

MLLI RESEARCH DAY

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2019

9.00 AM to 5.00 PM

UMBC, FINE ARTS 424



9.00 AM – 9.30 AM Welcome and opening remarks

Dean Casper and Associate Dean Stolle-McAllister

Dr. Ana Oskoz, Chair, MLLI

Dr. Nicoleta Bazgan, Program Director, INCC



Coffee & Breakfast

9.30 - 10.00 AM

John Stolle-McAllister. Intercultural Change: Politics, Culture and the Environment in Ecuador

Indigenous movements drastically changed the political and cultural environment of Ecuador around the turn of this century. My work examines some of the ways that Kichwa communities and individuals in and around the Otavalo Valley negotiate and shape their complicated cultural present. In particular, I focus changes in political institutions, blurring cultural lines, and managing natural resources. I use an intercultural framework, one largely constructed by the Indigenous movement, because it places cultural differences within hierarchies of colonial power, and seeks avenues to address inequalities, and find ways for multiple cultural groups to work together as they maintain (and transform) that which makes them unique.

10.00 - 10.30 AM

David Beard. Texts in Spanish for Teachers (TST): Constructing a Database of Texts in Spanish Rated by Difficulty

Teachers need timely access to effective learning materials that are specific to their lesson's objectives. In particular, finding reading materials for world language students is important because there exists a positive correlation between vocabulary size and how much someone reads (Nation, 2001). More specifically, vocabulary knowledge, in particular, the use of collocations, is one aspect that can make the difference between Intermediate-High and Advanced-Low proficiency scores in second language learners, (Blake & Zizyk, 2016). Reading can be a valid source of (vocabulary) input in the world language classroom, but at present, there is no readily available tools for teachers to find readings in Spanish that are classified by difficulty level, theme, genre, etc. This can often leave teachers with no other remedy than to spend hours looking for *just* the right materials for their class.

Texts in Spanish for Teachers (TST) addresses this by being the first computer application available to pair texts in Spanish with an algorithm that ranks them by how difficult they are to read. Readability, (i.e. Difficulty rating), is assessed by a modified version of the L2 Reading Index, a measure found within Coh-Metrix (Crossley et al., 2011). As opposed to the traditional Flesch-Kincaid method of assessing readability by which the average length of word and average length of sentence in a text equals its readability, the L2 Reading Index calculates readability

based on a formula that incorporates psycholinguistic variables known to predict word recognition and reading comprehension, namely: word frequency, syntactic similarity, and word overlap. This nuanced approach has been more successful in assessing readability of texts in English than the Flesch-Kincaid method, with these three variables explaining 80% of the variance (Crossley, 2011). Thus, coupling this algorithm with texts in Spanish and creating a freely available computer application for teachers seemed like a logical next step. The implications and applications of TST are numerous and range across teaching, learning, and research.



Coffee Break 10.30 - 10.45 AM

10. 45 - 11.15 AM

Javier De La Morena Corrales. To break the solitude: an approach to the concept of unwalled translation in Kate Chopin's "La Belle Zoraïde"

Nowadays, the rise of extremist, neoliberal governments has served to reinforce the idea that walls are crucial to prevent the contamination of the patriotic spirit of a nation. In this context, the translational practice acquires a bright resonance, for it is the only tool which allows a society to escape from its isolation by showing the path to a rich space of encounter in which different cultures converge: the borders. However, the translational practice, by maintaining the wall that separates an original from its subsequent, *secondary* translation, still continues to keep paradoxically alive those neoliberal principles that regard the voice of the muted as inferior. Building on this and bearing in mind George Steiner's belief that literature is the testimony of historical memory, the aim of this paper is to reflect on which implications would provoke the breaking of this translational wall and the subsequent coinage of a new type of translation that I am calling the unwalled translation.

Unwalled translations, as in the case of Kate Chopin's "La Belle Zoraïde" (1894), combine simultaneously within the same work both the original and its translation; blurring hence the lines that differentiate both texts. Indeed, by rendering the same story in two asymmetrical languages that share a translational relationship, unwalled translations are able to literally shed light on those silences which cannot be deciphered by the dominant, monolingual reader, for they are written in another language and culture. Hence, they vindicate the existence of those sectors of the population—the Creole in Chopin's case, along with the women's condition—whose *foreign* presence has remained always hidden along the the linguistic and social walls of silence that the dominant culture has imposed. As a result, unwalled translations aim at making dominant readers experience the constant sense of vulnerability that characterizes the fragile, invisible life of those cultures living on the borders; encouraging them to establish a democratic dialogue which puts into practice Homi K. Bhabha's desired idea of the third space. Additionally, they work as a channel to vindicate the importance of Translation Studies as a pivotal discipline to contest all those neoliberal principles, which aim at lingeringly erasing the critical thinking and the need for empathy as fundamental stances towards a more sustainable society.

11.15 - 11.45 AM

Renée Lambert-Brétière. Place-based identity formation among the Kwomas, Papua New Guinea

The study presented in this talk is part of a wider research project to document Kwoma, a Papuan language that will probably disappear within the next century. It examines how various landmarks serve as symbols of identity for the Kwoma, and suggests that geographical space functions as an anchor for culturally-construed realities.



LUNCH BREAK: NOON - 1.00 PM.

INFO SESSION HONORS PROGRAM and THE ACCELERATED BA/MA PROGRAM (Dr. Renée-Lambert Brétière, Director Honors Program, and Dr. Nicoleta Bazgan, Director INCC)

1.00 - 1.30 PM

Jaione Diaz Mazquiaran “Gu *ere* Euskaldunak gara, Boisekoak”: A Double Perspective on Identity Development and Intercultural Adaptation through the “Basques in Boise” Community

Being isolate to any other living languages, Basque and its speakers still retain the mystery of their unique cultural heritage. Basques immigrated to the USA from the Gold Rush of 1848 onwards and thus created the ubiquitous “eighth province” of the Basque Country. This paper pays especial attention to the city of Boise, Idaho, and the Basque Center therein. This non-profit organization named “Boise’s Euzkaldunak” puts forward different social events and activities which attempt to create a welcoming environment for visitors while celebrating the Basque-American identity of its members. Social networks have also been used to give voice to such communities of practice; diaspora members’ disconnectedness with the homeland can be replaced by interconnectedness with other users, resulting in maintenance of their ethnic identity. This challenges the fixed notion of home and belonging in that cyberspace becomes a new arena for collective memory, transmission of the politics of recognition and development of transidiomatic practices.

There are few academic investigations on the Basque institutional diaspora presence on the World Wide Web, so this paper aims to contribute to the field by focusing on identity development and intercultural adaptation from a double perspective: Basque-Americans who live in Idaho and attend the Center regularly, and Basques who belong to the diaspora and use the online platform as a way of staying connected to their roots. Fieldnotes will be collected by doing digital ethnography on media sites as a participant-observer. Together with this, artifacts and documents will be analyzed and qualitative data from surveys delivered to the users of the group *Idaho Basques & Beyond* and pages *A Basque in Boise* and *The Basque Center* on Facebook will be gathered. In contrast with the Homeland Criteria for Basqueness, the triangulation of data will showcase that members of this diasporic group can indeed preserve their identity online and offline through intercultural adaptation without necessarily having to acquire the language or be present at the homeland.

1.30 - 2.00 PM

Edward Larkey. German Narratives in International Television Format Adaptations: Harnessing Digital Humanities and Multimodal Transnational Television Studies

This paper will describe an international television studies project employing digital tools to engage in a transcultural comparison of a television format from Quebec, Canada. Entitled *Un Gars, Une Fille*, it has been reproduced in almost 30 different areas across the globe, including in Germany (ZDF, 2002). Originally produced as a sketch comedy series from 1997-2002, the series gradually transformed into a sitcom format containing three sketches per episode. It features a heterosexual 30-something, unmarried and childless couple in a variety of domestic private and public contexts interacting with each other and negotiating their relationships with friends, family, and various bureaucracies and businesses. The series revolves around efforts of the couple to define their relationship(s) in an era of “de-institutionalization of marriage” and the loss of conventional social scripts for male and female gender roles on the one hand, along with efforts by the female character to achieve autonomy, agency, and self-realization on the other. Each version of the series deploys culturally-specific family conflict management strategies as well as gender roles and narratives.

In recruiting collaborators from various countries, the project hopes to develop a comparative methodology for transculturally analyzing the various versions of the series. The analytical framework hopes to, on the one hand, incorporate both narratological and multimodal approaches for comparing the narrative sequencing, structure, and content of each version. In addition, I utilize computer software to compile, correlate, and compare quantitative and qualitative data on the length and duration of multiple modes of communication characterizing the televisual texts and incorporate these data into the hermeneutic analyses.

In my presentation, I will illustrate how the German version of this series, entitled *Du und ich* (“You and I”) produced by the public broadcaster ZDF in 2002, diverged from most of the other versions in length, sequencing, structure, and content. On the basis of a comparison between the German and other versions of a scene in which the couple visits the female partner’s mother, I will point out how the German version reflects a second discourse beyond the conventional psychological and psychoanalytical one inherent in all other versions. The first and primary discursive plane revolves around the notion of trauma and ambivalent sexuality inherent in the contradiction between the mother as asexual provider of family affection and loyalty on the one hand, and sexual partner of the husband on the other. The German version is embedded within a second dimension of discourse in which the traumas of the daughter are contextualized beyond the psychological and are connected to traumas connected to the Nazi period (1933-1945) and the aftermath of World War. Thus, the German version becomes paradigmatic for the *political* treatment of trauma for many other versions (French, Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Italian, Greek) which experienced trauma under German occupation, but whose social discourses may have excluded this political dimension in the development of gender roles, family relations and conflict management strategies.



2.00 - 2.15 PM Coffee break

2.15 - 2.45 PM

Jose Gutierrez Umana. A pragmatic approach on the DACA rhetoric used by the media and its effects on DACA Recipients

In this paper, I examine liberal and conservative rhetoric regarding DACA published in U.S. newspapers. I engage in a discourse analysis about DACA recipients and how the media portrays DREAMers. Conservative outlets, such as *The Washington Times* uses terms like “illegal immigrants” and “illegals” while *The New York Times* as a liberal source uses terms like “DACA” and “Dreamers.” Employing methods of critical discourse analysis to analyze the utterances published in the newspapers, I conclude that the framing of issues has a significant impact on the target audience’s views and stands on the issue. The DREAMers interviewed also state that how media refers to them affects their daily lives and people’s perceptions of them.

2.45 - 3.15 PM

Tania Lizarazo. Postconflict Utopias: Performing Everyday Survival in Colombia

Postconflict Utopias: Performing Everyday Survival in Colombia is grounded on my ongoing collaboration with the Gender Commission of the black farmers’ association COCOMACIA. I explore how Afro-Colombian women who experienced violence firsthand understand their personal journey of becoming activists, as part of a group of utopian spaces and practices—speculative rehearsals of peace-building—in Colombia. Drawing upon the digital stories I created in collaboration with the commissioners, this book and the digital archive [*Mujeres Pacificas*](#), imagine an ethical understanding of survival that manifests in everyday practices—from showing up to care-taking—, and not in massive resistance actions. In order to move away from stories that center a traumatic memory that reproduces violence, towards representations that make space for an ethical memory that recognizes the utopian potential of overcoming victimhood, a complementary—and less writing-centric—dissemination of the stories exemplifies the embodied knowledge that makes survival and imagining peace possible.

3.30 - 4.30 INVITED SPEAKER

David Tenorio, Ph.D. Department of Hispanic Languages and Literatures, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, USA. dtenorio@pitt.edu

David Tenorio is Assistant Professor in the Department of Hispanic Languages and Literatures at the University of Pittsburgh. At the intersection of Latin American Cultural Studies, Performance Studies, and Queer Theory, his research examines the representation of queer utopias in the contemporary cultural production of Cuba and Mexico. A former Mellon Public Scholar Fellow, he serves as an Editorial Board Member for *Brújula: revista interdisciplinaria sobre estudios latinoamericanos*, and as an Editorial Team Member for the Newsletter of the Caribbean Studies Association

TransCuba: Digital Storytelling & Trans*Activism in Post-Soviet Cuba

Jon Alpert's HBO documentary *Mariela Castro's March: Cuba's LGBT Revolution* (2015) depicts a triumphant Mariela, the director of the National Center for Sexual Education (CENESEX), leading a crusade against homophobia and transphobia across Cuba. Although the consolidation of CENESEX in the 1990s undoubtedly brought the topic of sexual diversity into the Cuban public sphere, the discourse and practices of this institution is fraught with sociopolitical contradictions (i.e. Mariela Castro's announcement in Mexico in 2017 that same-sex marriage was not to be supported by Cuban legislators, etc.) However, CENESEX, as portrayed in Jon Alpert's documentary, serves as a sanctuary for the transgender community in Cuba. With the promise of sexual reassignment surgery, hormonal therapy, and access to safe employment, many transgender Cuban women have joined the hosts of TransCuba, a community network comprised of approximately 3,000 members that is designed to create social awareness about transgender people, advocate on LGBT legal issues, and design HIV prevention campaigns.

Incorporating digital humanities methodology, affect and queer theory, and other tools of cultural analysis, this intervention seeks to problematize how transgender bodies become political instruments of official discourse, positioning the master narrative of the Cuban Revolution as a defender of sexual diversity. By reflecting on the process of mediation, production, and content in assembling the digital stories of 2 transgender women living in Havana, Cuba, I seek to question the validity of the master narrative of the CENSEX, and by extension that of the Revolution, as tools of meaning-making, and bring to the forefront the concept of intimate stories as fractured records of history-making for LGBT communities in Cuba.



5.00 - 7.00 PM

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ALUMNI, GRADUATE STUDENTS, AND PROFESSORS REUNION