Welcome to the 2000-2001 academic year! I am pleased to announce that we have finally organized a Web site for the Labs. Please check it out. The URL is: http://humanities.uchicago.edu/lla. We are interested in your comments, criticisms and suggestions. A Web site is always a work in progress, but that is especially the case for ours this year. Our primary goal is to create a site that is useful for the University community. Our secondary goal is to advertise our Labs and the wonderful work that goes on here to the world at large. The creation of the site has been an effort on the part of all of the staff, but major thanks go to Kay Yang for making the concepts a reality and for keeping the project on track.

We have been continuing to make significant upgrades to our equipment inventory thanks to the Mellon grant for More Frequently Taught Languages. We have used our statistics on equipment usage as our guide for equipment purchases; however, we have also expanded our inventory to include new items such as smart boards and document cameras. Please check the calendar throughout the year for seminars and workshops highlighting these new additions. If your equipment needs are not being met, please let us know. Also, please suggest workshops you would like to help you make better use of the Labs’ facilities. While we will maintain our analog audio and video equipment, we are making the switch to digital equipment as the standard. This year we will hold presentations that highlight the differences between the two domains so that digital equipment can be used appropriately.

Now that we are once again fully staffed, we are looking forward to an exciting and productive year. We always welcome your feedback; it is essential in making the Language Laboratories and Archives a premier facility for language learning, course development, and language research.

Karen Landahl
Academic Director
Northwestern University Language Symposium, May 20, 2000

Perspective and Practice 2000: Innovations in Foreign Language Instruction

Michael Berger

On Saturday, May 20, 2000 Michael Berger of the Language Laboratories and Archives attended a language symposium hosted by Northwestern University called Perspective and Practice 2000: Innovations in Foreign Language Instruction. Along with Michael, four other members of the U of C community attended: Chiara Fabian (Italian), Stephano Mula (Italian), Kijoo Ko (Korean) and Joanna Kurowska-Mlynarczyk (Polish); Ms. Ko and Ms. Kurowska-Mlynarczyk presented papers. In all, there were eleven presentations, about which more detailed descriptions are available at the LFRC; please see Michael Berger for more information. Following are brief descriptions of the day’s events.

Richard Li-Cheng Gu of Northwestern’s Chinese program started the presentations with a demo of his web program HanZigraph: Learning Chinese Characters through Pictographs. Mr. Gu has created his own pictographs for difficult Chinese characters and has found through testing that these new pictographs help students memorize more characters at a faster rate than previous memorization systems.

Juan Ignacion Calduch and Kim Potowski from the Spanish program at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign followed with their presentation “Using the web to increase cultural awareness in bilingual students.” The speakers demonstrated that by using engaging political materials from international websites, they were able to help bilingual students learn more about their own cultural backgrounds while improving their writing skills at the same time. They find that bilingual, heritage students often have a hard time honing their advanced writing skills and therefore are often turned down when they apply for high-level international, corporate positions. This program is designed, in part, to prepare these students for the international job market.

The next presenter, Holly Woodson Waddell, a graduate student in French at Northwestern, described the multimedia ‘bootcamp’ (designed to help academics who are technologically challenged), which she attended at Middlebury College.

Following a break, Kijoo Ko of the University of Chicago presented “Using a multimedia room in advanced language classes: video”, in which she described how she uses the LLA’s multimedia classroom in Cobb 210 (see related article in this issue of the NS).

Jasmine Santory, who teaches Spanish at the University of Illinois at Chicago, then described “Twenty good techniques for the development of oral language skills”, which she uses in her classes.

 Afterwards, Denise Meuser and John Paluch from the German program at Northwestern talked about “Integrating technology into an intermediate German curriculum”. One of the features of this approach is the use of the web-based grammar Intermatik, which was developed at Northwestern through a collaborative effort with the Multimedia Learning Center (MMLC).

Following lunch, Joanna Kurowska-Mlynarczyk of the U of C presented a paper on “The practice of maximum exposure and the employment of native language skills in a foreign language classroom” (see related article in the this issue of the NS).

Hong Jiang, a teacher of Chinese at Northwestern, then presented “Creating Interpersonal Opportunities for Foreign Language Learners in the U.S. College Setting”. She described how a program Conversation Partners pairs native speakers of Chinese with non-native speakers in an effort to improve the speaking abilities of the latter group.

Kristine Thorsen and Ingrid Zeller followed with a description of their program to involve students in German Theater and the production of a German play, Der Ozeanflug, by Bertold Brecht. The class culminated in three public performances of the play.

Thomas Simpson, who teaches Italian at Northwestern, then described how students of his advanced Italian media class produced and acted in a soap opera, which they videotaped and then made available on a website.

The day concluded with a presentation by Claude Tournier and Janine Spencer, coordinators of the first- and second-year French classes at Northwestern, respectively. They gave a sneak preview of Internef, which is an online resource for teachers of French. Internef will soon be available to French teachers in the U.S. and elsewhere and will provide them with professional development opportunities.
Most papers that use postlingually deafened adults with cochlear implants as their subjects focus on post-implant changes in perception; there has been almost no research on the acoustics of speech produced by adult cochlear implant users. What acoustic research can be found on the speech production of adult CI users consists of seven papers by Joseph Perkell’s research group at MIT, published between 1992 and 1997. The authors have found evidence that the Ineraid four-channel cochlear implant provides a sufficient degree of auditory feedback to affect vowel placement and duration, sibilant contrast, VOT and syllable duration, and fundamental frequency. Currently, most adults are implanted with a 22 or 24-channel Nucleus implant, which provides a more complex signal and utilizes a more advanced speech processor than the Ineraid implant. These changes in processor and implant technology have long-ranging implications for improvements in speech production. The Nucleus’s greater frequency range and increased spectral detail should particularly have an effect on vowel placement, stops, and intonation. This paper presents an acoustic analysis of the speech of a postlingually deafened adult with a Nucleus cochlear implant, from pre-implant and one and three months post-activation recordings. As neither intonation nor vowels provide physical landmarks to aid articulation, and stops have physical landmarks but require precise articulation and timing, these factors should be most affected by recovery of (partial) hearing after implantation of a cochlear implant. Thus, acoustic analysis of vowel formants and duration; stop VOT, duration, and burst spectra; and $F_0$ peaks and contours should provide the most information as to the articulatory changes that follow experience with a cochlear implant. Subject MS’s data have been analyzed for individual longitudinal trends and implant effects. Individual subject trends have been compared to those found in the MIT group papers.

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Using a multimedia room in advanced language classes: **VIDEOS**

Kijoo Ko

Using videos in language classes is neither a new nor a cutting edge technique. Nonetheless, this rather traditional, simple method is not used as much as it should in second language teaching. In the following summary, I will describe how we used videos last year at the University of Chicago in the teaching of Korean and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this activity.

During the Winter and Spring Quarters 2000, the 3rd year Korean classes met every Wednesday in the LLA’s multimedia classroom in order to use the computer and video presentation systems. The classes regularly watched videotaped news, drama, movies and informational documentaries about Korea. The following examples demonstrate the ways in which I incorporated different teaching methods depending on the types of the videos, and may serve as a template that others can use in any language class.

Although students at the 3rd year level can speak and understand everyday Korean fairly well, watching the SCOLA news proved very difficult for them at first. To overcome this difficulty, students were given a list of vocabulary from the news clip, which I prepared in advance. Then, before viewing each clip, I supplemented the news (especially for domestic or political issues) with some background information. After the first viewing, I asked students questions about what was covered and answered their questions to make sure that they understood the content. Then, we watched the entire news segment once again, followed by a second, more general discussion. In addition to gaining exposure to clear pronunciation, watching the news helped the students understand current events and issues in Korea, thereby allowing them to enrich their linguistic and cultural experiences simultaneously.

Parts of a prerecorded videotaped drama (with relevant grammar content) were copied and edited. These drama clips can be used in different ways, depending on their content and the level of the class. For example, 3rd year students watched a video clip without any prior explanation of the scenes. They were then asked questions about the segment to gauge their comprehension of it. If necessary, I would provide them with background information, which might include a brief summary of the whole drama. They watched the clip again, followed by a second discussion with more detailed questions. For 2nd year students, the exercises following the same drama clip were altered. After the first viewing, they were asked to summarize the clip in English. Then, after the second viewing, they were asked to summarize it in Korean.

Movies without English subtitles were shown to 3rd year students. They were given some background information about the movie: the names of the director and cast, the plot, the theme, etc. They then watched the entire movie without interruption. Afterwards, the film was discussed in Korean, which helped to clarify some points of the plot for the students. For homework, they were asked to write an essay about the movie.

When the same movie was shown to 2nd year students; they were given a list of questions and more background information before the screening. For this type of activity, I have discovered that it is very important to select a movie which captures the students’ interest; for example, award-winning movies or recent popular movies seem to hold their attention better than little-known films.

We have several types of documentaries, both in English and Korean, some of which are general treatments of Korea and others more specific explorations of the culture. These informational videos are used to help students more fully understand and appreciate as-
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The Phonetic Status of the Labial Flap

Ken Olson

Since Cotel (1907), researchers have been aware of the existence of the labial flap speech sound in Africa. Subsequently it has been attested in over 60 languages on that continent (e.g. Tisserant 1930, 1931, Doke 1931, Larochette 1958, Ladefoged 1968, Greenberg 1983, *inter alia*) as well as one language in Indonesia (Donohue, to appear). However, certain problems have beset phonetic research on the sound. In particular, (1) questions have remained concerning the precise nature of the articulation of the labial flap, (2) the status of the sound as a contrastive unit of speech has been questioned due to the fact that in some languages it occurs exclusively in ideophones, and (3) no consensus has emerged as to the proper representation of the sound in phonetic transcription.

The present paper, based both on a review of the literature concerning the labial flap and on primary field research in the Mono language of the Democratic Republic of Congo, provides principled answers to the above three questions. First, concerning the articulation of the sound, I find that while both the bilabial and labiodental versions are attested, there is no known language in which the distinction between the two is contrastive. The sound is exclusively voiced, the unmarked case for sonorants. The closure duration of the sound is about 25 msec, briefer than that of stop consonants, which typically have a closure duration of at least 50-60 msec (Catford 1977). In addition, a backing of the tongue co-occurring with the sound has been attested in Mangbetu (Demolin & Teston 1996) and Mono.

The second finding is that the labial flap is phonemically contrastive with other speech sounds in over a dozen languages. For example, in Mono, the flap contrasts with all other labial consonants. The following minimal (or near-minimal) pairs are attested:
The sound is well-attested in Mono and occurs in all major grammatical categories. In addition, the labial flap contrasts with the voiced bilabial trill in Meje (Rob McKee), and Baka (Parker 1985), with the voiced bilabial fricative in Sikka (Donohue, to appear) and with the labiodental approximant in Shona (Doke 1931).

Because of the significant number of languages in which the sound occurs, it should not be considered a phonetic rarity in the sense of Ladefoged & Everett (1996). Indeed, since the sound bears modal values for place and manner of articulation, it fits well into standard sets of phonological features or phonetic parameters. The fact that it is not widely attested may be due to its articulatory complexity (Lindblom & Maddieson 1988). These considerations, along with the evidence of contrast given above, argue for the inclusion of the sound in the alphabet of the International Phonetic Association.

The IPA principles suggest that the sound should be represented by a symbol without diacritics (International Phonetic Association 1999). Since the labiodental variant of the sound is more widely attested, and since the flap is voiced, the symbol should be related graphically to the sound. Another candidate is a hooktop with a fish-hook r (◎). The suggests a labiodental articulation, and the fish-hook suggests a flap articulation.

References


—Ken Olson is a graduate student in Linguistics. He is preparing a dissertation on the phonetics and phonology of Mono, based on his field work in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This is a shortened version of a paper that will appear in *The Journal of the International Phonetic Association*.
Continued from Page 3

a part of—then it follows that the teacher, through the fact that he/she speaks the students’ language, has access to their privacy, while they have none to his/hers. This, I believe, is the essence of the so-called “psychological barrier” occurring in the process of learning.

My recognition of this “barrier” in terms suggested by Anderson has been reinforced by my teaching experience at the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and especially, at the Summer Workshop of Eastern European Languages at Indiana University. During my several years of teaching, every term the same scenario has taken place. After the first few days of instruction, the students come after class to my office to tell me how their research is related to Poland, Polish culture and history. Considering the fact that my role is teaching the Polish language rather than helping students with their research, I assume that they come to demonstrate that they are intelligent, knowledgeable persons, capable of communicating much more than to jest dom (“this is a house”) and mam na imi e John (“my name is John”). Conversely, the fact that they come to communicate information about themselves has demonstrated to me the crucial importance of the communicative function of language—a function naturally deficient in the beginning language class. In other words, the students have tried to overcome precisely that deficiency by demonstrating that they have some access to the “privacy” of my language/culture. Based on this observation, I have concluded that, perhaps, I should begin the process of teaching by displaying what is common both to the target language and the language spoken by my students and not what is unique in the target language (like, for example, some details of its syntax); that I should display something in the target language that is familiar to them and would help them realize that we all live in a “shared universe of meaning” (Greimas).

Considering the great popularity of cinema, I have found that any film-related materials can be of great help in discovering both linguistic and cultural common ground. American students typically feel both surprised and pleased to find pictures of popular American actors, movie titles, etc. in Polish magazines. The photos not only greatly aid students’ navigation in the “common universe of meaning,” but also help to build the students’ confidence in their ability to deal with a foreign language, even at the very initial stage of study. Identifying familiar words within a text facilitates memorizing them; for example, in a short film-related text I used, the students “deciphered” without any prior help the meaning of the following words: film, telewizj, ABC, produkcja, seria, kontrola; they got the general idea of what the text was about, and guessed some of its details. Again, in doing this, students realize that they may have some access to the new language even without having learned a single word of it. In another exercise, I divided nouns denoting food items into columns of words, titled adequately and representing categories (beverages, fruit, meat, etc.)—with the general title “Food” on the top of the page. I distributed the handout to students without giving them any clue as to its meaning. After a few minutes, the students “deciphered” from 20 to 50 words out of 96, translated the noun on the top, and named several titles of the sub-categories.

The fact that languages have “something in common” at the semantic, lexical, and structural levels has another important implication for teaching practice, namely that students can use the skills they have in their native language to grasp grammatical rules in the target language—without having been lectured about those rules. Traditionally, the students first may learn an aspect of the target language and then implement their newly acquired knowledge in an exercise. In my classroom I often try to expose students to some practical use of the language first, and then make them discover the rule which I want them to master. The following exercise, demonstrating this approach, aims at teaching students a rule of Polish pronunciation. Presumably, the students have already learned the Polish alphabet, as well as the inventory of Polish consonants and vowels. Thus, they have learned that the Polish letter d (de) stands for the voiced consonant /d/. However, in actual pronunciation, this consonant may change its sound value and depending on the consonant that follows it, it may remain voiced or become voiceless. My students look at short poems about animals as a native speaker reads the poems to them. Then the students are asked if the poems have been read in a manner consistent with what they have learned about the way the Polish alphabet represents the sound value of Polish consonants. After a few readings students accurately find inconsistencies. They notice, for example, that in the word rzadki (‘rare’) the letter <d> has been read as [t]. Asked why the sound value of this consonant has changed, the students always give me the correct answer: /d/ is pronounced as [t] because the consonant that follows it is voiceless.
The vowel formant data do clearly show an increased use of the acoustic space in the post-implant sessions, a departure from the very tightly clustered tokens in the pre-implant recordings. Looking at the vowel duration, vowel word duration, and VOT data, an interesting pattern emerges. There is a tendency towards change away from pre-implant values at one month post-activation, and back towards pre-implant values at three months. There appears to be an overall increase in fundamental frequency with cochlear implant experience, which can be observed in both the vowel F₀ data and the intonational contour data. Subject MS’s post-activation comments about the intonation sentences are telling; she finds it difficult to hear intonation in her own speech, and the intonation patterns on the charts show a great deal of variation in the post-activation tokens.

MS’s data shows very different trends from those in the Perkell studies. The difficulties in comparing this study with the Perkell studies may result from MS’s comparatively short period of profound hearing loss (approximately four years, as compared to more than twenty years for the majority of the Perkell subjects). MS had very clear, articulate speech before she received the implant; thus it is not surprising that there were few significant changes in her speech after the implant was activated.

— Joanna H. Lowenstein is a graduate student in Linguistics, and is preparing a dissertation on the speech production and perception of adults with cochlear implants. This is an abstract of a portion of her dissertation work, which she recently presented at the International Clinical Phonetics and Linguistics Association (ICPLA) Conference in Edinburgh.

Thus, the students discover and articulate a rule of Polish pronunciation.

Students master the phonetic and grammatical rules faster and remember them better when they are led to discover those rules by themselves. Moreover, their participation in class becomes more active. They are being exposed to several aspects of the language all at once. The illustrations accompanying the poems reinforce remembering the names of the animals; the students see and hear the language; the poems are not artificial texts from a textbook but are an element of Polish culture. Learning a second language consists of mastering the grammatical structure and implementing the language’s communicative function, requiring an immersion in situations involving the active use of the language. In a language learning environment outside the culture it is important to expose students to a variety of learning experiences: interaction with others, games, puzzles, reading texts, listening to tapes, watching TV programs, interviewing native speakers, etc. In order for such a variety of experiences to be effective, the class must be thoroughly structured and evolve around a specific grammatical/lexical topic, so that that single topic is exposed from a variety of angles, within a single class unit.

The exercises I have demonstrated employ students’ native, linguistic skills only at the very beginning stage of learning. I have focused on that moment because I believe overcoming the “psychological barrier” is particularly important at this stage. However, the language classroom is the territory of encounter and exchange at any level of learning.

— Joanna Kurowska is a lecturer of Polish in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures. This article is a summary of the paper presented at the Language Symposium Perspective and Practice 2000: Innovations in Foreign Language Instruction on May 19-20, 2000 at Northwestern University.