: Pravda.

Bunin, I. (1987a). Antonovskie Yabloki. *Selection* (pp. 59-93). Kiev: Vissha Shkola.

Dostoevsky, F. (2007) Prestuplenie I Nakazanie. Retrieved October 10, 2007 from Website http://www.ilibrary.ru/text/69/index.html.

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Notes

1. The term of *L4-higher* is used there and further on in line with the commonly generalized references to L4, L4+, and L5 written and spoken passages available in the ILR-related pedagogical publications (see, for example the page of *Some "very high" level (4-higher) properties* in DLI-issued OPI-, DA-, and ICC workshops' manuals).

2. As per the concept of the Diagnostic Assessment applied in DLI, a *desired* level of proficiency in Reading or Listening is usually regarded as one level above the *working* (*current/already achieved*) level. The characteristics of the *desired* level have to be addressed in the questions in the Reading and Listening passages' worksheets, prepared by the DA specialist and in the relevantly following Individual Learning Plans. Importantly, the same terminological opposition can be applied to TL teaching and curriculum development , wherein a *desired* level is always reflected in the relevant scope and sequence, activities, textual materials, and lesson planning.

3. Noticeably, each of the italicized terms, so commonly referenced in the ILR-related literature, has a multitude of interpretations in language dictionaries and thesaurus. For example, Merriam-Webster's on-line dictionary (2008b) and other American on-line sources (*e.g.,* Atasegment.com online dictionary, 2008) supply the entry of *idiosyncratic* with up to 102 related words; the notion of *culture* is illustrated by three pages of various definitions in the Russian thesauruses and encyclopedias (*e.g.,* Sovremenny Entsyklopedihesky Slovar, 2007; Entsyclopedichesky Slovar Brokgauza i Evfrona, 2008), which inevitably leads the rater to excessive subjectivity in evaluating L4-higher passages. In this context, reference to typical, *i.e.,* repeated and frequently encountered, textual features helps to narrow down the scope of rater's term-related distractions. Additionally, a reference to typical in TL communication helps a rater to peripherally consider all those occasional language expressions that are unlikely to be encountered by learners in real-life situations.

4. With the increasing availability of audio-books, representing literary, philosophical, legal and technical written works in the Russian language, references to common features between *L4-higher* written and spoken passages becomes pedagogically important, especially when it comes to the point of structuring Skill integrated activities for the post-DA-interview Individual Learning Plan.

5. When speaking about the *abstracts* we mean the following selections: an abstract from a literary work, an article from a series of articles; a weekly radio-show that is part of the larger radio-show archive, etc.; the reference to the *communication patterns* assumes the distinct style, register, elliptical features, choice of synonyms, meaningful grammatical deviations, used by speakers and writers to imitate someone's favorite author or role model.

6. The list of the linguistic properties combines the ones from the page of *Some "very high" level (4-higher) properties* in DLI-issued OPI-, DA-, and ICC workshops' manuals with the stylistic and rhetorical devices, referenced by leading Russian Language scholars as the characteristics of highly idiosyncratic abstract literary language (*e.g.,* Vinogradov, 1977; Kl'uev, 1999). Expanding the DLI-recommended list of the *properties* ,we intentionally did not prioritize them, nor did we specify their individual relevance to tropes (figures of speech), rhetorical and/or stylistic devices, initially considering all of them to be somewhat equally relevant for rating L4-higher passages.

7. Both for a native speaker and a TL learner, the more abstract and individuated the passage is, the more complicated its comprehension. Noticeably, Merriam-Webster explains the second meaning of the word "abstract" as "difficult to understand" (2008a).

8. Translation of the Russian citing into English, provided there and further on, reflects more the content of the statement, rather than its cultural or idiosyncratic nuances. References to the authors are provided only for those citations that were found in one articular work. The proverbs,idioms and other commonly encountered word combinations are not referenced.

9. Having come across a multitude of controversial theories of the *esthetics*, we concluded to further refer to Dutton's summarization of its main descriptors, cited in *The Blank State…* by Steven Pinker (2002). Although related primarily to art, the *seven universal signatures of the aesthetics* may be definitively correlated with the content and linguistic characteristics of the ILR-outlined *L4-higher* passages.

10. Speaking of the Russian language styles, we follow Russian scholars to refer

exclusively to the so called normative or "literary" language, defining *colloquial, scientific, official-business, newspaper-publicity /journalistic style, and style of fiction literature* (Golub, 1997; Klu'ev, 1998; Vinogradov, 1977). As this classification does not cover all the higher-level-relevant TL varieties, we chose to also consider the register-formality scale (i.e., *frozen, formal, consultative, neutral, informal, casual, intimate* as defined by Joos (1961), and Quirk et al (1985) and such registers as *legalese*, *slang*, *baby talk* and *terminology* (Halliday, M,A.K., 1978; Trudgill, P., 1992).

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Exploring Diverse Settings for Language Acquisition and Use: Comparing Study Abroad, Service Learning Abroad, and Foreign Language Housing

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This study compared the amount of the second language (L2) use and linguistic gains made by students in three short-term language immersion programs: (1) traditional study abroad, (2) service-oriented study abroad, and (3) foreign language (FL) housing. These were chosen because they represent three distinct program types, providing students with different ways of interacting in the target language and different types and amounts of contact with native speakers. This allowed us to evaluate relationships between study setting, language use, and language gains. Learners completed language logs detailing their use of the L2 as well as pre- and post-immersion oral tests to assess gains in fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Although the traditional study abroad group used the L2 the most, findings demonstrate much of this use was due to coursework. When comparing use outside of the classroom, the service learning group used the target language significantly more than students in the FL house and traditional study abroad. Also two of the groups, those in the FL house and service-oriented study abroad demonstrated significant linguistic gains. Results also suggest a positive relationship between time speaking the L2 with non-native speakers and linguistic gains.

The setting in which L2 learning takes place is considered an important variable in L2 acquisition research. As Hymes (1972, quoted in Collentine & Freed, 2004) suggested, in order to understand language in context we must "systematically relate the two [language and context]." Firth and Wagner (1997) also contend that social and contextual factors are vital to understanding second language acquisition.

One setting that has received a great deal of attention is that of study abroad. Numerous studies have compared language learning in study abroad to at-home contexts such as formal classroom study or intensive immersion programs (Freed, 1995; Lafford & Ryan, 1995; Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1995). However, study abroad programs vary greatly in their structure, emphasis, and length. For example, a majority of students who participate in study abroad go for less than a semester and short-term programs account for most of the growth in study abroad participation (Institute of International Education, 2009). Yet most of the research on study abroad has focused on semester or year long programs. Additionally, few studies have examined language learning in study abroad programs in which students dedicate a large portion of their time abroad to activities other than coursework that require extensive interaction with native speakers in the target language. For example, in some programs, students engage in humanitarian service (Lewis, 2005; Porter, 2003; Wessel, 2007).

Another important setting for L2 learning is foreign language housing, in which students reside and speak the target language with other L2 learners and sometimes native speakers. Unlike students in intensive immersion programs like Middlebury College's Summer Language Schools, students do not devote all their time to studying the L2. Often their only exposure to the target language occurs in their residence, mostly with non-native speakers of the target language. Research (Martinsen, Baker, Bown, & Johnson, in press) comparing residents of foreign language houses to comparable students studying language on the same campus in the U.S. but not residing in language housing suggests that students in FL housing use the L2 more frequently and make greater gains in oral proficiency. However, more research is needed to determine what role FL housing can play in post-secondary FL education.

The purpose of this study is to compare language use and learning in three different short-term settings: (1) a traditional study-abroad program in which students attend classes, live with a host family, and make frequent excursions to visit historical and cultural sites; (2) a study abroad program where students, in addition to their course work, provide community service to native speakers and also live with host families, and (3) a program in which students live in an on-campus FL house over the same time period. The programs were examined in terms of changes in students' linguistic skills and time spent using the TL in various tasks.

Literature Review
Study Abroad

Research on study abroad has demonstrated that students who go abroad experience tremendous learning and growth in a variety of areas. Students' language skills often improve significantly. Moreover, students who go abroad frequently gain a deeper appreciation for and understanding of other cultures as well as their own (Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004). Study abroad also offers other benefits such as personal growth and development, increased confidence and willingness to communicate, and expanded career opportunities (see for example, Archangeli, 1999; Kauffmann, 1984).

Though most of this research has focused on semester or year-long programs, some evidence does suggest that short-term programs do have a significant impact on students' growth, at least in terms of cultural awareness and motivation. For instance, Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) found that students who spent five weeks abroad reported higher levels of intercultural awareness, personal growth and development, awareness of global interdependence and functional knowledge of world geography and language than students who took similar courses at home. Medina-Lopez-Portillo (2004) found that students in a seven-week study abroad program in Mexico significantly improved their sensitivity to other cultures. Also, Dwyer (2004) noted that students who participated in short summer programs reported that their commitment to learn a FL was strengthened as much (or more) from their brief sojourn as that of students who went for a semester. However, empirical studies of language learning in short-term study abroad programs are very scarce. This may be due to the widespread use of the OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview) in study abroad research. Since it measures overall skill in the target language it may be too blunt an instrument to capture the incremental changes that take place over a short period (Freed, 1995). In fact, many studies find that a percentage of students show no evidence of gain according to the OPI, even after a semester abroad

(Brecht, Davidson, & Ginsberg, 1993, 1995). These findings suggest that incremental changes may be better captured by other means, such as self-assessment or native speaker ratings.

Martinsen's (2007) study employed native speaker ratings to examine the linguistic gains made by students in a short-term study abroad program. Student participants completed two contextualized linguistic tasks similar to those used in oral proficiency interviews both before and after their time abroad. Native speakers then rated those recorded speech samples. Results indicated a small but statistically significant increase in students' oral skills. However, these results only reflect the learning of students in one program and more research is needed to determine if such learning is typical of students in other language learning contexts as well.

Target Language Use

Teachers, students or administrators involved in study abroad often assume that while students are abroad they will undoubtedly engage in many interactions with native speakers in the target language and that these interactions will propel them to new heights of fluency in the target language (see Mendelson (2004) for a discussion of these common assumptions). This idea is related to work by Hatch (1978), who argues for the importance of conversation in developing grammar, and Swain (1993, 1998) who holds that both input and output are vital to L2 acquisition (Mackey, 1999).

Interaction with native speakers is one of the most widely studied variables relating to improvement in oral language skills in study abroad (Brecht, et al., 1993, Freed, Segalowitz & Dewey, 2004; Keating, 1994; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004), though there is little consensus as to its benefits. Many studies have found that interaction with native speakers in the target language does predict improvements in the target language (see, for example, Brecht et al., 1993; Isabelli, 2001). On the other hand, some studies have found no significant relationship between improvements in oral fluency and the amount of time spent using the target language interactively outside of class. Still others (Rivers, 1998; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Wilkinson, 1996, 1998) shed doubt on the widely-held assumption that homestay experiences during residence abroad automatically lead to extensive interaction with native speakers. Also, very little research has considered how various language learning settings may encourage or discourage students from interacting with native speakers, suggesting the need for further study.

Service Learning

Service learning is a form of experiential learning that combines a few key elements: rigorous academic study of a particular discipline and provision for some form of service related to the same discipline that benefits members of a local community. The knowledge and experience gained by students from academic study and their service experience are thought to create deeper, more practical understanding than either service or classroom study alone (Lewis, 2005; Wessel, 2007). Buchen (1995) argues that students who engage in academic work related to community service become involved in 'a circular process that moves from feeling to fact, from experience to inquiry' which can cause the students to '[turn] to the academic with the kind of urgency that can set learning ablaze' (69). Morris (2001) found that students who participated in a service learning course

experienced an increase in their motivation to learn Spanish and improved attitudes towards Spanish speakers. This was true regardless of the learner's initial motivation to learn the target language.

Research has also found that service learning in study abroad is an excellent way for students to pursue culture learning. For example, Jackson (2007) found that students who participated in a study abroad program with a service learning component gained important cultural insights and felt significantly more confident in their ability to interact with native speakers of Spanish. Research suggests that service learning abroad has very positive effects on students' attitudes and motivation and promotes cultural understanding. However, these studies do not document how participation in service learning affects time spent interacting with native speakers in the target language or linguistic gains.

Foreign Language Housing

Foreign language housing (FLH) is a language learning context in which students (1) live together in an area designated as foreign language housing, (2) commit to speaking exclusively in the target language while in the foreign language housing, and (3) are often encouraged or required to participate in certain activities designed to increase use of the target language or understanding of the target culture such as preparing and eating dinner together and/or participating in cultural or social activities.

FLH programs advertise that learners will gain increased fluency in the target language, yet there are those, like Wolf (2002) who claim that learners do not interact in the target language in FLH. Pearson's (2006) study of Spanish learners in a language community suggests that learners report interacting primarily in English. Bown's (2006) study, however, offered contradictory evidence; learners reported speaking the target language 90% of their time in the language residence. The contradictory evidence is probably a result of differences in the structure and emphasis of particular FLH programs. Overall, the literature on FLH is sparse, and little is known about the amount of language used in FLH. Also, there is little empirical data regarding the potential linguistic benefits of FLH.

Research Questions

To address the need for greater understanding of the benefits of traditional study abroad, service learning abroad, and domestic foreign language housing, and to evaluate relationships between study setting, language use, and language gains, this paper will focus on the following research questions:

1. Do students in the three groups, Foreign Language Housing, Traditional Study Abroad, or Service Learning Study Abroad spend significantly different amounts of time using the target language (Spanish)?

2. Do students' oral language abilities (measures of fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar drawn from speech samples) improve more in one of the programs than the others?

3. Does amount of target language use translate to greater gains in oral language abilities in each of the three groups?

4. Does time spent using the target language in specific tasks predict language gain?

Method
Participants

Participants included 48 students total. Of the participants, 19 (5 males, 14 females) were students in a traditional, spring term program conducted in Madrid, Spain and whose focus was Spanish language and culture (hereafter TSA). These students lived with local Spanish families and took approximately 9 credit hours of upper division courses including a 300-level grammar course and other courses such as the culture and civilization of Spain. Thirteen (1 male, 12 females) participants took part in a spring term program whose focus was Spanish language and service learning (hereafter SLSA). These students also stayed with local families. They took 200-level courses and were assigned in pairs to give service 5-15 hours per week at various sites such as schools, orphanages, or homes for the elderly. Finally, sixteen (3 males, 13 females) participants lived in the foreign language housing (specifically the Spanish House) located near the campus of Brigham Young University. Residents of FLH at the research site live in an apartment complex designated specifically as foreign language residences and are required to communicate only in the target language within the complex. Additionally, students prepare and eat dinner together each weekday evening in the residence. However, students continue to take courses on campus and work and participate in extracurricular activities. Each apartment within the language house has a resident facilitator who is a native Spanish speaker and helps students to use the target language, coordinates meal preparation, and serves as a linguistic and cultural resource for the other residents.

Materials and Procedures

For the purposes of this study, language assessment focused on students' speaking skills since it seemed likely that the informal learning that occurs in study abroad through interaction with native speakers would affect oral skills more than reading or writing. Before and after studying abroad, students were asked to respond orally in Spanish to two contextualized tasks taken from the OPI and the Texas Oral Proficiency Test (TOPT), a test based on the OPI used in Texas to certify bilingual teachers.

These two tasks provided a sample of approximately three minutes of each student's Spanish from before and after their time abroad. Similarly brief samples of learner speech have been used in other studies (Yager, 1998; Koren-1995; Okamura, 1995) to successfully measure improvements in oral skills, particularly when measuring gains in pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency. Later, a panel of three native speakers and one of the researchers rated each sample on pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary (see Appendix A—TOLS (Test of Oral Language Skills Rubric). To score the samples, the native speaker raters used a rubric, which was created for this purpose by the researcher and contained descriptors of the kind of speech that would qualify for a given rating.

In order to create this rubric, the researchers referenced rubrics used by the Interagency Language Roundtable and other sources (Higgs, 1984, Koren, 1995, Okamura, 1995). Then one of the researchers discussed the rubric with experts in pedagogy and oral testing. The rubric was piloted informally with a panel of native speakers. After a discussion of the rubric with the native speakers, the raters calibrated it on a group of sample recordings (not from the current study) in order to establish inter-rater reliability.

For purposes of this study, inter-rater reliability meant that raters consistently scored samples within one point of each other in each of the categories. For example, a rater could assign a score of 3 in pronunciation and another rater could give the same sample a 4 in pronunciation, but if one of the raters assigned a 2 and another a 4, that would be considered inconsistent. During the ratings of the samples in the actual study no such inconsistencies occurred. The raters' ability to rate the students consistently and distinguish between a variety of skills levels indicated that the rubric was useful for the purposes of the study. The native speakers were also able to distinguish between students with experience abroad from those who had not been abroad as well as distinguish between university students in first- or second-year Spanish. Also, the raters in this pilot stage recommended that grammar be included as a factor on which students could be rated. Thus grammar was added as a category in the rubric used later in the actual study. Additionally, the raters in the pilot stage felt that a scale of 1 to 5 was too broad for comprehensibility and recommended a scale of only 1 to 3, which change was included. However, for future studies, we may consider re-wording the original rubric in the following manner: (1) could understand almost nothing, (2) could understand a little, (3) could follow the train of thought, (4) could understand almost everything, (5) could understand everything.

After piloting the instrument, one of the researchers and a new set of native speaker raters followed the procedures outlined above in order to reliably rate participants' speech samples. Samples were presented to the raters in random order so that the raters did not know whether a sample was taken before or after the student went abroad. Analysis of the ratings for the TOLS revealed high inter-rater reliability. Inter-rater reliability was calculated for each of the five components of speech rated. Cronbach's Alpha for each was Pronunciation = .83, Grammar = .91, Fluency = .95, Vocabulary = .90, and Comprehensibility = .14. Since the Cronbach's Alpha was low for Comprehensibility, the researchers considered those scores unreliable and therefore they were not included in the analysis. Face validity was deemed to be high because students were carrying out a communicative task with native speakers.

Approximately three weeks into their study experience, participants were also asked to keep a language log detailing how frequently they used the L2 over one week. The log was sent out with instructions by e-mail and students recorded the amount of time spent in a variety of tasks during the week (See Figure 1 for a complete list of activities provided on the language log.) Previous to the study, the language log was piloted on several FLH residents not involved in the actual study. This allowed the researchers to determine if there were any tasks that should have been on the log but were not. This log has been used in other research regarding language context and language use (Martinsen, Baker, Bown, & Johnson, in press).

Of the 48 participants, 43 completed the language logs, 26 completed the pre-test and post-test of oral language skills and 21 completed all three measures.

Results

In this section we will present the results of the study as related to each individual research question. Our first research question was to determine whether students in the three groups, FLH, TSA, or SLSA spent significantly different amounts of time using Spanish. (See Table 1.) To answer the first research question, we tallied the total number of hours spent using Spanish per week as recorded in the language log for each participant

in each group. We submitted these scores to a one-way ANOVA with the total number of hours spent using Spanish per week as the dependent variable and group (TSA, SLSA and FLH) as the independent variable. This analysis found a significant effect for group, $F(2,42) = 6.043$, $p = .005$. Tukey post-hoc analyses determined that the FLH group (3.64 hours per day on average) used Spanish significantly less than the TSA (6.84 hours per day on average) and SLSA (6.7 hours a day on average) groups.

Table 1. Reported Amount of Spanish Use by the FLH, SLSA, and TSA Groups (Standard Deviations in Parentheses)

	FLH (n= 12)	SLSA (n= 16)	TSA (n= 15)	F statistic	p value	Post-hoc Tests
Average total hours using Spanish per day	3.64 (1.89)	6.71 (3.66)	6.84 (2.90)	6.04	.005	TSA, SLSA> FLH
Average total hours per day using language productively	2.16 (1.34)	3.71 (2.09)	3.43 (2.40)	2.47	.09	TSA= SLSA =FLH
Average total hours per day using language receptively	1.71 (1.63)	2.54 (1.44)	3.25 (0.82)	5.10	.01	TSA> SLSA , FLH
Average total hours per day in class	1.51 (1.50)	2.19 (0.95)	3.96 (2.81)	5.64	.007	TSA> SLSA , FLH
Average total hours per day outside of class	2.12 (1.45)	4.71 (2.62)	2.87 (0.52)	4.65	.01	

We next examined how the three groups differed in their use of Spanish in specific types of tasks. We first examined whether the three groups differed in the total amount of time spent using Spanish productively (i.e., speaking and writing—for example, talking to roommates, talking during dinner, etc.) and found no significant effect for group, $F(2,42)=2.47$, $p=.09$, suggesting that the three groups, unlike for the total time

spent using Spanish, did not differ significantly in how often they used the language productively (FLH, 3.16 hours on average; TSA, 3.43 hours per day on average; SLSA, 3.71 hours per day on average, when averaging over a seven-day week). By contrast, in an analysis examining how much time the three groups spent in receptive activities such as listening to music, reading, and watching TV, the TSA group spent the most time (3.25 hours per day on average) in this manner, with the other two groups spending significantly less (FLH, 1.71 hours per day on average; SLSA, 2.54 hours per day on average), $F(2,42) = 5.098$, p=.01. A similar analysis performed on the total amount of time spent in the classroom revealed that the TSA group reported significantly more time (3.96 hours a day on average) using Spanish in the classroom than did the FLH (1.51 hours per day on average) or the SLSA groups (2.8 hours on average per day), $F(2,42) = 5.64$, p =.007. By contrast, a one-way ANOVA run on the total amount of time spent using the language outside of class noted a significant effect of group, $F(2,42) = 4.65$, $p < .01$. Post-hoc Tukey tests revealed that the SLSA group used Spanish significantly more outside of class (4.7 hours on average) than the other two groups. This analysis also found that the FLSR group (2.12 hours on average) did not differ significantly from the TSA group (2.82 hours on average).

The results of the analysis on the amount of language used by each of the three groups revealed that the two study abroad groups used Spanish more than the FLH students. However, when time using Spanish productively was compared, the three groups spent a similar amount of time speaking Spanish. In addition, the TSA group spent more time using the language receptively (i.e., reading and listening) than the other two groups. In fact, the biggest difference between the two groups was in the amount of time spent in class, with the FLH group spending the least amount of time in class and the TSA group spending the most.

Our second research question sought to determine whether the three groups differed in their language gain during the 7 weeks spent in the program. To answer this question, we averaged the native speakers' ratings of the participants' pre-and post-test language tasks into four scores for each participant: pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary. (See Table 2.) We submitted these scores to a series of one-between, one-within repeated measures ANOVAs with time (pre-vs. post-test scores) as within and group as between group variables. Our analyses found that for vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency, there was no significant main effect for time (all F's$(2,25) < 3.49$, all p's $> .07$), nor group (all F's $(2,1) < 3.44$, all p's $> .07$), nor a significant group x time interaction (all F's$(2,1) < 3.09$, all p's $> .08$). A similar analysis performed on the participants' pre- and post-test grammar scores, however, did reveal a significant effect for time ($F(2,25) = 12.74$, $p < .002$), but no significant effect for group ($F(2,25) = 1.70$, p = .205), nor a significant group x time interaction ($F(1,2) = 2.22$, p =.131). In other words, according to this initial analysis, all three groups demonstrated significant gains only in their grammar abilities from pre-test to post-test and did not demonstrate significant gains from pre-to post-test on vocabulary, pronunciation, or fluency. In addition, although all three groups did improve in grammar abilities from pre- to post-test, none of the three groups improved more than any other on any of the language skills measures.

Table 2. Pre- and Post-Test Scores for FLH, Sevice-Learning, and Traditional Study Abroad Students for the Skill Areas of Pronunciation, Grammar, Fluency, and Vocabulary (Standard Deviations in Parentheses)

	FLH (n=8)		SLSA (n=9)		TSA (n=9)		F statistic	p value
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test		
Pronun-ciation	3.33 (0.55)	3.44 (0.69)	3.25 (0.39)	3.13 (0.31)	3.85 (0.60)	3.59 (0.76)	Time: $F_{(2,25)}$ =1.07 Group: $F_{(2,25)}$ =2.18 Group x time: $F_{(1,2)}$= 1.58	.311 .135 .228
Gram-mar	2.67 (0.91)	3.07 (0.81)	2.37 (0.33)	3.08 (0.49)	3.30 (0.99)	3.41 (0.91)	Time: $F_{(2,25)}$ =12.74 Group: $F_{(2,25)}$ =1.70 Group x time: $F_{(1,2)}$= 2.22	.002 .127 .131
Fluency	2.82 (0.80)	3.00 (0.69)	2.92 (0.75)	3.46 (0.50)	3.57 (0.78)	3.48 (0.87)	Time: $F_{(2,25)}$ =3.49 Group: $F_{(2,25)}$ =2.26 Group x time: $F_{(1,2)}$= 1.81	.070 .205 .187
Vocab-ulary	3.15 (0.72)	3.15 (0.44)	2.75 (0.49)	3.25 (0.23)	3.70 (0.65)	3.48 (0.60)	Time: $F_{(2,25)}$ =.793 Group: $F_{(2,25)}$ =3.44 Group x time: $F_{(1,2)}$= 3.09	.382 .060 .080

One concern about the above analysis is that the TSA group had significantly more experience with Spanish than the other two groups. Many of them had had a previous 2-year immersion experience and were enrolled in third- and fourth-year language classes, unlike the FLH and SLSA students who were generally enrolled in second-year courses and had not had previous immersion experience. To assess whether the three groups differed in their language abilities prior to the 7-week study abroad or foreign language housing experience, we submitted their pre-test scores on pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar to a two-way (group by language score) ANOVA and did find a significant effect for group (F(1,25) = 4.24, p < .01). Post-hoc Tukey tests revealed that the FLH and SLSA groups did not differ significantly from each other on any of the language-task scores, but the TSA group did score significantly higher than the other two groups. Running the above analysis with pre test scores (high, mid, low) as a covariate may have addressed this concern; however, because the high pretest group would have included so few individuals (n = 4), we felt that such an analysis would not be possible.

Because of this, we ran a separate analysis looking only at the difference between the FLH students and the SLSA students. We submitted their pre-and post-test scores on pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary to a series of one-between, one-within repeated measures ANOVAs with time (pre-vs. post-test scores) as within and group as between group variables. (See summary of statistical analyses in Table 3.) These analyses revealed that for vocabulary, grammar, and fluency, there was a significant effect for time (all F's(1,17) > 4.48, all p's < .05), but no significant effect for group (all F's (1,17) > .834, all p's > .376), nor a group x time interaction (all F's(1,1) < 1.28, all p's < .276). In contrast, for pronunciation scores, there was no significant effect for time (F(1,17) = 0.004, p = .949), nor was there a significant effect for group (F(1,17) = .794, p = .387), nor a group x time interaction (F(1,1) = 1.23, p = .285). In other words, both the FLH and SLSA groups improved in vocabulary, grammar and fluency, but not in pronunciation. In addition the two groups did not differ from each other in terms of how much they improved on any language measure.

Table 3. Reanalysis of Statistics Comparing the Two Groups, FLH and SLSA Students on the Four Skill Areas

	F statistic	p value
Pronunciation	Time: F(1,17) =.0004 Group: F(1,17) =.794 Group x Time: F(1,21) =1.23	.949 .387 .285
Grammar	Time: F(1,17) =17.61 Group: F(1,17) =.208 Group x Time: F(1,21) =1.28	.001 .655 .276
Fluency	Time: F(1,17) =6.28 Group: F(1,17) =.834 Group x Time: F(1,21) =1.51	.024 .376 .238
Vocabulary	Time: F(1,17) =4.48 Group: F(1,17) =.453 Group x Time: F(1,21) =.411	.050 .511 .186

Our third and fourth questions involved connections between language use and language gains. To answer the third research question, we ran a series of correlations between language gains (fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar) and total time spent using Spanish, total time using the language productively, total time using the language receptively, and total classroom time. These Pearson correlations revealed only weak connections between the measures of language use and language gain (correlations from -.174 to .115; p values ranged from .422 to .948). However, one reason for these weak correlations may have been that the number of participants (21) who completed all three tasks (pre-test, post-test, and language log) was too low for reliable correlations. To further investigate the relationship between language use and language gain, we determined which two students in each of the three groups had the highest (i.e., in the top quartile) and which two had the lowest language gains (i.e., in the bottom quartile), as averaged across all four language skills. As mentioned previously, we did not include comprehensibility in this or any of the other analyses since the level of reliability was too low. We compared total time using Spanish for these high and low gainers, receptive and productive time, and amount of class time using Spanish. As seen in Table 4, relatively few noticeable differences were found between the two groups. While the group with the highest gain scores had a slightly higher amount of time spent producing Spanish, the group with the lowest gain scores spent a slightly higher amount of time listening to Spanish. In other words, there appears to be no obvious relationship between how much total time a learner spent using Spanish and whether or not s/he had noticeable language gains from pretest to post-test.

Table 4. Average Number of Hours Spent Using Spanish by High and Low Gainers Per Week (Data Was Collected for All Participants in All Three Programs for One Week)

	Top Gainers	Bottom Gainers
Total time using Spanish	6.8	6.84
Productive	4.12	3.95
Receptive	2.34	2.75
Class Time	2.01	2.12

To further investigate language use in specific tasks and the relationship of the tasks to language gains (question four), we examined the top and bottom quartile gainers' use of Spanish in all the language situations presented in the language log (see Appendix B). For several of these language situations, an interesting pattern emerged (see Table 5). The participants with the highest gains in each of the groups spent considerably more time (74 minutes a day on average) speaking to non-native Spanish speakers (their roommates and other non-native speakers) than did the participants with the lowest gains in each group (37 minutes a day on average). In contrast, the participants with the lowest gains spoke more often to native Spanish speakers, i.e., their host family, shop clerks, teachers, and other native speakers, (83 minutes on average) than did the group with the highest gains (35 minutes a day on average). In other words, from these results, it appears that the participants with the highest gains in all three of the groups (TSA, SLSA, and FLH) spoke more often to non-native and less often to native Spanish speakers, and that this difference between the two groups may have led to higher language gains.

Table 5. The Number of Minutes Per Day High and Low Gainers Spent Using Spanish in Specific Situations

	Top Gainers	Bottom Gainers
Commuting	25	7
Talking to Roommates	42	15
Talking with Non-Natives	32	22
Listening to Music	16	37
Talking with Host Family	19	46
Talking with Native Speakers other than the Host Family	22	41

Discussion

Results and implications will be presented for each of the research questions, as well as suggestions for future research.

1. Do students in the three groups, FLH, TSA, or SLSA spend significantly different amounts of time using the target language (Spanish)?

This study found that the TSA group, and the SLSA, on average, spent significantly more time using the target language during their time abroad than students in the foreign language housing, but the TSA and SLSA groups did not differ significantly from one another. However, when time spent in class is accounted for, students in the on-campus foreign language housing did not differ significantly in the amount of time spent using the target language interactively from that of students in the study abroad programs. This finding is particularly surprising given that the students living in foreign language housing generally only used the target language while in their apartment. As soon as they left the apartment they were in an English-dominated university setting.

This finding seems to corroborate other studies of domestic immersion programs. For example, Freed, Segalowitz, and Dewey (2004) found that students in an intensive domestic immersion program spent more time in the target language than students in study abroad programs. Furthermore, Dewey (2002) found that learners in domestic immersion programs at home spent more time in a variety of communicative tasks than learners abroad. However, in the immersion programs in question, students were often isolated from the English-speaking world. They took at least four hours of classes per day and participated in target language activities during almost all waking hours. The students in the present study had much less contact with the target language, as they were required only to eat dinner in the foreign language house with the other participants Sunday through Thursday and speak exclusively in the target language while in the housing. The rest of the time they were free to go about their lives in the English-speaking world, working, attending class, and socializing with English-speaking friends. Yet students in the FLH reported interacting in the target language roughly the same amount of time as students in both study abroad programs who had traveled to a Spanish-speaking country, lived with a host family, and were in proximity of native speakers.

Several possible explanations can be given for the patterns in language use in the FLH, TSA, and SLSA settings. These reasons largely relate to the need for and nature of social interaction, program-design issues, and student motivation.

The first social issue is the apparent need students have to interact with peers. Social capital theory suggests that people will form the strongest relationships with others with whom they have much in common (Borgatti and Jones, 1998; Coleman, 1988). Study abroad participants are often placed in homestay settings where the host parents are much older and have very different perspectives on life. Even if there are children in the home, often the ages of these children differ vastly from that of the guest student. Cross-cultural differences can also create differences that make communicating and bonding challenging. Study abroad participants may manage to have some contact with people their age, but again cultural and linguistic barriers can prevent strong bonding. It is only natural for learners to bond with the people with whom they have the most in common—fellow study abroad participants.

The issue of culture shock comes into play as study abroad participants are suddenly thrust into exciting but often frightening new surroundings far from home and anything familiar. These cultural differences will tend to push students towards the safety of the cultural similarity of their fellow students and their native language (Rifkin, 2005). Generally, this is seen as a negative pattern, but Wilkinson (1998) notes that spending time with other students allows an individual to process the overwhelming newness of their surroundings. One student stated, "If I hadn't formed the friends (other study abroad students) that I did, I don't know what I would have done—curled up in my room or something." Another stated that she "didn't see how it could be any other way" and felt that the time she was spending occasionally speaking English was "a pretty good balance." Wilkinson claims that these statements contrast with the perception that students lack motivation; instead, they are reacting to their environment in predictable ways, which may have actually benefited their learning over time.

Social bonding also came into play with the FLH residents, who had much in common with their fellow residents. They were attending the same university, were the same age, had a strong interest in learning Spanish, and had taken some of the same language classes. For this reason, it was natural for them to be able to connect well with each other. In fact, as with many college students, their social lives often revolved around roommates and other FLH residents. In order for them to share their lives they needed to speak and were required to do so in the target language. They also had signed a language pledge and had a native Spanish-speaking resident facilitator living with them who was responsible for encouraging target language use. These facilitators were also students, similar in age and background to the residents of the FLH, and thus could easily be part of the students' social and peer groups. This was generally not the case with the host family or the native speaker teachers in the study abroad settings. Also, students in the FLH knew that these native speakers had been hired to help them to use the target language and that their role was not to criticize or evaluate, but to encourage language use. In short, FLH promoted peer social circles where Spanish was used, whereas study abroad often involved social circles comprised of fellow participants speaking mostly English.

Another factor in understanding the results of this study is the way that the context affected contact with native speakers. In the traditional study abroad and the service learning study abroad programs, students interact with many native speakers.

Much of this interaction takes place with a native-speaker teacher, the host family, or service providers such as bus drivers, waiters, or store clerks. Some research on study abroad has found that these types of contacts are superficial and do not result in extensive or meaningful conversations with native speakers.

It is clear that program design (providing a native Resident Facilitator, requiring a language pledge, etc.) played a major role in language use in the FLH. Similarly, the service learning study abroad program also facilitated language use outside of class through requiring out-of-class contact with native speakers. The program tended to foster the same types of contact with native speakers as traditional study abroad, but also added the volunteer service component. The service component provided an opportunity to interact with native speakers for an authentic, non-language-related purpose. This finding may explain why the SLSA group spent more total time speaking Spanish outside of class than either the foreign language housing group or traditional study abroad. This finding corroborates other research on study abroad. For example, Martinsen (2007) suggests that students in study abroad need more natural ways of connecting with native speakers, as most interactions are superficial and require little speaking on the part of the native speaker (usually the host family). Isabelli-Garcia (2006) also asserts that helping students abroad to form social networks with native speakers through formalized activities such as volunteer service or internships could provide students with the kind of language contact that will foster gains. Others have also suggested the importance of social involvement (Dewey, 2008; Fraser, 2002; Levin, 2001; Whitworth, 2006).

2. Did students' oral language skills improve more in one of the programs than the others?

The results of this study showed that the TSA group as a whole showed significant gains from pre- to post-test only for grammar proficiency, though their lack of gain in other measures may be due to the fact that they started out at a significantly higher level than students in the FLH and SLSA groups. However, the similarities in gains between the FLH and the SLSA groups are striking. Specifically, the FLH and the SLSA made significant gains in grammar, pronunciation, and fluency, and the size of the gains in these three areas was not significantly different between the two groups.

The similarities in the gains in the two groups may suggest that the two contexts provide very similar opportunities for interaction in the target language. Students are often with other learners of the target language who share the same native language and also have some opportunities to interact with native speakers. The similarities in gains may also be due to the short-term nature of the program. It may be that students who participate in a study abroad or immersion program over seven weeks will show similar gains even if programs vary from one another in some aspects. It is possible then that differences in gains between programs could become more pronounced if the programs were extended to a semester or a year.

3. Does the amount of target language use translate to greater gains in oral proficiency in each of the three groups?

This study found that in all three groups the amount of time spent using Spanish did not correlate with greater gains. This may simply be due to the short-term nature of the program, so that the effect of spending more time using Spanish on students' gains

does not become visible. It may be that over a longer period of time the effect of using Spanish more regularly would be apparent.

4. Does time spent using the target language in specific tasks predict language gain?

The analysis performed using descriptive statistics indicated that the students with the greatest language gains spent far more time speaking with roommates on a daily basis than those who had the smallest language gains, while those with few or no language gains spent much more time speaking with native speakers. At first glance this seems counterintuitive. Generally, we would assume that interaction with native speakers would provide more rich and varied input than interaction with other non-native speakers.

There are two possible explanations for these results. One, the gains measured in this study were gains in oral skills only. It is possible that students speaking with native speakers spent more time listening than speaking since students are much less fluent than native speakers and are less familiar with conversational patterns in the target culture such as turn-taking or maintaining the floor. On the other hand, students who interacted with their non-native roommates may have had more equal exchanges because they were more similar in their fluency levels and their conversational patterns. Another explanation for this phenomenon could be that interaction in Spanish with roommates was of higher quality in terms of the linguistic tasks students engaged in. As mentioned previously, students' interactions with native speakers while abroad frequently consist of superficial interactions such as purchasing a bus ticket, ordering meals, or greeting members of the host family. In FLH, students' conversations with their roommates may cover a wider range of topics in greater depth due to their similarity in age, culture, and the amount of time they spend with one another, all of which could lead to greater gains in their speaking skills.

Limitations

In this particular study, only one of each type of program was investigated, limiting the generalizability of these results to other similar programs. The small sample size also represents another limitation. Additionally, this program focused on only a few variables that are of interest in study abroad and a more complete picture would be provided if this or future studies included other variables. In spite of these limitations, these findings provide useful case studies, suggestive of what may occur in other similar programs.

Implications for Practice and Future Research

One of the interesting findings of this study is that students in the SLSA program spent significantly more time using the language outside of class when receptive and interactive activities were combined. This suggests that the inclusion of the service-learning component provides more opportunities for contact with Spanish since the service component was one of the few unique characteristics among the three programs. This implies that program directors and planners can encourage use of the target language for students who go abroad by providing them with a non-linguistic purpose for communicating in the target language, in this case rendering service in the community. Future research could examine the advantages and disadvantages of different means of

connecting students with native speakers. Future research might also employ observation to corroborate the self-report measures used in this study.

This study also reported that students who interacted with English-speaking roommates in the target language were more likely to demonstrate gains in their oral skills than students who reported interacting more in the target language with native speakers. We suggested that this may indicate that interactions with native speakers are more superficial and that students rarely become full conversational partners in their interactions with native speakers. This highlights a need for further research to document the nature of the interactions that students have during study abroad and implies again the need for programs to help students to develop relationships and interactions with native speakers. Researchers should also consider the structure of particular programs, as the findings may differ across learning contexts.

Future studies might also consider additional variables that reflect specific programmatic objectives or outcomes that are normally attributed to study abroad. Among the possible variables to address are not only language-specific skills such as listening comprehension, but also pragmatic knowledge, including nonverbal communication, cultural knowledge, intercultural sensitivity, and motivation to continue studying the target language. In addition, future research should investigate larger populations of students in a greater variety of contexts. The findings of this study, however, represent an important first step in understanding the benefits of various learning settings. Moreover, this study raises important questions about the benefits of interacting in the L2 with native as opposed to non-native speakers.

Conclusion

Participation in study abroad will likely increase in the future, and it is likely that students and program directors will continue to opt for short-term programs for convenience and practicality. Even though the programs may be short-term in nature, program designers have many options for structuring their programs to create the most valuable learning context for their students. The current study suggests that even in short-term programs lasting two months or less, the context of learning does indeed impact the type of interactions that students have in the target language and influences their contact with native speakers. For example, we have found that students in the service learning study abroad program spent significantly more time outside of class using the target language than did students in the other two programs. This fits with the suggestion of previous researchers that built-in connections with native speakers can lead to more time using the target language outside of class. At the same time, more research is needed to determine what types of programs help to maximize interaction in the target language and how programs can create opportunities for interaction with students in the target language with native speakers outside of class. This aspect of programs may be particularly important in short-term immersion or study abroad programs where students might not have the time to develop such relationships on their own.

Additionally, we have seen that domestic immersion programs such as foreign language housing can provide valuable language learning opportunities even when students are not entirely cloistered from the English speaking milieu of a large U.S. university. This further highlights the idea that language-learning programs can vary greatly in their structure and purpose yet still provide students with a means of improving their language skills.

Appendix A
Test of Oral Language Skills Rubric

	1	2	3	4	5
Pronunciation	heavily accented speech with obvious interference from speaker's first language	less heavily accented speech, still much interference from first language	consistent use of sound system of target language even with errors	expert level of pronunciation with little interference from 1st language	highest level of pronunciation, very little interference from 1st language
Grammar	Typically misuses basic structural elements	correctly uses basic structures, but still irregular, may also lack knowledge of structures necessary to complete task easily	Correctly uses high frequency structures, some facility with complex structures	Consistent, correct use of basic and complex structures, small errors still present	nearly perfect agreement of gender, number, aspect, Proper use of complex structures
Fluency	Completely halting, hesitant, speaks with great difficulty	very halting, hesitant & fragmentary, far from smooth	Fairly halting, sometimes smooth & fluid	very smooth and fluid	Completely smooth/fluid
Comprehensibility	incomprehensible, only occasional words understood	reasonably comprehensible, can understand most sentences	completely comprehensible		
Vocabulary	Nearly unable to complete task due to lack of vocabulary knowledge	Task difficult to complete b/c of lack of vocab. Some simple vocab present	adequate, may still lack some words for the topic or unnecessary repetition	Very adequate, though range limited or slightly odd word choice	rich and varied, excellent word choice

Appendix B

Language Log A: TSA and SLSA Programs

Each day, record the number of minutes that you spend speaking, reading, listening to, or writing in Spanish while engaged in the activities listed below

Language Log

	Tues 5/ 27	Wed 5/28	Thurs 5/29	Fri 5/30	Sat 5/31	Sun 6/1	Mon 6/2
Getting ready for school							
Commuting, Public Transportation/Walking							
Eating breakfast							
In classes							
Eating meals							
Talking to friends/roomate							
Watching TV							
Listening to music							
Preparing meals							
Cleaning							
Studying/Doing Homework							
Email							
Reading							
Talking on the phone							
Sunday School							
Family Home Evening							
Talking to Host Family							
Talking to other native speakers							
Talking to other Americans in Spanish							
Other: specify							
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Language Log B: Foreign Language Housing Program

Each day, record the number of minutes that you spend speaking, reading, listening to, or writing in Spanish while engaged in the activities listed below

Language Log

	Tues 5/ 27	Wed 5/28	Thurs 5/29	Fri 5/30	Sat 5/31	Sun 6/1	Mon 6/2
Getting ready for school							
Commuting, Public Transportation/Walking							
Eating breakfast							
In classes							
Eating meals							
Talking to friends/roomate							
Watching TV							
Listening to music							
Preparing meals							
Cleaning							
Studying/Doing Homework							
Email							
Reading							
Talking on the phone							
Sunday School							
Family Home Evening							
Talking to Host Family							
Talking to other native speakers							
Talking to other Americans in Spanish							
Other: specify							
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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Reviews

Text Complexity and Reading Comprehension Tests. By E. Castello. (2008) Bern: Peter Lang AG. ISBN 978-3-03911-717-8.

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Determining what makes foreign-language texts difficult for learners is an important and long-standing problem. Language teachers and testers spend a considerable amount of time and effort determining if a given text is appropriate for their learners, without many tools other than educated guesses based on experience. Those guesses are often right, but they are also often wrong. On any given reading test, preliminary item statistics typically show quite a few items whose difficulty statistics do not match the initial estimates given by the professionals rating text difficulty. *Text Complexity and Reading Comprehension Tests* is thus welcome in addressing an area of need for language educators. Unfortunately, although it provides an overview of methods of determining complexity, it does not reach any coherent conclusions about the relationship between complexity and difficulty.

The core of the book is a research project focusing on what the author refers to as a "corpus" of 25 tests. Each test (with the exception of the first) consists of a single passage and between one and thirteen tasks (the first test is a matching exercise with four short texts). The author performed quantitative and qualitative analyses of the complexity of the texts and tasks in the tests. He also administered the tests to students and performed quantitative and qualitative analyses of the difficulty of the texts and tasks. The book describes and comments on these analyses, as well as providing substantial background information on the theoretical framework (systemic functional linguistics) and providing the contents of all the tests. Note that the book confines itself to the context of English as a foreign language. No attempt is made to generalize the findings to other languages. Some of the points made might well be applicable for other languages, but many of the factors influencing complexity, as discussed in the book, seem English-specific, for example discussions of the determiner system and clause structure.

The author begins by drawing the distinction between complexity and difficulty, citing Merlini Barbaresi (2003). The crucial difference is that complexity is an inherent quality of a text, whereas difficulty is inherently relative to the reader or listener. Castello is careful to use the term "complexity" in analyzing the linguistic features of the texts and tasks and to refer to "difficulty" only in reference to the examinees. The overarching research question, then, would appear to be to determine what types and degrees of complexity tend to affect difficulty. However, the book does not provide a clear answer to this question.

To be fair, the question is a very large one, and there are so many variables that it is not to be expected that a definitive answer could be reached. It would not be reasonable to hope that the book would conclude with a simple quantitative analysis of texts that could be done to guarantee a particular level of difficulty. The author clearly recognizes this, and his most useful conclusion is to show that by "triangulating" many different approaches to analyzing complexity and difficulty, it may be possible to come to a clearer understanding, retrospectively, of what has made a particular text difficult or

easy for a particular group of students. The study outlines quite a few quantitative text analyses, as well as qualitative analyses of factors likely to affect complexity, and the author is careful to separate difficulty of text from difficulty of task in the qualitative analysis of difficulty. As such, the book provides a smorgasbord of possible analyses teachers and testers might consider as they explore the relationship between complexity and difficulty on their own. However, the book fails to present a coherent summary and conclusion. There are many charts and graphs, but nothing is clearly tied together; the author confines himself to mentioning correlations between a few different statistics for a few passages, without discussing whether those correlations seem to mean anything for complexity and difficulty as a whole. The whole book seems to be individual comments on each test, with some comparisons drawn here and there between several tests, but no coherent summing up.

Aside from the problem that the conclusions are not well presented, the book has a major methodological problem: the research design is such that it is virtually impossible to isolate any given variable to determine whether it has an effect. Of course, there are many factors that go into text complexity, so it is unrealistic to think that one could find tests that hold most of them constant while varying according to others. However, it is not unrealistic to think that one could at least find tests using the same task type, to eliminate that variable, or, if one wanted to explore task type, write tests using the same text and different task types. Instead, the author selected tests with widely varying task types (multiple-choice, matching, True/False, True/False/Not Addressed, paragraph insertion, selected-response Cloze). In addition, the tests came from six different testing programs, some of which were geared toward academic English and others toward general English. A related problem is that the author divided the 25 tests into three "sub-corpora" and administered those three sub-corpora to three distinct groups of examinees. Therefore, there is no legitimate way to compare the three sub-corpora in terms of difficulty. Yet this is precisely what the author does, frequently commenting on which texts were comparatively difficult "in the corpus" when in fact those texts were merely difficult among their sub-corpora. Although of course all 25 tests can be compared in terms of complexity, the hypotheses about difficulty that might be made on that basis cannot be tested if there is no basis on which to compare the difficulty of all 25 tests. One might be able to draw some tentative generalizations if there were solid information about the proficiency levels of the three groups of examinees. However, although the three groups are described, and general estimates of proficiency (according to the Common European Framework) are given, the proficiency estimates are too general to be used in a systematic way to compare the groups.

As a result, the main usefulness of this book is to provide an overview of types of complexity and some in-depth qualitative analyses of specific texts and examinee comments regarding texts and tasks. The analyses and comments are sometimes interesting, but it is difficult to draw any generalizations from them, other than the rather well-known generalization that True/False/Not Addressed items tend to be difficult. The exercise of examining specific texts might lead language teachers or testers to consider their own research into the relationship between complexity and difficulty, but the book does not offer any helpful tendencies or guidelines that might enable teachers or testers to predict difficulty with any greater degree of accuracy than by using their experience and intuition.

Even as an overview of types of complexity, the book falls short of being a useful reference. A major problem is that the author provides explanations at the wrong level of specificity. The discussion of systemic functional linguistics is just detailed enough that a reader familiar with the theoretical framework will find it tedious, while a reader who does not know the framework will still be confused. The author would have been well advised either to refer the reader to a standard textbook on the framework or to put the explanatory material in an appendix. It is very easy to lose track of the specific point being made about a type of complexity when one has to read through pages of background. The background explanations of the technical terms are not even very helpful, as they typically lack examples; a reader who does not know what a lemma or a metastatement is will not emerge enlightened. There is no summary of the elements of complexity to which to refer, and the charts summarizing the quantitative information regarding complexity are very hard to read. Further, between the quantitative analysis of complexity and the section on difficulty are several other sections, so that by the time all the pieces are put together the reader has likely forgotten the main findings of the complexity analysis.

In summary, *Text Complexity and Reading Comprehension Tests* is a well-intentioned attempt to shed light on an important issue, but by biting off more than he can chew the author does little more than articulate the issue and demonstrate how difficult it is to come to any conclusions that can be applied in practice.

Reference

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Spoken Corpora in Applied Linguistics **(2007).** Edited by Mari Carmen Campoy and María José Luzón. Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang. Pp. 264.

Reviewed by LAMA NASSIF
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At a time when corpus studies have been strongly established in Applied Linguistics, with attention primarily focused on written corpora, and when the distinguishing features of the language of speech as compared to that of writing have been extensively documented (Biber, 2006; Biber, et al., 1999; Carter & McCarthy, 1995; Carter & McCarthy, 1997; McCarthy, 1998; McCarthy & Carter, 1995; McCarthy & Carter, 2002), investigating a resource that ties speech and corpus studies gains particular importance. This varied, well-structured, and informative book, ***Spoken Corpora in Applied Linguistics***, sheds light on equally valuable but much less researched potential contributors to Applied Linguistics than their written counter parts: spoken corpora. Skillfully, this volume illustrates the increasingly evolving interest in spoken corpora and mirrors the current advances in this domain.

Mainly of interest to language researchers and teaching specialists and requiring no considerable previous knowledge of spoken corpora or extensive familiarity with corpora in general, this book introduces an interesting array of studies revolving around two major themes. These themes represent the two main book sections, *The Use of Spoken Corpora for Language Research* and *Teaching and Learning Languages through Oral Corpora*. The studies presented provide valuable insights gained from the analysis of spoken corpora in different languages, especially English, in a variety of settings and by researchers from around the world. Collectively, the studies underscore their editors and authors' firm belief in spoken corpora as a powerful tool in language research and teaching.

Emphasizing the significance of this line of research, the editors Campoy and Luzón together with Sánchez and Salazar situate the studies in the subsequent volume chapters within the current research on spoken corpora, presenting some findings in specific fields. Academic and professional English, language learning, and interpreting are presented in a more in-depth discussion, highlighting the stance that spoken corpora could be of special significance in these domains. While Luzón, Campoy, Sánchez, and Salazar acknowledge that the book papers do not "exhaustively" represent the available spoken corpora-based studies, they rightfully maintain that these studies still adequately exemplify the developments in this field.

Section II offers a host of studies exemplifying how spoken corpora analysis could inform language research. In the first chapter of this section, A. Mouranen highlights the much needed understanding of English in "real-world use," offering an overview of some pioneering studies in the use of English as an international language. In this context, Mouranen introduces the *English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings* corpus (ELFA). ELFA is presented as a means geared toward developing research informing English teaching through examining the factors leading to success in international communication and providing possibilities for investigating how language evolves in "situated foreign language use." The importance of this chapter stems from the fact that it draws attention to an important aspect of language use which is not so frequently addressed, especially when dealing with corpora in general and spoken corpora in particular.

The next three chapters examine some features of spoken discourse in academic contexts. In the second chapter, V. Cortes and E. Csomay study frequent word sequences, "lexical bundles," occurring in the first three "Vocabulary-based Discourse Units" (VBDUs) of university lectures and the functions they perform. Cortes and Csomay draw conclusions on the frequency of the bundles instructors use to introduce a university class. In so doing, they propose the potential helpful lexico-grammatical insights gained from analyzing classroom talk. Some revealing insights in this respect could have been gained had instructor-student interaction in these lectures been investigated as well.

The following two chapters provide rich resources for the study of discourse analysis and language variation across social factors. In the first one, N. Drescher presents an exploratory study of the patterns of use found in a group of linguistic and pragmatic variables in a spoken corpus according to speaker/addressee(s) identities (male/female) and registers. The study revolves around the interpretation and exemplification of the underlying dimensions emerging from the analysis of the patterns in language samples. While the study itself does not provide an analysis highlighting the specific gender associations with the linguistic features within the contexts presented, it provides rich data for further investigation on how gender, register, and power relations operate in a context, influencing linguistic behavior.

Considering the significant role of pragmatics in language instruction (Kasper, 1997; Kasper & Rose, 2002), and bearing direct relevance to "pragmalinguistics" and "sociopragmatics" (Kasper & Rose, 2002), P. García's well-designed study presented in the fourth chapter skillfully investigates how a diversity of linguistic means are utilized by native speakers to realize various pragmatic functions. The study utilized a taxonomy "modeled" on Searle's (1969, 1979) pragmatic categories of directives, commissives, expressives, and representatives. In this study, García provides a competent analysis with carefully-chosen examples of how linguistic features were used variably across different speaker roles and different situation types. Nonetheless, the discussion of results could have used an overt contextualization within sociolinguistic theoretical frameworks.

Based on the hypothesis that text types within a language "can be graded in terms of complexity" (p. 129), J. Pérez-Guerra's pilot study in the fifth chapter addresses the textual variants of spoken and written English through focusing on the syntactic structure of subjects. Three text types were studied: academic writings, newspapers, and spoken language, using eight metrics functioning as "indicators of linguistic complexity." Though yielding tentative conclusions, as the author acknowledges, and considering how relative the notion of complexity is, especially when reduced to structural complexity only, the study draws attention to the differences in the subject categories across speech and writing. Thus, it contributes to the revealing of the distinguishing features of speech compared to writing.

In the last chapter of this section, A. Mendes and M. F. B. do Nasciment offer an interesting and careful analysis of the Portuguese word form *daí* "from there," outlining its morphological, semantic, and pragmatic properties as they evolve in a variety of contexts. The two authors refer to this process as "grammaticalization." Mendes and do Nasciment's study provides an interesting example of how linguistic forms evolve and take on new meanings in different contexts. This point provides rich soil for studies on language variation in modern day use, an investigation which, more than any other means, corpora can significantly facilitate (Conrad, 2004).

Following the language research studies presented in section II, section III offers a variety of studies underscoring the wealth of potentials spoken corpora could offer to people involved in foreign language teaching and learning. In the first chapter, Y. Tono introduces the NICT JLE Corpus, one of the biggest oral learner corpora in the world, with approximately 1300 Japanese EFL learners' interview transcripts. Tono reports on some NICT JLE corpus-based studies, highlighting insights gained into the features of learners' Interlanguage and its development across varied proficiency levels. In so doing, Tono draws attention to the future prospects for a better understanding of the mechanisms of learning across speech and writing, with insights on the detection of learner errors and determining proficiency levels.

In the second chapter, J. Osborne investigates an emphasized topic in language teaching, L2 fluency, by comparing some corpus examples for three types of potential "disfluency" markers: speech rate and pauses, retracing, and length of runs. Clear differences are documented across the levels and the markers and against native speaker data, giving support to the indicators of fluency Osborne proposes. Despite considering the evasiveness of fluency categorization, as the author acknowledges, the study offers interestingly helpful insights that could be utilized in the development and assessment of learners' oral competence.

The next two studies are of special significance to textbook writers. W. Cheng's choice of a timely study in the third chapter of this section highlights a major aspect of current language teaching, assessing the adequacy of "textbook input." Cheng investigates how interruption is addressed and realized linguistically in 15 English language textbooks used in secondary schools in Hong Kong and compares the results with actual forms of interruptions in the four major spoken genres there. The study findings underscore the misrepresentation of interruption together with the significant disparities between the forms taught in textbooks and those found in real life use. Hence, the study draws needed attention to the necessity for a better reflection of actual use through native speaker and English as a lingua franca corpora, resonating with Mauranen's emphasis, earlier in the volume, on the importance of lingua franca corpora.

In Chapter 4 of this section, S. de Cock examines recurrent word sequences, "routinized building blocks," that native speakers and advanced learners of English use in informal interviews based on a native speaker corpus and a non-native speaker one. Clausal sequences were the most predominantly recurrent word sequences, displaying how native speakers and learners differ in the ways they start their utterances and convey attitudinal stance. This interesting study offers feasible pedagogical implications that could inform a "contextualized discourse-oriented grammar of speech" section in language textbooks.

Lastly, rightfully advocating for the incorporation of corpus-based research use in language teacher education, with a focus on reflection in professional development, F. Farr, examines a small spoken corpus consisting of feedback sessions between tutors and student teachers following teaching practice. Areas of weakness and strength in these interactions were revealed. Farr then reports on the findings of frequency analyses within the same corpus across tutors and student teachers and with three other corpora. Despite revealing informative results, these analyses could be questioned on the basis of how closely they could inform reflective teaching practice, as the study proposes to do, considering the different genres of the four corpora.

Overall, it should be noted that the studies vary in terms of their rigorousness and the robustness of their designs. A point should also be made about the limited scope of some studies and the consequent tentativeness of their conclusions. Further, the lack of exemplification when needed in few studies makes understanding their methods and findings hard to follow.

With that said, this reader-friendly, informative, and well-written book is still a valuable addition to the library of language researchers and specialists, highlighting a timely emphasis on spoken corpora, especially considering the scarcity of books introducing studies utilizing these corpora as opposed to written corpora. The clearly outlined studies methodologies, the good organization of studies sections, the clear exemplifications of the bulk of the studies, and the avoidance of heavy reliance on specialized terminology or assumption of previous extensive knowledge of spoken corpora also expand the scope of target readers. In addition, the wide range of the issues tackled, making the book seem impressivley varied, the array of innovative methods and computer applications specifically designed for the studies, and the informativeness of the findings gained all contribute to making the book as a whole a true pleasure to read.

This volume certainly opens horizons for new perspectives on a variety of language-related domains. It also paves the way for future studies conducted by researchers as well as classroom instructors, who might be interested in exploring specific classroom applications, which this book does not address. Thus, this book could truly whet the appetite for the unfolding of a reservoir of practical applications that are yet to be explored.

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Political Russian: An Intermediate Course in Russian Language for International Relations, National Security and Socio-Economics, (6th edition, 2009). By Natasha Simes and Richard Robin. Kendall Hunt Professional, Dubuque, IA. Pp. 552.

Reviewed by EDO FORSYTHE
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Political Russian is a welcome updated addition to the limited catalog of intermediate and advanced-level Russian textbooks. Natasha Simes and Richard Robin have significantly updated the latest edition of their book with over 60% new materials (p. ii). *Political Russian* addresses the focus of many of today's intermediate and advanced Russian language students: the "generalists and practitioners engaged in international relations, foreign trade or people-to-people exchanges with Russia" (p. xiii). The topics covered include politics, government, economics, military operations, terrorism and demographics. These topics are presented with a focus on reading, listening, writing and speaking so that the students who finish both circles "will find themselves linguistically well equipped for work in all endeavors concerning issue of Soviet and Russian politics, history, government, trade and national security" (p. xvi).

The textbook is divided into two *circles*, each with seven and six lessons, respectively. The authors suggest that each lesson be covered in five stages and their suggested lesson plan structure is provided in the textbook's preface. Due to the length of each lesson and the amount of material covered in each one, each of the text's *circles* can last through an entire school year or compressed into one semester each, depending on students' ability, the needs of the students and the objectives of the course. As the students progress through each lesson in the *circle*, the grammar patterns they previously learned are repeated and reviewed to ensure mastery of the grammar and vocabulary lessons. This cyclical format of information presentation and repetition building on previously learned information is in line with Vygotsky's (1962) theory of scaffolding learning processes and allows the students to progress through the materials autonomously without a great dependence upon the teacher to drive their learning.

The reading passages included in each lesson are current and relevant to the topic of each lesson. They include vocabulary that will be useful for students of political science and governmental-related studies who will use Russian as a tool in their professions. The authors also included stress marks to aid the students' pronunciation and reading practice. The stress marks help students to develop the accurate pronunciation they need to conduct business, negotiations or whatever may be expected of them in their professional duties without sounding like unschooled amateurs of Russian. The pre- and post-reading activities review grammar points and use examples from the lesson's text to demonstrate the grammar patterns highlighted. The exercises provided in each lesson contain a variety of activities so that the students will not become bored with the same exercises lesson after lesson. The various review and reinforcement activities test students' comprehension of the articles, grammar and materials in an interesting mix of graphic chart comparisons, paraphrasing, cloze exercises, translations, and essay questions. The reading passages increase in length and complexity as the lessons progress so that the students are continuously challenged to increase their reading comprehension proficiency. As the texts increase in difficulty, the related exercises emphasize reading strategies so that students learn to process more complex articles without relying heavily on dictionaries

and other aids. These strategies not only test students' understanding of the given text, they prepare the students to tackle difficult texts they may encounter in the workplace.

The grammar sections cover topics from the upper-basic level through the low-advanced level constructions. The grammar materials and exercises review the grammatical cases and their uses; the grammar points are reinforced in the readings and listening comprehension activities to solidify understanding. The appendices in the back of the text provide charts with noun, adjective and verb conjugation patterns. Other grammar charts would be helpful as a handy reference tool; for example, having a chart to demonstrate how to form various participles, a list of which prepositions are associated with which grammatical case, and a table which explains the verbs of motion formations would be helpful to have as an appendix in addition to being included in tables throughout the text. The charts included in the explanation of prefixed verbs of motion on pages 344 – 346 are a wonderfully descriptive addition and will greatly help students understand this challenging aspect of Russian grammar. The grammar sections of each lesson provide a grammar explanation followed by exercises for review and reinforcement of the material.

One great aspect of this updated edition is the inclusion of online resources to support the learners. Each unit has complimentary audio materials available online to reinforce proper pronunciation modeling and listening comprehension practice. Each lesson's online section has a reading of the text, listening comprehension questions, grammar instruction support materials, a dialog (voiced at both natural and slow speed), and an authentic listening-comprehension audio clip. These materials correlate to various sections within each lesson in the textbook; each section that has supporting audio materials is flagged by an @ symbol at the section's beginning.

The audio clips posted to the website are clear and of high quality but not all of the clips downloaded or played when the link was clicked in Internet Explorer 8.0 (the link opened in Windows Media Player but would not play; when the default media player in IE was changed to QuickTime for .mp3 files, the audio clips played normally). The authors have been informed of this problem but were unable to explain why the issues with playing the files arose but did say that all of the audio files are saved in the .mp3 format for the widest compatibility across the spectrum of media players. The links to audio files did, however, open and play successfully in both Safari on a Mac and in Firefox – both of which used QuickTime to play the files. The option exists to download all of the audio for each lesson to one's computer – an excellent feature that allows students to study anywhere regardless of whether or not they have Internet access, but even when I downloaded the clips for lessons, not all of them played on my PC using Windows Media Player but they all played normally using QuickTime.

The voicing of each lesson's opening text was a bit slower than expected. The speed was not natural, but slowed to a speed more appropriate for beginner students of Russian. Considering that this textbook is geared toward intermediate and advanced-level students, such slowing of the text's reading may not be necessary. Having a second audio file with the texts read at normal speed might benefit students as they grow accustomed to speech at native-like speeds (similar options are available for the conversation dialogues). Otherwise, the audio support materials are an excellent addition to the textbook's lessons and will be of value to the students for their continued study outside of the classroom. These materials will also allow teachers to use class time for interactive activities and student project, group and pair work instead of spending valuable class time repeating

words and reading articles from the text. The students can do these activities on their own and spend their class time using and improving their Russian.

In addition to the online audio materials, each lesson is supported by self-paced comprehension checks based on Quia software. All of the objective exercises in the textbook are mirrored on the Quia website. Quia is an online assessment tool which allows students to answer questions and receive instant feedback. Each exercise that is supported by a Quia activity is tagged with the Quia logo beside the section's heading so students know which exercises are supported. All of the Quia activities are linked from the lesson's page on the *Political Russian* website so there's no need to worry about remembering other URLs or navigating the web to find the Quia materials; each lesson's homepage is a one-stop-shop. All of the Quia exercise links from the *Political Russian* website worked correctly and opened up a new web browser window for the Quia activity.

The Quia activities give students the ability to try to answer the questions and when they really can't come up with the answer, the system provides the correct answers. This makes sure that the students are not left unsure of what the correct answers are and allows them to seek clarification of their mistakes more easily in the textbook's pages. As the student successfully completes each activity, they are awarded a coin for their Quia piggy bank. The teacher can use the collection of these coins as an incentive for students to strive to get it right the first time without relying on the Quia system to provide the correct answers. The addition of the Quia comprehension activities is wonderful and provides students with great feedback on their progress through the grammar, lexical, translation and other activities in the textbook without being dependent solely on the teacher for the answers. *Note*: To use the tracking feature of Quia, the teacher and students must create a Quia account and the teacher must establish a classroom for her students to log into. Quia accounts require a paid subscription but the use of the exercises which support the *Political Russian* textbook is free and can be accessed without subscribing to Quia.

The online support materials also provide troubleshooting tips in case the audio or pages do not display properly. For cases when the troubleshooting does not correct the problem, an Error Report can be submitted via email from the site to the authors for further assistance. There is also a FAQ section with information about the audio and online materials, as well as information about the authors and publishers for those interested.

One thing missing from these online support materials is a digital version of the textbook lessons or specific parts of each lesson which could be downloaded onto a computer or mobile device and reviewed as needed by the students. The absence of such material does not lessen the value of the materials provided; having a digital version of the text would simply be the proverbial icing on the cake.

Political Russian (6th edition) is an excellent resource for upper-level students of Russian and provides teachers with a well-organized, topically-relevant textbook which can be used to prepare the majority of today's students for their common professional ambitions. The structure provided by the textbook gives teachers options for flexible use of the materials to cover two semesters to two years of coursework. The addition of online materials to this edition is the key to its success as a textbook. These materials allow teachers to blend their instruction to meet the desires of today's digital-native learners.

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General Information

Calendar of Events

2010

Centre for English Language Communication Symposium (CELC), 26–28 May, Singapore. Contact: Symposium Secretariat, Centre for English Language Communication, National University of Singapore, 10 Architecture Drive, Singapore 117511; (65) 6516-3866, 6516-7447, Fax (65) 6777-9152; Email: celcsymposium@nus.edu.sg Web: www.nus.edu.sg/celc/symposium/

ADFL Summer Seminar East, 3–6 June, Rochester, NY. Contact: David Goldberg, Associate Director, ADFL, 26 Broadway, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10004-1789; (646) 576-5134; Email: dgoldberg@mla.org Web: www.adfl.org

ADFL Summer Seminar West, 17–20 June, Colorado Springs, CO. Contact: David Goldberg, Associate Director, ADFL, 26 Broadway, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10004-1789; (646) 576-5134; Email: dgoldberg@mla.org Web: www.adfl.org

American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), 4–7 July, Philadelphia, PA. Contact: Jayne Abrate, AATF, Mailcode 4510, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4510; (618) 453-5731, Fax (618) 453-5733; Email: abrate@siu.edu Web: www.frenchteachers.org

Mapping Languages Across Cultures (MLAC10), 5–7 July, Salamanca, Spain: Contact: Email: mlac@usal.es Web: campus.usal.es/~tradotros/MLAC10

American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, 10–13 July, Guadalajara, Mexico. Contact: AATSP, 900 Ladd Road, Walled Lake, MI 48390; Email: corporate@aatsp.org Web: www.aatsp.org

English Language Teachers' Association of Israel (ETAI), 13–15 July, Jerusalem, Israel. Contact: Email: etaioffice@gmail.com Web: www.etai.org.il/ETAI_2010.html

18th International Conference on Pragmatics and Language Learning (PLL), 16–19 July, Kobe, Japan. Contact: Kobe City University of Foreign Languages; Email: pll18kobe@gmail.com Web: www.pragsig.org/pll/call.html

10th International Conference of the Association for Language Awareness, 25–28 July, Kassel, Germany. Contact: Web: www.languageawareness.org

Internationaler Germanistenkongress (IVG), 30 July – 7 August, Warsaw, Poland. Contact: IVG; Email: ivg@uw.edu.pl Web: www.ivg.uw.edu.pl

Traditions and Transitions: German Curricula, 26–28 August, University of Waterloo, Canada. Contact: John Plews, Email: jplews@smu.ca; Barbara Schmenk, Email: bschmenk@uwaterloo.ca.

British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL), 9–11 September, Aberdeen, UK. Contact: Web: www.baal.org.uk

African Studies Association (ASA), 18–21 November, San Francisco, CA. Contact: Kimme Carlos, Annual Meeting Coordinator, Rutgers University, Douglass Campus, 132 George Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1400; (732) 932-8173, Fax (732) 932-3394; Email: annualmeeting@africanstudies.org Web: www.africanstudies.org

American Association of Teachers of German (AATG), 19–21 November, Boston, MA. Contact: AATG, 112 Haddontowne Court #104, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034; (856) 795-5553, Fax (856) 795-9398; Email: headquarters@aatg.org   Web: www.aatg.org

American Association of Teachers of Italian (AATI), 19–21 November, Boston, MA. Contact: Edoardo Lebano, Executive Director, AATI, Department of French and Italian, Indiana University, Ballentine 642, Bloomington, IN 47405; (812) 855-2508, Fax (812) 855-8877; Email: elebano@hotmail.com Web: www.aati-online.org/

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), 19–21 November, Boston, MA. Contact: ACTFL, 1001 N. Fairfax St., Suite 200, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 894-2900, Fax (703) 894-2905; Email: headquarters@actfl.org Web: www.actfl.org

Chinese Language Teachers Association (CLTA), 19–21 November, Boston, MA. Contact: CLTA, Cynthia Ning, Executive Director, 416 Moore Hall, 1890 East-West Road, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI 96822; (808) 956-2692, Fax (808) 956-2682; Email: clta@clta-us.org Web: clta-us.org

National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL), 19–21 November, Boston, MA. Contact: NNELL, PO Box 7266, B 201 Tribble Hall, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC 27109; Email: nnell@wfu.edu Web: www.nnell.org

3rd International Conference on Applied Linguistics, 27–28 November, Minhsiung, Taiwan. Contact: National Chiayi University, Department of Foreign Languages; Email: ical2010.ncyu@gmail.com Web: sites.google.com/site/ical2010/Home

2011

American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL), 6-9 January, Los Angeles, CA. Contact: Patricia L. Zody, Executive Director, AATSEEL, PO Box 569, Beloit ,WI 53512-0569; (608) 361-9697, Fax: (608) 363-7129; Email: aatseel@sbcglobal.net Web: www.aatseel.org

Linguistic Society of America (LSA), 6–9 January, Pittsburgh, PA. Contact: LSA, 1325 18th St. NW, # 211, Washington, DC 20036-6501; (202) 835-1714, Fax (202) 835-1717; Web: www.lsadc.org

Modern Language Association (MLA), 6–9 January, Los Angeles, CA. Contact: MLA, 26 Broadway, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10004-1789; (646) 576-5000, Fax (646) 458-0030; Web: www.mla.org

Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (CSCTFL), 3–5 March, Indianapolis, IN. Contact: Patrick T. Raven, Executive Director, CSCTFL, PO Box 251, Milwaukee, WI 53201-0251; (414) 405-4645, Fax (414) 276-4650; Email: CSCTFL@aol.com Web: www.csctfl.org

Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT), 10–12 March, Baton Rouge, LA. Contact: Lynne McClendon, Executive Director, SCOLT, 165 Lazy Laurel Chase, Roswell, GA 30076; (770) 992-1256, Fax (770) 992-3464; Email: lynnemcc@mindspring.com Web: www.scolt.org

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), 17–19 March, New Orleans, LA. Contact: TESOL, 700 S. Washington Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 836-0774, Fax (703) 836-7864; Email: info@tesol.org Web: www.tesol.org

Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL), 2–4 April, Baltimore, MD. Contact: Rebecca Kline, Executive Director, NECTFL, c/o Dickinson College, PO Box 1773, Carlisle, PA 17013-2896; (717) 245-1977, Fax (717) 245-1976; Email: nectfl@dickinson.edu Web: www.nectfl.org

Southwest Conference on Language Teaching (SWCOLT), 7–9 April, Dallas, TX. Contact: Contact: Jody Klopp, Executive Director, SWCOLT; Email: jklopp@cox.net Web: www.swcolt.org

American Educational Research Association (AERA), 8–12 April, New Orleans, LA. Contact: AERA, 1430 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005; (202) 238-3200, Fax (202) 238-3250; Web: www.aera.net

International Reading Association (IRA), 56th Annual Convention, 8–12 May, Orlando, FL. Contact: International Reading Association, Headquarters Office, 800 Barksdale Rd., PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139; Email: pubinfo@reading.org Web: www.reading.org

Linguistic Society of America 2011 Institute, 5 July – 5 August, University of Colorado-Boulder. Contact: Email: lsa2011@colorado.edu Web: verbs.colorado.edu/LSA2011/

British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL), 1–3 September, Bristol, UK. Contact: Web: www.baal.org.uk

African Studies Association (ASA), 17–20 November, Washington, DC. Contact: Kimme Carlos, Annual Meeting Coordinator, Rutgers University, Douglass Campus, 132 George Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1400; (732) 932-8173, Fax (732) 932-3394; Email: annualmeeting@africanstudies.org Web: www.africanstudies.org

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National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL), 18–20 November, Denver, CO. Contact: NNELL, PO Box 7266, B 201 Tribble Hall, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC 27109; Email: nnell@wfu.edu Web: www.nnell.org

Information for Contributors

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of *Applied Language Learning* (*ALL*) is to increase and promote professional communication within the Defense Language Program and academic communities on adult language learning for functional purposes.

Submission of Manuscripts

The Editor encourages the submission of research and review manuscripts from such disciplines as: (1) instructional methods and techniques; (2) curriculum and materials development; (3) testing and evaluation; (4) implications and applications of research from related fields such as linguistics, education, communication, psychology, and social sciences; (5) assessment of needs within the profession.

Research Article

Divide your manuscript into the following sections:

- Abstract
  - Introduction
    - Method
      - Results
        - Discussion
          - Conclusion
            - Appendices
              - Notes
                - References
                  - Acknowledgments
                    - Author

Abstract

Identify the purpose of the article, provide an overview of the content, and suggest findings in an abstract of not more than 200 words.

Introduction

In a few paragraphs, state the purpose of the study and relate it to the hypothesis and the experimental design. Point out the theoretical implications of the study and relate them to previous work in the area.

Next, under the subsection *Literature Review,* discuss work that had a direct impact on your study. Cite only research pertinent to a specific issue and avoid references with only tangential or general significance. Emphasize pertinent findings and relevant methodological issues. Provide the logical continuity between previous and present work. Whenever appropriate, treat controversial issues fairly. You may state that certain studies support one conclusion and others challenge or contradict it.

Method

Describe how you conducted the study. Give a brief synopsis of the method. Next develop the subsections pertaining to the *participants,* the *materials,* and the *procedure.*

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Materials. Describe briefly the materials used and their function in the experiment.

Procedure. Describe each step in the conduct of the research. Include the instructions to the participants, the formation of the groups, and the specific experimental manipulations.

Results

First state the results. Next describe them in sufficient detail to justify the findings. Mention all relevant results, including those that run counter to the hypothesis.

Tables and figures. Prepare tables to present exact values. Use tables sparingly. Sometimes you can present data more efficiently in a few sentences than in a table. Avoid developing tables for information already presented in other places. Prepare figures to illustrate key interactions, major interdependencies, and general comparisons. Indicate to the reader what to look for in tables and figures.

Discussion

Express your support or nonsupport for the original hypothesis. Next examine, interpret, and qualify the results and draw inferences from them. Do not repeat old statements: Create new statements that further contribute to your position and to readers understanding of it.

Conclusion

Succinctly describe the contribution of the study to the field. State how it has helped to resolve the original problem. Identify conclusions and theoretical implications that can be drawn from your study.

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Acknowledgments

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All material submitted for publication should conform to the style of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th Ed., 2001) available from the American Psychological Association, P. O. Box 2710, Hyattsville, MD   20784.

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