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BRIDGING THE GAP: ONLINE MODULES FOR LESS COMMONLY TAUGHT LANGUAGES

Amy S. Thompson and Sandra L. Schneider
University of South Florida

Abstract

As language requirements burgeon at the post-secondary level in attempts to create global citizens out of college graduates, universities nationwide have seen a sharp increase in language course enrollments, especially in the Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL) courses (Furman, Goldberg, & Lusin, 2007). While this is a positive trend from an intellectual and cultural point-of-view, the sudden growth presents a unique set of problems for course implementation. There has been a current trend of offering language courses online to meet increasing demands for commonly taught languages (CTLs) (e.g., Chenoweth, Ushida, & Murday, 2006; Sanders, 2005), but little has been written about online offerings for LCTLs (c.f., Winke, Goertler, & Amuzie, 2010). To respond to the need for high-quality pedagogical materials for LCTLs and to compensate for the lack of face-to-face classroom settings, the Center for the Study of International Languages and Cultures (CSILC) at the University of South Florida (USF) has created lessons in Dari, Pashto, and Urdu for the Global Language Online Support System website (GLOSS; gloss.dliflc.gov) supported by the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center. This paper is an analysis of considerations that informed

the process and products of these modules. A discussion of implications and directions for further study concludes the paper.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Universities around the country are increasingly focused on the need to create global citizens out of college graduates. At the same time, universities have seen a sharp increase in language course enrollments, leaving many language departments scrambling to accommodate the influx of students with no increase in budget. In fact, as noted in Winke et al. (2010), “Over the last 10 years, there has been a trend in foreign language departments of offering hybrid or fully online distance learning classes to address issues of over enrollment, lack of classroom space, lack of qualified instructors, and budget cuts” (p. 199). In fact, according to Allen and Seaman (2010), in 2008, 25% of all postsecondary courses were offered online, despite the fact that only 33% of faculty support online teaching and that there have not been significant increases of support or training for those faculty who wish to teach their courses online. Specifically for language courses, there has been a growing trend of offering language courses online to meet increasing demands for language offerings for commonly taught languages (CTLs) such as English, French, and Spanish (e.g., Bañados, 2006; Chenoweth et al., 2006; Sanders, 2005).

For example, Chenoweth et al. (2006) investigate the effectiveness of online French and Spanish courses. Although there were some differences of student outcomes for the Spanish sections, the results indicate that the students in both the French and Spanish online and traditional classes learned a comparable amount of material. Interviews with the students involved in the online sections of the courses indicate that technical issues were sometimes frustrating to the students. The students also felt that not enough guidance was provided regarding how to use the website and when assignments were due, resulting in confusion throughout the course. This sentiment is echoed in O’Bryan (2008), who discusses the fact that learners need to be trained to use technology before they can reap the benefits of it. This particular study illustrates the importance of training sessions with students so that they can understand the learning objectives of the online lesson.

In another study involving online Spanish courses, Sanders (2005) describes an experimental hybrid Spanish course implemented in an attempt to reduce costs while at the same time increasing student enrollment. In this model, time spent in class was reduced from 200 minutes per week to 130 minutes per week with the time in class being spent mostly on communicative activities. Grammar, vocabulary,

reading, and writing activities were moved online. While those students in the traditional classes and those in the hybrid classes performed similarly in oral proficiency, the students in the traditional courses significantly outperformed the students in the hybrid classes on writing proficiency, which, “cast doubt on the redesign’s success” (p. 529). However, the hybrid courses did allow an increase of Spanish student enrollment of 85% and lowered the cost per student by 29%. Similar to Sanders (2005), Bañados (2006) describes a hybrid model for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in order to accommodate the growing demand for English language courses in Chile. The 39 students who piloted the blended course made improvements in speaking, listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, although these students’ gains were not compared to those in traditional English courses. Based on a student satisfaction survey, some of the students in this study felt that they were not given enough time to complete the out-of-class activities (32%) and that the allocated in-class time was not sufficient to reinforce the material studied independently (19%). Overall, however, the students were pleased with the blended EFL course.

Courses taught in the online modality need to be exceedingly well-planned, as the students are required to complete a substantial amount of work independently. At the onset of online course implementations, Chapelle (1998) provided 7 guidelines for the creation of online courses based on SLA research:

1. Making key linguistics characteristics salient
2. Offering modifications of linguistic input
3. Providing opportunities for “comprehensible input”
4. Providing opportunities for learners to notice their errors
5. Providing opportunities for learners to correct their linguistic output
6. Supporting modified interaction between the learner and the computer
7. Acting as a participant in L2 tasks

Chapelle (1998) also calls for regular evaluation of online courses to see if the aforementioned criteria are met. For example, is there evidence that the learners attended to the input? Are the learners producing “comprehensible output” and do they notice/correct their errors? Are they interacting with the lesson in a way that helps them work towards communicative goals? These evaluative suggestions offer guidance in developing online courses that are aligned with SLA theories about language learning.

Online materials have been shown to benefit a range of linguistic skills, including grammar acquisition (Peters, Weinberg, & Sarma, 2009), vocabulary

growth through word glosses (Chun, 2006), pronunciation (Cucchiaroni, Neri, & Strik, 2008), and to a lesser extent, pragmatics (Sykes & Cohen, 2009). There are also free programs available for teachers to create online lessons, such as *Quia* (<http://www.quia.com/>) and *Hot Potatoes* (<http://hotpot.uvic.ca>). Additionally there are free online language learning sites, such as Livemocha (<http://www.livemocha.com/>), the Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning (COERLL) at the University of Texas (<http://coerll.utexas.edu/coerll/home>), and the Global Language Online Support System (GLOSS) (<http://gloss.dliflc.edu>). Sites such as these provide attractive interactive activities that encourage learners to stay on task for a longer period of time, a habit that eventually leads to greater language learning success (Blake, 2011).

Can these types of online models be successfully implemented if the language in question is a Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL)? Brown (2009) argues that LCTL students differ from traditional students in several important ways, namely that they are typically older and have studied more than one foreign language. Winke et al. (2010) also indicate that compared to students taking CTLs, the LCTL students are relatively less interested in taking classes that are online or hybrid, perhaps partially because of the difficulty in typing in a non-Roman script when used to typing using the Roman alphabet (e.g., Blake, Wilson, Cetto, & Pardo-Ballester, 2008). Winke et al. (2010) describe LCTL courses as being in an “especially precarious position” being that these programs could benefit greatly from an online or hybrid format, “...yet these learners are among the very ones who self-describe themselves as less computer literate and less willing to enroll in a hybrid or online course” (p. 210). The authors conclude the article by stating, “For many universities, partially or fully online course are administratively advantageous, logistically necessary, or even crucial for the continuation of LCTL programs” (p. 212).

To put enrollment matters into perspective, the number of students enrolled in CTLs and LCTLs also needs to be examined. According to the Modern Language Association (MLA) data base, the number of students in 2009 enrolled nationally in the LCTLs discussed in this article was as follows: Dari 17, Pashto 19, and Urdu 335. In contrast, Spanish had an enrollment of 864,986 in 2009, and French had an enrollment of 216,419 (http://www.mla.org/flsurvey_search). The implications of these numbers are clear – most of the resources allocated to foreign language instruction and materials development will be given to those languages that attract larger numbers of students. Thus, LCTLs will remain underfunded, understaffed, and in danger of being eliminated in the face of budget cuts. As evidenced from the

current research, a potential sustainable means of providing LCTL courses could rely on the economic efficiencies gained by being at least partially online. Doing so can perhaps motivate language learners to become lifelong learners instead of simply taking a language to fill the university requirement (Blake, 2011).

The following section discusses one possible format for implementing online language modules. In particular, the focus is on the potential for leveraging much of the work that is being done within the U.S. Military to provide practical language training to those who will be placed on field assignments in areas of the world in which LCTLs are the primary languages spoken. The similarities and differences between academic and military approaches to language learning are discussed, and suggestions for building an online infrastructure that can be beneficial to language learners from both communities are provided.

ONLINE LANGUAGE LEARNING: THE EXAMPLE OF THE GLOBAL LANGUAGE ONLINE SUPPORT SYSTEM (GLOSS)

A practical reality is that resources will be directed to areas of critical need. This tends to create problems for offering LCTLs in academia, but in the military this need-based demand has had interesting consequences, at least for some languages. Over the last few decades, military language centers such as the Defense Language Institute and the Air Force Culture and Language Center have developed strong programs in LCTL training for those languages that are of critical interest for national security. With the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars, for instance, there has been a huge identified need and subsequent effort to educate officers and communications specialists in languages such as Arabic, Kurdish, Urdu, Pashto, and Dari. The scramble to prepare the troops for the realities of engagement in a part of the world that is linguistically unfamiliar to most Americans has provided numerous challenges. Many of these challenges are being met with creative learning tools such as the use of materials that include authentic language, including newspaper articles and conversations between native speakers of the target languages. These materials would also be useful in more traditional learning settings (e.g., Ghiringhelli, 2011; Jackson & Kaplan, 1999; McFarland, 2005).

The Center for the Study of International Languages and Cultures (CSILC) at the University of South Florida (USF) was created in 2007 with the mission to promote global understanding through integrated programs of language and sociocultural studies with a focus on critical world regions. With a team of scholars, translators, lesson developers, and technical staff, CSILC has created almost 1,000

online content-based lessons in critical world languages including Arabic and Farsi, and most recently, Dari, Pashto, and Urdu. CSILC has collaborated with the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center in the development of these online lessons. This collaboration grew out of USF's strategic plan to promote goals of Global Literacy through its programs, with particular sensitivity to issues identified within the U.S. Military. USF is in a unique position to act as a key academic link between the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) and the Department of Defense because CENTCOM and USF are both located in Tampa. These connections have created special attention to developing programs in the languages and cultures of critical regions such as China, the Middle East and North Africa, and Central and South Asia.

The Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) contracted with CSILC from 2007-2010 to complete several phases of what was unofficially called the Critical Languages Project. The Critical Languages Project was designed to create self-contained lessons that reinforce language learning and simultaneously teach about the culture, politics, history, religion, economy, and geography of the region in which the critical language is spoken. These lessons were created for possible inclusion in DLIFLC's open-access language tool known as GLOSS (<http://gloss.dliflc.edu>). GLOSS is an open-use resource with lessons that provide self-guided study of authentic language materials for anyone with internet access. GLOSS lessons are integrated interdisciplinary modules designed at multiple language levels to increase the independent learner's familiarity with and proficiency in over 30 languages. The primary users of GLOSS are U.S. government personnel who are training and practicing for language-related positions within the military; however, the lessons are available to anyone who has internet access and wants to use them.

In its most recent phase, CSILC's Critical Languages Project has focused on building online lesson modules compatible with GLOSS in Dari and Pashto covering content on Afghanistan and its neighbors, and in Urdu and Pashto covering content on Pakistan and its neighbors. These lessons focus on both reading and listening skills, and reinforce language training from elementary to general professional proficiency (Interagency Language Roundtable [ILR] levels 1-3), while at the same time providing useful information about the characteristics and cultures of the region.

A defining feature of the Critical Languages Project is that every lesson combines language and area studies content, and wherever possible incorporates authentic materials available from the countries of interest in text and audio formats,

with English translations provided. Lesson modules are provided in self-study units that focus on strengthening vocabulary, grammar, and cultural knowledge, and are available as stand-alone lessons or as supplements to in-class lessons and field experiences. The online format emphasizes flexibility and accessibility of lessons, and takes advantage of technological tools associated with the internet, data management, and distance learning. CSILC's online lessons follow a rigorous plan of development with multiple check points, reviews, and quality assurance measures throughout the development process.

Guiding Philosophy for Module Creation

CSILC embraces the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach to language pedagogy (e.g., Ellis, 2005, 2006; Savignon, 2005). Learning objectives include all aspects of communicative competence, and are therefore more expansive than grammatical competence alone. Lessons are designed to actively engage learners, focusing on pragmatic features of the language (i.e., situationally appropriate language) and meaningful applications of these pedagogical tasks to real-world tasks, thus endorsing task-based language teaching (TBLT). From the outset, students are encouraged not only to receive target language input but also to produce target language output in both written and oral forms, and to engage in interactions that increase their communicative competence, preparing them for target language interactions beyond the classroom. To encourage success, especially early on, a balance between fluency and accuracy must be maintained in order to facilitate willingness to use the language in interactions. Fostering the motivation to learn and use the language must always remain central to the teaching process.

The principles that CSILC uses to guide the lesson content are part of the CLT approach. Below are brief explanations of the principles from Ellis (2005) that directly informed the development of the online modules:

Principle 1 (Instruction needs to ensure that learners develop both a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and a rule-based competence): Introductory level lessons focus on basic communicative functions such as making introductions and asking for directions. Later lessons expand to less routine contexts and begin to introduce the grammatical rules necessary to apply common expressions with greater flexibility (e.g., using pronouns, changing person).

Principle 2 (Instruction needs to ensure that learners focus predominantly on meaning) and

Principle 3 (Instruction needs to ensure that learners also focus on form): Communicative tasks are especially helpful in accomplishing focus on both meaning and form. Online modules are composed of a wide variety of activities which facilitate interactive practice in a meaningful setting. Focus on Form is a part of the lesson and is emphasized when errors in meaning within the given context require an understanding of particular grammatical features. Pointing out common errors in grammar within a context can facilitate learning and later application of explicit grammatical rules.

Principle 4 (Instruction needs to be predominantly directed at developing implicit knowledge of the L2 while not neglecting explicit knowledge): Language learning involves both explicit (conscious) knowledge and implicit (procedural, unconscious) knowledge. Reinforcing both types of learning within lesson modules (e.g., through repeated contact and distributed practice) is essential to balanced second language development. Contexts such as conversations and interviews are commonly used to provide a structure that can simultaneously support implicit learning while introducing thematic content material.

Principle 5 (Instruction needs to take into account the learner's 'built-in syllabus'): Language learning follows a natural sequence of acquisition. Based on this awareness, as well as acknowledgment of inevitable idiosyncrasies across languages, CSILC's Director of Language Pedagogy developed guidelines for introducing grammar constructions at each ILR level for the languages in question.

Principle 6 (Successful instructed language learning requires extensive L2 input),

Principle 7 (Successful instructed language learning also requires opportunities for output), and

Principle 8 (The opportunity to interact in the L2 is central to developing L2 proficiency): Language learners need to have routine opportunities to experience the target language and also to produce the target language. To promote success, these opportunities must be geared towards the current

competence of the learner and to the pragmatic functions that can be successfully achieved at that level. In an online context, there are several forms of language input and output that are easy to provide and support, which is a vital strength of online lesson modules. However, there is also the challenge of reaching beyond routine interactive exercises to get as close as possible to actual interactions. It is particularly important to focus on opportunities to engage the learner in differentiating subtleties of meaning through language input and output, and to combine this with the kind of immediate feedback that will facilitate the differentiation process.

Principle 9 (Instruction needs to take account of individual differences in learners): Language learners have diverse learning styles and preferences; thus, the modules incorporate a range of topics and activities in both oral and written modalities. A strength in this approach is the focus on providing content information about the cultures and characteristics of the countries in which the languages are spoken. This focus offers great flexibility in capturing the interest of the learner, and it also affords different approaches to activity development, depending on the topic. Additionally, the use of authentic materials can contribute substantially to learner motivation, provided there is sufficient ancillary information to place the authentic material in a meaningful context.

ILR Language Proficiency Scales

Consistent with the approach of the DLIFLC, the language difficulty level of CSILC's lessons are based on the ILR language proficiency scales. The ILR scales have become the standard for all U.S. government language applications; although it was not until the 1950's that the U.S. government recognized the need to establish a standard for assessing foreign language proficiency (Herzog, 2011). World War II and the Korean War were particularly influential in bringing attention to the need for information about the language abilities of the citizens of the U.S. In 1952, the Civil Service Commission was charged with conducting an inventory and developing a registry of the language abilities of government employees. However, there was no accepted system, either within the government or academia, for a standardized assessment of language proficiency. There were no widely accepted or well-documented criteria for categorizing language skills or for constructing valid test measures (Clark & Clifford, 1988). As a result, the Civil Service Commission, with leadership from the Foreign Service Institute, set out to create an objective and

cross-cutting system for evaluating language proficiency. The ILR committee eventually grew out of this effort.

By 1958, language proficiency testing was required for all Foreign Service Officers; nevertheless, the early attempts of the Foreign Service Institute proved problematic (Herzog, 2011). Over time, a six-point scale was developed to standardize levels across languages for reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Levels range from 0 (indicating no functional ability) to 5 (indicated ability equivalent to that of an educated native speaker). With consultation from Harvard Professor John B. Carroll, standardized criterion-based factors were created and refined for scoring, and a structured interview protocol was implemented (Sollenberger, 1978). In time, after establishing requisite reliability, this 6-point scale was accepted as the standard test of language proficiency for Foreign Service Officers and gained popularity in other government agencies, including the Peace Corps. Throughout these early years, the ILR served as an unofficial advisory group consisting of members of various federal agencies interested in language training and testing. In 1973, ILR was formally institutionalized as a “Federal interagency organization established for the coordination and sharing of information about language-related activities at the Federal level.” One of its most important functions has been the creation and dissemination of what is now known as the ILR Scale, comprising the official descriptions of accepted Government Language Skill Levels for reading, listening, speaking, and writing. All U.S. agencies are required to adhere to the ILR Level Definitions as the standard for assessing language proficiency (Herzog, 2011).

The impact of the ILR Scale has not been limited to government agencies. It has also been felt in the academic community, although its visibility is not as great. The Proficiency Guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) published in the 1980s borrowed directly from the ILR definitions, and it is no coincidence that ACTFL also routinely employs Oral Proficiency Interviews as the primary tool for language proficiency assessment (Clark & Clifford, 1988). ACTFL has worked closely with the U.S. government to ensure that the two systems for gauging language proficiency continue to be complementary to one another (Liskin-Gasparro, 2003). Table 1 below is a comparison of the ILR and ACTFL scales taken from <http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/languagelearning/mangngyrlngglrnngprgrm/CorrespondenceOfProficiencySca.htm>.

Table 1: Definitions and Comparison of ILR and ACTFL Scales

ILR Scale	ACTFL Scale	Definition
5	Native	Able to speak like an educated native speaker
4+	Distinguished	Able to speak with a great deal of fluency, grammatical accuracy, precision of vocabulary and idiomaticity
4		
3+	Superior	Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations
3		
2+	Advanced Plus	Able to satisfy most work requirements and show some ability to communicate on concrete topics
2	Advanced	Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements
1+	Intermediate - High	Able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands
1	Intermediate - Mid	Able to satisfy some survival needs and some limited social demands
	Intermediate - Low	Able to satisfy basic survival needs and minimum courtesy requirements
0+	Novice - High	Able to satisfy immediate needs with learned utterances
0	Novice - Mid	Able to operate in only a very limited capacity
	Novice - Low	Unable to function in the spoken language
	0	No ability whatsoever in the language

ILR Proficiency and Structuring Online Language Modules

The online modules that CSILC has created in Dari, Pashto, and Urdu range from ILR Level 1 to ILR Level 3 and focus on the development of reading and listening skills. In order to deliver lessons at these varying levels of proficiency, the guidelines provided for the ILR reading and listening scales (see www.govtilr.org) were adopted and the quality assurance plan was created with the goal of ensuring that the characteristics of each level were met in the lesson. Table 2 illustrates how the ILR skills for reading at Level 2 were used to create a system for evaluating the appropriateness of a given online module. The ILR Skill descriptions specify general characteristics of the text, expected level of understanding, and likely areas of weakness. These specifications can then be used strategically to build modules that will be consistent with the stated level, and will be targeted at confirming the anticipated level of understanding and building on expected areas of weakness.

Table 2: Illustration of CSILC Quality Assurance Checks

Level	ILR Reading Skill Description: Reading	Quality Assurance Check
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read simple, authentic written material in a form equivalent to usual printing or typescript on subjects within a familiar context. • Read with some misunderstandings straightforward, familiar, factual material. • Locate and understand the main ideas and details in material written for the general reader. • Read uncomplicated, but authentic prose on familiar subjects that are normally presented in a predictable sequence. • Texts: news items describing frequently occurring events, simple biographical information, social notices, formulaic business letters, and material written for the general reader. • Generally able to read straightforward/high-frequency sentence patterns. • No broad active vocabulary, but is able to use contextual and real-world cues to understand the text. • Typically able to answer factual questions about authentic texts of the types described above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm font is standard to target language and authoring tool. • Verify that text is factual and questions require no inference. • Ensure that main proposition of passage is common topic. • Review sequence of passage events to ensure predictability. • Content of passage texts should be substantially similar to suggested example topics and formats. • Assess frequency of sentence structures for clarity. • Confirm the presence of necessary information in text. • Confirm vocabulary level and that content questions limited to fact comprehension.

The Source in Online Lessons

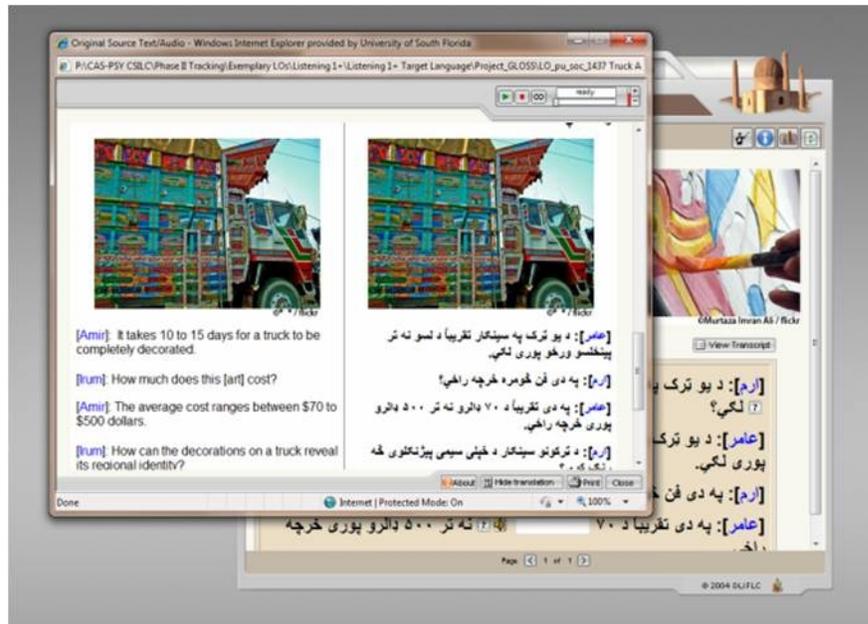
The centerpiece of each Critical Languages Project lesson is called the *source* and is typically comprised of a piece of authentic material. The source is a written text, audio clip, or other studio quality interactive presentation for which copyright permission has been obtained or which is copyright-free. The term ‘authentic material’ in this case is operationalized to mean that the material was produced with native speakers of the language as the intended audience; these authentic materials were not originally produced as pedagogical tools. A sample of the resources used for sources include *Institute for War and Peace Reporting* (<http://www.iwpr.net>) for news articles written by the country’s journalists-in-training, with articles available in multiple languages including Pashto and Dari; *Central Asia Online* (<http://centralasiaonline.com>) for regional news in South-Central Asia sponsored by U.S. CENTCOM and published in English and Urdu; and *Jadidonline* (<http://Jadidonline.com>) for general interest lessons about Iran and neighboring countries presented mostly in Farsi but with some entries in English and Dari. Occasionally, especially for more elementary-level lessons, pedagogical materials,

such as simple communications, were created by native speakers that were more appropriate in difficulty for early language learners.

Depending on the language level, the source is between 150 and 800 words for written texts, and 1.5 and 6 minutes for audio materials. Regardless of whether the module's focus is on reading or listening, the source materials are made available within the lesson in both text and audio formats. A written translation of the source in English is also always available. Students can read or listen to the source as often as desired, and they can access the English translation at any time.

Figure 1 below provides an example of the written English and Urdu versions of an audio source describing truck art in Pakistan. Every lesson centers on reading or listening to the source. When the source page is first accessed, only the target language is visible. If students desire, they can click on a labeled icon to see the English translation. As they work their way through the lesson, they can at any time click to access the source again, and then to listen to it in the TL or read it in either English or the TL. In this example, two of our TL specialists created this conversation which we recorded as the source. They then transcribed their conversation into written Urdu and finally translated it into English.

Figure 1: English and Urdu text of an audio conversation about truck art in Pakistan



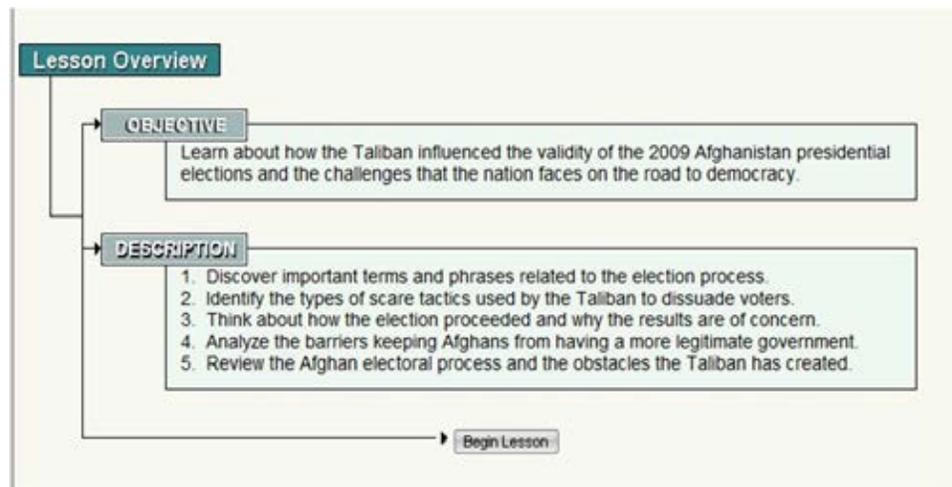
The illustration above was the source of a Level 1+ online lesson focused on listening. The icon that allows the student to listen to all or part of the conversation can be seen in the upper right hand corner of the source page. A fill-in-the-blank activity is partially visible behind the source page.

Lesson Activities

In addition to the source, the lesson is comprised of 3-6 activities accompanied by written feedback on the correct and incorrect answers. Throughout the activities, lessons include detailed Teacher Notes in English to elaborate content or grammar topics. The activities include various types of matching, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and open-ended exercises. In general, the activities are the equivalent of about 20-25 different questions about the content and language within the source.

Each of the activities is introduced through a lesson overview that includes an overall lesson objective and a description of what will be learned within each of the activities. Figure 2 below provides the lesson overview for an ILR Level 2.5 reading lesson from a Dari news article reporting events that illustrated Taliban influence on the 2009 Afghanistan election. The description of activities illustrates how language and content will be combined throughout the lesson, while previewing what will occur within each activity.

Figure 2: Lesson overview with overall objective and description of 5 lesson activities.

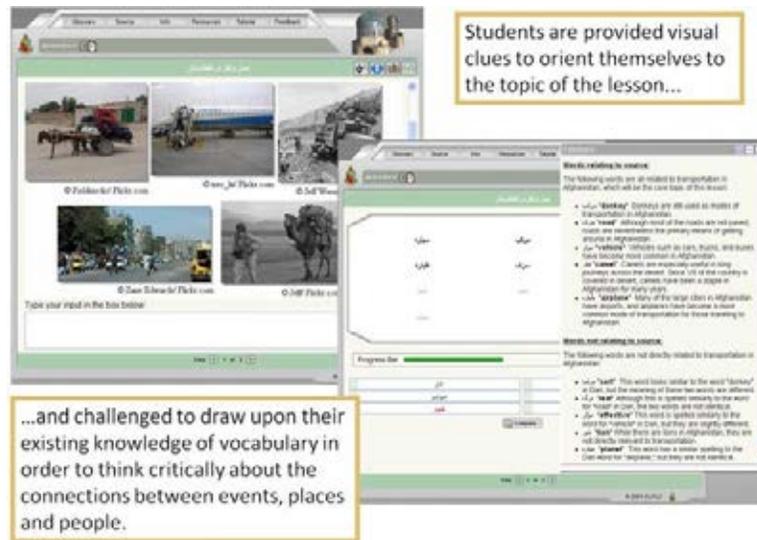


The lessons are structured so that each activity builds on the previous one(s) and is logically connected in a coherent way that helps the students understand what they should be getting out of the activity and how it fits in with the larger goal of the lesson. Activities typically appear in an order similar to the following (although for listening modules, this sequence may be slightly modified in order to present source segments in chronological order):

1. Pre-reading or pre-listening/schema activation
2. Reading/listening for the main idea
3. Focus on Analysis and Linguistic Aspects
4. Wrap-up/summary

The **pre-reading or pre-listening/schema activation** activity is designed to orient the student to the topic of the module and the context within which the source material needs to be understood. The first activity is generally completed before reading the source material. The **Teacher's Note** generally provides some background to the students to help them understand what is to be learned and why it matters, or to provide hints of what will be discussed in the source. Sample activities might include: a) write down three things you know about ***, b) answer these questions before you read the passage, c) look at these pictures and guess what the topic of the source will be, or d) match these related words. These activities are designed to be thought-provoking, encouraging students to think about what they already know about a topic, or what they want to learn from the lesson. The activity itself in Figure 3 appears in a screen as represented on the left. Students click the blue icon in the upper right hand corner of the screen to read the instructions for the activity, which are written in the TL but can also be accessed in English. In this case, students would be encouraged to generate as many words in Dari as they can to describe the modes of transportation in the pictures and to write down related words or ideas in English that they hope to learn in the lesson. When finished, students view related words in Dari by moving to the next screen which appears in this figure as the screen on the right. Here, they would pick out the Dari words related to the topic, and differentiate them from words that may appear similar but have distinctly different meanings. This would be guided by detailed feedback to make sure they understand the subtle differences in form as well as the stark differences in meaning.

Figure 3: Pre-reading activity for an ILR Level 1.5 Dari reading lesson



The **reading/listening for the main idea** activity is designed to ensure that the student has understood the main idea or major themes within the text. Students are tested on their assessment of the purpose of the source material or the main arguments for or against the basic proposition within the source material. This is sometimes done through direct questions but may also include asking the student to distinguish between ideas that are consistent or inconsistent with the main point, or that are essential versus peripheral, or to sort arguments according to the position they support, or to order the sequence of events or logical arguments. The **Teacher's Note** generally provides information (with citation or URL) that accentuates the main points in the text or provides help to students that will aid them in clarifying the major points. Figure 4 provides an example of an activity from a Dari lesson at ILR Level 2 from a radio broadcast about the Islamic Battle for Karbala. The activity requires students to arrange a chronology of the events that they learned about concerning this famous battle. The figure also shows the feedback that the student would receive after completing the task. The final point in the feedback provides additional information about the source and suggests additional reading for those students who might be interested in learning more about the topic.

Figure 4: Activity focused on extracting the main idea through a listing of the chronology of events presented in an ILR Level 2.5 radio broadcast in Dari

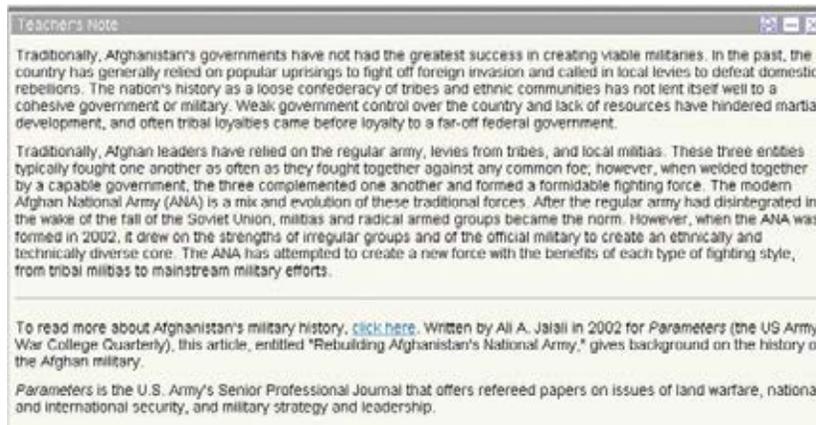
The **focus on analysis and linguistic aspects** activities (activities 3 and 4) generally focus on getting the student to analyze particular arguments, detect biases, or consider alternative views. Although less often emphasized, these activities might also include evaluating various aspects of grammar illustrated within the source. The **Teacher's Note** here can provide a wide variety of additional useful information, either for illustrating a grammatical principle or for providing suggestions for methods of argument analysis, or adding additional background information. Figures 5 and 6 illustrate some of the tools used to embellish these activities.

Figure 5 illustrates an ILR Level 1.5 activity about charitable hospitals in Pakistan that encourages students to advance their language skills by using the pictures on the left to help interpret the sentences in Urdu provided on the right. Figure 6 is a Teacher's Note from an ILR Level 3 Pashto lesson on Afghanistan's military history. It illustrates the importance of providing contextual background necessary to complete the language-based lesson as well as offering additional resources to add to the student's general content knowledge of the topic.

Figure 5: Images



Figure 6: Teacher's Note



The **wrap-up/summary** is the final module exercise and should typically try to help the student see the bigger picture, summarize what has been learned, or focus on the unresolved issues that a particular source material emphasizes (e.g., summarizing all or parts of the text; distinguishing fact from opinion; perhaps even going back to the pre-reading questions and asking students to answer them). **Teacher's Notes** again focus on enhancing the analytical skills needed to complete the activity or might provide a description of important related topic(s) and citation(s) for further reading. Figure 7 provides an example from an Urdu listening lesson at ILR Level 2.5. This is an ILR Level 2.5 Listening module which shows a

series of statements that participants must differentiate as central or not with respect to the lessons overall objective. The figure also illustrates the use of hints or guidelines to assist students if they are having trouble completing the activity.

Figure 7: Example of an evaluative activity to summarize what has been learned in the module. Students are also encouraged to submit summaries in English before checking their answers.



Module Creation Process

To create these vastly varied yet highly structured modules, a sophisticated system to coordinate the efforts of scholars, instructors, translators, media specialists, technical assistants, and quality assurance personnel has been developed and fine-tuned. In addition, a systematic feedback process based on DLIFLC's review, in which independent learners and TL instructors completed the lessons and provided detailed evaluations of the overall lessons and all of their constituent parts was conducted. This system facilitates the ease with which these types of learning products can be generated, and the resulting process flexibly translates to facilitate

the development of content at multiple educational levels for a variety of cultures and languages. Lessons are developed in organized sets with several selections in various areas. Each lesson can be explored individually or as part of a larger curriculum. Table 3 below offers a sense of the variety of course topics that can be covered from lessons that we have created for DLIFLC's online offerings.

Table 3: Sample Module Topics for DLIFLC's Online LCTL Offerings

Language	Country	Area Focus	Title of Lesson
Urdu	Pakistan	History	The Role of Women in the Freedom Movement
Urdu	Pakistan	Politics	Pakistan India Relations
Urdu	Pakistan	Culture	Cricket Mania
Urdu	Pakistan	Religion	Shi'a and Sunni Muslims in Pakistan
Urdu	Pakistan	Geography	The Threat of Earthquakes Near the Hindu Kush
Urdu	Pakistan	Economy	Pakistan's Electricity Crisis
Dari/Pashto	Afghanistan	History	The Great Game: Afghanistan Caught Between The British Empire and Russia
Dari/Pashto	Afghanistan	Politics	Combating Political Corruption in Afghanistan
Dari/Pashto	Afghanistan	Culture	Who Wants to Be the Next Afghan Star? A Popular Singing Competition in Afghanistan
Dari/Pashto	Afghanistan	Religion	Madrasahs and Education
Dari/Pashto	Afghanistan	Geography	The Durand Line
Dari/Pashto	Afghanistan	Economy	The Taliban as Employers for the Unemployed

Additionally, potential grammar topics were discussed among the module creation team (supervisors, TL experts, and the director of pedagogy) and a level-specific grammatical syllabus was agreed upon. Since the TL experts had varying levels of metalinguistic knowledge, the director of pedagogy asked questions such as, "How do you ask a question in Dari?" and "When someone is older than you, do you address them differently than someone who is younger than you?" Through this cooperative process, a level-specific grammatical syllabus was negotiated. Because of a lack of access to pedagogical materials for Dari, Pashto, and Urdu, the potential grammatical syllabus was created by CSILC's director of pedagogy with input from the native speakers of the target language. The negotiation between L1 English supervisors and TL speakers is a common occurrence when dealing with LCTLs (both in face-to-face settings and online) and will be revisited in the discussion section.

With a team of scholars, translators, lesson developers, and technical staff, CSILC has created user-friendly, instructional modules in Dari, Pashto, and Urdu, which ascribe to the tenets of CLT. Although these modules were created upon request of the DLIFLC for assistance in military training, they are likely (along with modules created by others) to become part of an open-access website that can be

used by the general public as well. Below is a discussion of some of the issues encountered while developing these language learning modules as well as issues to consider when undertaking similar projects.

DISCUSSION

Having presented a review of the current literature about online instruction as well as an overview of the GLOSS modules, a description of the module creation process as well as implications for further directions are needed. As mentioned in the literature review, online materials oftentimes provide more ‘learning time’ only if the learners choose to take advantage of the materials (Blake, 2011). Additionally, for successful language learning, learners must notice salient features of the input, produce output, and have the chance to receive feedback or notice errors in the output they created (Chapelle, 1998). One advantage of using technology for the input-output-feedback sequence is that the student can have access to input as often as needed without placing undue burden on the language instructor.

Specifically regarding some of the LCTLs, quality of instruction oftentimes becomes an issue. For languages like Dari, Pashto, and Urdu, finding native speakers or linguistically competent non-native speakers is challenging, and finding highly competent language users who also have sound pedagogical training is oftentimes impossible. It has also been discussed anecdotally (although there is no empirical evidence on the topic) that there are sometimes problems with the LCTL instructor communicating with the supervisor because of a lack of competency in a mutual language. For example, in the discussions with the TL specialists about the grammatical features of Dari, Pashto, and Urdu, the director of pedagogy, who had no specific experience with the languages in question, conferred with the TL specialists largely in the absence of supportive reference materials. There were several reasons for this, including the overall lack of pedagogical materials created for the languages in question as well as the relative inaccessibility of these materials. Although communication was overall successful, there were trying moments when conversations became cyclical because of linguistic misunderstandings.

The difficulty of creating materials for LCTLs is not an issue to be taken lightly. Because of this and other aforementioned reasons, for some languages, online instruction may be preferable so that more time can be allocated to creating collectively accessible, high quality materials; the pedagogically trained speakers of these languages can create pedagogically sound materials that can be made available to students in a variety of settings, as opposed to each instructor individually

creating materials (see also <http://www.lmp.ucla.edu/> for a collection of resources for LCTLs). As noted in the MLA report, the number of students taking certain languages also needs to be considered. For the languages in this project, the numbers are small: Dari 17, Pashto 19, Urdu 335. In cases such as these, pedagogically sound online materials that can benefit more of the enrolled students are crucial.

However, the controversy arises when considering the results of studies such as Winke et al. (2010). This study indicates that although the LCTL courses would greatly benefit from use of the online modality to keep these language courses a viable part of the language learning curriculum, the LCTL students are, in fact, the most resistant to the online delivery method. A related concern is that students who take online language courses need to be more intrinsically motivated to be successful. Although the structure of online language courses is designed for ample practice and feedback, the students themselves have to be motivated to use all of the features of the online lessons. This is not always the case, as illustrated by O'Bryan (2005). Participants in that study did not make use of the clickable "gloss" function that provided them with more information about the lexical items in question (see also Hegelheimer & Tower, 2004, for further information on this issue).

Some of these obstacles can be overcome by training the learners to successfully use online materials. O'Bryan (2008), in fact, discusses the importance of training language learners to use technology effectively in order to obtain the maximum effect that the technology offers. As stated in Hubbard (2004), teaching learners to effectively use technology in language learning helps the learners to understand the impetus behind the activities, thereby making them more autonomous learners. Farrell and Jacobs (2010) discuss learner autonomy as one of the crucial components of CLT, and describe it as when "...the teacher no longer shoulders the entire burden of running the classroom, with students taking on more rights and responsibilities for their own learning" (p. 18). Thus, the implementation of technology in language learning situations also benefits the students in face-to-face settings in that it helps them develop a type of language learning autonomy, giving them the skills to interact with others in the classroom rather than exclusively depending on the teacher for language learning facilitation.

In addition, online lessons have historically provided little chance for verbal output. As indicated in Chapelle (1998), online classes need to provide ample opportunities for output in order to align with second language acquisition theories. However, for logistical reasons, the majority of output that students produce during the online modality is in written form. One exception to this is the Open Language Learning Initiative (OLLI - <http://www.olliproject.com/index.html>) described in

McCloskey, Thrush, Wilson-Patton, and Kleckova (2008), which makes some use of voice recognition software. Projects like this are the exception, rather than the rule, however, as most output for online courses does not have the means to offer opportunities for the learners to speak (at least not in a context involving feedback or interaction).

Another issue to consider is the use of the L1 versus the target language in online lessons. It is, of course, the case that TL use is also variable in face-to-face classrooms (see Polio & Duff, 1994, for an in-depth discussion of this issue), but in a face-to-face setting, the teacher has at his or her disposal a variety of tools to induce comprehension. In an online setting, this is not the case, resulting in an L1 interface in most cases, especially at the beginning levels. This point is illustrated in the examples given for the GLOSS system described in this project, as well as in Kraemer, Ahn, Hillman, and Fei (2009). Online language lessons oftentimes use L1 translations of the target language to try to keep the students engaged and motivated, even though L1 translations are generally not encouraged in CLT.

Thus far, the GLOSS modules have been evaluated by internal members of CSILC and of the DLIFLC but have not been evaluated empirically. For evaluative purposes, one model to follow is that of Kraemer et al. (2009) in which the students who had used Multimedia Interactive Modules for Education and Assessment (MIMEA) evaluated the program in several areas: perceptions of the effectiveness of MIMEA in language skill development, relevance to language study, motivation for future language study, and general feelings about using online modules for language and culture study. Other than self-report data, it would also be valuable to measure the students' language improvement by use of the GLOSS modules. Since the primary goal of the GLOSS modules (and modules like them) is that of communicative competence, one way of testing linguistic progress would be by the use of a communicatively-based standardized test such as ACTFL's Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). A group of learners could take an OPI before and after completing a set of modules, and a t-test could be used to analyze the significance of linguistic gain.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

What are the goals and backgrounds of the LCTL students? Should these be considered when designing lessons? Because there are relatively few classes of LCTLs, student goals are oftentimes not taken into consideration. However, as illustrated in Brown (2009), LCTL students have a tendency to differ from CTL

students in several ways, including the fact that the majority of LCTL students have previously studied other languages. This fact should be a consideration in the design and implementation of LCTL courses, as those who are learning their second foreign language tend to be more efficient in the language learning process and "...as little as one or two years of formal instruction in a non-native language can affect the acquisition of another non-native language to a significant level" (De Angelis, 2007, p. 6). Additionally, a relatively large number of LCTL students are heritage learners when compared to those students in CTLs (Brown, 2009). Heritage language learners oftentimes have different needs than non-heritage learners with regards to language study (Montrul, 2011). For example, Reynolds, Howard, and Deák (2009) found that non-heritage language learners were more likely to study a language for career-related (extrinsic) motives, whereas heritage learners were more likely to study a language to establish cultural connections with family members. (See Lee, 2005, and Valdés, 2005, for a discussion of the term *heritage learner*). Other than the research on heritage language learners, the current LCTL literature does not analyze language choices of students who plan to use a LCTL for professional reasons. For example, many military personnel study LCTLs; however, research is typically done in a 4-year university setting in which a high number of military personnel are not present. To this date, there are not any empirical studies in mainstream applied linguistics journals that report on the frequency of study of LCTLs with reference to the military.

Both language instructors and students need structure for language lessons around which to build communicative activities. Although there have been misconceptions in the past regarding the perceived lack of grammar instruction included in CLT, current literature on CLT places a stronger emphasis on the inclusion of grammar instruction when needed (Ellis, 2005). Both implicit and explicit grammar instruction is needed in language learning, depending on the context, as grammatical competence is one of the factors for successful communicative competence (Ellis, 2006; Larsen-Freeman, 2003). As such, appropriate grammatical features need to be integrated into communicatively-based lesson plans built around authentic materials.

This article does not intend to make the argument that online language modules should replace face-to-face courses; both are needed and, in fact, should have a symbiotic relationship. There are certain benefits that online modules can offer such as more 'learning time' if the learners choose to take advantage of the materials (Blake, 2011). However, face-to-face courses offer instruction that can be tailored to the needs and goals of individual learners. With user-friendly, online language

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modules, technology can be utilized as a beneficial language learning tool for both students and instructors to enhance the language learning process as a whole.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Amy S. Thompson is an assistant professor of applied linguistics in the Department of World Languages at the University of South Florida and is the former director of pedagogy at CSILC. Her primary research interests involve Individual Differences in SLA. She teaches a range of graduate level theoretical and methodological courses in applied linguistics.

Sandra L. Schneider is a professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of South Florida (USF). She is the former director of USF's Center for the Study of International Languages and Cultures (CSILC), and has also served as USF's Associate Vice President of Research and Innovation as well as the National Science Foundation's Division Director for Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences.

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