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Evaluation of Standard-Based First-Year African Language Textbooks

Beatrice Mkenda

Abstract

Textbooks of most African languages were written during the grammar-translation era, and some still serve as guides to the teaching and learning of African languages. This study intends to evaluate the vision of African language teaching and learning materials, specifically first-year textbooks focusing on where the African language teaching materials have been, where the field is now, and where it might go in terms of teaching and learning materials, based on the standards for foreign language teaching and learning in the United States. The study follows Schleicher and Gleisner's (2001) research on African language textbooks, which found that many African language textbooks were not communicatively oriented.

Keywords: African language textbooks, Standards, Evaluation criteria.

In the past, foreign language teaching and learning materials were dominated by grammar translation and audiolingual methods. Such methods provide less opportunity for using language for communication, instead, the focus is more on memorizing vocabulary and short phrases for specific purposes. Scheicher and Gleisner (2001) state that the majority of African language teaching and learning materials were "written during the grammar-translation era" (p. 115). Most of these textbooks present specific types of conversation, such as for business or tourism, which restrict the understanding of the target language and its culture. Bennett (1969) affirms that "most of these textbooks are excellent grammar manuals written specifically for Peace Corps volunteers and linguistic graduate students who were primarily interested in acquiring grammatical competence" (Schleicher & Gleisner, p. 115). This changed, however, in the 1970s and 1980s when the development of the field of foreign language teaching involved the application of the communicative approach to the teaching and learning processes. Most commonly taught languages adopt this approach through the development of teaching and learning materials that help learners to

become grammatically, strategically, culturally, socially, and contextually competent.

The shift to communicative competence in less commonly taught languages remains more theoretical than practical in focusing on the teaching and learning materials. Foreign language teaching and learning materials that provide necessary authentic content motivate both the teaching and learning processes. In their article on African languages textbooks, Schleicher and Gleisner (2001) performed a study on how foreign language African textbooks meet the communicative approach. The result of this study depicts that some African languages textbooks stated communicative goals in their prefaces, but, practically, there were no communicative activities included in these textbooks. This paper observes the changes that have been made to African language textbooks since Schleicher and Gleisner's study conducted in 2001. The current approach to foreign language teaching focuses on the learners' ability to acquire cultural and grammatical competence through the communication process, which lacks in most African language textbooks.

Bragger and Rice (2000) note that the foreign language textbooks that are in use today reflect the significant changes in design and content that took place with the advent of the "language program," particularly in contrast to those in use just forty years ago that was dominated by vocabulary lists, seemingly random grammatical topics, and controlled exercises (Bragger & Rice, p. 110); Allen 2008, p. 1). The field of foreign language teaching and learning, like any other field, continues to expand as the number of new theories and approaches grows.

According to Bokamba (2002), the shift of African language materials began with four commonly taught African languages: Arabic, Swahili, Hausa, and Yoruba. Other African language textbooks were modeled on the Yoruba textbook series: *Je ka so Yoruba*. These textbook series are published by the National African Languages Resources Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the vision of African language teaching and learning materials, specifically first-year textbooks using some of the criteria for communicative-based textbooks presented by Glisan and Shrum (2009). The study intends to identify where African language teaching materials have been, where the field is now, and where its future might be based on the standards for foreign language teaching and learning in the United States. The standards for foreign language learning are categorized into five main goals: communication, cultures, connections,

comparisons, and communities. The standards identify the goal areas for foreign language learners, such as communicating effectively in the target communities, gaining knowledge and understanding of the target culture, using cultural content to connect their language learning with their academic fields, and comparing the cultural contents with their own, as well as building communities that contribute to lifelong learning (Standards, p. 31). Therefore, foreign language teaching and learning materials are expected to meet the standards to equip competent foreign language learners who can function in the target community effectively.

By providing an exploratory view of where African language textbooks are now based on the standards of foreign language teaching and learning, this study will provide insights into the potential of where these textbooks might be, and how educators and textbook writers can get there. The study will also encourage more research about the steps that have been made in moving toward meeting the standards for foreign language teaching and learning. Furthermore, the study will also suggest the role of publishers in ensuring that publishing textbooks meet the standards. In addition, it will serve as a guide for African language textbook writers who wish to write a textbook that meets foreign learners' needs.

This study evaluates twenty-seven African language textbooks. The selection of these textbooks was done randomly according to the textbooks' obtainability. The evaluated textbooks include more than one textbook from languages like Swahili, Xhosa, and Arabic; these textbooks were published in different years. The criteria for the textbooks evaluated originate from Glisan and Shrum (2009), who provide twenty-five criteria for a textbook evaluation in foreign language teaching and learning (p.65). The study carefully selects twelve criteria out of the twenty-five due to the fact that some of them can be combined and complement the others.

Schleicher and Gleisner's (2001) in their evaluation of communicative competence in African language textbooks found that many African language textbooks were not communicatively oriented, although their prefaces state that the goal is to help learners acquire communicative competence (p. 130). In order to find out if African language textbooks are standards-based, this study utilizes twelve out of the twenty-five criteria of the standard-based textbook evaluation designed by Glisan and Shrums (2009). While analyzing these criteria, the study observes the differences in the textbooks that were published before and after the publication of

Schleicher and Gleisner's study to determine the extent to which African language textbooks are communicatively based.

Twelve Criteria for evaluating communicatively based foreign language textbooks.

1. **The features of an organization based on relevant and interesting topics and cultural contexts**

It was observed that most of the African language textbooks evaluated in this study and published after the year of the birth of the Standards and Schleicher and Gleisner (2001) article have a clear organization of content that suits learners' interests, such as seeing a doctor, transportation, going to the market, greetings, etc. These topics are relevant to daily activities that are relatable in any society, and learners can practice in the classroom. Introducing topics familiar to learners' lives raises their interest in learning the culture and provides the opportunity for comparison with their own cultures in the process of communication. Stoller (2002) states that course content should be used as a "vehicle for helping students to master their language skills" (p. 112). On the other hand, Pessoa, et al (2007) observes that organizing content in foreign language teaching and learning fosters academic growth while also developing language proficiency (p. 102). Therefore, introducing content that relates to the interest of the learners motivates language learning and connects students to topics of interest. Schleicher and Gleisner (2001) explain that a well-explained unit in a textbook indicates to learners "right from the beginning that there will be practical benefit from their study of a particular aspect of the language" (p. 117).

In their evaluation of communicative-oriented textbooks, Schleicher and Gleisner (2001) found that many of the textbooks published before the Standards had chapters with headings like numerals and compound tenses. However, after more than fifteen years of their evaluation, there has been a significant change in first-year African language textbooks in terms of the organization of content. By the time of this writing in 2021, most first-year African foreign language textbooks demonstrate this change by providing features that provide cultural knowledge and other interesting topics as part of the content organization. These textbooks were published as a result of the 2001 African languages textbooks evaluation; they follow the example of one of the textbooks considered as being communicatively based. Therefore, these textbooks are titled *Let's Speak*

2. **Provides activities in which students talk to each other, share information and opinions, ask personalized questions, and express feelings and ideas.**

Activities that engage learners in sharing ideas and information encourage interaction and positive feedback as a result of developing proficiency in language learning. This study observed that only the 'Let's Speak' African language textbooks series that have been published since 2001 provide activities in which learners can work collaboratively in their learning processes and share their information and opinions about the specific topics included in each lesson. For example, learners are assigned activities that lead them to communicate and share information with the class, such as: "Ask your partner where she/he lives, and then report the answer to the class" (Nxumalo & Mkhize, p. 25). This kind of activity provides learners with the opportunity to use their newfound language skills in their daily routine, for example, in the use of greetings and introductions. Schleicher and Gleisner (2001) write that "the skill-using activities . . . provide learners with opportunities to express their own meanings, to be creative with language and communicate meaningful information in the classroom" (p. 124). For example, when students meet a person who happens to be a speaker of their target language, they will be able to introduce themselves and provide more information like where they live and what they are doing. Although learners are more into using the language for communication, there are also grammar expressions that are embedded in the conversation that allows learners to learn more implicitly rather than explicitly due to the fact that the goal/focus for language learning is to communicate.

Therefore, in 2001, Schleicher and Gleisner evaluated a selection of African language textbooks and found that "overall, skill-getting activities dominate the textbooks," whereby "the majority of the textbooks focus on the fill-in-the-blanks exercises that emphasize rote memorization and do not require students to use the language in a meaningful way" (p.125). Following the 2001 study, African language textbooks gained a new look by focusing more on communicative approach activities that give learners many opportunities to contextually use their target language.

3. **Provides authentic printed text (newspaper/magazine articles, ads, poems, short stories) that have engaging content and tasks**

Most of the textbooks evaluated in this study published before and after the introduction of the standards --- including those published before

and after Schleicher and Gleisner (2001) have advertisements, short stories, poems, magazine articles, or newspapers as part of their chapters. Most of the articles presented in the textbooks surveyed, however, focus only on comprehension, rather than on the actual use of the language. For example, reading the story of "The Lion and Three Friends" in Chapter 21 of the Hinnebusch (1996) textbook, learners are provided with questions about the story such as, "Who were the three friends? What did they see in the forest?" (p. 149). It is observed that learners' tasks provide little opportunity to use the target language in its contexts, which does not lead to achieving the standards for foreign language teaching and learning.

4. **Suggests strategies for comprehending and interpreting oral and written texts**

Learners in the foreign language classroom need strategies for comprehending texts to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations (Glisan and Shrum 2009). Teaching and learning tools like authentic pictures, photos, grammar notes, video, audio, and vocabulary lists help learners to understand written and oral texts. This study observed that most textbooks published before and after the publication of Standards and Schleicher and Gleisner's (2001) article present more than one picture in every chapter, as well as dialogue. Dialogues help learners create conversations based on their own life experiences, while pictures enable learners to create sentences through predictions and real-life situations, helping learners to express their thoughts and expressions in the process of communication. For instance, in a Yoruba textbook, Schleicher (1993) presents several pictures in each chapter that demonstrate practices in Yoruba culture, such as cooking, traveling, going to the market, and dressing These pictures enable foreign language learners to reflect on a real-life situation and construct sentences related to the event depicted in the picture. Before the series of African languages textbooks published by the National Language Resources Center, most foreign language African textbooks focused on helping students understand grammar rules, and so many textbooks include less authentic pictures to help learners comprehend and interpret texts for the sake of communication.

5. **Includes pre-listening/pre-viewing/pre-reading tasks**

Glisan and Shrum (2009) suggest that learners should become aware of specific vocabulary and important grammar rules for comprehending and interpreting oral and written texts. Pre-listening and re-reading tasks involve lists of vocabulary and grammar before or within the lesson. This study

observes that most of the Let's Speak series contains lists of vocabulary within a text. For example, in the Akan textbook, a lesson that teaches about introductions presents a monologue with some English translation on the side:

name/is	Me din de Kofi Ofori
live	Mete Nkran.
have/older	MewƆ nua panyin baako
	Ne din de Ayaw
	Ayaw te Kwaboanta
don't have/any	Menni nua kumaa biara

The author in this particular text and other textbooks published with the series of Je ka So Yoruba use reading strategies, which make reading in a foreign language easy due to the fact that learners will not have to contact the dictionary often. Before the publication of the standards and Schleicher and Gleisner's (2001) article, most African language textbooks did not include pre-listening and pre-reading activities in an attempt to simplify language-learning processes. It can be hypothesized that the authors of these textbooks were less aware of the communicative foreign language approach that focuses on the ability of the learner to communicate in the target language. Most of the textbooks evaluated in this study published contain some important vocabulary within the text and lists of vocabulary at the end of each lesson, as well as in the index pages to simplify the reading process.

6. **Includes tasks in which students speak and write to an audience of listeners/readers (i.e. process-oriented tasks)**

Learning a foreign language and its function requires activities that engage learners in communicative processes by allowing actual conversation. For example, learners can use role-playing, panel discussion, projects, and other collaborative activities to acquire the language. In this study, nineteen textbooks out of twenty-seven include pair work, group work, and individual presentations that allow learners to use the language for communication. Among the nineteen textbooks fifteen were published after the birth of the Standards and the other four books were published before the Standards. The following are samples from three of the evaluated textbooks published

after the Standards; each example illustrates how group and pair work is presented:

"*Tell your friend about the food you like, also tell him/her where one can get it and how to cook it.*"

"Talk about three things you want to do."

"You are going to the store to buy something. Call and ask if your friend can go with you."

These activities help learners to communicate in different contexts, such as demonstrating their daily life activities and expressing ideas and opinions. However, for the sake of achieving the goals for the standards, these tasks balance the various contexts of language learning by pointing to examples in the target communities in order to help the learner get a richer feeling for his/her target communities. Before the Standards, foreign language textbooks did not include scenarios that enable learners to develop their communicative skills as well as cultural understanding. Schleicher and Gleisner (2001) insist that "students will not learn how to effectively communicate in a foreign language unless they are given realistic exercise and tasks, which are tasks that native speakers perform in the target culture" (p.122). Learners practicing going to the market or cooking in the target language, and traveling in the target communities help them to bring the foreign language world to the foreign language classroom.

7. **Presents clear and concise grammar explanations that are necessary for communication**

The field of foreign language teaching and learning has moved from the traditional method of grammar-centered instruction to communicative grammar presentation. Current foreign and second language theories and research concentrate on issues concerning how to present clear and concise grammar notes in a communicative way. Twenty-two of the textbooks evaluated in this study present grammar explanations. Two textbooks published before the Standards did not have grammar explanations. The presentation of grammar notes does not reflect the communicative tasks in all of the lessons in a single textbook. Glisan and Shrum (2009) suggest that, for a textbook to meet the criteria for the goal of the standards, it should present "grammar that serves communication needs" (p.57). Most of the textbooks evaluated in this study especially those published after the Standards contain grammar explanations that reflect learners' communicative needs. For example, in explaining the "past perfect tense negative" in Zulu,

the author contextualizes the tense by presenting it in a sentence after a brief explanation: "Past perfect tense negative is created by attaching the suffix –anga at the end of the verb

Angivakaselanga ugogo I have not visited my grandmother

Asiqedanga We have not finished" (Nxumalo & Mkhize, p. 171).

This example from a Zulu textbook presents a grammar explanation that helps learners use the language in a real-life situation. The above example indicates that the emphasis in on tense, which is bolded. At the end of the lesson, the authors provide a task to follow up on the use of the past perfect tense negative to help the learner practice new grammar skills for communication. There is also an example of how to negate the tense and learners' activities that lead them to use the language in a real situation. (Nxumalo & Mkhize, p. 173).

8. **Presents vocabulary thematically, in context, and with the use of visual and authentic realia**

Vocabulary in foreign language teaching and learning is, of course, an important component, as it helps learners develop a semantic and grammatical lexicon. Becoming familiar with the vocabulary as it is presented thematically results in an increased level of proficiency for learners. Textbooks have to provide a vocabulary list that the students can use in real-life situations in their own community, as well as the target communities. Schleicher and Gleisner (2001) affirm that, in order for vocabulary to meet learners' needs, textbooks should "also sequence vocabulary according to the needs to enable learners to practice the language according to their priorities and differences when learning a language" (p.127). Most textbooks published before and after the publication of the Standards present important vocabulary within the text, as is indicated in the Akan monologue above. The list of vocabulary presented at the end of each lesson also provides learners with different options for using the new words to express their ideas and thoughts in the processes of communication. Some textbooks do not provide this sequence of vocabulary in the lessons toward the end of the textbooks. This study hypothesizes that this occurs because the authors believe that the learners have become more familiar with grammar and vocabulary as they approach the end of the textbook. Despite the presence of vocabulary lists, the authors do not always situate the vocabulary in the context of cultural

practices that reflect the target community to help learners use the language for communication.

Before the publication of the Standards, African language textbooks presented lists of vocabulary that focused on the memorization of words, the approach that limits the use of language for communication and emphases memorization. However, there are limited activities that focus on the use of these new words in a real-life situation of the learners as they compare to that of the target language.

9. **Provides opportunities for students to discover and explore the products of culture and their relationship to cultural perspectives**

The use of authentic materials in foreign language teaching and learning aims at providing cross-cultural understanding. However, some textbooks focus more on presenting pictures that provide opportunities for learners to use the language for communication purposes while focusing less on the target environment. Glisan and Shrum (2009) recommend an approach to culture in foreign language textbooks that emphasizes a constructivist approach to exploring the connection of cultural products and practices with their philosophical perspectives, enabling learners to develop more relevant cultural insights into the target culture and their own. Textbooks that use drawings and illustrations provide less opportunity to discover the products of culture and their perspectives due to the fact that they are not attractive to the learner's eyes compared to colored pictures. Also, they are hard to read and interpret. Six of the textbooks evaluated in this study use drawings, stick figures, and illustrations. Only two Swahili textbooks; *Tuseme Kiswahili* and *Kiswahili Bila mipaka* - present colored pictures from Swahili-speaking communities. It is hypothesized that African languages lack funding for developing quality textbooks that include paper quality, content, and pictures.

Before the Standards, African language textbooks contained pictures that did not focus on the cultural reality and therefore did not allow learners to use the language for cultural and communicative understanding. Most of the textbooks evaluated in this study present photos from the target environment, such as maps, bus terminals and schedules, newspapers, and tourist attractions like Mount Kilimanjaro and Masai Mara National Park in Kenya. However, for these textbooks to be considered a standards-based model, the pictures should be colored to inspire learning processes.

10. **Provides opportunities for students to use the target language to learn about their subject areas**

Textbooks of African languages have to focus on interdisciplinary topics for learners to be able to "reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through learning a foreign language" (Standards, p. 54). Textbooks published after the standards and the publication of Schleicher and Gleisner (2001) in this study present topics from different disciplines in order to help learners connect to different fields, such as transportation, medicine, going to the market, storytelling, the education system, travel, restaurants, and food. Glisan and Shrum (2009) maintain that topics in foreign language textbooks should be intellectually meaningful and engage learners in the parts of communication as they connect to their fields. The topics should help learners engage in "meaning-making and acquiring knowledge through the foreign language" (p. 57). Twenty-one textbooks mostly published after the Schleicher and Gleisner (2001) present different topics in each lesson, as well as the grammatical skills instead of the grammatical structure of the language that enable the acquisition of cultural and grammatical aspects of the language. For instance, in the Yoruba textbook, the author presents the topic of "shopping in an open market" with the specific grammar skills of using "why questions." Learners who are interested in business can connect their interest in the way things are arranged and the different ways of approaching customers, such as bargaining in the target community.

This study observes that textbooks that were published before the birth of the Standards present less interdisciplinary topics that enable learners to connect to their areas of study as they compare their language and the target language. Most of these textbooks contain dialogue and or monologue that focus on greetings or introduction.

11. **Provides opportunities for students to compare products, practices, and the perspectives of the native culture and target cultures in interesting ways**

Language and culture are inextricably intertwined with each other; therefore, any information presented in a textbook should provide learners with some cultural lesson that leads to a better understanding of the target community. Language operates in the cultural contexts of any language. Most textbooks published before and after the publication of the Standards and Schleicher and Gleisner (2001) present dialogues, short stories, photos, and pictures from the target environment to help learners learn both the language

and culture. Twenty-three of the studied textbooks present cultural notes in each lesson and are explained in English. Providing cultural notes gives learners knowledge about cultural practices, products, and perspectives. For instance, in the Yoruba textbook, the author presents the days of the week, which are also used for naming purposes. The author states "Yoruba beliefs and activities are reflected in these names of the day" (Schleicher p. 123). The author provides the meaning of each day in Yoruba culture, such as "Ojo Isegun," which is "Tuesday" but also means "a day of victory." Learners are able to acquire the culture of naming in Yoruba, which enables them to then make comparisons with the culture of naming in their own community. Various relevant contexts included in African language textbooks provide learners with ample opportunity to compare cultures, as well as become familiar with the new world of the target culture.

In this study's observations, most of the textbooks presented photos, pictures, and maps for different topics, which provided learners with the ability to compare these components of culture with their own comprehension. In attaining the goals for the standards for foreign language teaching and learning, many of the African language textbooks published after the Standards emphasize on communicative activities and cultural contexts and contexts, directed into promoting communicative, linguistic, and cultural competencies in a foreign language

12. Integrates technology effectively into instruction (audiotapes, videotapes, interactive video CD-ROM, World Wide Web, email, online, chat rooms)

This study found the before the publication of Schleicher and Gleisner (2001) African language textbooks included limited technological sources like radio and music. In the evaluation of the textbooks, five textbooks, three published before 2001 and two after 2001, include online sources CD. It is observed that recent textbooks have continued to provide a few technology sources to help learners use the language for communication and practicing the culture. Nineteen textbooks do not have CDs attached to them although some of them stated that they have CDs accompanying them. Few textbooks that contain CDs provide less interactive information about the target language. These CDs are basically the actual textbook recorded. Another textbook has links for songs on the internet; however, there is no communicative task assigned to the learners to help them use the language for communicative purposes. The standards for foreign language encourage the use of technology in a foreign language as an

important tool for providing learners with linguistic and cultural information inside and outside the classroom. In order to achieve the goals for the standards, African language textbooks must consider the use of technology to inspire and motivate learning processes. Learners of African languages are surrounded by all kinds of technology. African language textbooks authors can also provide useful links for the learners to use in learning language and culture.

How can African language textbooks achieve the goals set by the standards?

The study evaluates the textbooks in order to show that most African language textbooks have shifted from the grammar-translation method to a near-communicative competence. In the communicative competence evaluation of the selected African language first-year textbooks, Schleicher and Gleisner (2001) found that most African language textbooks were an "excellent source of grammar manuals" (p.130). However, ten years after their evaluation, there has been a great change in African language textbooks. Therefore, the new paradigm is one of the many tools that can be considered in developing materials for the teaching and learning of African languages. Most of the pictures presented in these textbooks—specifically the Let's Speak series—are authentic due to the fact that most of them are from the target communities. These textbooks also present folklore, videos, magazines, and articles from the target language, which helps learners to use their language skills in their learning processes. Most of these textbooks encourage learners to participate in the teaching and learning processes that lead them to the modes of communication.

Having many materials, however, does not necessarily indicate that their contents meet the needs of the learners to effectively achieve the goals for the standards of foreign language teaching and learning. Schleicher and Moshi (2001) state that material development is one of the biggest problems facing African language teaching and learning in the United States (p.205). Until this moment much less commonly taught languages are still in the transition of improving the available teaching and learning resources. Therefore, the future for African language textbooks is in fact "now," a sentiment echoed by Schleicher and Everson (2006) when they state that "the time is now" for these improvements to be made (p.199). Scholars of African languages should not take a rest after making a step forward. Bokamba (2002) states that African language programs have made a great move in teaching

and learning materials that range from traditional textbooks to online resources.

There is much to be done in the development of African language teaching and learning materials in order for this type of instruction to achieve the goals for the standards for foreign language teaching and learning in the United States. Having a good textbook does not necessarily indicate that the goals for the standards will be attained. Met (2006) observes that "bad teaching is not to blame" (p. 58) due to other issues that arise in the classroom, such as time, students' motivation, and the awareness that language coordinators and instructors have about the standards for foreign language teaching and learning. It is evident, however, that African language teaching and learning materials have gone through stages of advancement due to the scholars who devote their time, knowledge, and experience to the future of these learning materials/textbooks. Most of these scholars are linguists, language pedagogues, and literature specialists (Bokamba 2002, p. 1). The field is developing and will still develop following the invention of new theories and principles of foreign language teaching and learning. African language textbooks need to focus more on authenticity in order to accomplish the goals set by the standards for teaching foreign languages.

Authors of African language textbooks need to be aware of the standards and know that the use of authentic and realistic materials from the target environment will promote learners' understanding of culture. For example, pictures presented in textbooks should provide real information, as well as provide students with an opportunity to practice the language by using the pictures. If the pictures are just presented in the textbooks with task-based activities, they will be less effective in providing linguistic and cultural information.

Writers of African language textbooks need training and guidelines before writing a foreign language textbook in order to ensure that they are aware of the current status of the foreign language teaching and learning field. Schleicher and Moshi (2001) observe that most African language teaching materials rely less on research and study for foreign language teaching and learning. However, most textbooks published from the year 2012 incorporate current theories and research, but there remains the fact that there is no single textbook that meets all of the criteria that is mentioned by Glisan and Shrum (2009). It should be noted that these textbooks have to be both theoretical and practical to help learners comprehend the language and its culture.

Instructors of African languages have to be aware and mindful in selecting a textbook that focuses on achieving the goals for the standards. Met (2006) states that "language teachers need to recognize that they have the power to make a change and use that power to good effect" (p. 61). This may be a challenge to graduate students who have to follow whatever instructions are given by their supervisors for the sake of their positions. Therefore, African language coordinators should be targeted for information training in order to make advancements in textbooks in the next ten years.

Writers have to be aware of the role of technology in foreign language teaching and learning. Textbooks that indicate the use of video, chat, or the Internet motivates learning processes. LeLoup and Ponterio (2006) support this theory, writing that technology "creates rich cultural materials and presentations for and by language learners" (p.163). The authors of African language textbooks need to know that using technology will help learners develop their communicative competence, as can the use of technology to imitate the sounds of the language by using video and/or audio.

Research should be done to determine how learners use these textbooks in order to better ascertain the learners' needs as they use these textbooks. Theoretically, educators may think that certain textbooks are good, but it is ultimately the experience of the learners that determines their quality. There has been less research conducted about how learners like the textbooks they are using and their reasons for their opinions. A study that addresses these questions could be conducted in different schools or colleges that use diverse textbooks. Such a study could incorporate not only the students' opinions but also those of the instructors for the sake of comparison.

Research on the implementation of textbooks is also necessary so that instructors can be provided with training about how to use the textbooks in the classroom. If a textbook is good but the instructor is not aware of the current theories and methods of achieving the standards for foreign language teaching and learning, it will be difficult for the goals to be achieved. Instructors have to know what the learners should be able to accomplish when they teach a foreign language.

Textbooks are fundamental to language learning. Textbooks in foreign language classrooms have been considered a vital tool to guide teaching and learning processes. It is through textbooks that a foreign language instructor can create his or her own techniques in order to simplify

their language instructions. Other sources of learning, such as online courses and websites, are designed and modified based on textbooks that have existed for years. In his article, Sercu (2004) views textbooks in foreign language classrooms as the "guiding principle of many foreign language courses,", particularly at the elementary level. However, it has been questioned the extent to which textbooks meet students' needs, due to the fact that learning a new language goes beyond linguistics. A textbook is not all-inclusive and cannot incorporate everything from the target environment. It is because of this limitation that instructors need the knowledge and understanding of the theories, principles, and methods relating to foreign language teaching in order to properly utilize the textbook in the classroom situation. The use of standards-based materials in teaching and learning foreign languages should encourage students to not only take an in-depth look at the lifestyles, attitudes, value systems, and socio-historical circumstances of the people living in the culture under study, but should also include them in developing a global outlook and becoming conscious of the importance of wider political, social, economic, and scientific issues.

The ideal African language textbook, therefore, should contain the criteria mentioned by Glisan and Shrum. This study does not observe an African textbook that meets all of the criteria as suggested. However, some of these textbooks include most of them, although not in every lesson or not exactly as described. For example, the contents are organized in most of the textbooks, but not in an interesting way as described by Glisan and Shrum (2009). It should be noted that there is no single foreign language textbook that contains all the criteria for the communicative approach. Therefore, the foreign language teacher has to be resourceful in searching for supplemental materials.

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Teaching African Languages through Distance Education

Galen Sibanda

Abstract

Distance education has always posed many problems for instructors, perhaps, the most obvious being how best to deliver lessons and maintain effective communication given the physical distance between student and instructor. There are even more challenges in L2 teaching where the major goal is to get learners to speak in the target language rather than simply acquiring knowledge and being able to demonstrate it through written assignments as is the case with many other subjects. However, with advances in technology, many of the problems can now be solved. This paper discusses distance education, looking at some of the challenges and how they can be resolved in the teaching of African languages. It is argued that a synchronous distance education class is ideal for teaching and learning a language, and when instruction is modeled on sound pedagogical principles can just be as effective as a conventional class.

Keywords: distance education, synchronous, technology, learning, teaching, target language

Introduction

Distance education has always posed many problems for instructors, perhaps, the most obvious being how best to deliver lessons and maintain effective communication given the physical distance between student and instructor. There are even more challenges in foreign or second language teaching where the major goal is to get learners to speak and communicate in the target language rather than simply acquiring knowledge and being able to demonstrate it through written assignments and examinations as is the case with many other subjects. However, with advances in technology and careful planning, many of the problems can now be easily overcome. This paper looks at some of the challenges and how they can be resolved in teaching distance education African language classes. Although it is inspired by the success of a pilot pre-COVID-19 US distance education Beginning Zulu class, this paper is not presented as a report but looks at general issues as they may affect any other African language class using the same or a similar model.

Note that issues of oral proficiency particularly at different levels (elementary, intermediate, advanced, and superior) are not directly addressed in this paper as it is assumed they are not significantly different from those affecting a regular face-to-face class in the model argued for here. A separate detailed study would have to be carried out to establish if there are any considerable differences in oral proficiency outcomes between the two models.

The paper is organized as follows. The next section focuses on terminology, addressing the question of what distance education is. Then follows a section on pedagogical issues, and another discusses other related pedagogical and practical issues. The last section is the conclusion.

What is Distance Education?

The Origins

Distance education is not new. It has been around for more than a century in one form or another. As Daniel (2000:1) points out, the communication system of the Roman Empire set the ball rolling by introducing the precursor of modern distance education although it might not have been called 'distance education at the time. During that period the printing press was invented and postal services were established thereby enabling the printing and distribution of many copies of learning materials to many people. Later, towards the end of the 19th-century correspondence education became popular. The 20th century then saw the introduction of radio, telephone, cinema, television, programmed learning, computers, and the internet as important tools for distributing learning materials in distance education. Perhaps the use of many different tools contributed to the confusion in the use of the term 'distance education and other related terms that now abound. An attempt to define the terms is made in the next sub-section.

Definitions: Distance Education, Distance Learning, Distributed Learning, and Online Learning

'Distance education' is often confused with 'distance learning', 'distributed learning', and 'online learning'. The four terms refer to the "application of information technology (and infrastructure) to educational and student-related activities linking teachers and students in different places. All communications are mediated by some type of electronic means in real

or delayed time" (Schlosser & Simonson 2010: 129)1. Let us consider each of the terms in turn below.

Distance Education. Put simply, distance education is an all-embracive or "generic, all-inclusive term used to refer to the physical separation of teachers and learners" (Schlosser & Simonson 2010: 129). It is a form of education in which the learner (or some learners) and instructor are separate during all or a significant proportion of instruction. (See also Johnson 2003:1 and Kidd & Song 2007:289). Technology often plays an important role in bridging the instructional gap in distance education.

Distance Learning. In recent years this term has become almost synonymous with distance education, especially in the United States where it is commonly used (Schlosser & Simonson 2010: 130). As Schlosser & Simonson observe, in distance learning "students take on greater responsibility for their learning". Emphasis is on learner autonomy whereas 'distance education' is an all-embracive term that includes even distance learning as already pointed out above. The term *distance learning*, therefore, might not be suitable to use for a video conferencing class taught more like a regular class.

Distributed Learning. This refers to a model of distance education or a learning situation where learners, instructors, and materials are all in different locations. (See, for example, Saltzberg & Polyson, 1995:10). Obviously, technology has to play a very important role in the success of this instructional model as students need to access materials and communicate with the instructor.

Online Learning. When one talks about taking or teaching a distance education class it is common nowadays for people to immediately assume that reference is being made to an online class and yet 'online learning' is just one form of distance education. In online learning "instruction and interaction are primarily based on the technologies available from the internet and the World Wide Web" (Kidd & Song 2007: 290). Instructor-Student and Student-Student interaction is through Internet-based communication. Materials are normally posted on a class website and a course management system is often used. In other words, the use of the computer or other electronic devices is central to this mode of teaching and learning.

Main Models of Distance Education

There are three broad categories of distance education: asynchronous, synchronous, and hybrid. Although asynchronous distance education has a long history and was probably the most widely used before the COVID-19 pandemic, with advances in technology, the other two models are increasingly becoming popular.

Asynchronous. This model is the traditional one whereby instruction is delivered at one time and students can participate at another time. Correspondence and online learning are probably some of the most well-known versions of asynchronous distance education. Written and audiovisual learning materials are prepared by the instructor for distribution to students who later access them when they are delivered or posted on the internet. Accessing the materials is usually at a time convenient for the students.

Synchronous. The synchronous model involves at least a two-way communication with no time delay. It happens in real-time so that when instruction is delivered response is immediate. It is normally done through video conferencing and instruction is almost as it would be in a regular or traditional classroom setting. (See, for example, Birnbaum 2001: 85).

Synchronous distance education through video conferencing appears to be the model ideal for language classes. While the instructor can be in one location and students in another, for African languages in the US it seems best to have student participants at both the telecast site and the remote location at the same time especially as it is cost-effective and allows for a reasonably sized class. As Johnson (2003: 54) notes, "a live video link displays" the images of participants "on monitors in each location's classroom" thereby displaying their presence while "telecommunication allows for their verbal interaction". Advances in technology have even made it possible for computers to handle both video and sound simultaneously. The rationale for arguing for this model will even be clearer in the next section.

Hybrid. The hybrid model is a combination of both the synchronous and asynchronous models. From the curriculum, what is taught through the synchronous model and what is assigned to students via the asynchronous model may vary depending on the institutional, learner, or instructor's needs and preferences. There may be more from one model than the other.

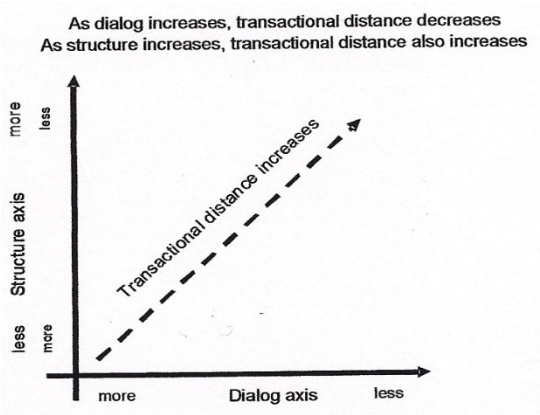
Pedagogical Issues

Having mentioned above that the synchronous model is the one ideal for the teaching of African languages or languages in general, it is necessary to show why it should be preferred to the other two models. Traditional asynchronous distance education classes tend to place a lot of emphasis on learner independence. For a language class, this can still work if the goal is just to focus on reading, writing, and listening as the students can do these tasks by themselves if they have access to the required written and audiovisual materials. However, if speaking, oral proficiency, or language proficiency, in general, is the goal then this cannot easily be achieved in the traditional asynchronous setup since students need more interaction with the instructor and with each other. Student-content interaction on its own is not enough. The synchronous video conferencing model that mimics the traditional regular class is best suited for the kind of student-student and teacher-student interaction also necessary (in addition to student-content interaction) in a language class whose goal is proficiency like most African language classes. While distance study in general leaves many students "feeling isolated, missing face-to-face contact with staff, and lacking confidence in managing the technology associated with the study" (Owens, Hardcastle, and Richardson 2009:70), Anderson (2008:112) observes that videoconferencing "…overcomes many of the objections that people have to education that occurs anywhere beyond the face-to-face classroom" such as "the lack of interaction associated with correspondence study".

It is also important to note that dialogue is generally more important in language learning compared to many other subjects. The importance of dialogue in language learning can, perhaps, be viewed in terms of Moore's (2007) transactional distance theory. The theory advances a system that focuses on the interaction between three key variables: dialogue, structure, and learner autonomy. According to Shearer (2007: 220), dialogue can be viewed as "communications between student and instructor leading to the construction of knowledge or advances a student's understanding of materials being studied". Perhaps, what needs to be added to this is that student-student interaction is also part of dialogue since, in many respects, it advances the same goal as teacher-student interaction. For instance, when teaching about bargaining at the market, a feature of many African societies, giving students instructions and letting them act it out might be better than just explaining or letting them read about what happens at the market. Of course, they can still ask the teacher questions after an explanation or reading but the interaction between themselves as they act out the scene seems more

effective. Shearer further explains that structure refers to "the amount of freedom a program gives the student in determining pace, sequence, learning objectives and outcomes, and assessment strategies" while learner autonomy is "the degree of interplay the student needs with the learning organization or learning environment". Say students are having a hard time understanding noun classes in a Bantu language like Zulu or Swahili, feedback is immediate in a regular face-to-face class and the teacher can change the way s/he teaches to help learners. This flexibility (or less structure) is one of the advantages of video conferencing over asynchronous distance education. Transactional distance is a function of dialogue and structure. As seen in Figure 1 below, as dialogue increases, transactional distance decreases, and as structure increases, transactional distance also increases.

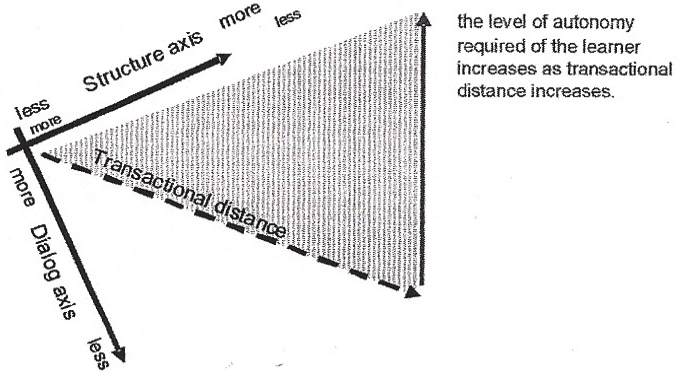
Figure 1. Relationship of dialogue, structure, and transactional distance (Moore 2007:94)



For a language class, the ideal situation is to have more dialogue and less structure to keep the transactional distance minimal. In other words, there must be more student-teacher interaction, student-student interaction and more flexibility in the way material is covered to allow for a better grasp of concepts and language in general.

The other key variable, learner autonomy is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Learner Autonomy (Moore 2007:96)



As can be seen, as transactional distance and structure increase the level of autonomy required of the learner increases as well. In our case emphasis must not be on learner autonomy but the goal should be to minimize the transactional distance thereby making conditions conducive to language learning and indeed proficiency.

Other Pedagogical and Practical Issues

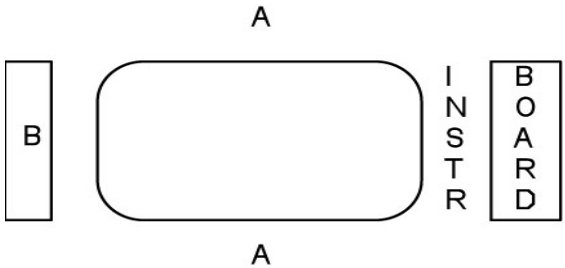
Sitting Arrangement and General Organization of the Classroom

The sitting arrangement can be very important in how a lesson is delivered. While some of the most common sitting arrangements in a regular/traditional class are sitting in groups, sitting in a circle, sitting in a semi-/half-moon circle, and sitting in rows, in a video conferencing class there is the camera to consider. The instructor must try by all means to stay in view of all students and also ensure that all students are in focus most of the time. Of course, it is useful to zoom in and out as different participants take turns to speak but focusing on a few individuals for too long without seeing what the rest of the class is doing could be just as disastrous as when a teacher spends too much time with just one group in a regular class without seeing what the groups behind him/her are doing. When out of view for too long, some students may feel left out and lose interest and end up doing other things not related to the lesson without the teacher's knowledge. In a language class, it is also essential for students to see the instructor's gestures and how s/he pronounces sounds. In Shona, for example, people clap their hands when greeting and men and women do it differently. For students to get this right it may be necessary to see how the teacher does it. Some sounds of a language being taught may also be pronounced with the mouth wide

open or with lip rounding. When the instructor is out of focus all this is lost. Although modern cameras can be manipulated to focus on any part of the room, to avoid these problems a good sitting arrangement needs to be decided upon before teaching commences.

Ignoring the situation where COVID-19 forced many students to learn from home, for now, a good sitting arrangement will in most cases depend on the position of the camera or its flexibility in focusing, the number of participants, the nature of the room and the flexibility in moving furniture and other materials in it. In general, a rectangle or round rectangle works well for a video conferencing class. This sitting arrangement is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Sitting Arrangement



The sitting arrangement illustrated by Figure 3 would be ideal if say University A (the telecast site) has a large number of students compared to University B (the remote location). University A students sit on either side of the long table while University B students and the instructor sit on opposite short sides. University B students would be present only through a large monitor but for the most part, one would even forget that they are not physically present in the classroom if the lesson is carefully planned and goes on well. The best position for the camera in this case would be above the monitor so that the University A students, instructor, and board are all in view. The instructor's default place should be next to the board preferably a movable one to allow for flexibility in case adjustments need to be made. Note that the board is at the best viewing position for University B whose participants may have problems viewing small handwriting at an angle. This sitting arrangement allows dialogue to occur as in the traditional face-to-face classroom and allows for flexibility in determining pace, sequence, learning objectives and outcomes, and assessment strategies as the instructor can easily keep track of student needs including those to do with speaking. In other words, it makes it possible to have less structure and more dialogue

thereby reducing considerably the problems of transactional distance often associated with distance education study.

The hi-tech room may, of course, have other equipment such as computers, printers, scanners, and remote controls. The instructor may not have control over where these are placed in the room. What is important is that when there is no zooming in all participants should be able to see each other and feel that they belong to the same class even though they may be in different locations. With African language classes, this should generally not be a problem as they are usually small.

A projector may be mounted on the ceiling facing the screen that drops in front of the board or on one side of the room behind some University A students who can just turn around for viewing. With a good video conferencing system University B participants should be able to view clearly what is projected on the screen. In the past what used to be even very helpful, especially when using a Polycom or similar system, was that from a small window on the monitor the instructor was able to see exactly what the remote site was viewing. Participants from both institutions were able to view movies and other images from DVDs, videocassettes, and the computer from the screen at the same time. All this reduced the transactional distance significantly as students in University B were made to feel, to a greater extent, as part of a regular class.

From 2020 COVID-19 forced students to learn from home and instructors to also teach from their residences. This meant that the ideal sitting arrangement could no longer be attained as each student was connecting to the class through his/her own computer or phone which has a camera. Although all students and the instructor could potentially view each other from the same screen some institutions did not mandate students to show their faces on the screen especially due to the glaring social inequalities exposed by different camera backgrounds. Smaller screens could also not show everyone's face and there were times when the instructor needed a larger part of the screen for illustrations or showing a video. While the situation seems to be going back to normal it remains to be seen whether or not most instruction will revert to face-to-face. The COVID-19 pandemic has also taught people that they don't need to leave their homes for synchronous online learning and this renders the sitting arrangement discussed above less important. The teacher now has to find other ways of keeping all students engaged including those whose faces s/he cannot see.

Creating activities that force all students to participate seems to be the solution. For example, when using group work the instructor can choose at random and at the end the member who reports for his/her group. When students know that the teacher will do this, besides spending some time in each breakout room, it forces all of them to participate and be ready to give their reports. This should be easy to do as the problem of assigning group work online has been solved by breakout rooms that programs such as ZOOM now offer.

Course Management System

A course management system (sometimes referred to as a learning management system or virtual learning environment) is essential for a distance education class as it makes communication between student and instructor more efficient (in a way, promoting dialogue) than when there is none and helps in the general organization of the class. Many course management systems work well such as those powered by Sakai, Desire to Learn (D2L), Blackboard, WebCT (now part of Blackboard), and Moodle (a free open-source web application). In the course management system, the instructor can place the syllabus and course materials such as assignments, exercises, tests/quizzes, reading materials, links to websites, and sound files. Even announcements can be posted on the system when not made in class or if there is a need for students to refer to them later. Besides getting or viewing their materials on the system, students also can send their work to the instructor via the same medium. E-mail may also be available for communication between students and instructors and can be generated within the course management system in many cases. All this favors dialogue and provides some flexibility for the course thereby reducing structure.

Homework, Class Exercises, Quizzes/Tests

It is good practice for the instructor to post homework on the course website in the management system and for students to submit their completed work in their drop boxes or any appropriate area in the system. Homework can, for example, be posted in the form of a document or reference to specific exercises in the class textbook. It can also be linked to sound files that students have to listen to and place responses in their drop boxes or the appropriate place within the system. In the past, since the instructor could not pass out papers to students at the remote site during class, exercises, quizzes, and tests for the lesson of the day would be posted on the class website at the beginning of class or at the point when they are

required during the lesson so that all student view them at the same time. When posted, students at both the telecast site and remote location(s) would be able to instantly see them by logging into their accounts, no one would be disadvantaged. There are of course other assignments that could be posted earlier when it was necessary that students view them before class. This is still true even with current synchronous classes where all students remain at their home institutions or residences during class.

From our example above students at University B could send all their completed work electronically by placing it in their drop boxes. Students at University A could do the same although the option of writing on pieces of paper that they hand to the instructor could also be available. Drop boxes ensure that no assignment is lost and are secure in that a student has access only to his/her box and only the instructor can view boxes for all students in the class. The date and time when materials are placed on the drop box can also be displayed in some systems so that no student can cheat and, for example, turn in a test or assignment late. This works even with current students who now rely mainly on computers and phones.

Grading essay-type work or assignments where divergent answers are expected is generally faster for many instructors when using the traditional way (with pen check marks and comments) than doing it on the computer. For this reason, assignments for a video conferencing class would often be printed out and corrected the traditional way. While students at the telecast site could be handed their corrected work, for the remote site corrected assignments could be faxed provided there was an assistant (or any other designated person) to receive them and pass them on to students. Otherwise, the instructor could end up dealing with privacy issues if any student could pick them up from the fax machine. If there was no assistant, assignments for the remote site could be corrected on the computer and then placed in the drop boxes. A low-cost program such as PDF Pen when used with a handwriting font could still give the students the feeling that comments on their assignments have been handwritten just like those for students at the telecast site. Giving students this feeling is in itself important as it gives a sense of having only a very small or no transactional distance. Assignments can still be graded this way even today when most students would be at home for a synchronous online class.

After each set of assignments is graded (including exams), grades must be entered in the grade book part of the course management system where they may be automatically computed and weighted accordingly

depending on the versatility of the system. This makes the instructor's job easier at the end of the term as there are no calculations to be made. Also, during the term, the instructor can easily monitor student progress and help those who are having problems.

Group Work and Chat Room

Using group work in a video conferencing class was generally very challenging as student participants were in different locations. While it was important to keep everyone occupied and to provide a sense of oneness by ensuring that each group had students from either campus there was the problem that some were only present through the monitor and could therefore not move to any assigned group. Also, using the monitor for group work was not ideal as only one group could use it at a time and members of that group could not keep their discussion to only their group like other groups. To overcome these obstacles, group work was assigned as homework and then each group would present its work when the class meets the next time. For groups to work outside class students could use e-mail or telephone but the chat room was the best option. Students could agree on a time to go to the chat room and exchange their ideas there. As already pointed out, group work is no longer for the chatroom. The creation of breakout rooms in ZOOM and other programs has made it possible for students to interact in small groups.

The Chat Room generally fills the social interaction gap created by a distance education class. In the traditional face-to-face setup, besides meeting during lessons, students have the opportunity for social interaction or chatting especially just before the lesson begins and at the end of class. In a distance education class, this is generally minimal, particularly between students from different campuses and when students remain at home for lessons. The Chat Room tries to bring back this informal aspect of interaction. This, of course, also promotes dialogue and provides more freedom in the ways students interact.

Exams/Presentations

While it is important to give students in different locations the same examinations that are fair to all, it is also important to also consider how this will be done as the instructor can only be in one location at a time. If the instructor has an assistant at a remote location, a normally written class examination may work well as the process can be monitored on either site. However, if the instructor has no one to monitor the examination at the

remote location, then a normal written class exam may not be fair to those at the telecast site who are continuously monitored by the instructor while those at the remote location have room to cheat. A take-home or an open-book exam may be best as no student will be disadvantaged. A class presentation or a combination of these possibilities may also be appropriate. However, the current situation whereby all students in the synchronous class may be at home allows the instructor to give the exam fairly without disadvantaging one group.

Other Related Issues

Expenses

In the past, many institutions could not afford video conferencing due to the astronomical cost of cameras, monitors, and other related hi-tech equipment. This situation has vastly changed in recent years as many universities can now afford hi-tech rooms fully equipped with cameras, monitors, lenses, DVD players, computers, etc. Most of the equipment is of a far much higher quality compared to similar products that could be purchased in the past and can be bought at a fraction of what it used to cost. Expense is, therefore, no longer an excuse for not doing video conferencing or teaching a synchronous online class as universities can now afford it and most of them already have the hi-tech rooms with the required equipment. Also, most students and instructors have their own computers and phones that they can use for such classes.

Student Registration

Student registration is generally not an issue for the instructor. However, it is worth pointing out that student registration issues need to be dealt with by the administration well before classes begin as students (especially those at the 'remote' site(s)) need to be sure that they will get full credit for their work. Failure to assure students that they will get credit at the end of the term can significantly affect enrollment in the class.

Scheduling and Rooms

While in the past scheduling needed to be done early as video conferencing typically involved two or more campuses although it was also possible to do it within the same campus (for example, when only one instructor was teaching two or more classes that were at the same level) this seems to be now an issue when only two or more institutions are involved. Campuses may have different time schedules and be in different time zones.

Also, one campus may be on a quarter system while the other is on a semester system. Good meeting times that take all these differences into account must be chosen early while there is still scheduling flexibility on each campus. Now that everyone uses his/her own computer or phone video conferencing or synchronous online learning no longer requires specialized hi-tech rooms in both the telecast and remote site(s).

Employment Issues

Potential Job Loses

There are potential job losses if a distance education program is not carefully planned. If the traditional or regular class setup is working well, there is no need to change it by introducing video conferencing as some instructors may unjustifiably lose their jobs. Video conferencing fills a gap whereby the instructor cannot be in two or more locations at the same time. However, synchronous online classes can take some of the advantages of technology discussed above if the instructor's job is not threatened.

Job Creation

Contrary to what can be easily assumed, that the use of video conferencing in teaching could lead to job losses, it is in fact likely to create more professional and stable jobs for African language teachers and other teachers of less commonly taught languages. Although there have been signs of change in the administration of programs in African languages in recent years, many institutions still hire African language instructors to teach part-time. This has seen many of them failing to attract qualified instructors, especially from far away as the instructor cannot sustain their life on the meager demeaning pay offered with no other benefits. As a result, many institutions have had to resort to hiring any locals or graduate students who speak the languages being offered as tutors even if their training or studies have nothing to do with language or education/ teaching. Even in cases where a qualified instructor is found locally, professionalism is usually compromised since the instructor has to rush to another part-time job (that may have nothing to do with teaching) before or after teaching his/her African language class. (See also Bokamba 2002 for other related issues). Video conferencing should be a solution as two or three institutions can share expenses and make it possible to hire a qualified full-time instructor with all the benefits befitting of the position.

There are also times when an institution has to decide between which of the two or three African languages (etc.) to offer due to limited resources. Consider, for example, a situation whereby University A wants to offer Zulu and Yoruba but can only afford to hire only one full-time instructor and University B is in the same dilemma. Rather than hiring four dissatisfied part-timers, video conferencing could make it possible to hire two professional full-time instructors. University A could hire a Zulu instructor while University B hires a Yoruba instructor. Video conferencing would then make it possible to offer both languages in the two institutions.

Many institutions wish to offer African languages but lack adequate resources. If these institutions pull their resources together or partner with institutions already offering these languages, they could be able to offer African language classes and hire qualified full-time instructors who teach via video conferencing.

Getting the Required Class Size

Another problem that often comes up in the teaching of African and other less commonly taught languages is failure to meet institutional requirements on class size. For instance, if University A has three students who want to take Zulu and University B has two, video conferencing can be a solution if the minimum class size in each of the institutions is four or even five students. In other words, instead of having two small classes, one larger more acceptable class can be created through the use of video conferencing.

Word of Caution

Finally, in reference to video conferencing Carter and Heale (2010: 109-110) warn that 'all that glitters is not gold' and highlight the need for advanced planning and getting technical, pedagogical, and human support. As with any technology, there will always be problems here and there such as a dropped connection once in a while, but this should not be the order of the day if the program is carefully planned and the right equipment is used.

Conclusion

The discussion above clearly demonstrates that a synchronous distance education class is ideal for teaching and learning African languages (or any other Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL)) and, when instruction is modeled on sound pedagogical principles with learner-centered activities, can just be as effective as a conventional class. It has also been shown that, with the current difficulties in hiring and retaining qualified African language

teachers in the US, synchronous distance education can be the way forward. It has the potential of bringing professionalism into the field especially by attracting qualified teachers who are offered the benefits they deserve.

Notes

The explanation in Schlosser & Simonson (2010:129) refers only to 'distance education', 'distance learning', and 'distributed learning' but it seems appropriate to include 'online learning as well.

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Enhancing the "Communities" Goal of the 5Cs for African Language Learning: A Proposal

Seth Ofori

Abstract

This paper demonstrates the need to enhance the *Communities* goal of the ACTFL Standards for students learning African languages as foreign languages. Significantly, it stresses the need for thriving communities or associations outside the classroom where all the parties involved in the teaching and learning of African languages can convene, and where their projects meet, interact, and are exchanged. Specifically, I propose communities where students can go to learn the new as well as to reinforce the old, by virtue of their membership. It is argued that the Communities strand of the five goals is the context within which the four remaining goals converge and flourish.

Introduction

This paper focuses on ways to enhance the Communities goal of the Standards (also called the 5Cs or five Cs) for students learning African languages as foreign languages. It stresses the centrality of the Communities goal to the actualization of the four other Standards goals (i.e. Communication, Cultures, Connections, and Comparisons), and, suggests ways to improve it for students learning African languages outside the languages' natural environments (Blaz 2002; *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st century* 2006). I hope that designating the Communities goal as *central to the actualization of the Communication, Cultures, Connections, and Comparisons goals* does not create the impression that it is more important than the rest, nor that the five (goals) are placed in some kind of relevance order. Instead, I hold dear the framers' position that the five goals are intertwined with equal importance. That is, each Standards goal is meant to play a unique role that the other goals cannot compensate for in the learning process. The Communities component of the five Standards goals, it is argued, is the context within which the remaining goals converge, and thrive, hence its nomenclature; and yet, it is the least explored of the five Standards goals in the research on the teaching of African languages as foreign languages. This is evident from the kinds of presentations one hears at African Language

Teachers Association (ALTA) conferences, and, also, from our textbooks. It is hoped that the current work will open the floodgate of ideas, innovations, and suggestions on ways to improve this goal for our students in the years ahead. The successes in the teaching of English and other commonly taught languages in the United States are due in part to the fact that these languages, unlike African languages (most of which fall within the less commonly taught languages' bracket), have thriving language communities within this country; these communities exist out of the nuclear/classroom community. These outside communities engage the learner either willingly, or unwillingly, and allow for reinforcement and creative usage of target language materials that have been learned in the classroom.

Taking insight from the field of sociology and the above example, I view language learning and acquisition as an acculturation process that takes place at two social levels, a primary socialization context (i.e., the classroom community), and a secondary socialization context. These levels are in constant interaction with each other and sustain each other. The secondary socialization context is the language community within which the classroom language community is a microcosm. Let us simply call these two communities the inner language community and the outer language community, respectively. This paper is based on the argument that if students are going to acquire African languages as foreign languages the way we expect them to, there should be, and they must be members of, thriving outer language communities beyond their classroom communities. These outer communities should engage them both directly and indirectly, willingly, and unwillingly, to use target language materials learned in the classroom in creative ways. It is these thriving outer language communities that I envision for African language programs in the US; further, I suggest ways to build them and invite all stakeholders to participate in their creation and sustenance.

The rest of the paper has been divided as follows: (a) *The Standards Document – its' philosophy and history, and the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Connection* – in this section, I place the Standards' document in the historical and theoretical contexts it was written; (b) *The Standards Goals: Practical Application* – this section focuses on my understanding of the Standards goals as revealed through two class projects, and, consequently, the context whereby all stakeholders are invited to shape the Communities goal; (c) *Enhancing the Communities Divide: A Proposal* – here, I suggest ways to improve the Communities divide of the five Standards goals for the learning of African languages outside these languages' natural contexts; and, (d) *a conclusion*.

The Standards Document – its philosophy and history, and the CLT Connection

I have provided below the statement of philosophy for the Standards for Foreign Language Learning, to provide the context within which instructors of African languages will find the Communities goal. This statement of philosophy (Blaz 2002:3) consists of (a) a general statement, which is a 'vision statement,' and (b) the five Standards goals which are comprised of Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. The statement of philosophy and the Standards goals read as follows:

[Philosophy:] Language and communication are at the heart of the human experience. The United States must educate students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad. This imperative envisions a future in which ALL students will develop and maintain proficiency in English and at least one other language, modern or classical. Children who come to school from non-English backgrounds should also have opportunities to develop further proficiencies in their first language."

[The Standards goals – the five Cs:]

Communication: Communicate in Languages Other Than English

Standard 1.1: Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

Standard 1.2: Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

Standard 1.3: Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

Cultures: Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures [through the study of other languages]

Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

Connections: Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information [that is unavailable to monolingual English speakers]

Standard 3.1: Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

Standard 3.2: Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

Comparisons: Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture [and realize that multiple ways of viewing the world exist]

Standard 4.1: Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own

Standard 4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

Communities: Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home & Around the World

Standard 5.1: Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting

Standard 5.2: Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment. (Blaz 2002: 3)

Following is a brief account of how the Standards document came to become part of the language curriculum in US schools. The story begins with a legislative success, as has typically been the case in educative improvements in the United States of America since its founding. It began in 1993 with the United States House of Representatives' approval of the *Goal 2000: Educate America Act*. *Goal 2000: Educate America Act*, which was passed into law in 1994 with amendments in 1996, calls for improved teaching and learning, and, higher student performance, in specific subject areas, namely, mathematics, English, foreign language learning, etc. The national Standards document for foreign languages was written in response to this act. It was written by an eleven-member professional organization led by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) with the help of

business leaders, government officials, and community members. Many language teachers (and others) were also said to have received drafts of the document for feedback (Blaz 2002). Through cooperation and collaboration, these professional groups, and all who agreed to assist in the project, answered the call for excellence in foreign language teaching posed by the political forces by producing the generic national Standards document for foreign languages in 1996.

The national Standards document is very significant in the field of foreign language study in the sense that it "establishes [as has never been before] a new context that defines the central role of foreign language in the learning careers of every student" (*Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st century*, 2006:15). Specifically, it challenges professionals with questions like: What essentials skills and knowledge do students need to acquire in the learning of foreign languages, and, what should students know and be able to do – and how well? The standard's goals are student-centered. They are meant to guide educators in "preparing students who can use the foreign languages they are learning in meaningful ways in real life situations" (*Standards for foreign language learning in the 21st century*, 2006:15).[1]

The first two sentences of the Standards' philosophy, as well as claims like, "Communication is the Cornerstone" (Blaz 2002: 10), all attest to the document's communication-centeredness. Such statements are manifestations of the enormous impact the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory had on its framing. As pointed out by Blaz (2002), "[t]hey [i.e. the framers of the national Standards' document] seem to have decided that, whereas grammar and vocabulary are essential tools, it is the acquisition of the ability to communicate in meaningful and appropriate ways with users of other languages that is the goal in today's classroom." This quotation succinctly captures both the theoretical and methodological contexts that shaped the Standards' document. It was written at a time most scholars were dissatisfied with grammar-centered theories and teaching methods in particular and were as a result embracing the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach fully. CLT is fundamental to the fulfillment of the Standards and goals, and cannot be overlooked in this paper.

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[1] Readers need to be reminded that the standards document for foreign languages is not a syllabus, nor a curriculum, as the document itself warns. It is a generic document meant to guide pedagogical decisions and choices; in that regard, it is not a stand-alone document. As noted in Blaz (2000:2) "[the] details [of it] were intentionally omitted so the curricular decisions could be made closer to the classroom…" In other words, it is a document that needs to be fleshed out to be made relevant to whichever language is brought to it and in ways that respect the ideals of the five standards goals.

Brown (2001) sets the beginnings of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach between the late 1970s and early 1980s, and, has the following to say about it:

> The late 1980s and 1990s saw the development of approaches that highlighted the fundamentally communicative properties of language, and classrooms were increasingly characterized by authenticity, real-world simulations, and meaningful tasks. … Today we continue our professional march through history. Beyond grammatical and discourse elements in communication, we are probing the nature of social, cultural, and pragmatic features of language. We are exploring pedagogical means for 'real-life' communication in the classroom. … We are equipping our students with tools for generating unrehearsed language performance "out there" when they leave the womb of our classrooms. We are concerned with how to facilitate lifelong language learning among our students, not just with the immediate classroom task. We are looking at learners as partners in a cooperative venture. And our classroom practices seek to draw on whatever intrinsically sparks learners to reach their fullest potential. (Brown 2001: 42 – 43)

Associated with CLT are principles like the following: (a) cooperative and collaborative learning, which stresses partnership, i.e. pair work, group/teamwork, sharing/exchange of information, come to each other aid; (b) interactive learning, which allows for authentic/real-world/genuine interaction in the classroom, or simulations of it, the aim of which is to prepare students for real-world language usage; (c) learner-centered classes, which allow for creativity and innovation, and enhance competence; (d) content-centered education; (e) whole language acquisition; and, (f) communicative approach (see: Brown 2001: 46 – 50). From the above, it can be inferred that CLT principles are not inimical to the dictates of the goals of the Standards, but they instead complement one another.

The beauty of the national Standards document's story very much rests on the cooperation, the collaboration, and the innovations (i.e. these key CLT attributes) that rendered the production of the document possible. It is hoped that this story will inspire African language practitioners here in the US to work together in order to strengthen their community-based, as the current paper aims to promote. The following section concerns the practical application of the Standards goals, and continues to emphasize the central

role key CLT principles – such as cooperation, collaboration, innovation, and sharing – play in the actualization of the Standards goals.

The Standards Goals: Practical Application

Two projects that I have been utilizing in foreign language Akan classrooms—a video project and a writing project—are used in this section to highlight the following to readers: (a) practical application of the five goals of the Standards document; (b) my understanding/interpretation of the five goals of the Standards document as revealed through the two projects; and (c) the context all stakeholders are invited to join in the dialogue and the innovations necessary to enhance the Communities divide of the five goals for our students.

The video and the writing projects are some of the strategies that I have been employing over the years to "… prevent previously learned [target] language materials from sinking into oblivion as [learners transition] from one level of instructional and acquisition goals, and emphasis to [another]…" (Ofori 2009: 61 – 62). The course instructor works closely with his/her students during these two projects, helping students to capture as much as possible students' target language exposure/experience at a given instructional level (i.e. each semester). It has been observed that putting items learned in these formats promotes easy review and unsupervised reinforcement. As noted by Ofori (2009: 69) "… relevant and easily accessible target language materials coupled with students' enthusiasm and willingness to engage such products are the chief ingredients for retention …" (Ofori 2009: 69).[2] Reinforcement (i.e., frequent usage of target language items learned) is key to retention, with the frequency of creative, authentic

[2]Ofori (2009) identifies 'the period of teacher-student disengagement', and scarcity of student-friendly target language materials to make up for this disengagement period or to promote effective and unsupervised revision of items covered at previous levels of language learning, as some of the causes of non-retention of target language materials, and as one of the main reasons why most students do not acquire the target language. 'The period of teacher-student disengagement' is the period of time that students have no contact with the language teacher, who is often their main source of information, during long periods, such as school vacations. These projects help document students' language exposure at the different levels of the learning process. Over the years, the two projects and many others have been used in an unsupervised manner, to help students review, reinforce, and retain target language materials covered at the different levels of learning. This problem is not unique to the teaching of Akan as a foreign language and so raises the questions: How do we share these practices or even the products that come out of them with other scholars and students in the field, and how could our program (i.e. how do scholars and students in our program) equally benefit from successful products and practices in other institutions? This paper argues that there should be a platform where these kinds of projects (i.e. students, class, and program projects) can be displayed, discussed, and shared. The question then is: what should be the nature of such platform(s) of exchange?

(i.e. socio-culturally meaningful), unconscious, and transactional usage of the target language presented as key ingredients for proficiency. Such are some of the core principles that motivate these kinds of projects.

The Video Project

The video project is the course instructor's idea but students are responsible for the actualization of the idea. They write the text for the video based on the semester's work with the help of the language instructor. Students ask very important socio-cultural questions while putting the script for the video together; answers to these questions are very important in the sense that they help students to situate the new language in its real-world context where native-speaker comprehension lies. The goal of creating the video is to bring isolated items and scenarios that are covered in the given semester into a system (i.e., one whole big event). Connecting items learned into a system is a way of making items learned (i.e., concepts, scenarios, etc) relevant to one another (especially when the language is being learned outside its sociocultural context). The assumption is that it is easier to recollect a large number of items learned in a system as opposed to remembering them as isolated units. The belief, also, is that if students are responsible for creating the text for the video (with minimal support from the instructor), they will equally be excited in learning it for performance. Following is an example of a video project I have worked on with students in the past at the elementary level. The scenario format was followed in both the creation and the learning of the script.

The title of the story is *Abenaa da* 'Abenaa's day' named after the protagonist, Abenaa, a young woman.[3] The story is structured in such a way that the protagonist encounters, and uses the target language in the range of scenarios that are covered in the first-semester Akan class. Following is a summary of the storylines (interspaced with the sub-scenarios are songs, drumming, and dancing by students):

[3] Abenaa is 'a day name,' a female born on Tuesday. A day name is the name a male or a female receives according to the day of the week on which he or she was born. Adding a day name on the title highlights this important and unique naming practice of the Akan people. Following are the Akan day names – day names appear in bracket, the first of names in a bracket is male, and the second is female: Sunday/*Kwasiada (Kwasi, Akosua);* Monday/*Dwoada (Kwadwo, Adwoa);* Tuesday/*Benada (Kwabena, Abenaa);* Wednesday/*Wukuada (Kwaku, Akua);* Thursday/*Yawoada (Yaw, Yaa);* Friday/*Fiada (Afia, Kofi);* Saturday/*Memeneda (Kwame, Amma)* (Ofori 2006: 6).

(i) The story is set in Accra, the capital city of Ghana where the new language (Akan) has life or relevance, and where some of these students will eventually visit. Abenaa is in Ghana on a study abroad program.

(ii) One day, she leaves her home in Adɛnta, a suburb of Accra, where she is staying with a Ghanaian family) to go and visit her friends. The purpose of her visit is to learn how to cook some Ghanaian dishes. From her friends' house in Madina, also a suburb of Accra, she plans to go to the University of Ghana campus where she is studying.

(iii) She decides to walk to her friends' house in Madina and on her way meets several people; she greets some of them and some of them greet her.

(iv) She knocks on the door at her friends' house and they allow her in. She greets them upon entering and they respond to her greeting. They offer her a seat.

(v) She sits down and they offer her water to drink and ask her mission (i.e. the reason for her visit) which she responds. Abenaa tells them that she will be visiting the University of Ghana campus in Legon and tells them the time she plans to leave their house to go there.

(vi) While she is waiting for the cooking session to start her friends give her their albums; one of the friends sits close to Abenaa to introduce to her those that are pictured in the target language with Abenaa also asking questions in the target language all along.

(vii) The cooking session begins. Abenaa gets to learn names of food items and how to prepare them. She learns names of utensils and how to use them. They share the tasks among themselves and sometimes call upon each other for assistance. In the end they eat some of the meals and Abenaa expresses how much she likes them.

(viii) They finish eating and then wash the utensils, clean the floor of the kitchen, and Abenaa is ready to go to Legon. Her friends accompany her to the nearby bus stop.

(ix) At the bus stop she meets people for the first time. These people are older than her, so she greets them appropriately (i.e., using the

greetings for adults) and they also respond as if she were their daughter. They interact at length at the bus stop. Specifically, they ask Abenaa questions about her country, her state, her hometown, where she goes to school in the US and why she is in Ghana. Abenaa asks them several questions too, and they become friends right there. Abenaa's friends – who have come to see her off – participate in the conversation also.

(x) While they are still waiting for the bus, a seller (i.e., a hawker) passes by with his wares, and one of the women that Abenaa meets at the bus station calls the seller to buy a dress. The seller quotes the prices of the clothing, and the people around help the woman to negotiate for a good deal. What a scene of people holding dresses/shirts against their bodies to see if it will fit them. While this is going on, the other people around say which shirts/dresses are beautiful and which ones are not; which dresses/shirts will fit who and which ones will not fit him or her. In the end, a dress is bought, the price is paid, and the seller gives the customer her change.

(xi) The bus comes, Abenaa gets on the bus to go to Legon, and her friends go back home. They wave at each other as the bus leaves. Abenaa gets off at the bus stop in Legon and goes to the campus. On campus she meets with friends and they discuss things they studied the day before all in the target language.

(xii) When it is evening, Abenaa takes *trɔtrɔ* (the passengers' van) and leaves the campus to go home. At home, she greets her Ghanaian parents using the evening greeting, they too respond. She inquires about the health of her Ghanaian siblings and shares some jokes with them. She changes her dress and goes to the kitchen to help her Ghanaian mum prepare the evening meal. After that she goes to the bathroom to take her bath. She eats. She washes the bowls with her Ghanaian siblings. After that Abenaa and her Ghanaian siblings sit down with their parents to watch TV. They discuss plans for the following day and discuss the program on TV. It is bedtime they bid each other good night and retire to bed.

Tentatively, the above were the different scenarios that we wrote about and were the very scenarios we had covered at the level that the video was made. Each student was guided to be able to perform any of the above roles, but in the end, students decided among themselves who they thought could

fit into which role. The important thing was that each student played a role in the video that was made. These sub-scenarios were built into class activities from day one and students were only called upon to weave such 'manageable chunks' (Oxford 1990: 45) – i.e., sub-scenarios – into a mega-scenario. Series of role-plays were performed on the sub-events in the story and our approach to learning the different scenarios was cyclical, which always allowed old items and scenarios to be reinforced and new ones to be introduced. It must also be pointed out that series of listening, speaking, reading, and writing exercises were administered to students to bring them to the level they needed to be to be able to do these role-plays.

The fact that our goal was to be able to produce this video created a sense of purpose and clarity of goal. In a situation like this, the instructor and his/her students are both aware of what has been acquired, and what remains to be acquired and together strategize ways to get there. In other words, the video project promotes cooperation and collaboration in the classroom right from the beginning. It also allows for each student's abilities, skills, and experiences to be utilized in the process. It is quite magnificent to watch the different students' abilities and skills interact in the language classroom, all in service to the new language. In his Meaningful Learning Framework (MLF), Ausubel (1968:vi) argues that "[t]he most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach [the learner] accordingly." This is what it means to make the new language relevant to students, specifically when students can connect their abilities, skills, and experiences relevantly to their new language, as is permitted by the video project. The project significantly helps connect the human face, the real world, target language socio-cultural products and several familiar images, and technology to the new language in a way that is appealing to sight, easy to 'mentalize' (i.e., commit to memory), and attractive to want to speak it.

The filming is done outside of class in locations and with products close to those of the target language. In other words, through this project, the class has no other option but to connect their classroom target language experiences to their (near) equivalents in their immediate socio-cultural environment. Also, different target language communicative scenarios and roles are performed as real-world events. Here, the target language comes to be associated with a memorable group experience associated with a lifetime in the real-world context, and roles played using the language and aspects of the language used to perform such roles will not easily be forgotten. Connecting words, phrases, sentences, or text, with objects and scenarios 'out there' promotes retention and meaningful learning. The fact that such

encounters are captured on video means that students can revisit items covered at previous levels of language instruction (for reinforcement) at any time – this is made possible by the fact that each student gets a copy of the production to take home. And, students can equally watch the video with loved ones for entertainment and cultural understanding, that is, with the video's many entertaining target language cultural activities (e.g. music, drumming, dancing, cooking) other than language usage. Currently, there are plans to upload these video projects on YouTube as one of the reviewers of this article rightly suggested. The shared goals and the fact that each role and person is vital to the successful completion of the project join students into a community of learners, promote the need to interact with each other, and the need to do so in the target language. The video project gives instructors and students the means to monitor progress at each stage of the acquisition process. It also helps the language program to have an accurate knowledge of what students can do and do well at each level of learning, and what remains to be acquired and may be included as part of the way ahead.

The Writing Project

Following is a brief description of an album project. This is a fifteen-page album project. The pictures used here are: the writer's childhood photo (i.e. when the writer was a baby); high school graduation pictures; first-year college pictures; a picture of the writer in class (here, the writer uses the target language to talk about biology, specifically, the human body), a picture of the writer with her friends and teacher, a picture of the writer and his girlfriend at the grocery store, a picture of the writer's family (i.e. mother, father, siblings, and the family dog), a picture of a family vacation, pictures of the writer's bedroom and kitchen, and lastly a picture of the writer with a car the writer would like to have. Elementary students are supposed to write a minimum of five short sentences describing the occasion, the things, and the people that are pictured; intermediate and advanced students can write up to ten sentences on a single picture, or a whole story on closely related pictures.

The objectives of the writing project have been documented in Ofori (2009: 67 – 68) as follows:

"The … [Album Project – i.e., the writing project] … [is] meant to create a lasting connection between the target language material and learners' socio-cultural experiences in a way that brings value to the target language text for a language is only valuable (i.e., relevant) for what it does, did, can do, or is

made to do for its user(s) in a given space and time. We must therefore create and facilitate … desire for acquisition, which … can happen when learners are made to own the target language (i.e., target language ownership). [Owning the target language] … is, when learners are made and are confidently able to use the target language to express or document their own socio-cultural realities among others, especially to express or document matters close to their hearts such as the AL-P [i.e., the Album Project]. Too often, we, either unconsciously or consciously, insist on adherence to the target language cultural context and events there-in to total neglect or marginalization of the source culture, thus, failing to capitalize on the familiarization that the source language context presents us as one of the means through which the unfamiliar (i.e., the target language and culture) could be presented to the remote learner. [It can be concluded from] … this project … that placing students or anybody related to them … at the center of their target language experience … – in other words, maximizing the extent to which the target language is made to convey/capture students' socio-cultural experiences – has the tendency to boost [retention] … and acquisition. This (i.e., the fact that the learning experience is channeled to matters of great relevance to the learner), among other things, brings value to the target language and for that matter its learning and acquisition."

Ofori's (2009) position is in line with the Meaningful Learning Framework (MLF) (Ausubel 1968), which was described as part of the video project above. According to Ausubel (1968), students learn meaningfully when new materials are linked with existing ideas. Ofori, whose main concern is on language retention and acquisition, has also observed that maximizing the extent to which "the target language" ('representing new material' under MLF) is made to capture "student's socio-cultural experiences" (i.e., 'existing ideas' under MLF) tends to boost retention and acquisition.

General Reflections on the Two Projects

In recap, the writing and the video projects grant students – especially, continuing students – the continual exposure that they need to develop proficiency in the target language even when there is no one to speak the language with. This represents how we language educators have been responding in part to the primary intent of the Standards' document, which is that students are granted the opportunity to develop proficiency in the foreign language through speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills. It takes a series of speaking, listening, writing, and reading exercises/activities

for the class to attain these final goals. These projects promote meaningful learning by linking the target language to what learners already know (their abilities, skills, and experiences), as well as to their immediate socio-cultural contexts. And, not only that, but the video project is also purposely done to capture the target language's sociocultural context. The album project converges at some point with the video project; this is when Abenaa visits her friends and is given an album. The need to connect the different experiences together, I have observed, is vital to retention. It needs to be pointed out that the video and album projects are simple techniques for learning (i.e., task-based: Skehan 1998a, 1998b; Williams & Burden 1997) and, as a result, can be replicated at the different levels of instruction, but in line with the goals for those levels. The shared goal and task create the community that is vital to the promotion and actualization of the Standards goals. Below, I explain how these projects promote the 5Cs, the Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities goals.

The Standards Goals in Action in the Two Projects

The following subsections focus on the extent to which the Standards goals' principles have been respected in the two projects. At the same time, they represent how I have come to embrace them practically, the context within which readers are invited to assess the call, and the proposals for improving the Communities goal.

The Communication Goal in Action

By allowing students to expansively document/represent their socio-cultural experiences in the target language, the writing project (or the album project) is an important product of students' communication, and an effective language learning tool with its voice association, class presentation, and discussion.[4] Through the use of this project, students have gained mastery of how to talk at length about their families, friends, and also about things and other people in their immediate socio-cultural context(s) and beyond. The fun part of this project is to watch your students talk about these pictures and answer questions asked about their presentations in the target language without any aid. The joy is comparable to that of a parent whose child has been able to take many steps unsupported – all you hope for is an equal partner in walking, and soon. It takes a great deal of student-teacher

[4] Stories written about students' pictures are always recorded, hence the phrase "voice association."

collaboration to reach such a level of acquisition, but whatever the challenges are, in the end, the benefits outweigh the costs.

The aim of the video project at the elementary level, for example, is to empower students to engage in basic communication in the target language and to be very good at it. The fact that students have a good grasp of items learned in the classroom situation, it has been observed, makes them very enthusiastic about learning the new language, as well as instilling a desire to use it frequently. The target language classroom becomes a micro-community by virtue of the fact that the different roles require that learners interact. The fact that the different roles are interdependent is such that for a student to be able to perform their role creditably, they must understand the other roles that interact with their own, and also must be in a position to be able to perform such roles equally well. Some students are nervous about the filming part, but such worries dissipate quickly with encouragement and good preparation. It is always helpful to slice the script for the video – which can be described as a mega socio-cultural document/scenery – into mini-communicative goals, or what Oxford (1990: 45) calls "manageable chunks." It takes great skill to do this. The individually manageable chunks (e.g., in the form of two-sentence role-plays) are sewn back together, piece upon piece, as students acquire them. This goes on until the many pieces have been acquired and the pieces are neatly sewn back together. The goal here is the acquisition, and it takes a good deal of interpersonal communication to attain it.

In conclusion, it takes a sense of community, ownership of the target language, frequent and very intense practice, and determination on everyone's part to accomplish each project.

The Cultures Goal in Action

According to Blaz (2002: 54), "[i]f you are teaching language in context and using culturally appropriate texts, you will be teaching culture," and "[s]tudents cannot truly master a language until they have mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs, and so knowledge of the culture of the target language is essential." The first of the two quotations supports the broadness of *Context over Culture*. For this reason, I often choose the former over the latter in my approach to both teaching and material development. If the Culture goal embraces practice, product, and perspective (Blaz 2002), the use of Context in its place at least widens the scope to include also all that is natural, and which can only be found in the target language communities. Given the broadness of Context over Culture, and the fact that

the latter can be subsumed within the former, it is not unreasonable at all for one to suggest that Context replace the Culture component of the five goals permanently.

The writing project has the unique cultural element, which one does not find in the video project, of the family – both the nuclear and the extended family. As basic as the family is to everyone, so must be the target language that allows one to talk about it. The writing project, with its focus on a primary socialization institution like the family (commonly referred to as the miniature society) and everything embedded in or related to it, gives the learner this opportunity to reflect, and more importantly to construct through speech, this important social institution using the target language. It has been observed over the years that the language associated with the family is acquired faster than other parts of language and is the last to be forgotten. The writing project allows for a thorough discussion about the family and individual family members. It allows us to talk about reciprocity and collective responsibility in the context of the target language's culture and society. This discussion could be done in a language that learners are very familiar with at the elementary level. The potency of this project, also, is in the large amount of cultural information that can be generated from a single picture. This is made possible by the fact that each picture's context is an output of a network of contexts – that is, a mere picture context is simply an atom of a very large network of contexts.

It has been observed that "[t]he overwhelming motivation for Americans to learn LCTLs is the intention to interact with the cultures of these languages" (Walker and McGinnis 1995: 1; Manley, 2008: 19). The LCTL teacher is therefore duty-bound, as the majority of learners have had no prior LCTL cultural exposure, to create "… a classroom culture that permits learners to socialize progressively according to C2 (target culture) Standards" (Walker and McGinnis, 1995, p. 14; Manley, 2008, 19). Such were some of the observations that shaped the video project. Several target language cultural items were represented in the video project, some of which are: how to gain entry into a house; greetings and responses (age and gender-appropriate greetings and responses, occupational greetings and responses, etc.); how to open a conversation (both formal and informal conversations); turn taking; body language (gestures); how to welcome someone; offering a drink or food; inviting someone to a meal; accepting and declining an offer; daily cultural observances; rites of passage; religion and religious practices in the target language's socio-cultural context; transportation; occupation; modern and traditional forms of recreation; meals and how to prepare them; and, cultural products, such as adornments, currency, songs, buildings, cars,

games, etc. These varied cultural practices, products, perspectives, and scenarios are basic to the target language communities; representing them in the video gives students a taste of how the target language communities operate. Cultural authenticity in the video is assured with the direction of an instructor who has native knowledge of the target language's socio-cultural context.

The Connections Goal in Action

I have broadened the scope of Connections from mere connection with disciplines/subject areas (Blaz 2002:73-92) to everything we do with language, given that everything we do and/or talk about in this life falls, in one way or the other, within one discipline, or across disciplines. The scope of Connections has been to make it everything that goes on in the language classroom, from more mundane tasks such as greetings, and asking about one's health and name, to less basic tasks, such as the study of the human anatomy, etc. Under this new outlook of the concept, I have come to assume and operate within two types of Connections in my duties as a language teacher; these are: (a) daily non-technical connection and (b) technical/in-depth subject-area connection. The former is what I seek to enforce at the early stage of instruction, which is the basic knowledge of any subject area as required for basic, daily communication. As for the full realization of the latter (b), I leave that to the TL subject teacher and interested novice students to pursue in-class projects and/or presentations.[5]

There is a basic connection of the TL with geography, music, technology, photography, cooking, sociology (i.e., family, friends, social roles, and structure, etc.), culture, linguistics, mathematics, and so on in the two projects. The areas and issues covered in each of these projects give the beginning student the basics of what it takes to fully engage and specialize in these subject areas in other spheres and this, I believe, must be the teacher's goal—and not necessarily that of the student—a very elementary stage.

The Comparisons Goal in Action

[5] The technical/in-depth subject-area connection can be pursued within the goal-based approach proposed by Folarin-Schleicher (1999). The goal-based approach seeks to integrate the learner's overall interests and specific goals within the language learning and teaching objectives. It is an effective tool for covering subject areas in the absence of subject courses in a foreign language.

The fact that one has prior well-internalized experience(s) of 'something' and is faced with the task of learning (a) variant(s) of the same experience(s) is what engenders comparison. Comparison of the two languages in form (structure) and context (i.e., cultural, and natural, context) is cognitively the learner's assessment of how much existing knowledge from his/her prior experience(s) can be utilized to facilitate his/her acquisition of the new experience. This makes comparison an indispensable cognitive activity in the foreign language learning and acquisition process. What this means is that the foreign language learner is bound to compare the two languages in form and in context even without the teacher spearheading this action.

From the above, comparison is a powerful learning tool in the sense that it saves the learner from having to learn a new language from scratch. My own approach has always been 'reflexive', which is to say that the target language is used to describe its structure and context, and no room is given to the source language. This is doable with the right linguistic and cultural aids (e.g., visuals – pictures, an activity, music, etc.), especially when such teaching aids appeal to all the senses.

Concerning the writing project, asking students to write extensively about the source language's sociocultural context using the target language allows for inter-linguistic and intercultural comparisons. Concepts are cultural artifacts – their meanings are largely specific to the communities that created them, and to be able to use them like their makers requires an untainted cultural understanding of what they are and are meant to achieve, when in use in the social milieu that owns them. Again, the two languages (i.e., the source and the target language) are compared frequently in their structure and in their respective cultures in preparing students to perform meaningfully and relevantly for the video project. Significantly, a comparison is made while students are using the target language for lifelong creative activities (i.e., via writing or enactment of the video script).

The Communities Goal in Action

An unclear designation about what 'community' is in the context of foreign language teaching and learning makes it very difficult to determine the length and breadth of this goal. Taking insights from existing definitions of the term, particularly in reference to insights from the German sociologist Tönnies' (1887:22) definition of the term as a 'unity of will' (*Gemeinschaft*) and/or of "self-interest" (*Gesellschaft)*, my working definition of the term has been: *any two or more persons tied together by the event(s) of (a given period of) time*

and/or space. Again, there is a key directive I have embraced in my dealings with the Standards goals (Blaz, 2002), which reads: "students [must] use the language both within and beyond the school setting." The phrase 'within and beyond the school setting' in the above quotation equally describes the two communities identified in the introduction—the inner language community (i.e., the classroom setting) and the outer language communities (i.e. the school setting and settings beyond)—well. The writing project (or the album project) has consistently allowed students to bring their own communities and community experiences to the target language in the form of pictures, and this is what it means to own a language, to be able to use it to express one's everyday experience. As expressed earlier, considering your classroom as a micro-community maximizes communication in the target language classroom. What unites students in the video project is what Tönnies describes as a 'unity of will' and as 'self-interest'—the collective desire students have to learn Akan/Twi— facilitated by the requirement that roles assigned to students meet and interact. Significantly, students are allowed to perform the video project in an African language and African community festival, and their album projects at language tables.

Enhancing the Communities Goal: A Proposal

There is a sense, after reading the existing literature or after listening to several ALTA conference presentations, that Communication and Culture are the most important goals (Blaz, 2002). What about the Communities goal? Are Communication and Culture not community-based? And do Communities not define and sustain Communication and Culture? Are not the four goals (i.e., Communication, Cultures, Connections, and Comparisons) relationship with Communities one of part-and-whole, Communities being the whole, and the rest just its constitutive parts? And, if so, why aren't Communities the most important goal both in the classroom and outside of it, given that it is the reason for which the four components exist in the first place? We can roundly defend the importance of one goal over the other, and we may be right in our argument depending on the context in which the argument is made. I wish to reiterate the point that the goals, in principle, are not in any relevant order. Communities is the goal (i.e., the context) within which the remaining goals converge and thrive, but not in the sense that the Communities goal is more important than any of the other four goals. The goals are in principle equal in importance in the sense that each has a unique role/place in the learning process for which the others

cannot make up. Therefore, any attempt to possibly rank them is, or ought to be, need-based. The Communities goal has been selected for attention because it is the least explored of the five in the teaching and learning of African languages as foreign languages. What educators need to work more on in the teaching of African languages here in the US is the Communities goal, and, on that basis, should be seen as the most important of the five goals currently. Community guarantees constant communication (which most students of African languages lack), but this is not necessarily true vice versa. Also, once there is a dynamic Community, there is a way of life (i.e., Culture); that is, Culture (specifically, the target language culture and even a comparison of it with the source culture) comes alive or becomes a reality, and not something written in a textbook. Again, the Connection goal, as specified by Blaz (2002), is taken care of within a thriving and engaging Community, with its many different interests, strengths/abilities, and specializations (or varied use of the target language) in place.

Community—more especially, the outer community, in our case the outer language community—is the marketplace wherein innovations, creativity, abilities, skills, and experiences are showcased, lived, admired, assessed, and/or accessed for the betterment of the parties involved. It thrives upon the recognition that we need to support one another in some common issue that confronts us (in our case, the teaching and learning of African languages), and that without cooperation, collaboration, exchange, and sometimes compromise, all can very easily fail. Unity of will and of self-interest are indications of peoples' recognition of and admission to this essential truth, and a pulling together of the different abilities, skills, experiences, innovations, creativities, and resources that are at the disposal of each of the parties involved to confront common challenges. The video and writing projects referred to in this paper represent some of the many creative projects African language teachers have embarked upon and continue to implement in order to help their students learn and acquire the languages they teach. Such are our efforts at the inner language community level (i.e., the classroom context). I want to use this medium to commend African language teachers within this category for such creative projects, most of which are without financial support from their institutions. All of these projects are also representative of the attempt to address the scarcity of instructional materials in the field (Thompson, 2008), or to make the few existing teaching materials utilizable in the foreign language context or supplement them.

But let us pause for a moment and imagine what a great impact we could have on the teaching of our languages and on our field in general to have a

place (or communities) whereby creativities can converge, interact, and be exchanged all in the advancement of our respective programs. Improved communities will serve as platforms whereby problems of scarcity of teaching materials, and/or, of non-retention of items learned can be dealt with. An improved Communities goal will also go a long way in advancing language teaching and learning in the sense that it is at the communities' level that the communications, cultures, connections, and comparisons components of the five goals converge and thrive. That is, an improved community will provide students with the wider communicative exposure and engagement they so much need in order to retain and advance their study of the target language. It is in this regard that I make the following proposals towards the advancement of the communities divide of the five goals: (a) three outer language communities are being proposed here, namely (i) an Intra-school Language Community, (ii) an Inter-schools Language Community, and (iii) a Learner-Heritage-Speaker Community; and also being proposed are (b) three student associations, each with its own website.

If you already possess these communities, the following suggestions will probably help you to strengthen them. Intra-school community involves bringing the entire language student body of an institution together regularly for an individual, a group, or a class presentation, aside from the regular in-class presentations. This will promote meaningful learning (that is, understanding, and retention of the target language) in the sense that the student presenter will be required to explain aspects of their target language to his/her colleagues (Web, 1989; Chi, de Leeuw, Chiu, & La-Vancher, 1994; Thompson, 2008). This should be a one hour and thirty-minute presentation, every month; and, we must do our best to have the following time division and activities in each presentation session: the first thirty minutes ought to be devoted to socialization and the playing and/or singing of songs by students or a student band in the target language, thirty minutes of the actual presentation, and thirty minutes of discussion in the target language.

There should be, for each language, an intra-school and an inter-school language community/association, each association with a website where the achievements of members can be published and shared by the two communities. Aside from the above (local and national) language-specific communities/associations, there should also be a local/intra-school inter-language and a national/inter-school inter-language association /community, to be called *All African Language Students Association* (AALSA), which every African language student will be advised to join. This association, like the other associations, must have a website where students' works in the target language will be published or displayed for national recognition.

Students from one institution must have access to projects taking place at other institutions. There should be a place where achievements at the institutional level can also be showcased. I am therefore proposing an *All African Languages Website*. This website will be a news outlet and a voice from the African continent. News items will be presented and/or analyzed in ways that are useful to the foreign language learner in each of the languages taught here in the US. This *All African Languages* website should provide links to the many different websites on students, class, and institutional projects where the most outstanding of projects are displayed, shared, discussed, and commented on for potential improvements. Examples of such projects include: class-centered projects like the video project described in this paper; *Languages and Cultures at IUB* (2004), and *Listening Exercises at IUB* (2006) of Indiana University – Bloomington, under the direction of Professor Alwiya Omar; *Magazeti online: Fourth semester Swahili speaking course* (2001), and, *Utamaduni: An advanced level course in Swahili language and culture* (2006) by Professor Magdalena Hauner of the University of Wisconsin, just to mention a few. If we are going to survive and grow as a field, we must work together on those aspects that will enhance our collective survival and growth. We need to know what other educators are doing, especially in material development, so that we can learn from one another. In other words, let us grow as a field through exchange and collaboration. We may not have the funding or the necessary institutional support to teach political science or mathematics in the target language, but we can do these things, which will go a long way to enhancing the Connections goal, easily on the web.

In addition to everything proposed above, I am also proposing an *All African Language Students Association Conference* (AALSAC). The main goal of the conference should be to promote student publication in the target language. Such publications must always come with their English versions if this is to be done online. AALSAC, in its nascent years, can meet with ALTA. One may ask: who should take the leadership of such a conference? My humble suggestion is that the National African Language Resource Center (NALRC), under the directorship of Professor Antonia Schleicher, which has been our home for most projects in our field, working with some students and also Professors in the African Languages and Literature department (all at the UW-Madison Madison), should be able to start the national African languages website part of this proposal. What we need right now is for coordinators of participating institutions to convince directors and African Studies Centers in their respective institutions of the need to make financial contributions towards this project.

To the best of our ability, we must also involve the heritage community in our areas in our teaching. The question is: how do we go about doing this? I propose a *Learners-and-Heritage-Speakers Community* (LEHSC). This should be an association to which every student must belong. It is easier to make our students join such an association than it is to bring members of the heritage community (of a language) on board. From experience, I know that students love to know more about our cultures, while at the same time, the heritage community members are also very busy trying to make ends meet. The question then changes to one of: how do we become and stay attractive to the heritage community in our respective areas? Indisputably, members of the heritage community love to share their language and culture with others, and, again, are very proud of the fact that their language has 'come that far.' As immigrants, we want to be understood by the host culture, which is what both the heritage communities and the teaching of the languages are primarily trying to achieve (but at different levels of society). Working together, therefore, is not an option but a necessity, if we both are going to make the impact we wish to make on the host culture. Very often we as educators are the party saddled with countless institutional restrictions – how open and comfortable are we as instructors or as a program with inviting in the heritage community? Involving the heritage community in our teaching takes students to a whole new level of cultural and linguistic adventurism, experience, and enrichment that the classroom situation often cannot provide our students, such that it becomes clear that interacting with the heritage community is the right thing to do for our students.

For the heritage community to be engaged to serve us, we must first serve them or acknowledge their services in kind. The agendas for our meetings with this vital community must be well-defined and must focus on things students have learned in the classroom and need reinforcement on, and/or other topics that students would like to have a conversation about; the target language must be the sole medium of communication in such extracurricular encounters. For example, we can learn to cook an indigenous meal from members of the heritage community, with the cost shared between students and the program when the program cannot cover all supplies. Other ideas include playing games like soccer; assigning students to homes to help children with reading, mathematics, etc.; and, as a program, we can develop online programs that will help these same children learn their parents' native language. Our students also need exposure to key heritage community events; at such events, students can perform a story, a play, or songs for the heritage community audience. In his (2006) paper, Mohochi points out how students from East Africa offer Swahili students the opportunity to use Swahili outside

the classroom situation. Such cooperation from these East African students is a perfect example of how willing and ready our heritage communities are to engage with our students. The best way to sustain such cooperation outside the classroom as well as make it beneficial, not just to one but to both parties, is to institutionalize it, which is what the current paper is proposing.

We surely need a place wherein both instructors and students in the US, and, also, people and institutions across the globe who are interested in what we do, can commune to promote and share in our individual and collective achievements in this field. This is the new Community I am proposing: a place where different ideas and projects are presented, debated, and exchanged. This proposal emanates from my conviction that no single institution or language instructor can do everything it takes to teach a language as a foreign language alone, hence this proposal for a new level of partnership and cooperation. This is my call to all stakeholders – to work together to shape the positions that have been expressed here and to do everything within our ability and influence to implement whatever the outcome of this dialogue may be. In the words of Bruner (1960: 31), "[t]he best way to create interest in a subject is to render it worth knowing, which means to make the knowledge gained usable in one's thinking beyond the situation in which learning has occurred." An (improved) outer language community will not simply generate interest in students to study our languages but will also sustain it. Tinto (1998: 171) describes the importance of learning communities this way, "… learning communities seek to involve students both socially and intellectually in ways that promote intellectual development as well as an appreciation for the many ways in which one's own knowing is enhanced when other 'voices' are part of that knowing." Also, "…by forming learning communities/ associations…students discover a 'voice' that they may not have previously recognized or had recognized by others" (Tinto 1998: 172). That is, in order for students to have a voice in what and how we teach them, the formation of student associations/communities is necessary.

Conclusion

Having a common place where our respective achievements in the target language can be displayed and shared will significantly generate competition in material development among contributors, which is what we currently need to keep pace with languages like English, Spanish, French, and German. The teaching of African languages has come to stay in the US, but for the

field to expand, we need the contributions of all stakeholders (consumers, practitioners, well-wishers, and experts). More significantly, our student base must be organized and energized, since the future is and will always be theirs; the community that the students' association provides is, in my opinion, the way forward. To colleagues in this profession, I say, '*Promote ye the Communities Goal and the other four will automatically be promoted!*' Cooperation and collaboration must be our guiding principles moving forward, for no individual or language program can achieve the Standards document's philosophy and vision alone, particularly in this era of increased specialization.

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Intensive Summer Fulbright-Hays GPA for Advanced Swahili and Intercultural Development[1]

Deo Ngonyani, Yusta Mganga, Joachim Kisanji, and Omega Royer

Abstract

This article applies Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity to reflect on Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad (GPA) for Summer Intensive Advanced Swahili in Tanzania 2008-2016. Bennett and his associates have identified six stages of intercultural development: Denial of differences, Defense of one's culture, Minimization of differences, Acceptance of the new culture, Adaption of the new culture, and Integration into the culture. The first three stages, ethnocentric stages, characterize the reaction to a new culture as viewed from one's own culture. In the last three stages, a person views their culture as part of a complex of world cultures and worldviews. Experience with the Swahili GPA has shown that participants come to the program with different levels of preparedness and development. In Arusha, Tanzania, the participants of the program took classes, lived in dorms and with host families, visited cultural sites, wrote about their cultural experiences, and explored various subjects of their interest. This article presents anecdotes from GPA that demonstrate that we find our participants in all six stages. We propose a variety of activities and approaches that can facilitate the learners' development to integrate into Swahili culture. The activities involve developing awareness among the participants and assisting them in reflecting on their culture and the new culture.

Keywords: Swahili GPA, intercultural development, intercultural competence, study abroad.

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[1] This is a substantially revised version of a paper presented at the annual meeting of the African Language Teachers Association that was held in Atlanta, Georgia, April 21-24, 2016. We wish to thank the participants for their helpful comments.

1. Introduction

With modern technology, people are increasingly connecting with other people of diverse cultural backgrounds, living together, working together, and interacting in business, academia, entertainment, culture, and in many other diverse ways. With this, we recognize the need to develop well-informed multicultural citizens who can work with people from multiple cultural backgrounds. Study Abroad programs are one of the means by which institutions and individuals seek to provide or acquire exposure that will provide a refined prism of a kaleidoscope of world cultures and skills to optimize intercultural opportunities. The overseas experience affects students' academic performance, personality, social adjustment, problem-solving skills, social engagement, and outlook on the world. Research has demonstrated that one's complexity of cultural competence has a significant impact on their ability to understand and engage in an intercultural relationship (Bennett, 1986; Bennett & Bennett, 2004). Competence in different cultures enables people to navigate relations and interact in ways that produce superior results. It is becoming abundantly clear that study abroad programs are not just about learning the subject matter which is learning the language. It is about developing intercultural competence. Increasingly, the focus is turning to various aspects of international education and the cultural experiences of the learners abroad (McLeod & Wainwright, 2009: Engle & Engle, 2003; Rexeisen et. al. 2008).

This article presents reflections on a particular study abroad program under the US Department of Education, the Swahili Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad (GPA), and provides anecdotes from the past eight years that speak of the intercultural development of the participants along Bennett's stages of intercultural development (Bennett, 1993). The Swahili GPA has had a long and successful history. However, some challenges need more reflection and draw lessons from studies on intercultural development. For example, GPA draws its participants from all over the nation and from diverse Swahili programs. Students join the program with different levels of cultural preparedness. Selection of participants has been based on applicants' scores in Swahili courses, African Studies courses, their general GPA, and the strength of their statement regarding the relevance of the program for their professional development. Come join the program unprepared in the first phase of Bennett's continuum of cultural sensitivity. More room needs to be made to probe the applicants' intercultural development. This should inform the orientation program, as well as the creation and modification of the

intercultural learning environment and mentoring. The paper also discusses many successes of the program, such as homestays. Families provide the cultural context in which participants experience life in East Africa albeit for only a short duration. Even this successful part of the program is not without challenges. Based on the anecdotes, the paper makes several recommendations for future programming.

The article is organized into 6 sections. Following this introduction, we present an overview of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity in section 2. In section 3, we provide a short narrative about the Swahili GPA followed by section 4 where examples and anecdotes that reveal participants in various stages of intercultural development are related. We discuss various proposals to help develop the participants' sensitivity in section 5 and present concluding remarks in section 6.

2. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

In this section, we define the central concepts in our study and provide an overview of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. This is the backdrop of our discussion of episodes in our engagement with students in study abroad.

The central concept that concerns us here is intercultural competence. Although it is widely used, the concept is not very well defined. It is identified with several concepts: intercultural sensitivity, cross-cultural adaptation, intercultural skills, global competence, multicultural competence, and cultural proficiency. A fairly good working definition is provided by Bennett (1993).

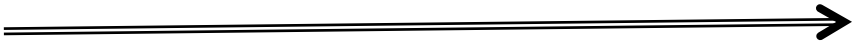
> Intercultural competence can be defined as the capability to shift one's cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities. …. This capability permits the successful navigation of the cultural differences, defined as those experiences, values, interpretations, judgments, and behaviors that differ between people and are learned and internalized from the groups one belongs to. (Bennett 1993:484)

Common in all the definitions that have been presented by various scholars is the need to be able to work with people from different cultures, reduce ethnocentrism, and build productive and positive relations in one's

own culture and internationally (Hammer M. R., Intercultural Competence Development, 2015). Study abroad programs are increasingly focusing on developing such competence. By examining the development among students, we may be able to design better programs and be of greater assistance in their efforts to adjust to the new cultures they encounter.

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity provides one framework for examining students' progress, designing curriculum, and evaluating cultural competence. The model was first developed by Bennett in a series of publications (Bennett 1993, 1986). It explains reactions and attitudes to experiences of differences in intercultural situations. The assumption is that more complex and sophisticated cultural experiences lead to greater intercultural competence. Intercultural development progresses in stages and steps. There are two phases of development, namely, the ethnocentric phase and the ethnorelative phase. The ethnocentric phase in which all new cultures are viewed from one's own culture begins with the denial of differences, followed by the defense of one's culture, and culminates in the minimization of differences in culture. In the Ethnorelative phase, a person views various cultures from multiple perspectives. It develops from acceptance of differences to adaptation and integration into the new culture. The model is presented below.

Development of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett & Bennett 2004:153)



Experience of Difference

Denial	Defense	Minimization	Acceptance	Adaptation	Integration
Ethnocentric Stages					**Ethnorelative Stages**

The diagram represents a continuum of phases from left to right. Ethnocentric stages are characterized by a person encountering different cultures and viewing all differences from the prism of one's own culture. This is a monocultural perspective that views one's culture as central to the construction of reality. Ethnorelative stages, however, are characterized by a person viewing one's own culture as one among many viable constructions of reality. Cultures are not viewed relative to one's culture.

The cultural experiences that Bennett and associates studied occur in a multitude of situations and not just study abroad. They include work environments that involve people from different cultural backgrounds, the student body of multicultural and geographic origins, as well as international trade (see for example Earley & Peterson 2004; on manager at workplaces; Hernandez & Kose 2012; on diversity in schools; Kruse et. al. 2014 in health care services; and Hammer 2012 in study abroad). In describing the stages, we focus on examples that are more easily relatable to students' cultural encounters. The picture of the stages presented in this overview does not in any way imply they are the only kinds of reactions. The examples presented here are sampled from Bennett (1986).

The first stage is the *denial* of cultural differences in which a student new to the culture chooses not to engage with a new culture and prefers to stay in one's culture to protect her/his worldview. In this stage, a student may show no interest in experiencing other cultures. This lack of interest may be manifested in two other forms. One is to refuse to see or acknowledge the differences in culture. The other is to use wide categories of perceived differences. Here are examples of what such a student might say:

> "All big cities are the same – lots of buildings, too many cars"
> "Do you ride camels to school?" "Do you have houses in your country?" (Bennett 1986:187)

Such statements show resistance to the new culture and unwillingness to explore and experience new realities. When differences are acknowledged, they are painted in very broad stripes such as American vs foreign resulting in the question that so irks and annoys foreign students, as the questions in the second line above clearly illustrate.

The second stage, defense, is reached when one acknowledges the differences in culture. However, his/her culture is central to worldview and is the measure against which all cultures are gauged. Cultures are evaluated as superior and inferior. One's culture is superior to all other cultures. Negative stereotypes occupy a prominent position in the description and evaluation of other cultures. Two examples of how this worldview finds expression are the following very common utterances.

> "When you go to other cultures, it makes you realize how much better the US is." (SUPERIORITY)
> "I am embarrassed by my compatriots, so I spend all my time with the host country nationals." (REVERSAL)

The first expresses the assumed superiority of one's culture, while the second reverses the admiration to that of the new culture. The superiority is often focused on superficial differences such as different foods or different eating hours. With a focus on such superficial differences, one may reject one's own culture as inferior to the new culture. This is considered a reversal of the defense stage.

Next, the student may trivialize cultural differences in an attempt to minimize the differences that they encounter. This has also been referred to as "enlightened ethnocentrism." It suggests that an individual is familiar with differences, such as the differences encountered by students or businesspersons, for example, who have been abroad (Bennett 1993:190).

> "The key to getting along in any culture is to just be yourself-authentic and honest!"
> "If people are really honest, they'll recognize that some values are universal."

These statements suggest that it is not necessary to learn more and get engaged with the new culture. The emphasis is on similarities and claims of being 'color-blind.' When one says such things, one acknowledges the differences, but the differences do not matter if one sticks to their superior culture.

The fourth stage in this journey, acceptance of cultural differences, is in the *ethnorelative* phase. This stage is characterized by a broader recognition of the differences and increased curiosity about other cultures. An individual has come to a point where s/he understands that one's culture is only one of many complex cultures of the world. Examples of expressions that capture this development include:

> "The more cultures you know about, the better comparisons you can make."
> "I know my homestay family and I have had very different life experiences, but we are learning to work together."

While the first statement expresses the recognition and appreciation of the diversity of cultures, the latter reveals a willingness to learn from the hosts and to find harmony in the new culture.

The fifth stage is an adaptation to cultural differences. At this point, a student immerses in the new culture consciously makes use of the different aspects of culture that are different between the two (or more) cultures that she has experienced. A familiar expression of this include:

> "I greet people from my culture and people from the host culture somewhat differently to account for cultural differences in the way respect is communicated."
> "I can maintain my values and also behave in culturally appropriate ways."

The student is not only familiar with the different cultures but makes use of the worldviews and seeks to behave in a manner appropriate for each different cultural context.

The final stage in the ethnorelative stages is sometimes combined with the stage of adaptation (Hammer 2011). At this stage, an individual has internalized bicultural or multicultural frames of reference. They embrace relativism and evaluate cultural phenomena using multiple frames. Such sentiments are expressed in the following examples.

> "Everywhere is home if you know enough about how things work there."
> "Whatever the situation, I can usually look at it from a variety of cultural points of view."

Such statements indicate the level of comfort the person has and that person's readiness to different perspectives and get connected in different cultures. The person has created identities that enable her to become part of multiple cultures.

Our experiences with the Swahili GPA and other study abroad programs at MS-TCDC have revealed that participants come with a wide range of cultural sensitivity and development. They are found in all six stages, as the anecdotes presented in this article illustrate. Before we present the anecdotes, we provide an overview of the program.

3. The Swahili Group Projects Abroad

In this section, we present a brief history of the Swahili GPA thus providing the background and context for the discussion on the intercultural development of the participants. We also describe the main features of the program that are relevant to our discussion of intercultural development.

The Swahili GPA is offered as part of the Short-Term Projects and Advanced Overseas Intensive Language Training Projects funded by the Office of Postsecondary Education of the US Department of Education. It is part of the Fulbright-Hays program for international education. Grants for such projects are made to enable participants to study the language in its native country. Participants are required to study the language at the Advanced Level after they have completed at least two years of instruction in the language. The purpose is to maximize opportunities provided by institutions and environments in the countries where the language is spoken. Languages such as Swahili are not widely spoken in the US. This means students may not get adequate exposure and opportunity to use it outside classrooms. The program targets:

> Graduate students, or juniors or seniors in higher education institutions who plan to apply their language skills and knowledge of countries vital to the interests of national security in fields outside of teaching, including government, the professions, or international development. (US Department of Education, 2012:)

This competitive program awards such grants to several institutions for various foreign languages. The first Swahili GPA took place in 1983 in Kenya under the directorship of Dr. Ann Biersteker then at Yale University. Since 1991, it has been taking place in Tanzania. The program operates under the oversight of the Association of African Studies Programs (AASP) and the African Language Teachers Association (ALTA). The US Department of Education awards a grant for GPA in cycles. The current cycle last four years. After AASP and ALTA agree on the institution and director, an application is entered into the competition for a GPA grant[2].

[2] Past directors of Swahili GPA are Drs Ann Biersteker, Ivan Hoffman, Tom Hinnebusch, Eyamba Bokamba, Magdalena Hauner, Alwiya Omar and Lioba Moshi. We acknowledge other instructors involved in the Swahili GPA at MS-TCDC over the years. They include

In 2008 a grant was made to Michigan State University's African Studies Center and the College of Arts and Letters to run the program for the first cycle of 2008-2011. The second cycle award was made in 2012 for 2013-2016 to Michigan State University African Studies Center and Ohio University's African Studies Center. The grant was used to provide fellowships for students from all over the United States to study in Tanzania. The 2008-2011 cycle provided funding for 8 weeks for 12 to 16 participants. In the second cycle, from 2013 to 2016, the funding was for 10 to 14 participants for 7 weeks. For the period we are describing in this study, the program took place at the MS-Training Center for Development Cooperation in Arusha, Tanzania[3] (MS-TCDC). The objectives stated in the recruitment material are:

- to provide the participants with intensive advanced training in Standard Swahili in a Swahili-speaking environment;
- to develop conversational skills (i.e., listening, comprehension, and speaking) to an advanced level;
- to develop communicative competence to function in a Kiswahili-speaking community;
- to provide opportunities for the participants to experience East African culture.

The program consists of three phases, namely, (a) the pre-departure phase, (b) the overseas phase, and (c) the post-program phase. These are the preparation stages, in-country activities, and evaluation and reflections after the program.

The pre-departure phase included recruitment of participants, publicity, reviewing applications, and selecting participants, as well as the pre-departure orientation. The pre-departure orientation involves guidebooks, letters, emails, online material, and conference calls. A handbook was created as a guide to the program and an introduction to Tanzania. The handbook consisted of information about the program itinerary, registration at Michigan State University, preparations for travel, the host institution in Tanzania, consular services, health services, contacts, and security, as well as

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[3] MS is an abbreviation of Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke which translates as the (Danish) Association for International Cooperation. MS-TCDC was established by this NGO.

addresses concerns of the participants and their parents. In addition, it consisted of information about required readings, personal expenses, general knowledge about the host country, and cultural aspects of East Africa. The group then traveled to Arusha together for the program.

The overseas phase consisted of diverse activities. It started with a two-day on-site orientation. This covered familiarization with the facility, the neighborhood, and the city of Arusha. It also included an overview of the program discussions about expectations. Instruction commenced after the orientation. For six weeks, participants attended regular instruction in the morning for 4 hours. Participants had opportunities to practice in their small groups, share their daily experiences, address grammatical issues with instructors and make presentations. Afternoon sessions were mostly for activities outside the classroom including short excursions, guest lectures, scheduled conversations with native speakers, mini-project data collection, watching videos and plays, debates, as well as one-on-one tutorials. These activities were designed to take maximum advantage of the native environment of the language and to challenge the participants to interact and use their language skills in the community. One week was spent traveling to Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar to explore the rich history of the East African coast, interact with the Swahili people of the coast, and observe the diversity of culture and Swahili dialects. Short excursions were organized to expose the participants to the lives of farmers, herders, small-scale entrepreneurs, community centers, and even international organizations such as the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the East African Community headquarters. Students wrote journals documenting their encounters with the new culture and frequently presented various aspects of culture and life.

In the post-program phase, we encouraged students to file their evaluation of the program with the Department of Education as well as provide feedback to the directors of the program. Generally, participants have rated the program very highly in most of its components. However, a common complaint is inadequate preparation for the cultural encounter. This problem is at the core of the issues of intercultural development, as anecdotes in the next section reveal.

4. Anecdotes of Intercultural Development and Suggestions of Activities

The anecdotes discussed here are selected from various sources including their weekly journals, conversations, discussions as well as events that were either reported by the participants, instructors, or host family members. We present them according to our evaluation of the stages that they reveal. For each stage, we suggest some activities that can assist the participants in their adjustment.

4.1 Denial

Apart from classroom activities, the program is designed to help participants have intense contact with the new culture. This is done through homestays, excursions to different parts of the area, and engagement in some social activities. We encourage them to engage with the new culture through interaction with people and through actively seeking information about the lives of the people they encounter. Such encounters provide ample opportunities to speak, listen and interact.

There have been program participants who have exhibited behaviors that show they prefer isolation to engagement in the culture. At different times we have had students who upon arrival at MS-TCDC Arusha revoked their commitment to stay with families. They preferred staying in the dorms by themselves. They were ready to incur personal expenses for that. Such refusal to engage in the new culture is also revealed in other aspects of their programs. Such participants would often not want to take part in any hands-on activities that characterize the native speakers. For example, on visits to farmers, some students would not want to even try some activities when the hosts urge them to do so. They would be standing on the side, aloof, and not even interested in taking notes about the activities that they would need to report later.

Denial may also take a disturbing form when participants choose to isolate themselves. In our attempts to provide immersion for the participants, we also placed them with families, but they may have been unwilling to learn and adapt to the new culture. There have been participants who preferred to lock themselves in their rooms all the time rather than interact with the host family. MS-TCDC once had a complaint filed against it because a study abroad student had dumped an amount of trash in a nearby stream. The trash

included beer cans and bottles, boxes, paper, food containers, and leftovers, all of which the host family did not know were stored in the guest's room before he dumped them. Unfortunately, someone witnessed the dumping and took a video with a phone camera. The host family was puzzled by this. To provide privacy for their guest, they did not enter his room and did not bother him when he was in the room. The trash showed that for weeks he brought alcohol, cigarettes, food, snacks, and soda that he did not share with anybody. He had isolated himself to the point of even not wanting to have his trash handled in the same way as other trash in the house.

It has become very clear that a softer landing into the culture needs to be a major feature in the orientation program and preparation to live with families. In one case, a student irked by constant visits of relatives, friends, and neighbors decided to take action at one time. On hearing a knock at the door, she told the host family to wait while she went to the door. She went to the door and rudely turned away the guest and banged the door in the guest's face. We can say that there are personality issues involved. But the student's action reveals a level of insensitivity that is quite astonishing and calls for more careful preparation.

Participants at this stage require much attention and support to develop cultural awareness and cultural diversity. The instructors and program leaders have the task of facilitating the development of awareness by designing activities that help them to connect with the symbolic aspects of culture. For example, music, attire, holidays, and literature. Activities that help them investigate and acquire more information about the target culture will be more beneficial.

4.2 Defense

There have been many students who recognize the differences between their American culture and the Tanzanian or African culture they encounter but always evaluate them against the American culture. Their reflections especially on their homestay experiences are very informative. One of the common complaints about their homes is the lack of privacy and the invasion of relatives and neighbors. One participant complained about too many neighbors and relatives coming to visit to greet the guests and staying for dinner without an invitation.

One area where participants need to adjust in any culture is food. It is a natural example of our propensity to evaluate a phenomenon from the prism of our background. Preference for most foods is an example of socialization and acquiring tastes. When one eats food for the first time, there are certain expectations and wishes about it. One may hope it may taste sweet or like something else they are familiar with. Often, a person may encounter something totally unexpected. One may decide to try to understand the attraction that other people have for that food or may decide it is a bad or unworthy taste. A participant was overheard discouraging new people in the cafeteria from even trying *ugali* a corn grits-like food, popular throughout East, Central, and Southern Africa. He insisted he had tried it but found it to be tasteless. This staple food is cooked without sugar or salt. Locals never eat *ugali* by itself for it may not have flavor or taste. It must be eaten with fish, meat, vegetable, or other foods which may be salted. A person new to the food is likely to miss this most crucial part of the meal and try to find the taste of *ugali* by itself.

There are many cultural practices that American students consider an affront to their sense of decency or rights. For example, passionate arguments often arise on the question of bride price, a common practice with many ethnic groups in East Africa. The American will quickly pass judgment by saying this is a form of selling and buying a girl. This practice is different from American culture. This practice, which most Africans consider a symbolic token of appreciation to the family of the bride, is condemned as insulting to basic humanity. Such condemnation is passed without investigating what is involved in the whole process of a proposal to a wedding and how the families of the man and the woman engage in lengthy negotiations as they ritually position themselves to become one family. Often, members of the extended family of the bride end up sharing the bride price with most members getting as little as 5,000 Tanzanian Shillings (approximately $2.5) of this token.

It is important to encourage and grow the curiosity of the participants by drawing attention to similarities between their own culture and the new culture. Assignments that require the students to find out about the origins or the reasoning behind certain aspects of culture or customs may go a long way to lowering their defenses.

4.3 Minimization

Some aspects of the process of language learning may even reveal the learners' attitudes to the culture and how they choose to engage or disengage with speakers of the target culture. One example of this is when a group traveled to the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro to learn about the life of coffee farmers. We engaged one farmer to show them how coffee is picked and locally processed. The participants' tasks were to take part in the demonstrations, pick up coffee, peel it, roast it, grind it, and make coffee. They were all expected to report back in class about the processes and activities. The farmer spoke no English and described all activities in Swahili. A pair of participants reported the processes using words they translated from English directly to Swahili. For example, they reported on *maharagwe ya kahawa* as a literal translation of 'coffee beans' instead of punje za kahawa. They said *kahawa inapigwa* for 'the coffee is ground' instead of *kahawa inatwangwa* or *kahawa inasagwa*. These may appear to be minor errors. However, one must remember that the learner was supposed to listen to the farmer, ask questions about how things are done, and learn new vocabulary that is appropriate for the activities. Underlying such translations is an implicit assumption that all languages express things the same way, you only have to get the equivalent words in a new language. For that reason, they do not want to be observant of the life they are trying to learn about.

Another example of minimization can be discerned in their choice of readings. Literature is an important part of a people's culture. For each program, participants are instructed to select a novel, novella, or play that is written in Swahili which they eventually present to the rest of the class and write a report about. Every now and then we find students preferring to read translations of English literature or abridged versions of English literature. One recent example is Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* in Swahili. That is all well and good if the idea is only to get the participants to present the plot using the appropriate grammar and vocabulary. However, such choices fail to recognize that there are different stories and narratives in every culture. It expresses a worldview of a particular community. Narratives and literature reflect a people's experience which has some uniqueness. It is also likely the case that they had read the English version and preferred an easier option that would not challenge them too much. In the same group that had a participant present a translation, other participants specifically sought Swahili classics like Shaaban Robert's *Adili na Nduguze* or even contemporary popular literary works such as Emmanuel Mbogo's *Watoto wa Maman'tilie*.

Since this is the stage where participants prefer to see superficial similarities and ignore the differences, activities that highlight the differences in a non-judgmental or confrontational manner may be very useful. For example, the group may study climate, and agricultural activities and link them to food cultures that distinguish American and African foods. Why, for example, do Tanzanians or East Africans in different locales have different staple foods? From areas of rice as a staple food, to bananas and plantains as the staple food, to corn staple food, will be linked to the environment and the diversity of climates.

4.4 Acceptance

Curiosity is a major feature in this stage, as attempts to fit into the new culture in a sensitive way. Happily, most of the participants in GPA arrive in Tanzania with such curiosity and ask for directions on how to do things in culturally appropriate ways. One of the questions that often comes up is "how do I decline more food without offending the host?" Such a question reveals an understanding that one cannot take things for granted and do as they do in America. It is a potentially sensitive situation.

We also notice some mistakes that may be a result of misreading the new culture. At one point our group was invited to a party of the Swahili Society of the neighboring Tumaini University. Wishing to present themselves as fully immersed in the culture, a group of female participants in our study abroad group clad themselves in *khangas*. They looked stunningly impressive. But they were the only women at the party that dressed that way. It became very clear to us that although we had talked about clothing and how to wear *khangas* and *vitenge*, we had not taken the trouble to assist the participants to recognize how to use the clothes on appropriate occasions. However, such mistakes are a clear indication of the efforts the participants were making to immerse themselves in the new culture.

Not only are the participants curious about the cultural phenomena that they observe around them, but they also seek to know about other things that they may have heard and suspect there are going to be some differences. Their curiosity and desire to immerse themselves also manifested in their desire to know about customs and significant social events that take place. These are good occasions to provide a broader encounter with the new culture. A deeper analysis of the contrasts in culture may help in a better understanding. Often, participants initiate the kind of activities that will

expose them more to the culture. For example, one of the expectations that are often expressed when participants go to live with families is that they will get to learn and discuss about family life, chores, responsibilities, and various aspects of cultural practices. This is a door to introducing activities and assignments that lead to more investigation and a better understanding of culture.

4.5 Adaptation and Integration

We combine the last two stages of DMIS in this subsection as they encompass our goal for the learners. During these stages, students exhibit greater effort and ability to shift their frame of reference in ways that are appropriate in the cultural context. We can still think of integration stage as reminiscent of how a multilingual is able to shift from one language to another depending on the interlocutors and the culture. Such a person uses categories, expressions, and frames as appropriate with ease. In language, there are examples of this as models for integration. A fluent speaker of Swahili can easily shift from telling time in English where the 24 hours of the day begin at midnight and in Swahili where the day begins at daybreak. We do not believe that our participants can always easily shift in this way at the end of their short-term program. But we can see the desire to reach that stage with many of our participants.

Earlier on, we described a group of female participants in our GPA who dressed in African attire, but it was not appropriate for the occasion. The same group of girls that was enthusiastic about wearing African prints learned about attire, bought some more, and had some made for them by one of the host mothers. They asked her about how and when to wear them. And soon the colorful girls would go to occasions with culturally appropriate clothes and style.

Over time, we observe debates and discussions about various facets of the local customs and behavior and the adjustment or adaption that the participants are engaged in. In several cases, we observed that some participants were not happy about the amount of control parents have over their children of the same age as our participants. They found life too constricted and without much freedom for themselves. The participants complained about mothers requiring to know about every step they made when they went out. Over time their resistance decreased as they discovered the strength of the host parents and how their support eased things during

their stay. They discovered that the parents in their old ways were there to protect them and that being new to the environment and being young, they were not familiar with all the environments, situations, and people. They came to terms with this type of close supervision provided by parents in Africa while experiencing more freedom when they return to the US.

At this stage, it seems appropriate to expose the participants to more nuanced forms of cross-cultural communication and more sophisticated language use. An intensification of the encounter with Swahili seems appropriate here. Homestays provide such exposure and intensity for the participants to experience and to consciously try to adjust to different situations.

5. Recommendations

Through many years of our engagement with American students at MS-TCDC Arusha, we have made several observations that the DMIC has helped to clarify. The first observation is that learning a language and willingness to learn a foreign language does not in itself mean intercultural learning or development. As noted earlier, we have had participants who on arrival in Arusha refused to engage with the local people claiming to have interest only in the language. Such behavior often leaves the instructors confused because it is not clear what is the point of traveling all the way to study in Tanzania. One of the ideas behind language study abroad programs is to provide intensive contact with the culture and language. Instructors and program leaders need to be more aware that such contact does not necessarily lead to rapid progress or rapid development in intercultural competence. One can live in the culture and denigrate the people and the culture or even resent the fact that they came to this culture. In all, intercultural development is a complex process with many facets of which instructors, students, program leaders, and hosts need to be made aware.

One major component of any study abroad should be pre-departure orientation and preparation. In the last eight years, the pre-departure orientation involved: (i) a guide which was over 35 pages long; (ii) webinars and video conferences; (iii) individual telephone conversations. These can hardly cover enough about the culture and life of people in East Africa. Efforts must be made to have extended orientation. Many study abroad programs have an orientation program that consists of several meetings and activities lasting for a semester. However, this is only possible if the

participants of the program are known well ahead of time and are in the same locale. The Swahili GPA gathered participants from all over the country, such an extended program is not possible. Perhaps one or two days of pre-departure orientation should be a necessary component of the program. The orientation program should aim at inculcating a sense of preparedness, interest, and self-awareness. It should provoke curiosity on the part of the participants as they embark on this adventure. Bhawuk & Brislin (1992) made an apt observation when they said: "To be effective in another culture, people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be willing to modify their behavior as an indication of respect for the people of other cultures." (Bhawuk & Brislin 1992:416). Program directors and instructors need to find ways and design activities that cultivate their interest.

The study abroad program should put more emphasis on intercultural development by raising awareness of the various aspects of culture in the home country as well as in the host countries. A big part of this should be sensitizing them to the differences in culture and to the cultural diversity that exists in the world. Explicit and open exploration of various issues in their intercultural experience need to be integrated into the pre-departure orientation, during the program, and post-program. This exploration should include an exploration of some central concepts of culture and intercultural development, culture

Intercultural training needs to take a more prominent place in pre-departure programs and the study abroad program design. It is not enough to provide some country-specific information or the locales of the study abroad program. It is necessary to take into consideration various other aspects of intercultural development. Earley & Peterson (2004) explore a critical concept in intercultural development, namely, cultural intelligence. This is the ability to adapt across cultures which is a function of the ability to gather, interpret and act according to different cues of different cultures (Earley & Peterson 2004:105). They identify three elements of cultural intelligence: (a) thinking, learning, and strategizing – cognition and metacognition. On encountering a new culture, a person needs to be able to observe and identify various aspects of the culture and be able to reflect on what they encounter vs their own culture (b) Efficacy and confidence, persistence and value congruence and affect on the new culture – motivation. A new culture presents a multitude of signals and symbols that may be confusing and challenging. A person needs to have the motivation to persist

in the learning process. (c) Social mimicry and behavioral repertoire – behavior. A person needs to respond accordingly with appropriate actions and behavior. A study abroad program will most likely produce better results if these different facets are taken into consideration when designing. Instructors and program directors need to design activities that help participants become more aware of their culture and diversity. They should learn to identify differences in culture among communities in their own communities and prepare them to encounter the other culture.

For programs that aim at increasing the participants' cultural competence, homestays are very crucial. In most households in Tanzania, English is not spoken. This goal places the participants in a real immersion situation (Paige et. al. 2004). In other words, homestays provide a very intensive contact situation in which they must develop their language skills very fast. Participants get to live with a host family and experience family life and participate as a member of the family. Homestays provide ample opportunities to speak the target language. Most of the homes were without the help of English at all. Participants learn specific family roles and chores as appropriate in the family. Participants get a support group that is useful in efforts to adjust to a new environment and in their intercultural development. The support group may involve making new friends and new connections. In short, homestays put learners in a situation with realistic challenges of life in the community: crowded public transportation, unreliable power supply, problems with water supply, etc. This way they learn how people negotiate their way around such challenges.

The experiences with homestays can be enriched with coordinated activities that instructors can schedule. From a list of activities or observations, the participants can be directed to some particular activities and tailor them with instructions. And this can be done in coordination with the host family. For example, an assignment on cooking a particular common dish could be synchronized with practice and activities like writing a recipe for the dish and how to give instructions. When they go home and ask for the recipe, they will discover very quickly that there are no written recipes for the local dishes. They will also notice that in this culture, most of the cooking and learning to cook is done in an apprenticeship style. In their presentations and discussion, the instructor can direct them to focus on this difference in food preparation and learn not to make judgments about unwritten recipes against written recipes.

There are some important aspects of the culture that participants may not easily encounter. For example, with one of the groups, we were lucky that one of the instructors had a wedding in the family. She invited the whole group to this elaborate cultural event. Not only did the participants enjoy the fanfare, but they had many questions and learned a great deal about weddings in Tanzania. This group was fortunate because the wedding was with the family of one of the instructors. However, weddings are not that rare. With planning and involving the community, it should be possible to always find such an event where the instructors and program leaders can arrange for participation or attendance. Instructors can plan ahead and find from among staff or in the neighborhood where and when such significant events will take place.

There is a growing body of studies using the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity to study various aspects of study abroad (Bloom & Miranda 2015; Rexeisen et. al. 2008; Anderson et. al. 2006). The studies have revealed that a model is a powerful tool for investigating the experiences of participants of study abroad programs. There is a need to study intercultural development in study abroad programs in Africa. Such studies may inform program developers, instructors, and international educators. It will increase awareness about students' needs.

We have observed that on several issues, enacting or commenting on various aspects of intercultural contact leads to a greater awareness of the issues, the conflicts, and even resolution. For example, one participant always felt pressured by the host mother and father insisting at the table that he should have more food or juice. After a few days of agonizing about how he should refuse food when he was full, which he believed was impolite, he wrote a song that he brought to the class. This prompted a discussion among themselves since they had a similar problem. With the help of the teachers, they were able to come up with polite ways of declining offers of more food. We believe with such creative activities, participants can highlight several aspects of their intercultural encounters. For example, they can make skits or even mini-documentaries that portray their intercultural development. Instructors and program directors can make a documentary or instructional video dealing with various aspects of intercultural development. This will be a useful tool for instructors, participants, and other program directors.

6. Conclusion

This article set out to present reflections on our experience with Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad for Intensive Summer Swahili in Arusha, Tanzania. Although the program has a long history dating back to 1983, we focused our attention on the last two cycles from 2008 in which we have been deeply involved as directors, instructors, and coordinators. Our reflections were inspired by the Developmental Model of Intercultural Communication (Bennett & Bennett 2004; Bennett 1986, 1993; Hammer 2015). We believe study abroad programs are unique opportunities that provide participants with environments where they can develop intercultural competence.

In our reflections, we identified behavior and expressions that clearly indicate that participants have come to the program with different levels of sensitivity, from an initial denial of cultural differences to those who are gradually adapting and shifting frames of reference with relative ease. For this reason, we recommend program designs and execution that pay more attention to intercultural development. It involves greater awareness of the diversity of cultures as well as a better understanding of the differences between the participants' cultures and the cultures that they encounter. Apart from the many activities we suggest, we also propose that more research be conducted into the various cultural aspects of African study abroad programs and study abroad in general.

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Teaching Kiswahili in a Summer Abroad Program: The Washington University's Experience

Mungai Mutonya

Introduction

Study abroad programs in Africa vary in duration, academic focus, and degree of interaction with the host culture. Within the broad range of programs are the short-term, language- and culture-oriented programs that seek to enrich a learner's skills in the target African language through experiential learning. The Washington University in St. Louis (WU) Summer in Kenya, the focus of this paper, is one such program that seeks to maximize the benefits of learning Kiswahili and understanding Kenyan society by carefully blending coursework, homestays, service learning, guest speaker presentations, and guided excursions.

Teaching Kiswahili in a study abroad setting abounds in unique opportunities, rewards, and challenges that far outweigh language teaching experiences in a traditional classroom environment. Immersion learning offers the language learner a close interaction with Kiswahili speakers in an authentic setting, exposure to abundant resources essential to the acquisition of the target language, and firsthand experience of the host culture. However, the linguistic and experiential benefits inherent in such a learning environment may be hampered by unimpeded out-of-class interactions, exposure to the diversity of nonstandard varieties of the target language spoken in a multilingual society, as well as a lack of group cohesion.

This paper discusses lessons learned teaching an African language and directing a summer program in Kenya. The program has been running intermittently since 2000 depending on Kenya's political environment and the United States Department of State's advisories to citizens' travel to the country. Having expanded in focus from the native-Swahili-speaking sites in coastal Kenya to upcountry locations where the language serves to facilitate interethnic interaction, the contemporary four-week WU program offers participants a more comprehensive representation of the diverse Kenyan society and an appreciation of the various manifestations of the East African lingua franca: Kiswahili.

In general terms, observations made and conclusions drawn in this paper are informed by the experience gained directing the program, teaching Kiswahili on-campus and abroad, and adjusting to the expansion of the WU program beyond the predominantly Kiswahili-speaking enclaves. Anecdotes from students' journals, generously used in this paper to illustrate some of the issues discussed, coupled with other forms of feedback, accentuate the participants' perspectives.[1]

For the moment, however, let me provide a brief discussion on study abroad in Africa and the key components of the WU program to illuminate the context under which foreign-language teaching takes place in the summer abroad program.

Study Abroad in Africa

The Institute of International Education (IIE) reports that academic year 13,266 of the total 304,467 U.S. university students studying abroad went to Sub-Saharan Africa during the 2013/2014 academic year.[2] The 4.4 percent total of Africa-bound students is relatively small in comparison to the more popular destinations in Europe and Latin America. That represents 1.1 percent fewer students than the previous year. The drop in enrollment in African study abroad programs can be attributed to several factors. First, the unvarying negative portrayal of Africa in the western media is bound to dissuade any traveler, let alone young undergraduates, from contemplating a sojourn in Africa. That notwithstanding, convincing skeptical parents to approve participation in African programs is an even more daunting task for undergraduates. Consider the following anecdote from the journal of an African Studies major who participated in the WU program in 2003:

> Before I left for Kenya I told people about my trip. The response was always the same. First, the person would be very surprised and say "how exciting" or "you're so brave." Then I would always get advice or comments like "be very careful about contact with people because AIDS is very prevalent in Africa," "are you sure it's safe with all those tribal conflicts there," or "you know African men

[1] I am indebted to WU Summer in Kenya participants, individually and collectively, for the anecdotal evidence contained in the excerpts.
[2] See Opendoors 2015

have six or seven wives- so don't be too friendly. They'll love your blonde hair." The negative reaction and sheer ignorance of my folks were infuriating.

Second, considering ongoing international conflicts, acts of terror in various parts of the world in the recent past, and the incessant travel advisories by the US Department of State, particularly to African countries, a downward trend in study abroad participation in Africa hardly seems beyond the realm of expectation.

In the case of the WU summer program, students continue to show a strong desire to travel to Kenya in spite of incessant travel advisories issued by the U.S. Department of State. Based on information elicited from program participants in the course of application interviews, informal discussions, and analysis of program evaluations, three related reasons stand out as the epiphany moments for many participants' decision to study in Kenya. First, proficiency in Kiswahili and increased knowledge of Africa acquired from numerous courses offered on campus boosted their confidence to the realization that they, too, could maximize the benefits of immersion into African culture. Second, the use of emerging technologies in classrooms allowed the students to embrace a relatively comprehensive depiction of the country and its people, and helped in debunking myths, while at the same time emphasizing existing academic and professional opportunities available to foreign scholars in Africa. Furthermore, firsthand accounts of professors who lived or conducted research work in Africa inspired young minds to venture out. Finally, narratives of memorable experiences and unique rewards, from African study abroad returnees, solidified the interests of prospective participants. Suffice it to say, program alumni remain the best recruiters for the Kenya program and play a prominent role in preparing potential participants for the experience abroad.

The author is not able to summon sufficient evidence to determine whether the accounts provided by WU students over a relatively short period warrant making broad generalizations regarding study abroad in Africa or about teaching Kiswahili in study abroad programs. However, sharing the experience from one program may eventually lead to a more comprehensive understanding of such study abroad ventures.

WU Summer Program: An Overview

Offered by African and African American Studies at WU, the summer program is designed to provide participants with opportunities to apply Kiswahili skills and knowledge attained in other disciplines in real-world situations. Maximizing interpersonal contact with host community members through homestays, guest lectures, excursions, and community projects enhances a learner's linguistic skills in negotiating unfamiliar and socially uncomfortable situations and expands their understanding of the host community. Pires (2000) further notes that experiential learning enhances a student's academic and general life skills that include techniques of observation, listening, communication, and problem-solving.

Program participants take two three-credit courses—one in Kiswahili and another in an interdisciplinary course intended to broaden a student's appreciation of the agency of local communities in tackling economic and social problems. After an exhaustive discussion of relevant assigned readings, students visit indigenous organizations that have made a positive impact on the lives of the community and participate in the organization's scheduled community activities. In the course of various summer programs, participants have acquired invaluable knowledge of the Green Belt Movement grass root projects, street children rehabilitation homes, HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns, women's self-help projects in rural Kenya, and much more.

Guest Speakers

Guest speakers are drawn from a pool of local professors, professionals, community leaders, and social activists invited to speak on topics suggested by program participants. A broad range of themes is covered to accommodate the diverse interests of participants drawn from a wide array of disciplines. In addition to the core topics pertinent to the understanding of Kenyan society, an effort is made to engage students in an intellectual dialogue with Kenyan scholars, students, and cultural experts. Speakers augment the students' appreciation of the diversity of Kenyan society but more significantly provide an analysis of local and international issues that often challenge a student's viewpoints. Dissenting views complement the goals of our program: the intellectual and personal enrichment of the student through firsthand experience of the culture, language, lifestyle, and viewpoints of the host society. One program

participant observed:

> It was very powerful to hear from people who experienced torture as well as those who have AIDS. While the things we learned about torture and AIDS in Kenya were important, I took another message away from our lectures today. I was exposed to organizations in Kenya doing work for Kenyans. I think that many people have the perception that Africans often sit back while outsiders finance and aid them. I want to go back to the U.S. and share with people what I have learned about these different organizations in Kenya

Coursework

Concerning language teaching, the program strives to enhance a learner's conversational skills by combining formal instruction with informal out-of-class exposure. Guided by the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning[3] That, among other things, advise language instructors to underscore the learner's acquisition of the ability to "know why to say what to whom" during interaction with L1 speakers, an effort is made to teach the appropriate use of Kiswahili in everyday interaction with Kenyans.

On the subject of the interdisciplinary course, students are required to maintain a non-private journal that reflects on daily experiences, lead a group discussion, and write a final paper. The journal, which is reviewed weekly by the instructor, serves two related purposes. First, it gives the student an opportunity to document observations and reactions to daily events, activities, and presentations. Second, it provides the director with essential feedback essential in gauging the level of comprehension of Kenyan society and an opportunity to bridge knowledge gaps that may otherwise be overlooked in a fast-paced program. The journal has also proved to be a major forum for participants who are hesitant to engage in discussions of controversial topics openly. Relevant academic issues identified during the review of the journals are injected into future group discussions while personal matters are handled appropriately. The final paper is submitted in the first week of the fall semester to allow for reflections and library research. Intermediate and advanced-level students

[3] Standards formulated by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

are encouraged to write their journals in Kiswahili. Language homework is also assigned on a daily basis.

Home Stays

Homestays play an integral role in providing the experiential education that the WU summer program seeks to offer. No other experience, in our view, maximizes a student's exposure and meaningful interaction with Kenyans than this component of the program. This out-of-class experience enables the student to make significant gains in language skills and cultural understanding and facilitates a cross-cultural dialogue that is mutually beneficial to the host and the student (Talburt and Stewart, 1999; Chen, 2004). One of our participants recounted his experience with a Mombasa host family in the following journal entry:

> So far the homestay has been a very interesting experience for me. I have eleven brothers and sisters, of which I have only met five (I think). Things have been getting more comfortable and when I am [at] home I sit with my family and write or read or talk with them. Yesterday, my brother … took me to Old Town to check email, and then we went to meet some of his friends at his clubhouse. It was about twenty guys from his soccer team sitting around watching sports.

The program acknowledges the significant contribution of members of the host family, and the community in general, as purveyors of linguistic and cultural knowledge that immensely enriches a student's study abroad experience. Feedback received from program alumni, and host families indicate that the intercultural contact, albeit brief, has resulted in a productive long-term relationship between American students and host communities.

The experiential component of a study abroad program, Cressey (2000:47) notes:

> Can provide valuable insight into how the members of a foreign culture view and interact with the world, how they behave toward each other, and what they value most in the human experience. While these elements of a culture can be described in lectures, books, and articles, there is an important difference between

reading about them and having to come to terms with and deal with the ways that they differ from one's norms and values.

Although there is a great deal to discuss study abroad experiences, hereafter this paper focuses on challenges and lessons learned teaching Kiswahili to U.S. students in Kenya. The language learning strategies presented below were applied with varying degrees of effectiveness to different groups that participated in the program from 2000.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Teaching a proficiency-oriented Kiswahili course abroad within a four-week period abounds in challenges. In addition to paying attention to student variability, the instructor has to harmonize the demands and expectations of students, the university, parents, the host community, and local liaisons. While a young undergraduate student, studying in Africa for the first time, expects to learn in an environment that allows for a memorable sojourn in a foreign country, the University expects the program director accompanying the students to ensure quality learning, student safety, and budget stays within stated limits. Host families and local liaisons, for their part, expect tangible benefits for services rendered to the students, and parents of these under-21s, some who grudgingly give consent to have their children travel to Africa, expect regular reassurances and constant communication from the program director.

Group Dynamics

Collaborative learning is essential for a fruitful and rewarding language-learning experience. Mugane (2002:168-9) notes that with the class "working well as a social unit, a student's knowledge, and proficiency often draws on the resourcefulness of the other students." Mugane's remarks transcend the classroom setting and were particularly salient for a program that attracts students with different levels of proficiency[4] in Kiswahili. A close-knit group is essential for the accomplishment of the goals of the program and a successful sojourn abroad.

[4] Although Kiswahili proficiency is strongly recommended for a successful experience abroad, there is no language requirement for admission into the program.

The WU program strives to establish a close bond among participants by developing team-oriented language-learning activities and games during orientation sessions. Acquaintances developed during these sessions are strengthened abroad and solidified upon return to the U.S. A common bonding strategy that has worked well with students is to invite those with higher proficiency to assist new learners and to share with them language-learning strategies they find most effective. Similarly, other participants are encouraged to share useful foreign language strategies developed in high school or other college language courses. Such discussions during orientation sessions provide insights into each student's experience as a foreign language learner and minimize the jitters of learning an African language. Furthermore, harnessing individual interests in the program into a common unifying goal can be achieved by encouraging participants to consider donating books to needy schools in Kenya.

Student Motivation

Study abroad participants have a fervent desire to interact meaningfully with residents and to be perceived by the community as *wanafunzi* 'students' and not *watalii* 'tourists.' The motivation to avoid the bastardized tourist-Kiswahili and the need for accelerated acquisition of appropriate Kiswahili is a very rewarding and fulfilling teaching experience. Furthermore, faced with the realization that faster adjustment to the foreign environment hinges upon the ability to communicate in appropriate ways in Kiswahili, students abroad are more adept (than in classroom situations) at collaborating in group projects, assisting each other in drills, role-plays and individual assignments, thus making Kiswahili learning truly enjoyable. A participant in the 2000 program noted in his journal:

> I enjoyed learning Kiswahili in the mornings and then practicing it in the afternoons on my walks through town. The only regret is that I didn't learn as much Kiswahili as I would have liked. I think I set a very high expectation for myself to learn the language quickly, but I know it takes the time to develop skills in an entirely new language. However, the Kiswahili I learned helped me navigate my way around Mombasa in an easy and exciting way.

The language teacher, for his part, Hall (1997) advises should be cognizant of the diverse personalities, motivations, needs, and expectations

of the group, and should seek to nurture the prevalent motivation for accelerated language acquisition by providing a broad range of learning tasks that match varied learning styles.

In the WU program, students are encouraged to whet their appetite for accelerated learning by reading assigned texts before departure and participating in tutorials conducted by participants who have attained higher Kiswahili proficiency. Acquisition of necessary skills such as greetings, providing personal information, and asking basic questions helps to diminish the anxieties of total immersion, albeit to a small degree.

Teaching Kiswahili

Goal-based language instructions are taught immediately upon arrival in the host country to help students adjust to the foreign culture and prepare for the homestay experience. The intense language courses are interspersed with opportunities to practice acquired skills in authentic situations. To build the necessary confidence in Kiswahili usage under such circumstances, learners are first given the opportunity to practice specific role plays in class, followed by group practice in a real-life setting, gradually decreasing the size of groups down to individual assignments. Unlike the traditional classroom settings where drills and simulations of a *matatu* ride, getting around the house, asking for directions, introducing oneself, and reacting to an emergency may seem remote and irrelevant beyond the classroom capsule, they acquire an obvious relevance in Kenya. Students heightened motivation to learn the language, occasioned by real and present needs, is one of the best rewards for a Kiswahili teacher.

Identifying and Utilizing Local Resources

Another lesson learned while teaching Kiswahili to American students in Kenya is the necessity for the teacher to guide the learner to identify and utilize the abundant Kiswahili-learning resources extant in the immediate surroundings. Apart from the more public resources such as radio, television, newspapers, billboards, advertisements, product labels, road signs, campaign posters, and music, students are asked to be keen observers, attentive listeners, and bold interlocutors as they interact with the members of the host culture. They are encouraged to pay attention to

gestures, facial expressions, body movements, verbal and non-verbal sounds, and to understand the appropriate cultural contexts for such signs.

Having made the observations, a student is required to report findings to the group, incorporate those linguistic signs in and out of the group settings, and discuss the comparisons and contrasts with obvious signs from other languages and cultures. Hanks (1996) notes that "Linguistic signs acquire their meaning because they point to other signs in the environment. When learners go abroad, all these signs are there, live, to be recognized and decoded." For instance, a visit to a Maasai village documented in the following excerpt from a student journal provided adequate material for learning Kiswahili colors, personal traits, and cultural artifacts:

> Different colors symbolize different things. Yellow is for intelligence and knowledge, white is for peace, and red is the Maasai's favorite color: it is the symbol of courage. Black is the symbol of the blacksmith. There is a symbol for the sky when they dance they jump toward the sky. Orange is a symbol for those who love animals.

Some gestures and mannerisms observed and reported back to class may help in broaching cultural topics such as sexuality, obscenities, and the cross-cultural interpretation of the concept of personal space in communication. In 2004 the following journal entry sparked exciting, and often heated, discussions among the participants, prompting the director to invite a local scholar to help the group understand aspects of intimacy and sexuality in Kenyan society:

> I think the coolest custom that I observed while out today was seeing two men walking down the street holding hands as a sign of friendship. Even though someone had mentioned something about it earlier, it was still exciting to see because it is something that I have never seen at home and certainly never will. Men in the U.S. are too worried about being construed as gay to do something like that. I guess that they just don't have to worry about it here because of nobody here.

Additionally, to encourage individual initiatives at enhancing communication skills in Kiswahili, a language instructor should seize every

available opportunity to allow the students to express thoughts and opinions in the language. For instance, on public occasions such as book donations to schools or receptions for host families, students are given the opportunity to utilize acquired Kiswahili skills in speech, songs, and skits. Sometimes a popular playground song is translated into Kiswahili and performed before Kenyan children who are always eager to learn and participate. Kenyan children reciprocate by teaching American students their Kiswahili songs:

> Former street children at Watoto Village welcomed us with traditional songs and dances with brightly colored traditional costumes…after the incredible production, we interacted with the kids and played the same hand games that we played when we were girls, just with different Kiswahili lyrics. It was a very emotional and inspiring experience. I can't imagine anything else topping it for the rest of the trip!

Similar mutually beneficial interactions occur during community services such as tree planting, renovating a school library, or cleaning up. Students are encouraged to exploit such opportunities to hone their linguistic skills.

Input from the Host Community

Homestays provide unique language learning environments. Students are matched with families with school-going children and parents with minimal or no proficiency in English[5]. Experience has taught us that well-educated families usually use English in interactions with American students even when the guest insists on using Kiswahili. Homework provided is intended to elicit interaction with children, teenagers, and parents in the family. Younger children and adolescents help with Kiswahili assignments; parents provide background information on Kenyan society and contemporary issues facing the community.

> Things with my host family are getting more and more comfortable every day. Last night my sister, […], wanted to see my Kiswahili homework and I ended up discussing Kiswahili stuff with her, and

[5] Worked well in Kiswahili-speaking household otherwise learner was subjected to English or other Kenyan languages are spoken by family members

> I got to apply all that I have been learning so far. One of my goals is to be able to converse with my mom. She doesn't speak a word of English. I want to create some relationship with her, and the language barrier is preventing that.

Advanced students are expected to discuss with host parents issues of interest to the group in Swahili. Mali, a program participant, belonged to that category and she describes her experience with a host mother who had little or no proficiency in English:

> [My host mother] and I spoke Kiswahili all the time, which was amazing to me because we would have long and meaningful conversations. She helped me love speaking Kiswahili and want to continue communication with this family for as long as we can maintain contact.

The first part of each daily Kiswahili lesson is set aside for discussions of students' oral reports. A discussion in the target language of everyday experiences and conversations held is followed by questions from the teacher and classmates. Students are allowed to seek assistance from host family members and fellow students in preparing the presentation.

Apart from helping student-host interaction, such a learning activity helps community members appreciate their role as hosts as well as proprietors of valuable language and cultural knowledge. Young school children are amused to see an American university student seeking help to construct a very simple sentence. For host siblings, the experience of hosting a foreign university student greatly expands their educational horizons and is forever etched in their memory. Bridging the cultural divide is a mutual enterprise. However, a language instructor using this method must contend with dialectal variation, societal attitudes towards speakers of varieties of Kiswahili, slang, and emerging urban youth Kiswahili.

Kiswahili Varieties

The urban Kiswahili varieties spoken by the youth have a tremendous allure to U.S. students abroad and can hardly be ignored by a language instructor in Kenya. After all, Sheng, the prestigious urban speech in Kenya, predominantly serves in the identity construction of their peer

group. Students are expected to identify various language forms and to use them in appropriate contexts.

The distinct features of the *Kimvita* and *Kiamu* dialects are evident and do emerge as relevant issues of discussion during the review of homework done with the assistance of family members who speak these Kiswahili dialects. For instance, Edgar Polome (1969) notes that the voiceless alveolar affricate [ts] as in *chungu* 'bitter' is reflected in Kimvita as a dental stop [t], *tungu*, and *macho* 'eyes' as *mato*. Among the numerous features in Kiamu, palatal implosive stop [j] is realized as palatal semivowel [y]. Hence *moja* 'one,' *kuja* 'to come,' and *majani* 'leaves' are realized as *moya, kuya,* and *mayani* respectively. Moreover, immigrants to the coastal areas from diverse linguistic groups have given rise to a variety of non-native Kiswahili broadly referred to as *Kiswahili cha bara* 'hinterland Swahili'. This is an amalgamation of non-native Kiswahili varieties characterized by distinct interference of L1 features from indigenous Kenyan languages. Similar Kiswahili varieties are prevalent in rural Kenya where the lingua franca is used for interethnic interactions and identity construction. Students are made aware of linguistic diversity and the role of Kiswahili as a lingua franca; they are asked to be attentive to linguistic diversity and social attitudes toward the varieties.

Focusing on the integral role Kiswahili plays in the daily lives of Kenyan society, and the diverse manifestations of the language in various settings, a student is invited to observe and report back to class language use in the community. A show-and-tell activity that seeks to draw attention to authentic products and cultural objects and to make a student more conscious of target language usages in their immediate surroundings is assigned. Among the many items brought to a class bearing, Kiswahili information includes product labels, place names, posters, maps, event tickets, newspaper clippings, brochures, menus, video clips of Kiswahili graffiti, *matatu* names, buses, T-shirts, beer, CDs, songs, *kanga*, etc. Advanced-level students are encouraged to create Kiswahili commercial advertisements for popular products they use in the U.S.

Utilizing Emerging Technologies

Emerging technologies that many American students use regularly and bring along on their trips abroad, though not developed to support

language learning can be utilized for such purposes (Godwin, 2005). The video camera, for instance, a handy and very attractive gadget for most students traveling abroad, becomes a very useful tool for capturing images and recording Kiswahili-learning activities and skits witnessed or performed away from class.

The Internet café becomes an inevitable rendezvous and instant messaging in Kiswahili becomes a vital learning tool. Cell phones have become an essential item for program directors, at least to help maintain contact with students at all times. A majority of Kenyans also communicate through cheaper and more convenient messaging on mobile phones, by way of SMS (short message service) with Kiswahili being among the preferred languages of communication. It has even developed its Kiswahili lexicon, *kuwa mteja*[6] 'busy line' *ku*-SMS 'to send an SMS message.' Students are encouraged to communicate with peers, family members, and their instructors in Kiswahili.

Conclusions

A participant in the year 2000 who has since returned to Kenya twice for graduate research aptly captured the sentiments of many participants after the program:

> Tuesday, we marched off to the airport, dragging our feet… And in the perfect final chapter to a charmed summer program of wishes fulfilled and dreams achieved, [three of us] were rightfully upgraded to FIRST CLASS, where we smelled our complementary moisturizer and Kenyan coffee, spoke Kiswahili to the hostess … and tried to stave off the inevitable post-Kenya depression. I know I'll always remember every moment spent there, and I'll always miss it. Next stop - the Fulbright office. I need to get back to Kenya.

The short-term summer abroad program provides invaluable opportunities for American students to explore long-term academic and professional

[6] The literal meaning 'to be on subscriber [mode]' is derived from the automated Kiswahili message for a busy line or unavailable network service. The message invariably informs the caller that the subscriber is unavailable - *mteja wa nambari ya simu uliopiga hapatikani* 'the subscriber to the number you call unavailable.'

opportunities in Eastern Africa. Affordable and conveniently scheduled to allow for foreign travel, summer classes, and time to pursue other summer goals, the summer program is significantly contributing to the growth of the African language in several ways. Firstly, the program offers an undergraduate student who has studied the language in an American university the ideal opportunity to practice it in real-life situations. By so doing the learner acquires advanced skills through interpersonal interaction and becomes a lifelong learner of the language. Secondly, a student who had never had a chance or an interest to study Kiswahili develops such an interest abroad continues to learn the language upon return to college, and helps convince friends and prospective program participants to study the language for at least a semester before immersion. Thirdly, host siblings in Kenya and school children in the numerous schools we visit have developed a renewed perspective on Kiswahili considering the career opportunities that arise from a mastery of the language. Finally, the short-term program accords a student, hesitant to commit to lengthy stays in Africa an opportunity to test the waters, so to speak, during the summer. Many WU program participants have returned to East Africa either on semester- or year-long programs or for graduate research.

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