

## Saving the World One Language at a Time

### *UO Professor Fights to Conserve Dying Languages*

Josh Alder, Staff Reporter

Paula Radetzky is on a mission to save the world from losing pieces of its history, one language at a time.

According to Radetzky, an assistant professor at the University of Oregon's Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures, since

2001, many of the world's languages have been rapidly disappearing.

"There are many languages that are considered endangered, one is dying every week," Radetzky said. "If you're conservative, then one is dying every two weeks."

Just like animals and plants, languages

can become extinct when they are no longer spoken or taught and their last speakers die. According to Radetzky, this happens for a number of reasons, but the most dominant factors are social and economic changes that force entire groups to adopt other cultures' customs and tongues.

In 2000, Radetzky began working with two indigenous tribes in Taiwan: the Saaroa and the Kavalan. Since then she has spent several months every summer living and talking with native speakers, as well as documenting their words, stories and history.

The Saaroa tribe lived in isolation for centuries in the south-central mountains of Taiwan. About 60 years ago, the Saaroa began to mingle and intermarry with a larger tribe, ultimately adopting its language.

After World War II, the Chinese government made indigenous children attend state-run schools where they learned Mandarin Chinese.



*Paula Radetzky and her Saaroan informant Kilakilau Tumamadikisase on a porch in Taiwan during Radetzky's field work in the summer of 2004. There are about 5 native speakers of Saaroa left.*

## In This Issue

- **The Fight to Save Endangered Languages**
- **Another Successful FLIS!**
- **New Web-Based Speech Tool**
- **Life at the End of the World**
- **Foreign Language Computing**

*Continued on page 2*

# Radetzky Works to Conserve World's Languages

*Continued from page 1*

The Saaroa tribe's numbers have since dwindled to about 300, and today, there are only about 5 remaining speakers of Saaroa.

In contrast, the Kavalan tribe, based on Taiwan's east coast, has about 600 members with about 50 native speakers.

Radetzky grew up in Tokyo where she attended international schools and became fluent in both English and Japanese. Later, she became fluent in French, Spanish, and Korean. However, she doesn't speak fluent Mandarin. Luckily, Taiwan's political history has provided her an accessible means of communication.

"Between 1895 and 1945, Taiwan was governed by Japan, and [the Saaroa] did have some village schools, so some of the people went to school for about four years and they learned Japanese," Radetzky said. "I speak to them in Japanese, and that's how I work with them."

When Radetzky attended Columbia University in New York City, she got a bachelor's degree in French because the school didn't have a linguistics program. However, she was later able to study linguistics as a graduate student at the University of California-Berkeley, earning a Ph.D. in 2002.

It was at UC-Berkeley that she became interested in the Austronesian language family, the largest language family in the world with more than 1200 languages. By contrast, the Indo-European family, which includes English, Russian, Spanish, Hindi, Greek, Welsh, Farsi, and more, has approximately 440 languages. The Austronesian family is made up of languages widely dispersed throughout the islands of Southeast Asia and the Pacific, including Hawaiian, Tagalog, Javanese, Malay, Rapa Nui (the language of Easter Island), Fijian, Samoan, Maori and Malagasy.

"Growing up in a foreign country is always good for your language awareness," Radetzky said. "My father was a French and Spanish teacher, my mother was a French and English teacher."

It was Radetzky's grandfather who first told her of the native peoples of Taiwan. He had visited Taiwan in the 1930's and told her about the indigenous people who lived there.

Even today the Saaroa people are still not recognized by the government as a tribe. "They are called "Tsou" (pronounced "tso"), and are grouped together with two other tribes," Radetzky said. "The

Tsou language is the biggest of the three, so that's what they're called."

The Kavalan tribe, on the other hand, received tribal status two years ago after years of pleading with the Taiwanese government.

Radetzky's overall goal is to make sure the Saaroa and Kavalan languages don't become lost to history like so many other languages.

"[I want] to document the language since it's going to be gone in less than 5 years," Radetzky said. "There are five speakers; they're all elderly and losing their memories or their health."

While it is difficult to pin down the reasons why some languages become endangered, some people blame the government for failing to encourage the tribe to keep their cultures and customs intact. However, the problem is often a matter of societal preferences and economics.

"Some governments are definitely guilty of forcing people to learn the dominant language," Radetzky said. "But even if that isn't the case, there are so many economic forces at work. People want to go to the city... to make money and for educational opportunities for their children. They're no longer living in the village and keeping any of the traditions."

According to Radetzky, it's a pattern that is all too common around the world. "Once you realize that a language is going to be gone, it's almost too late, unless there is some kind of huge turnaround," she said.

Radetzky plans on publishing her findings at some point in the next few years, but the task is expensive and time consuming. To help finance the project, she has applied for numerous grants, and has received more than \$70,000 over the past five years, including a \$40,000 joint grant from the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities as well as the Smithsonian, which was awarded to her in March 2005.

But, Radetzky's research is not spurred by any acclaim or financial support she might receive in the future; rather, it is a labor of love fueled by a deeply founded passion to keep these tribes from losing links to their past.

"I think it's just an important thing to document languages because that's the only record you're going to have after the culture vanishes. It's their heritage."

# New Web-Based Speech Application

YLC continues to be a campus pioneer in the area of web-based speech, and with the imminent release of our latest tool, Amiga Live Chat, faculty and students will have access to a real-time audio/video communication tool that runs inside of Blackboard.

Like other chat software, Amiga Live Chat allows users to communicate via text, audio, and video. However, having been designed with an academic audience in mind, Amiga Live Chat is unique in several ways. Because it runs from within Blackboard, the university's learning management system, faculty will find it easy to access and configure for their respective needs.

Likewise, students will be using a tool that is ad-free and is optimized for one-on-one discussion, tutoring, and problem-solving. Perhaps most significantly, because it uses off-the-shelf software and hardware (Flash Player and USB-microphones or webcams), both faculty and students probably already have access to everything they need to get started. Essentially, you log in, you enter a discussion room, and you begin speaking (or typing). Besides YLC, other computer labs around campus will have the appropriate equipment.

Designed to be the synchronous counterpart to the YLC Message Board, the multimedia discus-

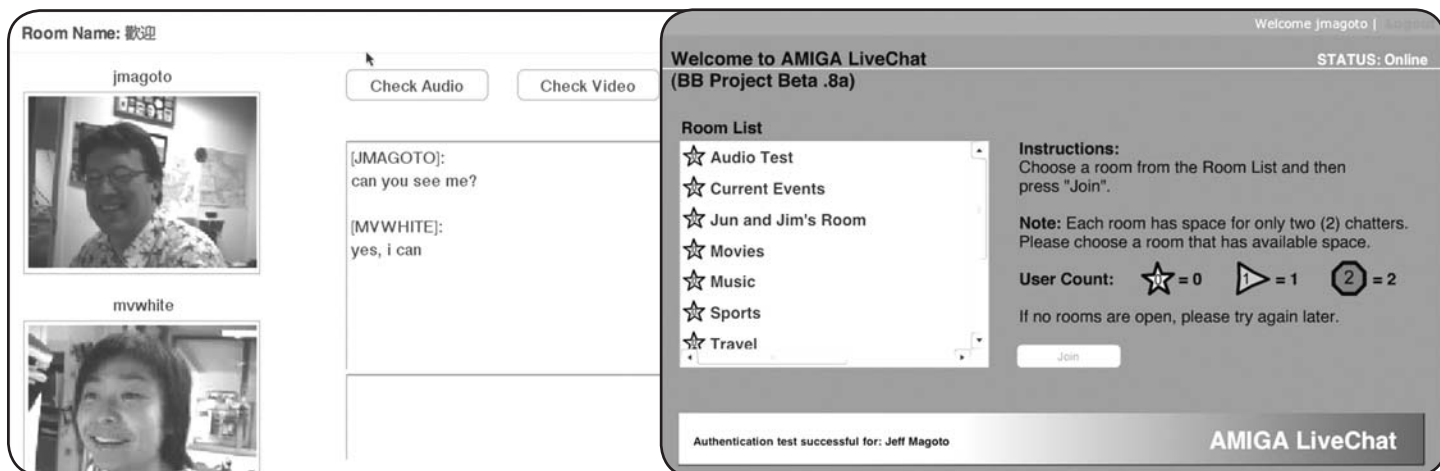
sion tool we released last year, Amiga Live Chat facilitates the kinds of discussions or virtual office hours where feedback is needed right away. While the software won't do much to free up busy schedules, it will allow conversations to continue well beyond the classroom. Beta testers report that it is very easy to use and greatly appreciate the extra value hearing and/or seeing your discussant adds.

In foreign languages we're excited about having a tool that will pair up speakers across the ocean as easily as across campus. Our standalone version, which is multilingual, will contain speech prompts, suggestions for doing self-study language learning, and a feedback tool that lets users get more information on their interlocutors, like how other chatters have rated him/her.

Amiga Live Chat is in beta testing right now. We anticipate that several classes will use it during the Fall and that it will be widely available Winter term. Instructors interested in using it or getting a demonstration should contact Jeff Magoto at YLC or check out:

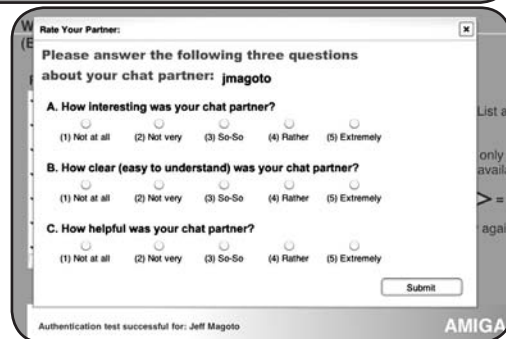
<http://babel.uoregon.edu/amiga>

Amiga Live Chat is generously funded by the Northwest Academic Computing Consortium (NWACC) and the UO's Educational Technology Fund.



*Amiga Live Chat allows real time messaging as well as audio or video chat (top left). Students should be familiar with the layout of Amiga since it works similarly to a chatroom (top right).*

*Instructors can set their room up to suit their own needs, organized by topic, textbook chapter, language or anything else. Students can evaluate the session as well as their interlocutor (bottom right) to help future students choose a partner. Amiga is Flash-based and Unicode compliant, which means that it can handle virtually any language including Chinese, Japanese, Hebrew, Arabic and Russian.*



# A View from the End of the World

Last March I set out for the end of the world.

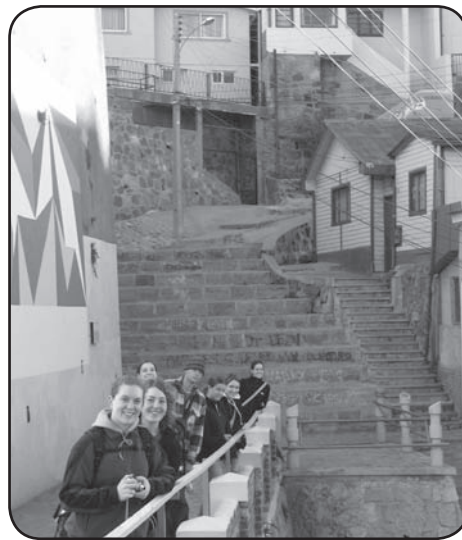
As a Political Science student in my next-to-last quarter at the U of O, I wanted to take advantage of my time left to accomplish one of my yet uncompleted undergraduate goals—to achieve fluency in Spanish.

I left Oregon to spend a term studying abroad in Chile, a nation that refers to itself endearingly as ‘el fin del mundo,’ or ‘the end of the world’. With territory extending for over 2,700 miles and boasting possession of the most remote island on earth, Easter Island, Chile does seem to warrant the title.

This narrow nation, just over 100 miles wide, takes great pride in the diversity of its natural beauty. The driest desert in the world, the Atacama, occupies northern Chile. A journey south takes one through the noisy hub-bub of the Santiago metro area, past the sleeping giants of the Patagonia range and through the picturesque Lake District, which looks remarkably like western Oregon.

Finally the nation plunges south through the massive glaciers of Torres del Paine to Cape Horn where the country’s territory finally comes to rest a mere 600 miles from Antarctica.

I had been abroad before, but never for such an extended period of time. I was prepared to learn, but I expected most of my discoveries to be about Chile and the cultures of South America. I never imagined that after three and a half months in Chile, I would learn so much about being from the United States.



*U.S. study abroad students enjoy a stroll through El Museo del Cielo in Valparaiso, Chile.*

That’s not to say that I didn’t experience Chilean culture fully. I quickly became accustomed to greeting with a kiss on the cheek, to eating huge lunches and a light “once” for dinner, to adding “*po*” to the end of my sentences just for good measure and to witnessing frequent protests

*By: Ariel Olson, Contributing Editor* as I walked through town on my way to campus. Still, my greatest lessons and those that I have brought home with me weren’t about Chile, but rather about the U.S., and how our nation and culture are perceived from abroad.

Within my first week in Chile I was forced to confront an expectation that I didn’t even realize I had until it wasn’t met. Being an international student, I expected that more people would be interested in me.

To me, the diversity of the United States is one of its greatest attributes and I consider myself lucky to have the opportunity to interact with people from all over the world and to share in their knowledge and experiences.

For this reason, I was surprised when I arrived in Chile and found that, at least initially, few people had much interest in me or my country, and even fewer had the patience to talk with me during the first three weeks or so when I still had difficulty expressing myself in Spanish.

I had to be patient, both with myself and with what I perceived to be a general lack of interest in us as North American students. Doing so meant remembering that U.S. culture is constantly being exported all

## YLC Quarterly

### Staff

Director: Jeff Magoto  
Office Coordinator: Karen McDonald  
IT Specialist: Ginny White

### Graduate Teaching Fellows

Self-study: Bené Santos  
Newsletter: Tom Dolack  
Multimedia: Andrew Porter  
Research: Sermsap Vorapanya

### Student Coordinators

FLIS: Michelle Keiser  
Computer Lab: Jennifer Stocks, Eric Beltran  
Senior Assistants: Tana Leibrant, Lyndsay Keiser  
Scheduling: Ryan Hastreiter  
Staff Reporters: Ariel Olson, Josh Alder, Leticia Camargo

### Fall ‘05 Schedule

M - H: 8:00 - 7:00  
F: 8:00 - 5:00  
Sun: 1:00 - 5:00

**Phone:** (541) 346-4011

**E-mail:** [ylc@uoregon.edu](mailto:ylc@uoregon.edu)

**Website:** <http://babel.uoregon.edu>

The YLC Quarterly is published by the Yamada Language Center at the University of Oregon. As part of the University of Oregon, the Yamada Language Center is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution committed to cultural diversity and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**Cover Photo:** *Sat Pavan Kaur Khalsa, North Indian Foldlore Dance, FLIS XXVII, by Eugene Valjean*

over the world. While I was in Chile, headlines from home were consistently shown on the news. Our music, movies and television programs ran relentlessly over Chilean broadcasting stations. Even our taste in food and fashion had noticeably influenced their menus and clothing styles, though always with a Chilean flare.

With so much forced exposure to the U.S., how could I blame my Chilean friends for not expressing much further interest in my culture?

On several occasions individuals attempted to raise issue with me regarding recent U.S. foreign policy and were sincerely shocked to discover that my views differed in many ways from what they saw on TV.

Others were surprised by my physical appearance and personality. "I expected you to be taller, whiter, fatter, louder, lazier, wealthier, more blonde,

more selfish, etc...," they would tell me.

Many people I met assumed that I, like other U.S. exchange students before me, chose to go abroad in order to party and sightsee.

At first I was frustrated by these generalizations, but the more I thought about them the more I realized they weren't meant to offend. Instead they stemmed from a genuine misunderstanding or lack of exposure to the real diversity of our society.

Unfortunately, the ways in which I differed from the Chilean conception of the U.S. didn't immediately serve to change these views; my friends simply considered me to be less North American, and the stereotypes persisted.

Changing these negative perspectives about the United States required months of dialogue, lots of patience and a genuine shift in

my own conceptions of my home country.

It's great to go abroad. It's fun to learn a new language, to experience a new culture and to travel to new places. But exercising these privileges implies some degree of responsibility.

Throughout my time in Chile I was constantly observed, evaluated and questioned. I had to work hard to earn the trust of those I met and to demonstrate that I wasn't just in the country for some sort of extended vacation, but that being there meant more to me. I was more than a student—I was a diplomat.

The United States is in the hotseat and the world is watching. Even in Chile, at the end of the world, people are waiting for us to break the mold and exemplify a new kind of North American; one with a genuine interest in and commitment to the rest of the world.

The University of Oregon's 28th Annual

# Foreign Language and International Studies Day

SEE THE *movement* OF THE WORLD

May 5, 2006

Yamada Language Center  
University of Oregon  
541.346.1538 • flis@uoregon.edu  
<http://babel.uoregon.edu>

# Foreign Language and International Studies Day

If you could choose the best trip around the world, what would it be? What countries would you see? What cultures would you visit? What languages would you try to speak?

FLIS 2005 was just such an opportunity. It was a day to travel around the world: to drink Japanese tea, travel through romantic France, hear about German history, discover the languages in Ethiopia and dance to African-Brazilian songs. These were only a few of the activities that took place at last May's Foreign Language and International Studies Day.

Twelve hundred high school students from all over Oregon packed the University of Oregon campus for the 27<sup>th</sup> year in a row to attend over 110 different cultural presentations.

"We get to see all these different cultures. It's pretty educational," said Michael Demick from Lincoln City, who watched a presentation on Spanish culture.

Some students preferred the language lessons, while others were more into the cultural presentations. Some did everything they could to taste lots of different inter-



# Language International Day 2005

by Leticia Camargo, Staff Reporter

national foods; others preferred to dance it all out in the music-related sections. One thing is for sure: it was a day for all kinds of tastes, and a chance for everyone to explore their interests in many different parts of the globe.

There were over 25 languages featured—from the most common ones, to a few hardly anyone had heard of. An American Sign Language presentation captivated its audience—the dexterity required to sign effectively seemed so hard.

The Portland-based theater group Teatro Milagro enriched FLIS this year by telling a story about immigrants from the other side of the border. *Cuéntame Coyote* was a tale about the ideas and adventures of two orphan girls in Mexico trying to cross the border to the United States. It eloquently captured the hopes and frustrations of a world thirsty for more cross-cultural communication.

Once again, FLIS was a day for exploring new places, trying to understand cultures other than our own, and appreciating the many ways that language makes the world go round.



# Word Processing in a foreign language: PC

## Typing in another language

1. First add your desired language to the available languages on the language bar. To do this, go to the Settings>Control Panel>Regional and Language Options>Languages (names will vary slightly depending on Windows version). Click on the “Details” button. It’s convenient to assign a shortcut key to switch between keyboards. Do this by activating the “Language Bar” or by assigning a key combination with “Key Settings...”

2. Now to switch the keyboard to your desired language simply click on the language bar and select the language, or use the shortcut key you defined under “Key Settings” – no need to worry about fonts. Switch back to English when done.

## Accented characters

In typing a language that uses a Latin-based alphabet, but with accents (French, Spanish, German, Italian, etc...) there are three options.

1. The first is to follow the above instructions to add the requisite keyboard layout. Accented characters will then be much more accessible.

Note, however, that this will require learning a different keyboard layout (some are more different from the English QWERTY

keyboard than others).

2. The second is to use the character map. Under Programs>Accessories>System Tools is the Character map program. Open this program and you will see a large chart with virtually any accented letter and symbol you could need. To insert one into your document “select” the letter you need and either “copy” it to the clipboard and paste it into your document (ctrl-v), or find the keystroke in the lower right-hand corner (it will be alt plus a four-digit number beginning with 0). If you use these letters often it is worth learning the keystroke.

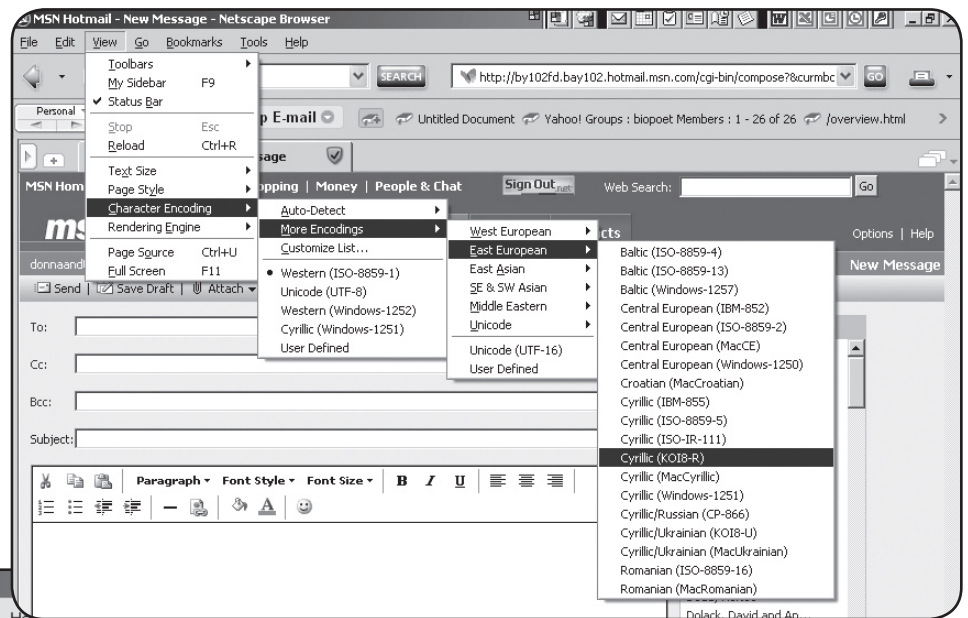
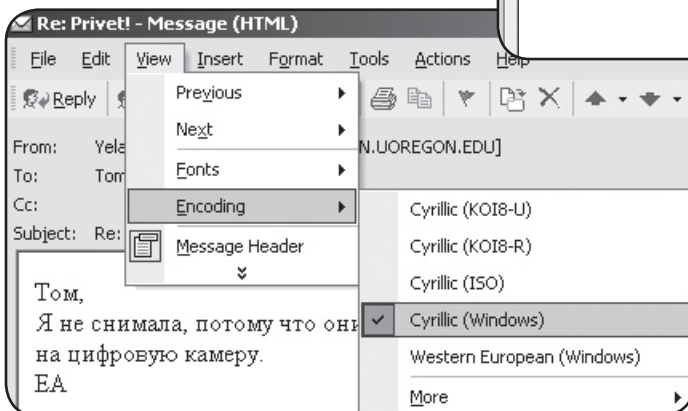
3. In Microsoft Word you can insert a special character by going to Insert>Symbol. Select the letter you need and click

“Insert” and it will be inserted wherever the cursor is.

## Email

1. Switch the keyboard to your desired language, if necessary, before typing your message. If you are typing in a non-Latin-based alphabet (Russian, Chinese, Arabic, Hebrew) and are using a web-based email program (Hotmail, Yahoo), switch the Character Coding (under View) to one of the Cyrillic options.

2. When viewing emails using a different script, change the Character Set (under View or Format) to the appropriate choice (it may take a few tries to pick the right one). Again, if the message is entirely question marks, it is most likely undecipherable.



*Sending and receiving email in a foreign language can be daunting, but it doesn't need to be. The most important thing is to make sure you have the correct "character set." All major web browsers (top) and email programs (left) have settings for character set: just make sure to select the appropriate one before writing or reading your email. many of the newer programs will do this automatically.*



# Word Processing in a foreign language: MAC

## Setting up the keyboard

1. Go to “System Preferences” and under “International” select “Input Menu” and then click the box next to the language you need.

2. Now there will be an American Flag at the top of the screen. To switch to an alternate keyboard, first click and hold on the flag and drag down to the language you need. Your keyboard should now speak another language! Note: Some languages, like Russian, will require particular fonts. Russian, for instance requires fonts with “CY” after it.

## Email

1. When composing email in another tongue using one of the popular email programs (Eudora, OS X Mail or Entourage) you will follow the same steps as above

## AlphaMail

Tired of problems sending or receiving email using non-Latin fonts with UO’s Web Mail? Well, this fall the university is offering an alternative to your old (green) email, IMHO. AlphaMail, which is 100% Unicode compliant, will be able to handle foreign languages much more easily.

This means that it will be able to handle all your foreign-language correspondence needs, whether they be in Polish, Thai, Pushto or Gujarati. If you can type a word-processing document in the language, you can now email in that language as well.

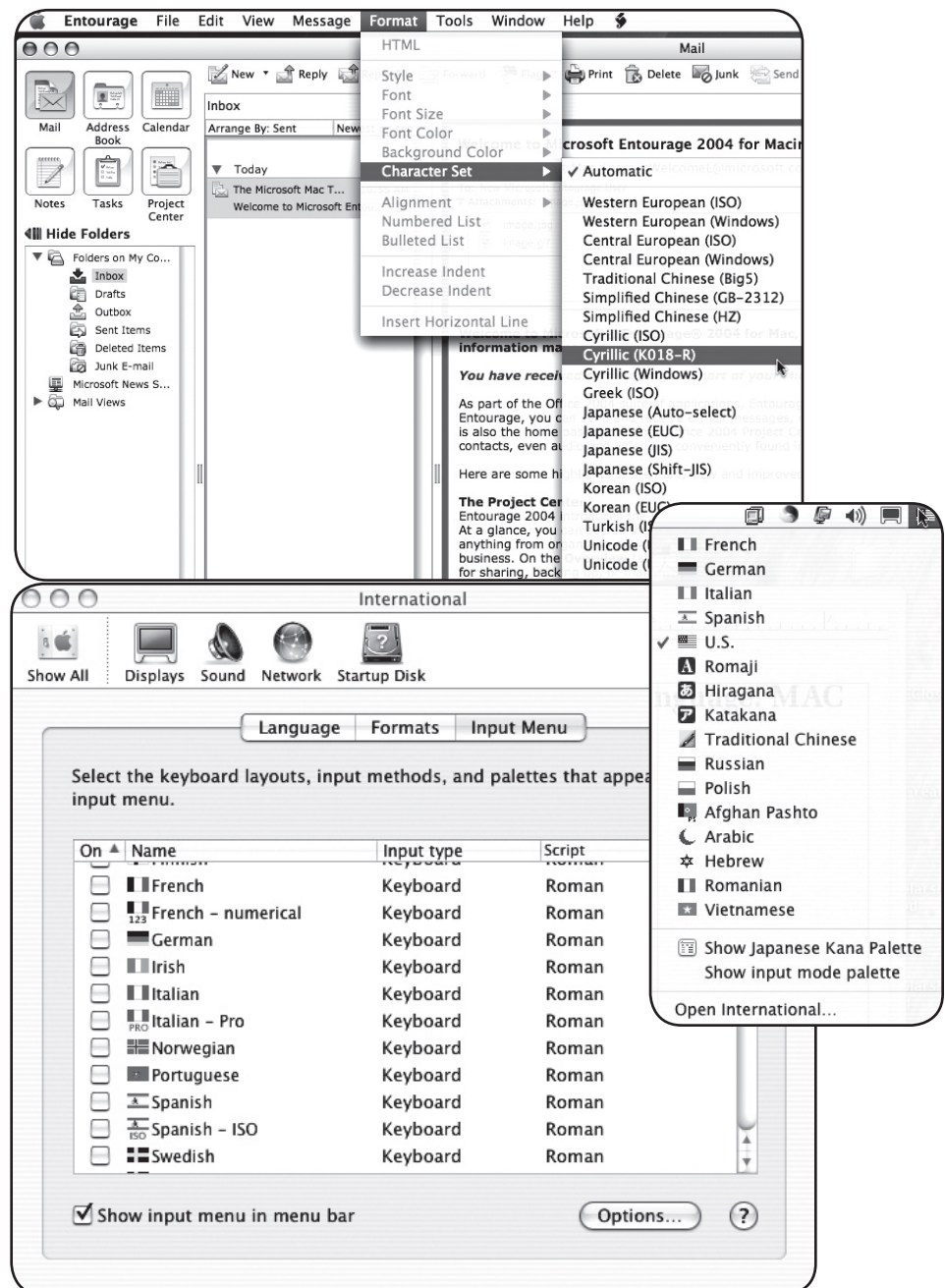
This new mail client can be accessed at:  
[alphamail.uoregon.edu](http://alphamail.uoregon.edu).

(switch input language by click-and-dragging on the flag). When composing in a web-based email program (hotmail, yahoo) with a non-Latin-based language, make sure to go to View>Character/Text Encoding and switch to an appropriate encoding before typing and sending your message.

2. If you receive an email that is unreadable, your first step

is to either switch the character encoding as described above (if you are in a web browser) or to change the corresponding setting in your email program (Format>Character Set in Entourage).

3. Note that if the message is a string of question marks, it will most likely be unreadable no matter what you do with it.



# Media Workshop Gets Summer off to Bang

Summer got off to a bang at YLC with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Academic Affairs IT Workshop, which was held from June 13-17. Thirty faculty from around campus spent the first week of their summer vacations exploring multimedia software, editing video projects, making websites



*This year's Multimedia Workshop featured our biggest group ever: 30 people! Participants learned the rudiments of web and document design as well as editing audio, video and photos, and basic Flash programming.*

more interactive, and tweaking Powerpoint presentations.

Bringing such a diverse group of scholars together was an interesting logistical and curriculum challenge for YLC staff. Multimedia is a vast area and at times we struggled to tailor our tutorials to some of our participants' very discipline-specific needs. Fortunately, the participants were indulgent of our organizational lapses, and YLC Staff are quick learners, so each day we got a little better at meeting everyone's needs.

Guest lecturers helped anchor various IT strategies and methods in sound pedagogy. Examples ranged from the project-based learning that is used in documentary filmmaking and multimedia authoring to innovations in computer-mediated communication which allow disparate groups to work and learn as if they're in close proximity.

The cross discipline contact was certainly a highlight of the week. As one participant noted: "I am particularly happy for having found out what other people do, finding commonalities and establishing some links that will certainly end up in collaboration across disciplines and departments."



*Experiential learning with technology. Here Joey Bargsten, AAA, demonstrates his innovative lecturing style.*

## Fall Offerings:

Arabic	Swahili
Farsi	Thai
Greek	Romanian
Hindi/Urdu	Turkish
Portuguese	Vietnamese
Navajo	Wolof
Indonesian	Bamana

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>.

# Student Wins Russian Essay Award

University of Oregon 1st-year student Svetlana Easton was recently awarded a Bronze Medal in the 6th Annual National Russian Essay Contest sponsored by the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR).

Sveta placed third in Level 1 of the Heritage Learner category, meaning that her essay was judged against other native speakers with less than five years of formal schooling in Russia or the former Soviet Union.

“All of us in REESC are extremely proud of Sveta’s achievement,” says Josh Overcast, REESC GTF and UO contest coordinator. “Aside from the obvious distinction of placing highly in a national contest with over dozens of other participants, Sveta is

also the first participant from our university to receive an award. I should also note that Sveta was only one of two award recipients in all of Oregon. This really is something I hope Sveta feels she can brag about!”

First held in 2000, the ACTR Russian Essay Contest continues to draw increasing numbers of college and university students from around the United States each year. The total number of participants and participating institutions has nearly doubled since 2003.

“In 2004 we had one participant, and this year we had five,” notes Overcast. “I look forward to 10 or more of our Russian students submitting essays--and winning awards--next year!”



*Svetlana Easton received a “Bronze Medal” in the ACTR Russian Essay Contest*

## Everyday Etymology

*Continued from page 12*

Brazil wood when they first navigated the land’s coast.

As we can see, association is one of the most common ways of naming objects or places, but language may also bring some ironies that we are just not aware of. The Spanish saying *Ojalá*, and the Portuguese *Oxalá* means “I hope that...” However, the term itself is originated from the older Arabic phrase “*In Sh Allah*,” which means “May Allah grant.”

How ironic that these traditionally Catholic cultures, after hundreds of years battling the Islamic Moors to control the Iberian Peninsula, still use this traditional Islamic phrase.

Language in close contact constantly influence one another. Confusions like that wouldn’t

happen if people were more aware of the background of the words before they adopted them!

Etymology influences our lives more than we think. It might even appear in your daily activities. Today when we hear the word alarm, we might associate it with some kind of warning, or perhaps with an alarm clock, the little object that emits a loud annoying noise that disturbs our cozy slumber and wakes us up every morning. Originally, however, to warn of approaching enemies, the French military used the Old Italian call, “all’arme,” which meant, “to arms!” And thus we get “alarm.”

So tomorrow morning when you hear your alarm going off, get ready to battle another day!

## New Faces at YLC

YLC welcomes six new GTFs this year. Each specializes in language teaching and/or technology, and will be working in conjunction with the Self-Study Language Program.

- Maria Benédita Santos, Brazil, Coordinator of the Self-Study Language Program.

- Sermsap Vorapanya, Thailand, Thai tutor and Research Assistant.

- Marko Mwipopo, Tanzania, Swahili tutor and African Studies Program GTF.

- Dorsaf Naoui, Tunisia, Arabic tutor and Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant.

- Nilay Sevinc, Turkey, Turkish tutor and Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant.

- Andrew Porter, USA, Multimedia specialist and Materials Coordinator.

# Musings on Language and Culture

## Start Your Day with a Trip Back in Linguistic History

by Leticia Camargo, Staff Reporter

Ask any student if they think school is a place to have fun, and you will probably get that “what are you talking about?” look. But when the word originated in ancient Greece, it meant exactly that, a place for leisure.

Originally, a school (or *schole* in Greek) referred to a time away from hard work outside under the hot sun. It was a chance for Greeks to rest and meet each other to discuss ideas. They believed that knowledge was very important, and that a man’s education would never really be complete. Thanks to their excitement for knowledge, most of our civilization’s structure comes from ancient Greece.

Just as earlier societies influenced our life style, they also made their mark on how we speak today. The development of languages can be very curious sometimes. Geography, weather, historical events, are a few of the elements that shape a culture, and therefore, a language, through time. Studying the word’s history, or etymology, can make us understand a bit more about what we are trying to express.

Have you ever thought about how simple things that we say all the time arose? Daily greetings in some languages might connect you not only with the person in front of you, but also with the cultures behind those words. Languages such as Italian and Hebrew use the same word for both

hello and good-bye. The Italian *ciao*, which has been adopted into so many languages, originated in *shiavo*, which meant a slave. Therefore, the meaning of the expression used to be “I am [your] slave,” as a form of polite deferment. Nowadays, people all around the world use the expression with a smile on their face. Israelis on the other hand wish Shalom, or peace, for people who are coming or going.

From complex backgrounds to practical ideas, words can play a very helpful role in our daily lives. Have you ever thought about how many times a week you wonder which months have 30, and which 31 days? In some cultures, people count their knuckles trying to figure that out, but in Thailand that’s not necessary. They found a faster solution using vocabulary.

Months with 30 days end with -on (like September *Kanyayon*), while months with 31 end with -om (as January, *Magarakom*), and February ends with -an: *Kumpapan*.

From simple to important names, words may express a little piece of a country’s history. For example, “Argentina” came from a treasure that the Spanish people were looking for in the area during colonization: *Argenta* in Latin, or simply valuable silver.

Along the same lines, Brazil came from the fact that the Portuguese found a great amount of

**Only Words .... ?  
How Far Can Your Vocabulary  
Take You?  
“Ojalá” I Knew What I Was  
Talking About!  
A Simple “Ciao,” a History  
Lesson  
Words and Meanings You Don’t  
Learn in School**

Yamada Language Center  
1236 University of Oregon  
Eugene, OR 97403-1236  
ylc@uoregon.edu



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

**Yamada Language Center**

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