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# *Learning theory and technology in university foreign language education*

## The case of French universities

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### ABSTRACT

Second language study in French universities includes both modern language (literary) and foreign language (communicative) approaches, although teaching is dominated by the literary strand. Traditional educational models based on the transmission of knowledge are unable to accommodate recent progress in our understanding of learning theory, which offers cognitivist and constructivist approaches to learning and teaching. Similar advances specific to second language learning and teaching cannot be reconciled with the standard grammar–translation method, but instead call for communicative, task-oriented classrooms. This article traces the development of learning theory and second language teaching with respect to the roles of teacher and learner, conceptions of language as process or product, and individual versus group learning. It recommends an activity-oriented, project-based approach to second language teaching, learning and evaluation as an appropriate foundation for foreign (non-literary) language learners, including future school teachers, and calls for greater academic recognition of second language research.

**KEY WORDS** *constructivism, foreign language teaching, higher education, second language acquisition (SLA), second language teaching, scholarship of teaching and learning*

IN COMMON WITH other European countries, the French education system has long maintained the traditional academic distinction between modern and foreign language study. *Modern* languages, or *langues vivantes*, are defined in opposition to the classical languages, Greek and Latin, and thus situated in the

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academic family of literature and the arts. A *foreign* language, or *langue étrangère*, on the other hand, is contrasted with the native language, and more properly belongs in the fields of linguistics and education, in the domain of social sciences. Thus the same language – English, or Spanish, or German – may be studied in an arts faculty as a vector of the culture of the countries in which it is spoken, or in social sciences as a communicative tool for the student to acquire. Each approach to the *second* language (to use a third, perhaps more neutral term) sets its own goals, which in turn influence teaching methods: modern language teaching takes High Culture as its ultimate aim, using traditional grammar-translation to train students; foreign language instruction aims for language proficiency, and has to a certain extent followed trends in second language teaching, from audiolingual methods through communicative approaches towards task-based learning.

At present, these two approaches to second language study are represented in the French university system by a *Langues, Littératures, et Civilisation pour l'Enseignement* (LLCE) strand for modern languages, and a *LANGues pour Spécialistes d'Autres Disciplines* (LANSAD) strand for foreign languages. The two strands differ markedly in their positions on culture and language proficiency. The LANSAD strand focuses on communicative language use (including comprehension and expression in the second language), with the culture of countries where the language is spoken a secondary concern. The literary LLCE approach, in contrast, favours a strong cultural orientation (including literature, social and political history, and textual linguistics) and considers the development of language proficiency as a pre-requisite, the responsibility of individual students and preferably accomplished during study visits abroad. It is one of the paradoxes of second language study at French universities that the literary, LLCE, modern language specialists are responsible for all instruction in their language in French primary and secondary schools, as well as all university language programmes. LANSAD departments cater only for students taking optional courses, and are, like the teacher training colleges, staffed by LLCE professionals.<sup>1</sup>

This state of affairs creates three different problems for second language learning and teaching at the tertiary level in France. The first concerns the number of hours of language instruction: since students are more or less tacitly expected to take responsibility for developing their own language proficiency, language programmes include only a very small proportion of the hours of instruction required for even minimal communicative competence. The second issue involves instructional methods, which for modern language specialists are based on the transmission of culture as a structured body of knowledge, as opposed to the development of particular competence on the part of individual learners. The third problem relates to recent changes in both school

and university populations, involving increasing heterogeneity of learner needs and abilities, and requiring far-reaching changes in both goals and methods of second language teaching.

The present article will examine each of these three issues in turn: hours of instruction, methods of instruction, and orientation to instruction. These issues can be seen as a nest of three embedded questions: what happens in the second language class is situated at the centre, inside a wider circle involving our understanding of learning theory, which is itself embedded in a broader European educational context. The article calls for greater use of information and communication technology (ICT) both in and outside the second language classroom, more constructivist approaches to second language learning and teaching for all learners, and the recognition of the need for new pedagogical tools to meet new needs in second language learning and teaching at the university level in France. The following sections will attempt to justify these recommendations.

#### THE SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION

The field of second language acquisition is generally considered a young discipline: only in the past forty years have theories been developed in linguistics and psychology to explain how individuals learn languages after their first language, and systematic efforts made in educational circles to apply these theories to language teaching. And yet significant advances in our understanding of the field are now generally accepted. Behaviorist learning models which viewed language acquisition as the formation of habits, and thus informed teaching methods which emphasized memorization and drills, have given way to cognitive approaches focusing on information processing, leading to methods based on comprehension and communication. Linguists, psychologists and educators agree on key concepts like *interlanguage*, the developing language system which is both specific to each learner, reflecting his or her language experience, and yet in some respects common to all learners, showing developmental stages which are shared by different learners of different second languages. There is also broad agreement on factors which influence second language acquisition: the quantity of input, or language exposure, which learners receive, the type of interaction in which they engage, and the quality of feedback with which they are provided, have all been shown to affect the rate of acquisition, as well as ultimate attainment.

In his recent exposition of major issues in the field, Hulstijn (2007) identifies differences in ultimate attainment, or learning outcomes, across

individuals as a key problem for second language researchers to explain. We need to know why 'only very few adult L2 learners attain a native level'. From his perspective as a second language researcher, Hulstijn opposes the dismissal of 'vast differences in exposure to the target language' as a 'trivial' cause of variation. In other words, many learners do not learn a second language to an advanced level because they do not have enough exposure – they simply do not receive enough input. And, while the issue of quantity of language instruction may be uninteresting for researchers, it is an important one for second language instruction in the French university system.

Put bluntly, acquiring a second language to a high level of proficiency takes a very long time. While researchers investigate individual factors such as language aptitude, motivation and learning styles, teachers focus on hours of instruction. In the private sector, the need to attract fee-paying students and provide certification of language proficiency has led to pragmatic calculations of the time required to reach various levels of language competence. These calculations have remained remarkably constant over the past twenty years, suggesting that changing trends in methods and examinations do not impact on the fundamental requirements of instructional time. Two examples will suffice to illustrate.

Intensive English programmes at North American universities, which bring international students to a level of proficiency sufficient to study for university degree courses, generally operate with six class levels and six periods per year. Students are placed at the appropriate level for their proficiency, then attend classes for 20–25 hours per week over 6–8 week sessions until they reach the requisite proficiency level (TOEFL score, in most cases). Absolute beginners who start at the first level and work up through all six levels in a year will thus receive between 720 and 1,200 hours of instruction as they move to an advanced level of proficiency. They need between 120 and 200 hours of instruction over six to eight weeks to progress from one level to the next. A French student arriving in North America with seven years of secondary school English will typically require two or three sessions to reach university proficiency, i.e. between 240 and 600 hours of instruction over three to six months.<sup>2</sup>

In Europe, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) also operates with six levels of proficiency (from beginner A1 and A2, through intermediate B1 and B2, to advanced C1 and C2). Instructional programmes in French, English and German concur in their estimations of the number of hours required to reach each level: some 200 for A2, between 500 and 750 for B2, and 1,000 to 1,200 for C2. Once again, between 150 and 200 hours of instruction are required to progress from one level to the next. Although official programmes set a standard of level B1 for the end of secondary

schooling, many students are still at level A2 even after additional years of post-secondary instruction, suggesting a shortfall of some 300 to 500 hours necessary to bring them to the B2 level recommended as an outcome for university foreign language instruction. (New programmes may even set targets of B2 for the end of secondary and C1 for university degrees.)<sup>3</sup>

In French universities, the number of hours of instruction in degree courses for LANSAD students falls far short of these figures. Students fulfilling language option requirements in university language centres may be offered one or two hours per week in two 12-week semesters, for a total of 24 to 48 hours per year. Those taking degrees in languages with business (LEA: *langues étrangères appliquées* or applied foreign languages, where students study two languages plus law, economics and accountancy) may have double this volume in each language, or 96 hours per year.

It may be objected that, over a three-year degree, students receiving instruction at the higher end of the spectrum will in fact receive around 300 hours and therefore fall within the ranges recommended in North American intensive English programmes and in the implementations of the CEFR cited above. Moreover, students in modern language courses (LLCE) have many more hours of foreign language instruction, taking perhaps four or five hours per week of listening, speaking, grammar and translation classes in addition to their literature classes, hence 96 to 120 per annum, or up to 360 hours over a three-year degree. There are two responses to this charge: first, research shows that intensive instruction – more hours over a short time frame – is more effective than slower-paced instruction, therefore 300 hours in one year will lead to greater proficiency gains than the same number of hours taught over three years. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it is the conditions under which instruction takes place that count.

General educational research suggests that lower teacher–student ratios and homogeneous classes produce more effective learning. Private educational establishments tend to offer small classes of like students, formed on the basis of placement tests. Research in second language acquisition has given rise to a number of sometimes conflicting theories of acquisition, but there is general agreement that acquisition implies interlanguage development, or change in individual learners' internal linguistic systems, which in turn occurs through understanding and interacting in the target language, with some form of focus on linguistic features. Acquisition occurs within individuals according to the proficiency, motivation, abilities and interests of each, and so language instruction, perhaps more than other disciplines, requires teachers to provide rich language input, group interaction and individualized instruction in order to reach different students at different developmental stages.

French universities are particularly accessible compared with their European neighbours: matriculation is relatively inexpensive and open to all holders of the high school *baccalauréat*, as well as mothers of large families and individuals with certain professional experience.<sup>4</sup> A first-year student with little or no exposure to English thus has the right to enrol in an English class set at post-secondary level, alongside those who studied English for seven years in high school, as well as French–English bilinguals and nationals of other European countries. Numbers may reach 40 or 50 students per class. We are clearly a long way from the conditions in which individual interlanguage development can be nurtured, should this be considered a priority.

In the present climate of funding difficulties in higher education, the only practical solution to these shortcomings in both hours and conditions of foreign language instruction seems to be the use of instructional and communication technology (ICT) in combination with face-to-face instruction. The internet can provide input, interaction and individualization. It has opened access to a large range of authentic language resources, providing the opportunity for students to receive almost unlimited linguistic input in their chosen language. For English in particular, learners can read and listen at any level on practically any topic, or work on interactive exercises at their convenience. Learning platforms and Web 2.0 tools also allow cooperative learning, from communication in forums and chatrooms with native speakers and other learners, to collaborative expression on blogs and wikis. However, the integration of ICT into university foreign language instruction requires changes in instructional methods. Language teachers with long memories will remember frustrating experiences with self-access listening laboratories, listening programmes and listening libraries or multimedia centres: it is relatively simple to make resources available to learners, but encouraging effective use of such materials requires imagination and effort. Similarly, with internet-based resources, it is not enough to identify potentially relevant links for classroom use or home study. For such resources to function effectively as input for language acquisition, they must become an integral – normal – part of foreign language instruction in universities.

#### SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING: CHANGING THEORIES, CHANGING METHODS

In an article which traces the development of the learning sciences, Sawyer describes what he calls the Standard Model of Schooling, based on a common-sense approach to knowledge and learning:

- Knowledge is a collection of *facts* about the world and *procedures* for how to solve problems. Facts are statements like ‘The earth is tilted on its axis by 23.45 degrees’,

and procedures are step-by-step instructions like how to do multi-digit addition by carrying to the next column.

- The goal of schooling is to get these facts and procedures into the student's head. People are considered to be educated when they possess a large collection of these facts and procedures.
- Teachers know these facts and procedures, and their job is to transmit them to students.
- Simpler facts and procedures should be learned first, followed by progressively more complex facts and procedures. The definitions of 'simplicity' and 'complexity' and the proper sequencing of material were determined either by teachers, by textbook authors, or by asking expert adults like mathematicians, scientists, or historians – not by studying how children actually learn.
- The way to determine the success of schooling is to test students to see how many of these facts and procedures they have acquired. (Sawyer, 2007: 5)

This approach to educating children, also known as the transmission–acquisition model (Rogoff, 1990) or instructivism (Papert, 1980), also characterizes much of higher education in many countries today, and offers a particularly apposite description of French university teaching. Instruction is based on the lecture mode, both in *cours magistraux* (lectures, often on theory) given in lecture theatres and in *travaux dirigés* (more practical classes) conducted in smaller classrooms. The 'facts' of a foreign language (aside from its cultural aspects) consist in its grammatical description and vocabulary, and their 'sequencing' is determined by specialists in its literature, whose chosen 'procedures' consist largely in writing and translating. Evaluation is generally by final written exams (and some orals) which test literary knowledge and linguistic competence together. Exams are also open to off-campus students (known as *contrôle terminal*), who do not attend classes but study by their own means, often with no contact with teachers or course materials. This aspect of the educational structure highlights the underlying assumption that learning involves the accumulation of facts and procedures and can occur completely independently of teaching and teachers.<sup>5</sup>

The gap between this transmissive model of learning and the acquisition-friendly environment described in the previous section could hardly be more pronounced. And yet the learning environment favoured by second language specialists is supported by many decades of development in educational psychology as well as language teaching, which can be traced through changes in conceptions of the roles of teacher and learner, the second language itself and the learning process.

Since the advent of universal education in the Western world at the start of the twentieth century and the adoption of the standard model of schooling, four major learning theories have influenced teaching methods: behaviorism,



cognitivism, constructivism and socio-constructivism. Behaviorist theories of learning as the association of stimuli with responses, in the work of Ivan Pavlov, John Watson and B. F. Skinner, gave way to the cognitive revolution of the middle of the twentieth century led by George Miller and Noam Chomsky and their information-processing approach to learning. Subsequent interest in the work of Jean Piaget in educational circles, particularly in early childhood development, led to the spread of constructivist approaches in the last quarter of the century, although the learner-centred, active learning associated with this theory has only gained currency in language learning for adolescent and adult learners in the past 15 years, in tandem with a similar interest in the more socially oriented work of Lev Vygotsky, known under the label of socio-constructivism.

How have these theories been appropriated in the field of second language acquisition and teaching? It may be helpful to view these theories in terms of the way language learning is positioned along three axes: the learner-teacher continuum, the product-process continuum, and the individual-group continuum. Behaviorism is the only theory to focus mainly on the teacher, for the arrival of cognitivist approaches has provided a rationale for learner-centred education. Cognitivism and behaviorism, however, share a product-oriented view of language as a body of knowledge or set of competences to be acquired – the target language. Constructivism marks a decisive break in this respect, with its emphasis less on the outcome of language learning and more on the process, and this from the perspective of the teaching context. Finally, socio-constructivism differs from the three preceding theories in its emphasis on the contexts for teaching and learning; for the other theories, learning takes place largely within an individual, whereas socio-constructivism focuses on the group. These differences are represented in Table 1.

Some expansion of this rapid overview is necessary to explain changes in language teaching methods over time. The standard model of schooling dovetails neatly with the grammar-translation approach to second language, which was developed for the study of Latin and Greek, and focuses on the memorization of grammatical paradigms and vocabulary both as a useful mental exercise and a prerequisite for access to the literary canon in the original language. Translation, in this model, provides opportunities for both practice and evaluation. When the need for communicative competence in the spoken language arose around the Second World War, behaviorism was the dominant psychological model. Foreign language educators such as Robert Lado and Charles Fries combined behaviorist psychology's drive to reduce complex behavior to its simplest stimulus-response components with a parallel orientation in structural linguistics to identify minimal units of sound and meaning,

TABLE 1 Characteristics of major learning theories in second language teaching

<i>Learning theories</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>Learner</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Learning</i>	<i>Hypotheses and methods</i>
<i>Behaviorism</i>	Skinner (1957) Fries and Lado (1958)	<i>Teacher</i> The teacher is responsible for providing step-by-step instruction	<i>Product</i> Habit formation, imitation, reinforcement	<i>Code</i> Language is verbal behavior; old L1 habits must be replaced by new L2 habits	Contrastive analysis hypothesis; audiolingualism
<i>Cognitivism</i>	Chomsky (1959) Gass (1997) Ellis (1997)	<i>Learner</i> The learner is innately programmed to follow a built-in syllabus	<i>Product</i> Interlanguage develops in predictable ways towards the target	<i>Code</i> Native speaker mastery of the target language is the ultimate goal	Interaction hypothesis; communicative language teaching
<i>Constructivism</i>	Piaget Long (2000) Skehan (1998)	<i>Learner</i> The learner actively constructs meaning	<i>Process</i> Interlanguage develops through scaffolded mediation	<i>Code</i> Language is mediated by others and then internalised individually	Focus on form; task-based learning
<i>Socio-constructivism</i>	Vygotsky Firth and Wagner (2007) Lantolf (2000)	<i>Learner</i> Learners construct meaning together	<i>Process</i> Language competence develops during language activities with other learners	<i>Context</i> Collaboration is an end, not a means	Cooperative learning; project work

A related point concerns the sliding scale between focus on the individual learner and focus on a group of learners. In instructivist (grammar-translation and audiolingual) classrooms, the teacher controls content, language and activity, perhaps by assigning a passage to be translated as homework, or by setting learners to listen to and repeat parts of a spoken text in the language laboratory. In each case, the text is selected and prepared by the teacher in advance. In a constructivist classroom, the teacher may give up control of all three elements: the learners may choose topics and materials, and participate in group activities, such that the linguistic content of a class is not predictable in advance. The teacher's contribution (and authority) now depends on his or her ability to coordinate group work and, crucially, to provide instantaneous feedback on language form and content. Advance preparation can help only so much, then teachers must think on their feet. The same can be said of evaluation: planned individual production can be assessed on relatively narrow criteria, while judging real-time communicative competence or the outcome of learning tasks or projects involves many more considerations.

A final brake on the adoption of new teaching methods concerns the status of teaching itself in higher education (Boshier and Huang, 2008). In a somewhat overstated caricature of the North American university researcher's disdain for pedagogy, Decarie (2007) presents the issues thus:

Advocate teaching to an academic and the first reaction is likely to be blank incomprehension because few have the faintest idea what the word means. At best, there might be some notion it has to do with keeping up-to-date lecture notes and checking vigorously for plagiarizers... Teaching is beneath the dignity of a professor. It is 'spoonfeeding' people who are 'not prepared'. (Decarie, 2007)

Hence, at university, teaching is telling, evaluating is policing, and anything else devalues the academic enterprise. A more measured assessment is provided by Elton (2009), who deplores the schism which has developed in universities between research and teaching, such that research is seen as a noble undertaking, and teaching is barely worth consideration:

The traditional view, although not always expressed so blatantly, was that one improved in teaching through imitation of role models – one taught, as one had been taught by academics that taught, as they had been taught, by . . . , an apostolic succession, going back to the middle ages. (Elton, 2009: 256)

In French universities, at least as far as the humanities are concerned, teaching is at once everything and nothing. Bourdieu shows how research is subsumed into teaching:

. . . the conflation of the activities of teaching and research – with the result that pedagogical debates and concerns are very often the true motive for publications with

scholarly pretensions, and that the most 'personal' research can so often provide material for the classes preparing pupils for academic entrance examinations. (1990: 123)<sup>7</sup>

He also demonstrates the reduction of teaching to preparation for competitive exams such as the *agrégation*, officially for the recruitment of secondary school-teachers: it is 'through the domination of the *agrégation*, the ultimate goal of all lectures and all competitive examinations, that the intellectual norms governing this competition are imposed on all teaching, including undergraduate study and the writing of graduate theses' (Bourdieu, 1990: 140).

The reader will understand that cognitively oriented learning theories have not yet found their place in foreign language instruction at French universities for a number of conceptual reasons. To these must be added certain recent developments in teaching conditions. Various external factors (from continually rising *baccalauréat* pass rates, and a generally gloomy job market, to the expansion of EU membership) have brought increasing numbers of students to university, while lack of funding creates large, heterogeneous classes. Learners differ widely in their foreign language competence, motivation, and even native language, and often lack the study skills to benefit from the standard teaching model. Constructive approaches which might help these learners are therefore unrealistic because of organizational constraints such as class size, hours of instruction and examination schedules.

Once again, an ICT solution appears the only one which can increase the time students spend on learning tasks, allow appropriate groupings of learners and facilitate individualized feedback from teachers. However, in the standard teaching model described by Sawyer and implemented implicitly in French universities, it is difficult to introduce ICT adjuncts to face-to-face classes effectively. Students used to 'spoonfeeding' in teacher-fronted classes where all content is provided by the teacher will expect more of the same online, and indeed university services tend to offer *static* tools such as virtual platforms and podcasting facilities which increase the teacher's workload without necessarily improving learning opportunities for the students. And indeed it is the fear of exploitation that deters many teachers from placing teaching materials online. An online lesson represents so much unpaid teaching time, and a lecture which can be downloaded and read may not be given in class in the same way as one which students have not had the opportunity to preview. Add to this the tyranny of student email queries about online materials, and it is easy to see why uptake of web-based opportunities has not been swift among French university teachers.

It is my contention that a more *dynamic* approach to the integration of ICT in foreign language instruction is more likely to bear fruit. Virtual spaces like blogs and wikis offer opportunities for more constructivist teaching and

learning, since both teachers and learners can contribute, instead of the burden falling only on the teacher. Learners can collaborate in groups, and the teacher can offer guidance and feedback from a distance. Projects such as the University of Nantes hybrid LEA English course conceived by Marie-Françoise Narcy-Combes and her team (Buck and Narcy-Combes, 2008) or a mobile teaching education experiment in German for pre-service primary teachers (Macaire, 2008) offer indications as to how more dynamic approaches can be implemented. Hybrid or blended learning, which combines online with face-to-face instruction, seems to offer the best prospects for more successful foreign language teaching in French higher education.

#### CONCLUSION

This article has argued for a number of more or less wide-reaching changes in foreign language instruction at French universities. Accepting that more hours of instruction are unlikely to be forthcoming in the current political climate, while arguing that more time to learn is essential for acquisition, the integration of ICT into language instruction is proposed as a pragmatic solution. Yet changes in teaching methods in both face-to-face and online instruction should take into account developments in general learning theory and second language acquisition research which support cognitivist and/or constructivist approaches to programme design and delivery. And none of this can be achieved without recognition of the value of university teaching, or what has become known as the scholarship of teaching and learning.

In a thought-provoking discussion of the place of teaching in humanities in British universities today, Elton (2009) contrasts *scholastic* approaches to teaching and learning as the transmission and assimilation of an accepted body of knowledge, appropriate for schools, with a Humboldtian conception of the ongoing *scholarly* endeavour to refine understanding in both teaching and research at university. He defends university teaching as a problematic and researchable activity which is as worthy of an academic's attention as research. His position is echoed by Riordan, who calls for collaboration among teaching colleagues: 'What if faculty members made it a point to make public to their own institutional colleagues their teaching questions, practices, and assessment of student learning?' (2008: 273). In this framework, research into second language acquisition should inform and complement foreign language instruction, and instructional practices and learning outcomes in languages should themselves be researched to inform acquisition research.

How might such recommendations be implemented? Cognitivist and constructivist research in language acquisition and teaching to date focus on

interlanguage development, and suggest a classroom focus on spontaneous, rather than planned language use, practice in language use, rather than language analysis, and on-the-spot feedback (focus on form) rather than formal testing. Aside from offering rich language input for acquisition, ICT can provide recording technology to facilitate feedback from teachers and reflection on the part of learners. Crucially, ICT can also help teachers, since class recordings can provide data for language acquisition research and studies of teaching effectiveness, thus contributing to an evolving scholarship of language teaching and learning.

In French universities, such developments would require far-reaching changes in conceptions of language, acquisition and teaching. First, if language is to be viewed in terms of communicative competence rather than as a cultural artefact, then a Shakespearean critic may no longer design a syllabus around a structural description of English. Knowledge can no longer consist in a discrete body of information, separate from the teacher, the learner, and indeed the act of teaching and the process of learning. The off-campus student engaged in entirely self-directed study can no longer figure in the university language programme; students must spend time in language interaction, and hybrid or distance courses must become the norm for this section of the student population. Similarly, teachers need to be fluent in the language they are teaching, and able to orchestrate interaction via group activities; these activities should no longer be limited to the margins of language programmes, reserved for temporary native-speaking language assistants (*lecteurs*), generally untrained and poorly integrated into faculty life. Assessment of student performance must also reflect the nature of the knowledge or competence being acquired, testing spontaneous language use in interactional contexts rather than planned disquisitions on cultural topics.

Second, if acquisition is to become a classroom concern, as opposed to a pre-requisite for university study, then language programmes can no longer simply prescribe aspects of 'facts and procedures' to be learned. Reasonable amounts of class time must be set aside for language acquisition so that proficiency becomes a concern for teachers and students, rather than an extra-curricular responsibility for students. Hybrid learning which combines face-to-face classes with online resources seems the most promising avenue when funding is short, but one which depends on changes in current teaching practices. To make the best use of face-to-face contact time, teachers must move beyond the lecture, and focus on both smaller units of class time such as activities, and larger ones such as projects. This is particularly crucial for students in foreign language programmes, the LANSAD branch of language studies, who are expected to need to use the second language in their professional lives, and in the case of prospective primary school teachers, to teach

it to young learners. Yet acquisition is also a concern for LLCE, or modern language students, many of whom will go on to become secondary school teachers at junior or high school level, or take up non-research (often LANSAD) teaching positions in university language departments. Today's modern language students are responsible for tomorrow's teaching and learning, and if they are destined to teach as they were taught, as Elton suggests, let them have a communicative model.

Nevertheless, it remains the case that certain concepts in second language acquisition and teaching, such as interlanguage and learner-centred classes, constitute something of a double-edged sword for today's university language teachers. On one hand, teachers are liberated by the notion that learning takes place inside the heads of individual learners, who benefit more from grappling with the language first hand than from their teachers' accounts of their own grappling, to use Cobb's image. On the other hand, if we are no longer grappling with the language on behalf of our students, what is it that is actually required of us? This brings us to the third issue, that of the place of teaching in academic life.

While constructivists would easily answer the foregoing question about the role of the language teacher with recommendations for orchestrating interaction, stimulating motivation to learn and providing appropriate feedback on learners' performance, there is relatively little robust empirical second language classroom research to tell us exactly how best to facilitate language acquisition. This question would benefit from much more, sustained, academic attention. It would be beneficial if language teachers were to take language teaching as seriously as research, and participate in academic inquiry into effective teaching methods. It is not the purpose of this article to suggest that Shakespearean scholars reinvent themselves as language educators or acquisition researchers, but simply that these specializations achieve recognition. If teaching is to be 'scholarly' rather than heuristic, it must become a focus of academic attention; only then can second language learning flourish.

#### NOTES

1. University control of school programmes is extensively documented and analysed in Bourdieu (1984), particularly with respect to the literary disciplines (classics, French literature and philosophy) 'which are closely linked to school syllabuses and examinations, and, through them, to secondary school teaching, whose reproduction they directly control by fashioning through syllabus, lecture, and entrance exam topic, the dispositions durably inculcated in the teaching body' (1984: 134; 1990: 101).
2. These figures are drawn from the author's experience teaching in the Intensive English Program at the Center for English Language Training at Indiana University in the 1990s. The interested reader can find confirmation in current programme schedules at different

institutions from the website of the American Association of Intensive English Programs (AAIEP, <http://aaiep.org/>).

3. Figures are taken from language teaching websites for English (Cambridge ESOL, <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/exams-info/cefr.html>), French (Alliance Française, Grenoble, [http://www.alliancefr-grenoble.org/notre-cursus-cecr-cPath34\\_37.html](http://www.alliancefr-grenoble.org/notre-cursus-cecr-cPath34_37.html)) and German (SPIRAL, University of Strasbourg, <http://u2.u-strasbg.fr/spiral/A1A2/Langues/allemand.htm>).
4. For a sociological explanation of this situation based on a close analysis of the events of May 1968 and their fallout in French universities, the interested reader is again referred to Bourdieu (1984).
5. Interesting parallels with the French situation can be drawn with reference to the 2004 special issue of *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* (Absalom, 2004). Willis (2004) provides a Bourdieusian explanation of British reluctance to embrace foreign language learning: foreign language proficiency has symbolic rather than functional value, providing academic and social status. To preserve this elite, then, instruction should not be democratized; continued restriction also safeguards the nation's cultural capital. A similar analysis of foreign language instruction in Japan by McVeigh comes to similar conclusions about Japanese culture: 'only a select few need worry about acquiring English, and the state should decide who acquires it' (2004: 218).
6. Coleman (2004) outlines reasons for reluctance among UK modern languages academic staff to embrace new approaches to learning thus: 'They have never been trained as language teachers, are contentedly unaware of the extensive research literature on advanced level language teaching and resent spending time teaching language: it distracts them from research, and now that the communicative approach in schools delivers entrants with less than total mastery of the grammatical system and its nomenclature, language classes consist largely of "remedial" work' (2004: 155–6). This analysis is also apposite for the French situation, as is Coleman's further observation that the link between funding and student enrolment prevents modern language departments from relinquishing language teaching to university language centres.
7. The alert reader will note that the present author is not, of course, immune from this charge.

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