

## ASL Interpreters Provide Needed Service

Josh Alder, Staff Reporter

Understanding academic lectures is a core requirement of a university student's life. To do this successfully requires background in reading, attention, and a keen interest in the subject. For the university's six ASL interpreters, who mediate that comprehension process for the hearing-impaired community, there's the added pressure of making that subject come alive for someone else.

Such is the life of an American Sign Language interpreter at UO. The university's Disability Services employs six ASL interpreters to assist the four deaf students on campus. It's a difficult and demanding job that requires hours of preparation and real passion for the language.

Janis Sellers-Stuck has been an ASL interpreter in various positions for the past 17 years, including seven years at the UO, Lane Community College and Eugene's 4-J school district. She began as an on-call interpreter at the UO in 1995 and has spent the last two years as a staff interpreter for Disability Services.

Sellers-Stuck, 44, grew up in the southern Oregon town of Cave Junction; after high school, she enrolled at Rogue Community College in Grants Pass. She later moved to Eugene and worked on general studies at Lane Community College from 1983 to 1986. In 1993, she returned to LCC and interpreted for some classes while still a student in others; she graduated with an associate's degree in Chemical Dependency Counseling in 1995. She also completed a two-year program of interpreter training and ASL certification, finishing at Western Oregon University in Monmouth, Ore.

"I had seen ASL used and I wanted to learn more about it," said Sellers-Stuck, commenting on her introduction to the language. "A friend of mine wanted to practice it and that got me really interested in learning it myself."

During the Winter 2005 term, Sellers-Stuck has spent each Tuesday and Thursday interpreting for Man-Sze Fong, a University junior and a soon-to-be human physiology major. Fong, 20, was in Hong Kong and grew up in Portland. She lost her hearing when she was two and a half years old following complications from meningitis.

After graduating in 2002 from Cleveland High School in southeast Portland, Fong was awarded the UO's Diversity Building scholarship, which pays for nearly all of her tuition and fees.



Janis Sellers-Stuck sign interprets Susan Verscheure's Human Anatomy lecture.

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# ASL Interpreter Brings Lectures Alive *Continued from page 1*

While signing for Fong in Human Anatomy II, Sellers-Stuck sits to the right of the professor during lectures and is careful to translate every pertinent word that is spoken, including questions and comments from other students. For a class such as Human Anatomy II where terms are specific and often difficult to pronounce, Sellers-Stuck takes time to spell out each word so that Fong can correlate the vocabulary with the course textbook.

"I really feel bad for my interpreters because they have to spell everything right... and try to look at the pictures behind them," Fong said.

Sellers-Stuck's motions seem effortless and premeditated; at times she appears to be thinking ahead of the instructor, anticipating the words that will follow each completed thought.

Randy Bell, 24, a university senior and human physiology major, has noticed Sellers-Stuck as she interprets in the class and is impressed by her abilities.

"She really has a difficult job to perform," Bell said. "This is a tough subject and she has to spell out all the words... it's really amazing that's she's able to listen to the lecture and interpret without missing anything."

ASL interpreters are more involved in their students' classes than most people realize. They work with professors and instructors to keep up with in-class assignments and homework, and spend time reading and studying the required course textbooks and literature, which Disability Services provides to them. Some instructors allow interpreters access to slides and lecture notes prior to class sessions; however, there is often no preparatory material available when courses include guest lecturers and last-minute curriculum changes.

Most college students have, at one point or another, experienced difficulty sitting through a long class period. But, for ASL interpreters, nodding off or tuning out the instructor for a few moments simply isn't an option. Luckily, UO interpreters are generally assigned to classes in teams so they can switch off at regular intervals. Steve Massie, 37, is a part-time interpreter with Disability Services and works with Sellers-Stuck during Fong's anatomy and psychology classes. They each take turns interpreting, switching every 20-30 minutes during the 80 and 90-minute classes.

"[Interpreting] is pretty taxing mentally, more than you'd think," Massie said. "They've

found that after 20-25 minutes, the mental process starts to break down. We switch off every 20 minutes just to keep our brains fresh."

ASL interpreters work differently than spoken-language interpreters because they are not just converting syntax; rather, they must find ways to demonstrate emotion, expressions and feelings such as humor, seriousness and interrogation. It's a highly defined skill that takes years to master, taking more passion and drive than most people – even those with an interest in learning sign language – possess and are able to maintain.

"The level that you are thinking is so much higher than just communicating," Sellers-Stuck said. "It takes a lot of focus and you have to really be concentrating. You've got to know your stuff. Eventually you get to the point where you can see where people are going... but it takes a lot of practice and determination."

Sellers-Stuck and her colleagues are some of the UO's unsung heroes. Their silent efforts often go unnoticed by the general student population, and the profession certainly isn't lucrative. However, the value of the service they provide is truly essential and incredibly valuable.

## YLC Quarterly

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# New Speaking Tool for Oral Skills Classes: YLC Message Board

Jeff Magoto, YLC Director

The challenges of an “advanced conversation class” are well-known to language teachers and students alike: How do you balance content learning with speech practice? How do you encourage group learning while providing lots of individual feedback? And, how do you keep track of all those audio and video tapes that get produced in the process?

For Catherine Wiebe, Senior Instructor in French, who’s been teaching at UO for nearly twenty years, and has tackled FRN 307 Oral Skills many times, the class is still a challenge. But starting Winter 2005 one thing changed which seems to have promise for the future—the way she and her thirty students interact outside of class.

Wiebe has traded in boxes of tapes for a speech-based web conferencing system—the YLC Message Board (MB)—that allows her and her students to engage in the kind of one-to-one spoken interaction that is so crucial in oral skills teaching. Students make short reports on increasingly complex topics, and Wiebe writes and talks back to them (the MB includes audio, video, and text) about the effectiveness of their communication.

Wiebe says she used the MB to optimize classroom time for small group work and discussion. She’s not a big fan of individual student presentations in classes like this: “They’re just too time-consuming and tend not to engage everyone.”

Instead her students posted three speaking assignments to the MB, much like reporters phoning in stories to a newsroom. For a unit on style and fashion and its impact on culture, for example, students described in detail how

they would re-design the traditional school uniform.

“For me the point of the MB was to give people more opportunities to speak,” Wiebe said. “Maybe they’re shy, or maybe they need more time to formulate their thoughts. It’s also easy for language students to fall into the pattern of saying a few words about many different things without ever getting practice at speaking about something in depth.”



*Catherine Wiebe’s two French 307 Oral Skills classes bravely piloted v.1 of the YLC Message Board.*

## Feedback via Two Channels

Wiebe gives both written and spoken feedback to students’ MB postings—about one-third focused on content and two-thirds on language. “I try to give them a sense of how well they communicated their ideas, especially those who elaborated or really pushed themselves linguistically; I then make specific comments about pronunciation or grammar.” She notes that most of her spoken comments focused on usage be-

cause the MB made it easy for her to model correct forms.

Most students prepared their talks by writing them out ahead of time. When they actually recorded them on the MB, Wiebe says that there were some interesting digressions and attempts at ad-libbing, but not as much as she would’ve liked. Nor was there much crosstalk. Despite the fact that students had access to others’ work, they didn’t really comment, or try to elaborate on what others had described.

Wiebe notes that each of the three assignments got easier for them to do and that she saw qualitative growth. “Since they were preparing their talks, I could push them to go farther in what they said.”

## In the Future

Next term Wiebe anticipates using the MB with second-term French students and perhaps with a special class she teaches for students on their way to Lyons and Poitiers next year for study abroad in France. “If we can overcome the logistical problems, I’m going to match them up with the students who are in France now. It’ll be interesting for them to hear what our students there have to say about their experience as it comes to an end.

Wiebe hasn’t yet done a formal evaluation of the software, but preliminary indications are that students like it, especially the individualized feedback she gives them. One student told us it made a real difference in her speaking. “I got a sense of my French voice, and now I’m starting to like it.”

UO faculty interested in using the YLC Message Board (v. 2) can sign-up online at: [babel.uoregon.edu/messageBoards](http://babel.uoregon.edu/messageBoards).

# Linguistics Begins EFL Teacher Preparation Program

Leticia Camargo, Staff Reporter

The university has taken yet another step in becoming an international campus—UO now offers a degree program for language teachers seeking to teach English abroad. Aimed at both international and U.S. students planning to teach in a variety of school settings overseas, the Linguistics department's Language Teaching Specialization M.A. will help meet the huge global demand for more teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

While there are many TESOL preparation programs around the country, what makes this program distinctive is its focus on teaching internationally and the cross cultural awareness that such work requires. "What it takes to teach language is really different from what it takes to teach most of the other content areas," said Spike Gildea, the Director of the Linguistics Department.

The program is designed primarily to enable language teachers to address the proficiency needs of their students, making their communicative skills stronger rather than getting students ready to pass a grammar exam.

"I see our job here as sensitizing people to the job of giving people the skills to be communicative members of a culture," said Gildea.

This is exactly what the 15 students who enrolled in the program, which is in its first year, came to get: a quality teaching program that addresses their needs in a short time frame. "I came to America, and to this program, to have some experience

and learn more," said Hyan Sook Lee, a student from Korea who together with six other students form the largest nationality group in the program.

The program focuses on teaching a foreign language rather than a second language, and on the skills teachers need inside



*LTS students take classes in linguistics, pedagogy and assessment. They concentrate on teaching communication rather than grammar.*

and outside the classroom. In order to accomplish that, it includes courses from both Linguistics and the College of Education. Core courses include: EFL theory and classroom pedagogy, second language acquisition, English grammar, teaching culture and literature, comparative education, and computer assisted language learning. A few international students in the program also take classes in writing and pronunciation.

Even though the program offers many different classes, some of the students think there are

still some improvements to be made. "I think all the classes are necessary but still very limited," said Yon Jeong Chin. She wished there were some more pragmatic approaches and a more organized support to help international students keep up with the classes in English.

The Korean students all come from Hanyang University in Seoul, where they begin their studies during the summer. This experience prepares them to come and study in the United States. "I think this is good because we learn more about how it is going to be here," said Chin.

The director of the LTS program, Sarah Klinghammer, thinks that it's going very well so far. "We are grateful to have a small group this year because it's a pilot year, and it gives us ideas of how we will need to reformat," she said. "The students are really invested in doing the program, and doing it well."

## Distinctiveness

Unlike some programs, where EFL is an afterthought in language teacher preparation, the LTS curriculum is designed by and for language teachers. Its graduates will have a solid grounding in

**"I have found the LTS program to be a marvelous experience. Our instructors are seriously invested in our development [and there's a] sense of community among students and between students and professors." – Josh Overcast**

linguistics, pedagogy, and assessment practices. Gildea, Linguistics Chair, adds "We give people what

# Students Gain Practical Knowledge

they need to be really good teachers.”

However, several students, expressed the hope that in the future students could have more hands-on teaching practice. “I wish we had the chance to teach somewhere outside,” one current student said. Others mentioned the importance of observation and feedback in learning to teach language.

Klinghammer said that this is one of the long-term goals of the program. “This is supposed to be a very practical, applied program. The students are supposed to leave the program with things they can actually use when they go back to their own situations,” said Klinghammer.

The LTS is an accelerated M.A. program (only five terms), but attempts to cover the same material as longer programs, which means that there is quite a heavy academic load.

The practical or applied nature of the program is definitely one of the elements that the students appreciate. “I like it because it’s short, compact and intensive,” said Ozgur Pala, an LTS student from Turkey.

Pala adds that the international crowd and the small classes are big pluses of the program. He also notes that his professors are very accessible. He hopes that future student cohorts will become even more diverse, bringing in teachers from all over the world.

LTS faculty are aware of this and certainly build “peer teaching and learning” into their classes. “There is a lot of cooperative learning going on in different projects,” Klinghammer said. When there is a balance between international students and native English speakers, students learn



*LTS students from the US, Korea and Burma in Comparative Education (one of the core classes of the program).*

more from each other.

Josh Overcast, a U.S. student in the program, agrees: “I have found LTS to be a marvelous experience. Our instructors are seriously invested in our development as competent language teachers. Also, one of the best things about the program is the sense of community among students and between students and professors – I have formed close bonds and lasting friendships with many of my colleagues, and we all work hard to help each other improve our skills and knowledge.”

The program is open to students with a B.A. in languages, linguistics, or a related field, with classes starting each summer term. For more information, see their website: [logos.uoregon.edu](http://logos.uoregon.edu).

## Staff Changes...

**F**arewell to Shirley Bolles. After more than twelve years as office coordinator for YLC, **Shirley Bolles** has moved across the hall to become office manager at the AEI. While more than 300 staff, students, and directors have come and gone in this time, Shirley’s smiling face has been a YLC’s constant. Her professionalism, helpfulness, and “can-do” spirit will be sorely missed.

**H**ello to Karen McDonald. Taking over for Shirley is **Karen McDonald**, who has more than 20 years’ experience in bookkeeping and office management. Karen’s second language is Spanish, but she’s already proven herself adept at BannerSpeak and other UO/YLC jargon. Feel free to stop by and introduce yourself. Karen can be reached at: 346-540 or [klm@uoregon.edu](mailto:klm@uoregon.edu).

## Acknowledgements

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**Phillip Lighty:** Linguistics 199, the Self-Study Language Program

**John Patton and the Cadence Management Corporation of Portland:** 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Foreign Language and International Studies (FLIS) day.

**The Keithan Family:** Keithan Lounge renovations and FLIS

**The Yamada Scholarship Foundation:** annual study abroad opportunities to Japan

**The Platt Family:** YLC Language Guides

**Clint Venekamp, Christopher Simmons, and Mrs. Stanley Uyeda:** YLC Virtual Language Lab

# A Thousand Years of Culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Josh Alder, Staff Reporter

Necessity, it has been said, is the mother of invention. For one Portland State University professor, the need to effectively teach Russian culture led to the creation of an innovative college lecture course that brings one thousand years of sights and sounds into the classroom.

Sandra Rosengrant, Ph.D., chair of the Foreign Language Department at PSU, has been an instructor of Russian language, literature and cultural history since 1979. In 1999, she received both PSU's Teaching and Learning with Technology award and the George Hoffman award for excellence in teaching, scholarship and service.

On Jan. 28, Rosengrant gave a guest lecture at the Yamada Language Center as part of the Russian and East European Studies Center's lecture series and presented the program that she and colleague Joel Rice prepared using Macromedia Director. The presentation contained examples of the 18 lectures (each contained on its own CD) comprising Rosengrant's Russian culture course, "1,000 Years of Russian Culture."

Rosengrant, who has written two Russian textbooks ("Focus on Russian" and "The Golden Age: Readings in Russian Literature of the Nineteenth Century") with a third on the way, said she developed the Russian culture teaching program with the features of a textbook in mind.

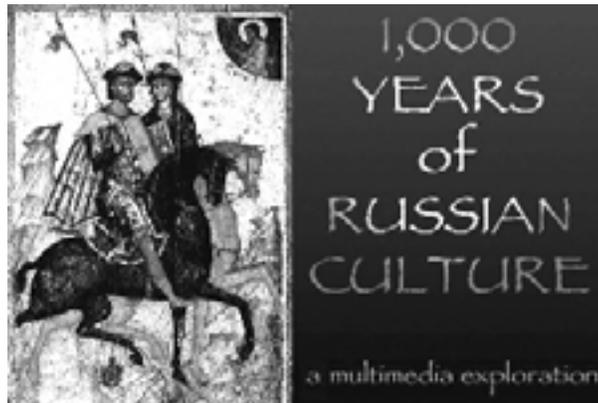
Developing the multimedia material was "as much work as a textbook," Rosengrant said. "In my mind, this is my fourth textbook-linked project."

6 Rosengrant's main objective was to find answers to her primary

concerns: "What do the students need?" and "How can we provide it to them?"

When Rosengrant began teaching at PSU 26 years ago, the policy in the Foreign Language Department was that all classes must be taught in the target language. This posed a problem when Rosengrant began preparing to teach a class on Russian culture.

"The only textbook I could



find for the cultural history class was a Soviet textbook called 'Pages of History,'" Rosengrant said. "We would read a little bit... and [the students] would say, 'Well, St. Basil's is a wonderful monument of architecture,' and that was kind of the end of the discussion."

Rosengrant tried using slides to create more interaction in the class; those helped students gain a greater understanding of the sights of Russian culture, but Rosengrant wasn't completely satisfied.

In 1996, Rosengrant applied for a grant that would allow her to meld her lectures with new technology. She enlisted the help of Joel Rice, a graduate from the PSU Russian program who was working as a freelance consultant and computer graphic artist at the time.

"It seemed like the perfect solution for what I had been trying to accomplish," Rosengrant said. "If I could get everything in a computer, instead of fooling around with slides, I thought I might have a chance of actually giving people the ideas I was trying to convey."

Rosengrant's presentation was a stunning experience of history in images. Much more than a banal collection of slides or silly animations, the custom-built course tools meld the beauty of Russian art, landscape, architecture and more into a rich experience of historical immersion.

The viewer is transported to the rise of Moscow as a world power; the rule of Ivan the Terrible; the exquisite art and literature of Realism during the 19<sup>th</sup> century; the works of world-renowned Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein; and continuing to the present day. Students don't just hear interesting facts about Russia – they see its history unfold and develop in front of them.

However, it's not just the detailed preparations, carefully selected illustrations and scope of Rosengrant's lecture series that make it enjoyable and notable; rather, Rosengrant's impressive teaching skills, understanding of captivating instructional techniques and devotion to her students' comprehension are the keys to her success in the classroom.

The fourth and final speaker in the series will be Michael Henry Heim from UCLA who will speak about translating the classics on Friday, May 20<sup>th</sup>. For more information email: [tdolack@uoregon.edu](mailto:tdolack@uoregon.edu).

# UO Students Compete in National Contest

On February 11, five University of Oregon students participated in the 6<sup>th</sup> annual National Post-Secondary Russian Essay Contest, sponsored by the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR). The students were Christine Coalwell, Svetlana Easton, Rosalia Gobeo, Calvin Hall and JD Turner.

Each year over 300 students from over 30 U.S. colleges and universities take part in the contest. Participants are given one hour to compose essays on a topic announced only at the time of the contest. This year, the topic was "When I relax..." Participants are not allowed to use dictionaries or other outside resources. Essays are judged according to different levels, based on how long individuals have been studying the language. Also, heritage learners – those students who speak Russian at home and/or who have had some formal schooling in a

Russian-speaking country – are judged in a different category than non-heritage learners. Authors of the top three essays are awarded gold, silver and bronze medals, and have their work published in the summer edition of the ACTR newsletter.

"I think the growing participation in this contest at the U of O shows just how much our Russian program is ready to expand," says Josh Overcast, GTF instructor of 2<sup>nd</sup> year Russian, noting that 2<sup>nd</sup> year Russian has grown 50% in the last two years. "We had our first participant last year, and this year we have five. As we continue to encourage our students to participate in Russian-related events not only on campus and in our immediate community, but also in the wider academic world, we show them how invested we are in their active involvement, initiative and improvement."

## Lost in Translation

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think if for example they literally translate the English expression "to lick a disease"? Or if someone in Brazil told you that you just are a "hard piece of bread"?

But how can you translate a word that carries a meaning that might not be shared in another language? Because of the cultural baggage enclosing language, some people claim that translation is an almost impossible task.

Indeed, considering the diversity of languages, mistranslations are a problem that will always arise.

And I say, "right on." Misunderstandings like these celebrate the beauty and unique heritage of each culture. If all the languages were the same, it

wouldn't be anyone's "cup of tea", would it?

Translating is also a chance to dive into another culture, and maybe discover new windows to see the world through. Here's one from my language, Portuguese.

Take nostalgia, intense desire, sadness and affection, mix them together. Add some sugar, salt and a shot of cachaca (or Port) while listening to some samba (or fado), and you will find yourself understanding the hearts and souls of we Portuguese-speaking people when we tell you we have "saudades" for someone we love.

Send me your favorite inscrutable phrases, proverbs, or bad translations, and we'll publish them in our next issue.

## Summer Multimedia Workshop: June 13-17

YLC will once again be the host for Academic Affairs' IT summer workshop on "Multimedia for Teaching and Research."

The workshop will cover the basics of graphics, sound, and video, and how to better incorporate them into teaching and research.

Taught by UO faculty, IT experts, and YLC staff, the workshop will bring together twenty-five faculty from more than 14 departments for an interesting cross-disciplinary exploration of multimedia in teaching.



## Spring Offerings:

Arabic	Swahili
Cantonese	Thai
Farsi	Romanian
Greek	Turkish
Hindi/Urdu	Vietnamese
Portuguese	Navajo

**Mandatory Orientation  
March 31, 5:00, Pacific 121**

Availability subject to enrollment. There is a \$50 instructional fee for UO students and a \$100 fee for community members.

# Lost in Translation: Adventures across Linguistic Borders

Leticia Camargo, Staff Reporter

*It's harder than the spider to translate words, because the taste is like the ass. However, if you think it doesn't cost a whistle, you might end up paying a big monkey! So you should definitely add some oil to it.*

A literal translation of the Spanish, Swedish, Portuguese and Chinese expressions that comprise the preceding paragraph gets us something like this in English: It is extremely hard to translate words because everyone has a different opinion. However, if you don't care about that, you might end up getting in a really uncomfortable situation.

No matter how slowly you read the sentences, like most literal translations, they just don't mean anything.

From the cryptic code of the Rosetta Stone to a world of globalization where 6,000 languages are spoken around the globe, translation has become a powerful tool and an important skill.

The year 2005 has been designated as the Year of Languages in the United States, but celebrating diversity also means respecting their uniqueness. Each of these languages carries with it more than just diverse words, but also a rich background of culture that reflects its history, folklore and social interactions.

Many examples of cross cultural insensitivity exist. My favorite is the advertising campaign of Scandinavian vacuum manufacturer, Electrolux, which tried to reach consumers in America with the

promise that, "Nothing sucks like an Electrolux."

In the world of translation, things may become uncomfortable even in the most simple situations when interacting in a multicultural environment. A French person, for example, might simply want to cheer saying "chin chin," and a Japanese person might understand this to mean they were raising a glass to "tiny male genitals."

Americans also find mistranslation all-around the world from non-native speakers of English that

just don't quite get it. In Rome, for example, a laundry sign reads: "Ladies, leave your clothes here and spend the afternoon having a good time!"

Words by themselves have limited meanings; it's the background and context that go along with your choice that make a word a unique communication tool. The art of translating this meaning requires

more than just grammar skills, but the responsibility of fully transmitting their cultural connotations and overtones.

In English you might say you are feeling blue when you are sad; in Portuguese when something is blue (azul) it means it's all good; Germans, on the other hand, might think that you had a few too many drinks if you say you are blue (blau).

Cultural expressions also go along with these challenges of word choice. What would someone

• It seems like Russians don't enjoy people who just talk too much. They even invented a word to name them. *Pochemuchka* refers to those people that ask too many questions, like kids who always ask "why [*pochemu*]"

• Your dog was run over, the car had a flat tire on the way to work, and when you finally got there, you were fired. The same day your doctor tells you that you have a fatal disease. People with such bad luck are called Shlimazl in Yiddish.

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