

# LANGUAGE LINKS

*A Newsletter of the Language Center (R-205)*

*Rosenberg Library & Learning Resource Center*

*City College of San Francisco*



## How Small the World — How Big Our Task

by Tom Blair

My stay in Berlin has shown me how small the world has become. I am taking an intermediate German course after about thirty years from any formal study of the language. In my class at the Volkshochschule (somewhat like City College), classmates come from every continent. While we are only sixteen in total, we come from Cameroon, Mexico, Canada, Japan, Korea, Ireland, Ukraine, Argentina, Greece, Spain, Bulgaria, Poland, Mongolia and even the U.S.A. German happens to be our common language this time, but all are motivated to learn.

Sitting on the other side of the desk after so many years of teaching makes one realize a few things. Language learning is challenging, a fact we as teachers sometimes forget. Language learning is time-consuming. Language learning, especially in a cultural context, is super interesting.

Intermediate classes are daunting to the teacher. What can one do with a group of students where each one has a different

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## Wearing Tom's Many Hats!

by Ed Sterling

Then the Martian says: Take me to your leader! Some days I wish I could take the *clients* to Tom Blair; those days I sorely miss his presence and leadership. But most days, I keep Tom's leader hat on, and I receive the extraterrestrials and deal with their requests and complaints!

The primary reason why there are "good days" in the chair's chair is the professionalism of our faculty. In today's world people often have expectations that exceed reasonable standards for a public institution, so there are complaints. Even in the resolution of these, the faculty members show their seasoned professionalism. So, after the initial adjustment, I have come to enjoy the responsibility because it allows me to serve our colleagues and the students. The variety of tasks is interesting, too.

The intricacies of dealing with the spring schedule—Tom did the first draft of it—was like successfully solving a puzzle, not to mention new software programs. Making the courses and instructors fit into the limited rooms available to us and getting a few courses into the new Health Center was a challenge, but virtually all schedule requests were satisfied in a reasonable manner. The paperwork

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preparation? How to teach when some have a good grasp of grammar while for others it is an arcane subject? How do you keep those with Latin-based mother tongues interested while explaining to those without that background what words mean? How to clarify a language with complicated grammar without raising the affective filters so high that students tune out?

As I added the class about two weeks into the session, I first felt like a goldfish gasping for breath. The first day's grammar subject was Konjunktiv I and II, or subjunctive. I could hard remember the words, much less the conjugations and the rules on usage. But things got better. The second day I had to write an in-class composition and now I mostly feel comfortable, despite 28-letter-long words!)



Our task as language teachers is to help our students bridge all these gulfs, and help them not only communicate in the language, but also have some understanding of the other cultures.

P.S. Reunited Berlin is a wonderful place to visit with museums, theaters, neighborhoods, multi-cultural restaurants and music. Do visit if you have the chance! *Auf Wiedersehen!*

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for informing payroll about every instructor's work load is not automated, so scores of forms have to be completed with a typewriter. I had not touched a typewriter in years nor typed a form in triplicate—they are very unforgiving of errors. A second challenge is the sheer size of our bookstore orders, which include adoptions of new texts. These sound like minor jobs, but the devil is in the details.

Tom has a few other hats. He is the executive director of the California Community College Foreign Language Council (CCCFLC), and I am the treasurer. This fall, with Tom's hat on top of my hat, I coordinated with other leaders to put on the conferences for southern and northern California. October 20 we met at Mount San Antonio Community College in Walnut, California, near Los Angeles. Then the following Friday, we met at Diablo Valley College in the East Bay. The details of registration of participants, new memberships, presenters, luncheon items, and promotion all take plenty of time. Both conferences were successful and participants were thankful. *Giorgio Spano* did an excellent presentation at Diablo Valley about teaching foreign language online, and *Sue Lian* was invaluable as the conference co-chair.

All in all, sitting in for Tom as department chair has been fine, and I am happy to serve. *Now I would like to change hats and continue this message as*

*president of FLANC:*

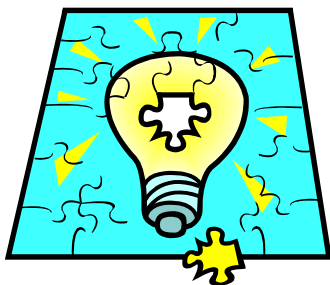
Because of my participation in CCCFLC and in the Foreign Language Association of Northern California (FLANC), I see the value of service on a regular basis. I also see that there are not many young professionals joining the ranks of volunteers in organizations. Where are tomorrow's leaders in our profession?

Of course, service is inherent in our classroom jobs. We serve our students in many ways. However, recently I attended a California Language Teachers Association meeting, and we were informed that the teachers in our field have the highest median age of all disciplines. You may have been aware of this, but it is indeed a crucial time to encourage our students to pursue a career in FL instruction. While the need for FL teachers is increasing, the number of languages being taught is also in flux. Thousands of new Chinese, Japanese and Arabic teachers are needed across the nation, and retiring teachers in European languages need replacements. Growth and improvement in our profession is often stymied by a lack of "highly-qualified" language teachers. A second issue is retention. We hope new FL teachers will find it fulfilling to continue for decades. Experienced teachers should remember that their newest colleagues often leave teaching after a couple years. It would behoove our departments and our administrators to foment mentoring relationships between veterans and new-hires.

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Recruitment and retention are essential for the future of FL programs. So, I want to extend an invitation now. Because of the “graying” of our discipline, especially of its leadership, it is now more important than ever to consider service through involvement on committees or boards of professional organizations. Despite the fact that you are not paid, serving the profession could be one of the most rewarding jobs you ever have!



## Study Abroad - Unwrapped.

By Jill Heffron

On a personal level, one of my joys is contemplating the size and diversity of our planet: 193 countries! 6,800 known languages! So much to see and learn! But on a professional level, it's sometimes a bit of a frustration: there's only one of me and so many wonderful places to create study abroad programs for our students! To that end, we are always investigating new possibilities for programs – perhaps a location where we've never offered a program before? Or a new program in a country to which we have already ties?

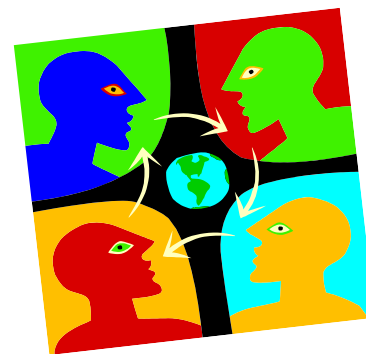
Happily, two such new programs are being planned (subject to board approval) for Summer 2007: A travel-study tour of South Africa and an intensive Chinese language program at the International Cultural Exchange Center (ICEC), located at the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunication (BUPT) in Beijing, China.

The program in South Africa will be led by *Johnetta Richards*, a part-time faculty member in CCSF's African-American Studies Department, who is also a full-time faculty member in Africana Studies at SFSU. Professor Richards has previously led programs to South Africa and other African countries and is currently working with me to plan a CCSF program for June 16 – July 7, 2007. Highlights will include visits to Johannesburg, Pilansberg State Park, Soweto, Pretoria, St. Lucia and Durban and meetings with local teachers and school children, visits to townships, game parks and cultural villages, and a tour of Lesdel Village Compound's ethnic group villages, followed by an evening of ancestral folktales.

Additionally, we are excited about our future collaboration with the ICEC at the BUPT from mid-June to mid-July, 2007. This program is being planned with the assistance of the CCSF *Chinese Language Faculty* and Department Chair *Tom Blair*. Participants will spend four-weeks in Beijing, living in on-campus apartments, eating in the school's cafeterias with other BUPT students, and

receiving intensive Chinese language instruction five days a week. The BUPT is host to foreign students from all over the world and is one of China's preeminent institutions in the fields of information processing and security and wireless communications.

Keep your eye on the Study Abroad website for updates or e-mail me at [jheffron@ccsf.edu](mailto:jheffron@ccsf.edu) to be put on our mailing list.



## World Affairs Council “Language Dinners”

Here's news for instructors to pass along to their students: The World Affairs Council of San Francisco, through its “Young Professionals International Forum,” hosts regularly scheduled “language dinners,” where language learners “get together for the purpose of eating delicious food, spiced with good talk in the local language.” Languages include Mandarin, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish, all taught at CCSF (it also hosts dinners for Farsi, Polish, Portuguese and Romanian learners.) For more details, go to [www.itsyourworld.org/yp/](http://www.itsyourworld.org/yp/)

## A Summer in Korea by Stan Rappaport

This summer, I had the privilege and very rewarding experience of teaching English at a summer school in South Korea. It was held at Sangji University in Wonju, a city of about 300,000 in northern part of the country, not far from Seoul. This particular summer school, or summer camp, as some call it, was somewhat historic. It marked the first time that the government of South Korea funded a summer English program for under-privileged or disadvantaged families in the largest province, Gangwon-do. Three hundred students from six different cities and towns participated.

I would say that the level of English proficiency in general was low, but these students made up for that several times over with their enthusiasm. I thought at first that I would be lucky if the students learned some new phrases, but during this short period, I noticed improvement in reading, writing, listening, and speaking – all four skills. That is the advantage of intensive language-learning. I taught traditional classes in conversation and writing, and activity classes in sports and music. My classes and activities kept me busy most days

from early morning until 9:00 p.m. in the evening.

At first the students were shy and not so talkative, but by the end of the camp they had become warm and friendly and did not want to leave. None of these students had ever been outside of South Korea, and most had never even met a foreigner. But I found them to be intelligent and accomplished: some were very talented singers, pianists, and dancers, as we learned from the talent show at the end of the camp.

I find Korea fascinating. It was not my first visit – I had taught at a university there right after I graduated from college. It has changed a lot since then: Korea is now very modern and Wonju has new high-rise apartment buildings going up in various parts of the city. I liked the food, which is pungent and unique, and visited temples and historic sites. But I enjoyed most of all talking to people and getting to know a very friendly and inquisitive people. Given the chance, I will certainly go back!



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## Faculty Monitor – Alan Young

*Alan Young* joined the Language Center as a Faculty Monitor in the Spring 2006 semester. Previously, he had spent several years in corporate marketing at a number of companies, but as a Faculty Monitor he has been able to return to education, his primary interest.

Alan spent three years working in Japan as an English instructor on the Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program. He's also studied Japanese at Duke University, the University of Michigan, the University of Hawaii, and Keio University in Tokyo. He received a B.A. in Economics and Political Science from Duke University, an M.A. in Japanese Studies at the University of Michigan, and an M.B.A. from Duke University. In his spare time, Alan also works as an independent college counselor and UC Berkeley Admissions Reader and advises high school students on the college admissions process.