

APLISC NEWSLETTER

2nd Semester - 2008 Volume 17, Issue 2

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Message from the President



Dear APLISC members,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to our Newsletter's last issue in 2008. To start with it is important to mention that we had a very fruitful year, in which new actions were undertaken and special events took place. Secondly, I would like to congratulate the editorial committee, for all the efforts that were put together in order to make this on-line publication an opportunity to enrich our knowledge about theoretical and practical issues that permeate the teaching of English as a foreign language.

In the current issue, in the spotting the problem section, we offer an article, written by Gabriela Brum who, from a theoretical perspective, clarifies the construct of communicative competence, and highlights the importance of this construct for language pedagogy.

If you are interested in pronunciation issues, it will be a delight to read the classroom focus section, which highlights the importance of incorporating pronunciation teaching into the EFL classroom. This article, written by Denise Cristina Kluge, Mara Silvia Reis, Denize Nobre-Oliveira, and Luiz Armando Silveiro Sozinho, provides useful information on specific areas Brazilian learners have difficulty with being, therefore, an appealing topic for teachers who are constantly in search for making informed decisions in their classroom practices.

In the special section Denise Osborne brings a socio cultural issue to the teaching of a foreign language, in the article entitled "After all, which race are we in the United States?"

Inside this issue, you will also see the pictures of the content-based learning workshop with Dorit Kaufman, in which students from the Graduate course at UFSC had the opportunity to interact with public school teachers, in a fertile interchange of teaching ideas. Continuing to focus on events, you will also be delighted by seeing the pictures of our second semester APLISC seminar, in which Professor Magali Menti delivered a lecture on Motivation and teenagers. In this same occasion, two workshops were administered – one by Denise Nobre and Denise Kluge, the focus of which was on possibilities of working with pronunciation in the classroom, and the other, conducted by Heloisa Tambosi and Andreia Scafaro, which aimed at exploring the use of tasks and storytelling for young learners. In both workshops there was cheerful and attentive participation from the audience!!!

Last, but not least, in this seminar we also counted with the contribution of three public school teachers - Iolanda Pereira, Luciane Pivetta, and Sonia Silva – who shared some projects that have been implemented in public schools contexts.

Well, it is time to say goodbye, as a new board of directors - headed by Gizele Luz and Rosane Silveira - will continue working and, certainly doing an outstanding job for APLISC. My last words are devoted to thank our committed APLISC team, who has worked efficiently, joining all efforts to strengthen ongoing exchange and up-to-date expertise in English teaching.

Enjoy reading the 2008.2 issue and keep searching for personal and academic growth!!!

All the Best,

Raquel D'Ely
APLISC President
2007-2008

What is communicative competence?

Gabriela Brum

According to McGroarty (1984), communicative competence can have different meanings depending on the learners and learning objectives inherent in a given context. Widdowson (1989, p.135) claims that communicative competence is not a matter of knowing rules for the composition of sentences and being able to employ such rules to assemble expressions when occasion requires it. It is much more a matter of knowing a stock of partially pre-assembled patterns, formulaic frameworks, and a kit of rules, so to speak, and being able to apply the rules to make whatever adjustments are necessary to contextual standards.

Linguists have not always used the term “competence” in the same way: Stern (1983) equated “competence” with “proficiency”, Chomsky (1965 and subsequent work) uses “competence” to refer just to static knowledge, excluding any notion of “capacity” or “ability”. Taylor (1988), views “competence” as a state or product, not a process; he separates “competence” and “proficiency”, stating that “proficiency” is the ability to make use of “competence”. For Savignon (1983) communicative competence is the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning involving interaction between two or more persons, or between one person and an oral or written text.

Communicative competence involves knowing the grammatical system of a language and using it appropriately to convey meaning in different contexts.

With so many different opinions about communicative competence, two models are going to be described to explain better what communicative competence really is.

The first model was created by Canale and Swain (1980) in which they divided communicative competence into four components that operate simultaneously in communication: grammatical competence (the mastery of the structures of a particular language, the knowledge of the grammar rules), sociolinguistic competence (appropriate use of vocabulary in a given situation), discourse competence (the ability to produce written and oral language that is cohesive and coherent) and strategic competence (the knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies which enable the learner to overcome difficulties when communication breakdowns occur). Learners who achieve communicative competence are able to apply their knowledge by using different strategies to communicate coherent thoughts and ideas in different social contexts.

There is a different model by Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell in which they show communicative competence as a pyramid enclosing a circle and surrounded by another circle. In the circle within the pyramid we find discourse competence, like in the model by Canale and Swain (1980). On the left corner of the pyramid is linguistic competence (the sentence patterns and types, the constituent structure, the morphological inflections, and the lexical resources, as well as the phonological and orthographic systems). On the right corner of the pyramid is actional competence (the knowledge of language functions and speech act sets). On the top of it we find socio cultural competence (the speaker’s knowledge of how to express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication, in accordance with the pragmatic factors related to variation in language use). Finally in the circle that surrounds the pyramid we find strategic competence, like the one from the model by Canale and Swain (1980).

According to Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (p.29), language teaching methodologists, materials writers and language testers badly need a comprehensive and accessible description of the components of communicative competence in order to have more concrete pieces of language to work with, as an elaborated “checklist” that practitioners can refer to. Hackje and Williams (1992) concluded that the communicative competence framework provides an integrated and principled basis for designing a language program.

The concept of communicative competence sees language as a tool used for communication. This view capitalizes the importance of the interaction and interdependence of the four language skills in communication acts. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing do not occur in isolation in communicative contexts and, as Brown (1994) eloquently states, “given that communicative competence is the goal of a language classroom, then instruction needs to point toward all of its components...” (p. 29). These components are grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence. To achieve this goal, the teacher should plan and implement activities that focus on these areas of competence and that prepare learners to develop fluency and accuracy in all four language skills.

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<http://www.gsu.edu/~wwwesl/alesl/tammy?Language.htm>



Gabriela Eltz Brum has been teaching English for 10 years. She has a Master's degree in Literatures in the English Language (UFSC). She has worked in several English courses: WIZARD, ICBNA (Cultural), SENAC and YÁZIGI in Porto Alegre and SKILL in Imbituba.

Joke Time

Q: Why did they throw the clock out of the window?

A: They wanted to see TIME fly!

Q: What did Adam say on the day before Christmas?

A: It's Christmas, Eve!

Q: What do you call a letter sent up the chimney on Christmas Eve?

A: Black mail!

Using Manipulatives and Visuals in Content Based Language Learning (CBL)

Workshop Presented on August 5, 2008, Florianopolis, Brazil

Dorit Kaufman

First and foremost, I wish to thank APLISC and the organizers for hosting this event. I would also like to congratulate and thank all the participants, teachers and students alike, for your enthusiastic engagement, collaborative spirit, and diversity of ideas that have made this workshop a most stimulating and memorable experience for all.

An important part of a teacher's work is to make connections with other people's ways of giving meaning to the same experience (Duckworth, 1987, p.105)

This workshop focused on developing interdisciplinary learning modules, designing hands-on activities, and integrating visuals to engage all students, enhance understanding and develop literacy and concepts of the disciplines. This is best accomplished through collaboration among language and content-area teachers.

During my visit to Brazil I was fortunate to visit the Iguassu Falls—a world natural heritage site and one of the world's greatest wonders. I witnessed the power and grandeur of this Brazilian gem. Back home, reflecting on my experience, I began to imagine developing a most stimulating and multifaceted interdisciplinary learning module around the theme of Water Falls - specifically the Iguassu Falls - to which Brazilian students could relate. I would like to propose that you team up with your colleagues, teachers of history, science, mathematics, language, literature, art or music to develop such a learning module.

Your interdisciplinary unit could include - and these are but a few examples: climatic and environmental issues; political and economic considerations; the Falls as a focus for partnership and collaboration among neighboring countries that share the beauty of the Falls and the energy that they generate; the Falls as portrayed in fiction, poetry, art, music, photography, and folk tales. One could envision science, mathematics, literature, art, and music converging around this theme to create a rich and multi-dimensional learning module. I encourage you to collaborate with your colleagues across the disciplines and wish you much success as you develop such a unit and publish your work on this Brazilian treasure – the Iguassu Falls – a visual metaphor for energy, beauty, and inspiration.

Dorit Kaufman is a Professor of Linguistics and the Director of the Professional Education Program at Stony Brook College – New York



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Incorporating pronunciation teaching in the EFL classroom

Denise Cristina Kluge

Mara Silvia Reis

Denize Nobre-Oliveira

Luiz Armando Silveiro Sozinho

Brazilian learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) demonstrate different types of difficulties in acquiring sounds that do not belong to the phonetic inventory of their native language (NL). Sometimes learners fail in acquiring these sounds because teachers do not focus on this linguistic aspect of the foreign language.

If students do not notice the differences between sounds of the NL and those of the foreign language (FL), they can be expected not to produce the existing distinctions correctly. In other words, without an appropriate model from the teacher and/or from pronunciation teaching materials, students are less likely to acquire an accurate pronunciation of the target FL sounds. Although the relationship between the input given by the teachers and the students' production has been discussed by several authors (e.g., Brown, 1994; Nunan, 1991), it seems that the literature has not presented practical implications. Perhaps this is the reason why teachers do not master the issue, or why they do not know how to apply pronunciation practice in the classroom.

Most of the pronunciations problems EFL teachers find in the classroom are caused by differences between the learners' phonological system (Brazilian Portuguese - BP) and the target system (English) (Baptista, 2001). Among the most common problems EFL teachers face in the classroom concerning BP learners' pronunciation are: the words with *th* spelling, vowels, regular past tense *-ed*, word-final nasal consonants, and syllable stress.

The pronunciation of *th* is considered one of the most challenging English sounds for learners to pronounce accurately, since this is a sound that does not exist in their NL. Thus, they tend to replace it by /t/ and /d/ (Reis, 2006), turning the pronunciation of three (the number "3") into a tree (the plant). A similar kind of substitution (i.e., in which the learners replace a nonnative sound by a sound that already exists in their NL phonological system) is that of vowels (Nobre-Oliveira, 2007; Nobre-Oliveira & Kluge, 2007). Therefore, they generally do not make any distinction between words such as sheep and ship, bad and bed, would and wood.

In the syllabic level, two of the most common problems are the pronunciation of *-ed* and /m/ and /n/ in word-final position. As we know, the *-ed*, which characterizes the simple past of regular verbs, has three possible pronunciations, /t/, /d/ or /ɪd/, as in worked, loved, and wanted, respectively. As to the nasals, the problem lies in the lack of fully pronouncing /m/ and /n/ in word-final position (Kluge, 2004; Kluge et al., 2007). Instead, the learners nasalize the previous vowels and delete the following target nasal and, sometimes, make no distinction between minimal pairs such as them-then, and cam-can.

As regards words stress, one of the major challenges found by Brazilian learners is that of placing emphasis on the correct syllable on English words (Silveiro, 2006). Whereas Portuguese favors end-stress mostly, English stress is more often word-initial. Even cognates tend to have stress on different syllables, as in the word temperamental. Moreover, vowel reduction in unstressed syllables is a necessary skill which requires regular training.

Both teachers and learners can practice these challenging aspects of English pronunciation and, thus, improve their oral/aural skills. A very attractive and useful tool for such practice is the Internet, which can provide fruitful information and activities. Some websites that can be used are the following:

- <http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ipa/index.html> (Phonetic alphabet - charts, fonts, etc.)
- <http://www.esl-lab.com/> (Listening practice)
- <http://eslactivities.com/pt/> (Listening practice)
- <http://www.howjsay.com/> (Pronunciation practice)
- <http://www.manythings.org/pp/> (Pronunciation practice)
- <http://www.uiowa.edu/~acadtech/phonetics/#> (Information on phonemes and articulation issues)
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aixBifo0SWE> (Pronunciation lessons)
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wxzieu-WXt4> (Pronunciation lessons)
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k80wiT0t2rc&feature=user> (Pronunciation lessons)
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AfpZgmc0VY> (Pronunciation lessons)

Besides the pronunciation problems highlighted in this article, there are other problems which should be considered, such as aspiration of initial voiceless stops (i.e., time and pie), vowel epenthesis (the insertion of an extra vowel in the beginning or end of a word, such as street [istriti] and name [neimi]), and intonation. Teachers should keep in mind that they do not need to have a native-like pronunciation. Instead, they should be aware of the differences between the Brazilian Portuguese and the English phonological systems, explain and illustrate these differences with contrastive examples, and provide their learners with opportunities to practice the target English sounds.

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After All, which race are we in the United States?

Denise Maria Osborne

When Brazilians move to the United States, they not only change their country, but also their race! If we are white in Brazil, in the United States we are no longer white but automatically become... Latino! Everything should be fine, except that here, in the United States, Latino and Hispanic have the same semantic force; that is, both terms are considered synonymous.

Among the various options for race in the American Census, there is Latino/Hispanic, wherein Latino and Hispanic terms are combined into one category. The interchangeable use of these terms occurs not only in everyday conversations but also in the media, the academic environment, and official papers.

And that is where we Brazilians become confused. We are Latinos but not Hispanic. According to the authoritative Portuguese dictionary Aurélio, Latino refers to peoples of Latin origin and Hispanic refers to Spanish people. It is evident that we don't speak Spanish, as some "uninformed" Americans may think (and by the way, our capital is not Buenos Aires!).

Language is perceived by many speakers, linguists among them, as a way to express identity. The Portuguese language is, therefore, a mark of our identity as Brazilians. This semantic confusion between Latino and Hispanic has negative consequences for the Brazilian community in the context of the United States. When Brazilians answer the U. S. Census, they divide themselves into white, Latino/Hispanic, black, etc. Therefore, it is difficult to know how many Brazilians are here, because nationality is not specified.

Another important factor that increases the difficulty of Brazilians in identifying themselves ethnically is that race has historically been treated differently in Brazil and in the United States. In the United States, black and white categories are rigid. In Brazil, we identify race based on the skin color and physical features. Officially, the Brazilian Census has five categories: white, black, dark brown ('pardo'), Indian, and yellow (Asians). However, if we ask Brazilians in the street, they may come up with a very creative list concerning 'race', such as 'claro(a)' (light skin), 'escurinho(a)' (semidark), 'trigueiro(a)' (wheat colored) and 'sapecado(a)' (burnished red) (partial data from a list of 134 different terms that the Brazilian Census collected from people in 1976).

This does not happen in the United States. Physical aspects do not define race. What really counts is ancestry. Therefore, in order to be considered black, one has to have a black parent or grandparent, for example. This is called the one-drop rule; that is, only one drop of black blood is enough for someone to be considered black. In other words, if an American has African ancestors, he is considered ethnically black (even if he is blond and has blue eyes!). In Brazil, it seems that the opposite tends to occur. Only one drop of white or European blood is enough for one not to be black.

The fact that we Brazilians conceive race differently from Americans and that Latino and Hispanic terms are used interchangeably in America causes the Brazilian community to be invisible. Consequently, it is less powerful according to the American perspective. On the other hand, the Brazilian conception of race challenges the imposition of labels that immigrants feel that they have to comply with when they come to the United States.

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Note: This article was first published in Portuguese in Clarim on August 17, 2007.

Content-Based Learning Workshop with Dorit Kaufman

On August 5th, Professor Dorit Kaufman, the Director of Professional Education Program and a Professor at Stony Brook University (New York) presented the workshop “Using Manipulatives and Visuals in Content-Based Language Learning”. The event took place at UFSC and the participants experienced using a variety of visuals and manipulatives to enhance instruction and learning. The APLISC Board of Directors would like to thank Professor Kaufman for the excellent presentation.

APLISC members and guests at the workshop.



Gisele Cardoso, Dorit Kaufman,
and Raquel D'Ely.



Rosane, Dorit and Kyria

Dorit Kauffman is thanked personally in NY by APLISC Representatives

Apparently NY has more in common with Floripa than most would trust. On a very rainy day, Rosane Silveira (vice-president APLISC) and Kyria Finardi (collaborator) met Dorit Kauffman (in-house guest speaker) over coffee. Rosane and Kyria thanked Dorit for her wonderful presentation (made especially for APLISC) in August this year and exchanged information on the US and Brazilian Educational Systems. Dorit is in charge of the Education Certifications at the Stony Brook University in NY and praised the proficiency level and participation of teachers during her presentation in Floripa. During her presentation she touched upon different aspects of Content Based Teaching, which, according to her, is the basis of the American Educational System. Dorit said that she was impressed with Brazil and Brazilian teachers and would love to go back. Perhaps in the dry season next time?

Aplisc Seminar

On October 4th, APLISC members and guests attended the 2008.2 Seminar in Florianópolis. Professor Magali de Moraes Menti opened the event with the Plenary Speech “Motivation and Teenagers: The unreachable star?”.

The participants also heard three English teachers (Iolanda Pereira, Luciane Pivetta, and Sonia Silva) report about successful experiences in public schools: “Teaching English through Thematic Projects”.

Two workshops were offered. The first one discussed the importance of pronunciation teaching (“Incorporating pronunciation teaching into the EFL classroom”) and was presented by Denise Cristina Kluge, Mara Silvia Reis, Denize Nobre-Oliveira and Armando Silveiro. The second one, whose title was “Teaching English to children: Different Approaches, Different Ideas”, was presented by Heloísa Helena de Faria Tambosi and Andréa Peixoto Scaffaro.



Bruna, Mayara, Donesca, Marimar and Kátia



Gisele Cardoso, Magali Menti, Rachel D'Ely



APLISC participants



Magali Menti

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