

¡Visión Cooperativa!

First-Year Spanish Program Coordinators a Dynamic Duo

Kera Abraham

It's not often that you find a professional match made in heaven—but the coordinators of the UO's first-year Spanish program, Laurie de Gonzalez and Paula Ellister, go together like *arroz y frijoles*. For ten years they have teamed up to coordinate the UO's most popular language program. Not only do they supervise the Graduate Teaching Fellows and instructors of the UO's 900 first-year Spanish students, but they also design the curricula and grading systems for six introductory Spanish classes. They co-authored an activity book called *Así Somos*, and they work to ensure that every beginning Spanish student receives personalized attention in the classroom.



Paula Ellister and Laurie de Gonzalez

It may sound overwhelming, but de Gonzalez and Ellister have fun with their work. As they solve problems and plan lessons together, laughter often bubbles out of their shared office in Friendly Hall. They describe themselves as a sort of yin-yang team, with Ellister—wearing flowing clothes and wire-rimmed glasses—as the mover-and-shaker, and de Gonzalez—dressed in simple black, her hair neatly framing her face—as the innovator.

“Our styles balance each other out really well,” says Ellister. “Laurie is extremely creative. She’s always thinking about how we can improve on what we’re doing. She’s always coming up with ideas.”

“Paula is the organizer,” chimes in de Gonzalez. “She’s more of the spokesperson. I’ll sit back and listen, and she’ll take the reins.”

“She’ll throw these ideas at me, and I’m pretty good at saying ‘Okay. We can do this,’” says Ellister. “We work really well in that way. We have a mutual respect for each other’s abilities.”

“We have completely different styles,” adds de Gonzalez, and the two women giggle at what seems to be an inside joke.

Though they like to laugh, Ellister and de Gonzalez take their work seriously. It’s not without its challenges. Most of the first-year Spanish program’s fifteen GTFs

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had never taught a class before coming to the UO; it can be difficult to ensure that they develop effective teaching methods while keeping the curriculum consistent. It's important, for example, that when a student moves from a Spanish 101 section taught by one GTF to a Spanish 102 section taught by another, he or she is at the same level as everyone else in the class.

"That's probably our biggest challenge," says de Gonzalez, "Making sure that everybody's on the same track, under the same types of expectations as language levels change. We strive for consistency, and I think we achieve it."

Being one student among hundreds can be daunting, so Ellister and de Gonzalez try to ensure that every first-year Spanish student has a chance to express his or her individuality. Teachers encourage students to be creative with personalized portfolios that include writing, photos, and memorabilia. An open-ended testing method requires students to write short essays as part of their exams.

"We're probably the only teachers that know each student's name; that know whether they're in class or not; that know something about their families," Ellister says.

"Ego involvement is one of the key things in becoming good at something," adds de Gonzalez. "We get very involved with the students, and that has something to do with the material that we teach, because it's more personalized."

Although individual expression is an important part of language learning, the professional relationships between students, teachers and supervisors are paramount to the success of the first-year Spanish program. "There's a lot of teamwork," says de Gonzalez.

The women look at each other knowingly and laugh. ★

FYI: News and Announcements

InterCom is a free service sponsored by the Center for Applied Second Language Studies on the University of Oregon campus. By specifying your languages and interests, from job postings to foreign language teaching materials, you will receive one email digest every Friday with the information you need. Recent examples include national conference announcements, links to spectacular foreign language Websites, and relevant teaching methods that will spice up your classroom. Hundreds of subscribers are already using this free service. To subscribe, visit <http://casls.uoregon.edu>.

The YLC will host a faculty workshop on how to use multimedia in teaching and research. Led by YLC director Jeff Magoto and IT specialist Ginny White, faculty members from eight different departments will update their technological skills and begin work on a variety of curricular projects. For more information, contact Jeff Magoto.

The YLC Quarterly

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Fall '04 Schedule

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F: 8am - 5pm
Sun: 1pm - 5pm

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A Greater Appreciation for Home

Johnathan Shaw



Johnathan Shaw

When I studied abroad in Japan this last fall, I fully expected to gain a greater appreciation for Japanese culture and ways of thought. One generally travels to another country with the idea of gaining understanding, and consequently a certain amount of admiration, for the target country. It's only natural, at least in my mind.

And I did gain appreciation for Japan, in a variety of ways. Some were expected, such as a larger amount of respect for the way things are expressed in Japanese. (Can anyone say onomatopoeia?) Some were definitely not expected. Who would have thought, for instance, that I would develop a taste for raw cuttlefish? Certainly not I—but every now and again, I find myself wanting a nice juicy piece of raw squid on rice. (Admit it, on some level, it does sound appealing.) Every new insight into Japanese culture proved beneficial, because it expanded my horizons and helped me to discover new parts of my character.

The development in me that was completely unexpected, however,

was a greater appreciation of my own country. Perhaps I should have expected this as well, but I was prepared so thoroughly to learn the positive sides of Japan, and conversely the negative sides of America, that I was surprised to find things that I actually like better about America.

By this I mean more than just the occasional burger, though that was missed as well. (I was more fortunate than the typical exchange student, however, in that I knew the location of at least three Wendy's® restaurants in Tokyo.) More than American burgers, the two things I appreciate most are the United States' attention to handicap accessibility and its scarcity of public pornography.

One of the first things I noticed in Tokyo was that many buildings were not accessible to physically handicapped people. Having not closely observed other large cities, it is possible that this is common in metropolises and might not be an American-Japanese contrast. Whether it is or is not, however, I know that nearly everywhere I've traveled in the United States has had handicap accessibility, and I am proud of the determined effort Americans have made to increase building accessibility to include everyone possible.

More than this, I appreciated America's restrictions on pornography, when compared with the surprising prevalence of soft pornography in everyday Japanese life. Underwear ads, strip club ads, street signs, and even comic book drawings contained near or completely naked women (always women). Even if you didn't read the newspaper or comic books, pictures were forced on you by people

reading them on the train or the street, by large billboards advertising lingerie, and by walking by where someone could put an advertisement poster. Which was anywhere. When I asked my Japanese friends about it, they just said that "it was normal — something we've grown up with." It's a part of the culture, sometimes shocking, just like other cultural differences. That truth notwithstanding, and whatever one's personal beliefs about pornography, I still appreciate the fact that viewing pornography in America is a choice, and not something to which we must be subjected.

Despite these differences, I had an amazing study abroad experience, due in part to my excellent, excellent host family, who took me everywhere and showed me more than I thought possible. I also gained a valuable appreciation of my own country. Sometimes we are trained to think negatively of our American nation, perhaps in false modesty, perhaps from people who truly do believe we are an evil entity trying to take over the world. In a time when much of our country dislikes ourselves, or at least that other person who doesn't agree with our opinions, I think it's important to remind ourselves of how much we do have to appreciate about living in the United States. It's good to have a reminder of how fortunate we are to live in this country—where we have freedom, wealth, and space—and remember that we have the responsibility to be, at the very least, grateful for what we have. *

Johnathan Shaw is an American-born student of linguistics.

Fulfilling...But Not Always Easy

Ayisha Yahya



Ayisha Yahya

I do not regret leaving my home in Kenya to come to the United States to study. Immersed in a different cultural setting, I have learned valuable lessons in and outside the classroom, and built enriching friendships with people from diverse backgrounds.

My experience as an international student has been fulfilling, yet I must admit that it is not always easy. Even as I have learned to blend into the community around me, I never quite forget that I'm isolated from my own culture in many ways. Many times I yearn for the warm fold of my home, where I can hear the musical sound of my language in the streets or catch the scent of familiar foods wafting from open windows. I long for the company of people who know how I think and understand what I value and believe in.

Finding that type of understanding in a place like Oregon is not always possible because of the limited cultural diversity in the

state. In addition, I have found that for some people, perceptions of Africa are highly stereotypical; their only knowledge of the continent stems from the dire or exotic media images they see flashing across their television screens.

I've had people ask me some strange

and even offensive questions, and I'm sure international students from other countries may have had similar experiences. I always tell myself that the questions are just curiosity at work and I have a responsibility to challenge any stereotypes with honest answers. I'd rather people ask than just assume.

Nonetheless, being a cultural ambassador has its own complexities. After all, I do not want to claim that

I can speak for all Africans or all Kenyans, but there is the danger that since there are so few of us here, our views become tokenized to represent entire peoples. Of course I do want to promote cultural diversity and tolerance, but I also want people to realize that I speak first as an individual and my experiences do not reflect that of all young Kenyan women.

As cultural beings, we are both teachers and students. We have the opportunity to share with each other and that sharing hopefully will lead to greater understanding between people. As challenging as it may be at times to be in a different culture, I know that I still am who I am and I live my culture every day by remembering my roots and choosing to share it with others. *

Ayisha Yahya is originally from Nairobi, Kenya. She is a second year graduate student in International Studies.

Fall '04 Offerings:



Arabic	Hebrew	Thai
Cantonese	Hindi/Urdu	Turkish
Farsi	Polish	Ukrainian
Greek	Portuguese	Vietnamese
Swahili	Romanian	

Availability subject to enrollment. There is a \$50 instructional fee for UO students and a \$100 fee for community members. For more information please visit <http://babel.uoregon.edu>.

A Special Place in Exceptional Times

Ozgur Pala

Before I arrived in Eugene in September 2003, I was excited and worried. The relations between the United States and Turkey were at a critical point, and I am Turkish.

These questions bothered me: Would the locals welcome me? Would they be xenophobic or friendly? Would my race, appearance, and beliefs impose hardships on me?

But after my arrival, most of my reservations were proven groundless. Almost all of my encounters with people in Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, and Washington DC mirrored what I have experienced in Eugene so far: friendly and helpful attitudes without judgements. But there was one fact which bothered throughout my travel to these places. Most of the workers in restaurants, airports and other minor service jobs were black or Asian. What was the reason behind this? Although almost all American people are against any kind of racism or exploitation of labor they seemed to be quite indifferent to this bitter reality.

The University of Oregon is a special place embedded in exceptional times. Unlike the university I graduated from in Turkey, the U of O has wonderful facilities, student organizations and groups, contributing events and a great deal of diversity. With 1300 international students from 86 countries, I did not feel like a stranger at the UO. The first day I walked in the campus I got to know three wonderful friends from three different countries. Due to my encounters with people from different geographical and cultural backgrounds, I now know that Benin

and Togo are West African countries, that Brazilians speak Portuguese, and that Myanmar is the other name of Burma.

Thanks to the International Cultural Service Program, through which I give presentations to the community on Turkish culture, I had plenty of chances to have conversations with local people. After one of my presentations, an American said to me, "We are very self-centered people. We think that you ride camels to school and governed by dictators. There is a lot to learn about the world on the part of the Americans. I did not know that we share this much." By hearing these kind of confessions I came to understand the reasons behind the prejudice against the region in which I live. The ICS program helps to break these stereotypes and promote understanding.

The Saturday Market has become a place of relaxation where I can experience the 'hippie' culture of Eugene. Thanksgiving Day, New Years Day, St. Patrick's Day, Passover, Easter and harvests in organic farms were a few occasions during which I was able to discover the meanings of these events from the American perspective. Based on my personal experiences, I find the people of Eugene to be very liberal, understanding, helpful, relaxed, sharing and accepting. They



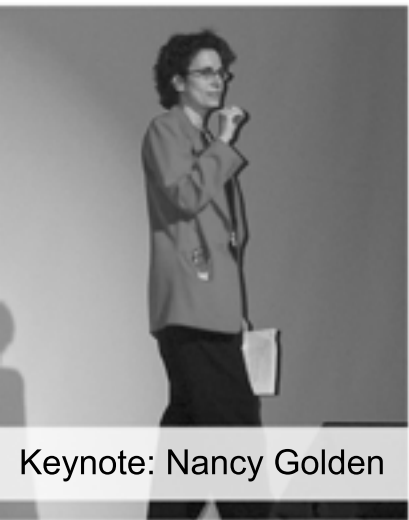
Ozgur Pala

do not judge people by how they look or what they think.

The multicultural atmosphere in Eugene increased my awareness of how significant it is to create harmony among cultures. Most importantly, I have learned how valuable we are as individuals and as representatives of our cultures and countries in this "huge" microcosm of the USA. Since I love Eugene, its culture and people I decided to extend my stay for another year. If I can get the visa, I will pursue an MA Degree in Applied Linguistics at the University of Oregon next year.

Now, I feel more confident travelling to different parts of the world. A Turkish proverb says, "One who has a better knowledge is not the one who lives longer, but the one who travels more." *

Ozgur Pala is a Fulbright Scholar from Ankara, Turkey.



Keynote: Nancy Golden

Like any great tradition, the best aspects of FLIS remain consistent from year to year. The campus is energized by the presence of excited high school students. Our young visitors are educated, entertained, and engaged by the UO's talented foreign language faculty and students. And it never seems to rain.

What do change are the faces and personalities behind FLIS. This year, during our 26th annual foreign language day, there were many distinctive and memorable ones. Springfield School District superintendent Nancy Golden



Do Something You Love



Having Lots of Fun!



A Look at Ecuador



Foreign Language and **2004** International Studies Day



Japanese Traditional Games



offered to mentor any of the 500 audience members interested in pursuing careers in teaching. Linguistics researcher Tim Thornes asked his workshop participants to introduce themselves and identify their favorite animals in Northern Paiute culture. College of Education language teachers-to-be had their students jumping, chanting, and discussing careers in language teaching. International Cultural Service Program students Veronica Sanchez and Ozgur Pala brought the languages and cultures of Ecuador and Turkey to life. And, of course, the multicultural music, theater, and dancing gave a lift to every participant's day.

We sincerely thank our more than 100 presenters, 75 volunteers, and 1800 visitors for keeping this tradition alive.



Folkloric Dance from Mexico



Technology Grant Funds Virtual Language Lab

Jeff Magoto

Computer technology has had a profound impact on nearly every aspect of foreign language learning except speech. A \$50,000 educational technology grant, recently awarded to the Yamada Language Center (YLC) and the foreign language departments, aims to change that. This grant will fund the creation of a web-based tool, dubbed the “virtual language lab” (VLL), for developing oral communication skills. Students will be able to sign up for chat or tutorial sessions and interact with other speakers in a variety of ways. Teachers will be able to design new kinds of lessons, provide customized feedback, and assess their students’ progress in ways not previously possible.

The VLL builds upon significant groundwork already in place. For five years, the YLC has delivered high-quality language materials over the Internet. The VLL will enable language faculty, researchers, and support staff to transition language learning from the more passive skill of listening to the more active skill of speaking. This shift will require a concerted effort; speaking into computers is just different.

The long-term goal is that the entire VLL will run within the familiar interface of Blackboard, the course management system that so many faculty and students already use for their online teaching and learning.

Quality language instruction, whether on-campus or at a distance, requires more than just classroom instruction. Creating opportunities for

interaction is crucial—especially when that exchange can be with a conversation partner halfway around the world.

This virtual environment will complement traditional teacher-to-student interactions and student-to-student endeavors like YLC’s Language Exchange, making possible cross-cultural and international linkages that have heretofore been restricted to text. The grantees are interested in collaborating with other units on campus interested in building this infrastructure or designing the curricula that accompany it.

Contact YLC director Jeff Magoto for more information.



Starting in the Fall, patrons will be able to check out headphones and cameras optimized for YLC’s new speech-based VLL.

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...a service and technology center for language teaching, study and research