

Final Printed Issue



LLD Alumni Newsletter for Linguistics & TESOL

< <http://linguistics.sjsu.edu/bin/view/Public/BenColborn>>

Vol.6, Number 1 College of Humanities and The Arts *Winter 2008*

This is the final printed issue of the LLDA Newsletter that will be sent by the increasingly expensive snail-mail. For everyone whose email we have, we will notify you of each new issue as it is posted, as well as of social events and professional meetings.

To receive an invitation to view join the LLDA Yahoo group and read discussions and articles on professional topics, please send your email address to Ben Colborn <bcolborn@gmail.com>. When you receive your invitation from Ben, it's important to respond WITHIN 30 DAYS, or the invitation will expire.

LLDAA Board Meeting

September 7, 2007



Left to right: Carol Wilson ('83), vice-president; Louise Varma ('04), treasurer; Ben Colborn ('06), president; Diane Andrews ('90), past president; Pat Nichols ('72), editor; Cheryl McKenzie ('78), past vice-president and webmaster.

New and old board members at a planning session for the new academic year.

Winter 2008, page 2

From the President.....

Whether you are reading this edition of the LLDA A newsletter on paper or online, you are interacting with a transitional medium. This is the last LLDA A newsletter to be printed and mailed, and the first to be posted online. Going forward, the LLDA A will only be posting an electronic version. The newsletter printing and mailing costs are significant, so the board has decided that our limited funds would be put to better use elsewhere. When future editions of the newsletter are posted, the alumni will be notified via e-mail. The first electronic edition is posted on my web page at the LLD Department web site: <http://linguistics.sjsu.edu/bin/view/Public/BenColborn>.

This change in the distribution of the newsletter brings up two significant issues. First, the LLDA A needs a new webmaster. Cheryl Lee McKenzie has served ably as the webmaster for several years and would like to turn over the reins to someone else. The LLDA A web site needs several updates soon as well as ongoing maintenance. If you are interested in filling this position, please contact me.

Second, please make sure that you have subscribed to the LLDA A's Yahoo! Group. While I endeavor to maintain a list of LLD alumni's e-mail addresses, the process is error-prone and the resulting list is necessarily incomplete. The more alumni subscribe to the list, the better the communication will be. The list will be more complete and accurate, but most importantly alumni can communicate directly with each other. I expect that we linguists and educators would prefer many-to-many communication enabled by a discussion group over one-to-many communication. To join the list, either request subscription at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/lldaa/> or contact me directly.

A monthly informal networking opportunity has begun this fall. All alumni are welcome to come and enjoy conversation with other alumni. This meeting is held in the upstairs coffee area at the Santana Row Borders café, the first Wednesday of each month from 5 to 8pm. February 6 will be the next meeting in 2008.

One of the LLDA A's stated objectives is to provide a communications network for alumni. I look forward to supporting this objective with the help of current and future board members. Please enjoy this last paper edition of the newsletter, or this first electronic edition, as the case may be.

Ben Colborn
bcolborn@gmail.com



Ben Colborn ('06) & Diane Andrews ('90)
LLD Graduation 2007

Executive Board LLD Active Alumni 2007-2008

President – Ben Colborn 2006
Vice-Pres – Carol Wilson 1983
Secretary – Ellen Goldman 2004
Treasurer – Louise Varma 2004
Archivist – Karen O'Neill 1978
Web Manager – Ben Colborn 2006 (temp)
Newsletter Editor - Pat Nichols 1972
College Liaison – Linda Sarmecanic 1986
Social Secretaries – Andrea Withers 2000
& Jennifer Kockelman

Winter 2008, page 3

From the Past President.....

San Jose State University, founded in 1857, is a proud 150 years old. The Department of Linguistics and Language Development, established in 1991, is sweet sixteen. As for the Linguistics and Language Department Active Alumni network, we are just over four years old, our bylaws dated June 1, 2003. It has been my privilege to be a charter member of the LLDA and to serve for three years as its interim president.

Reflecting on those three years, fond recollections come to mind: Selling hotdogs and beer at Spartan Stadium to raise funds for our annual \$250 student scholarship; reconnecting with my former professors—and meeting new ones—at LLD department graduations; sharing stories, job leads, and international cuisine with LLDA members at summer potlucks; ushering at the department-sponsored evening with sociolinguist and author Deborah Tannen; enjoying social hours with fellow alumni at TESOL and CATESOL conferences; and having pizza with students and alumni at a joint social hour and dinner organized by the LLDSA (student association).

It gives me satisfaction to realize how well these activities have furthered the four stated goals of our LLDA network—to promote the common interests of the Department of LLD alumni, to develop funds for scholarships and other activities of benefit to alumni, to provide a communications network, and to promote multilingual and multi-cultural awareness.

Our annual election of officers took place at a June 23, 2007, potluck graciously hosted by Dovie Wylie at her Palo Alto home. I am pleased to pass on the privilege and responsibility of the office of president to Ben Colborn and to welcome Carol Wilson as vice-president. I would like to thank Pat Nichols, our excellent newsletter editor, for her wisdom, guidance, and hospitality to LLDA. Finally, my thanks to other board

members for continuing in their offices for another year. With their enthusiasm and direction, we will continue to move forward as a proud part of San Jose State University and its 150-year legacy.

Diane Andrews, Past President

LLDA Networking leads to college positions!

Mission College needed instructors for its new Writing Center last spring. Fortunately, **Carol Wilson ('83)**, who teaches English at Mission, had contact information for **Pat Nichols ('72)** who sent out the word. **Alla Petrosyan** and **Lilian Wilson** contacted Mission's English Department chair, David Lang, who interviewed them and offered them positions almost immediately. This is their second semester in Mission's Writing Center where they work on building the composition skills of individual students. Mission is delighted to have such able and willing instructors on its staff, and reports are that Alla and Lilian are enjoying the student contact while gaining some valuable experience.

English departments at the local community colleges frequently have sudden need for additional staff, and the LLDA is an excellent resource for colleges needing staff and for graduates seeking positions.

Generally English and ESL departments at the local community colleges maintain a pool of qualified candidates for part time positions. Anyone seeking a position should contact the community college human resource office (certificated positions) and inquire about the part time pool for ESL and English instructor positions. Some districts keep the pool open at all times; others have an extended application period. It never hurts to ask.

-Carol Wilson

Empathy

2007 Alumni Scholarship Essay

I have come to feel keenly aware of the challenges that non-native speakers of English face in our LLD classrooms, as well as the corresponding inherent – and in a sense, unfair – advantage that thus accrues to those of us who happen to be native speakers.

My appreciation for the daily trial faced by a significant portion of our department's student population actually probably has its roots in the business travel experiences of my former high-tech career. Over several years I had the opportunity to visit 20 different countries, and I always enjoyed the challenge of trying to pick up what I could of the language in each destination. My adventures in negotiating my way through restaurant menus and city maps aside, though, my business was always conducted either in English or through a translator. In short, I was spoiled. The only exceptions were in France. Out of some combination of respect for my local colleagues and curiosity as to how well I could survive on my school-learned intermediate French skills, I managed to conduct a couple of meetings – a total of perhaps all of two hours' worth of discussion – in another language. My head hurt from the effort. Worse, I retained little if anything from these meetings. It was all I could do to maintain my focus through the constant effort required just to follow the conversation. The non-native English speakers in our department no doubt all speak English better than I speak French, but I am nevertheless amazed at what they must go through each day just to participate, let alone excel, in our courses.

More recently, I had an occasion – if not exactly a pleasant occasion – to try to articulate that sense of empathy that I feel for this non-native English speaker segment of our population. As a department we are justifiably proud of our linguistic diversity. In fact, just this past fall I conducted an e-mail poll and found that our students speak

more than 40 different languages and major dialects. I was shocked, then, to discover that the appreciation for linguistic diversity is not quite universal. One day earlier this semester, another LLD student, who happens to also be a native English speaker, intimated that he rather resents the large number of second language learners among our cohort. In his words, "They get in my way." I was so completely taken aback that initially I simply had no idea how to respond. My wife expects better from the 10-year-olds in her fifth-grade classroom. I never – simply never – would have believed that a student studying linguistics or language development could espouse such a pejorative attitude. I remain amazed.

Still, outrage changes few minds. My ongoing choice has been to continue to share with this individual some of the reasons why I feel such an appreciation both for the challenges that our second-language learners face and for the ways in which their participation so richly enhances the experience for us all. Most recently, we spoke of the oral presentations that are an important part of LLD 250W, the graduate research and communication skills course. I recall the challenge I faced in putting together a cogent speech, repeatedly editing until it fit comfortably within the allotted 10 minutes, and practicing it aloud until I could deliver it smoothly. I thought about all of this effort then considered what it must be like for the non-native speakers, who get no break on the scoring for content, timing, or delivery, yet accomplish all of this in a language with which they may be something less than entirely comfortable. By and large, they do extremely well at this, and I remain simply awed and humbled by their combination of skill and perseverance. As for the aforementioned less appreciative student in our midst, developing his empathy remains a work in progress, but, it is hoped, a worthy challenge.

-Robin Melnick, LLD Graduate Student

Winter 2008, page 5

LLDAA Scholarship

Robin Melnick was the recipient of the 2007 LLDAA Scholarship. Robin holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from UC-Berkeley and returned to graduate study in linguistics after a twenty-year career in high-tech companies within Silicon Valley. Upon completion of his MA in Linguistics, he plans to pursue a doctorate in historical and comparative linguistics.

Outside of his classes, Robin enjoys his work with the LLD Student Association and as the department's linguistics tutor, though above all, he prizes his time with his wife, Mary, and five-year-old son, Andrew.



Linda Sarmecanic ('86) presenting 2007 LLDAA Scholarship to Robin Melnick

LSA Summer Institute 2007

Stanford University was host to the 2007 Summer Institute traditionally held by the Linguistic Society of America (LSA). Several current LLD students attended the Institute and received credit toward their degrees for the coursework completed. Several alumni attended some of the public lectures.

The theme of the 2007 Institute was "Empirical Foundations for Theories of Language," with William Labov as the opening speaker for the public forum

lectures. The closing lecture on "Empirical Syntax" was given by Joan Bresnan, who acknowledged that the field of syntax is now turning more in the direction that Labov advocated for phonology in the 1970's, with the use of corpus data that support a view of linguistic competence as inherently variable and sensitive to probabilities of the environment.

Job Opportunities

***Karen O'Neill ('78)** reports that the director of language schools for high school university students in Ho Chi Minh City is interested in having "retired" teachers join his program as faculty for one-year commitments to teach English. He would also welcome recent grads who might make two-month commitments. If interested, contact Karen at koneill@salmail.sjsu.edu.

*The College of Education at SJSU is now preparing candidates for secondary credentials in Mandarin. Professor Cathy Buell is the Chair of Secondary Education and also coordinates a state-approved Intern Program, in which qualified candidates are paid as beginning teachers while they teach under supervision and complete their coursework for the credential at SJSU. Candidates demonstrate their competency for teaching, in part, through CBEST and the appropriate state-approved language tests in Mandarin. If interested, contact Cathy Buell at cmbuell@email.sjsu.edu and Helene Chan in Foreign Languages at vipchan@aol.com.

NOTE: According to a recent study by the Modern Language Association, "Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2006" enrollments in Arabic increased by 126.5%, in Chinese by 51%, and in Korean by 37.1% between 2002 and 2006. Spanish remains the most taught language in the U.S. More students are studying more languages than ever before.

LLDAA Summer 2007 Social



LLDAA members gathered for a social event June 2007 in **Dovie Wylie's** ('79) backyard.

Mark your calendar!



State Conference

April 10-13, 2008

CATESOL 2008 Statewide Conference

Theme: "Growing Democracy"

Sacramento – Hyatt Regency, Sheraton Grand, & Sacramento Convention Center

Check CATESOL's website for more information www.catesol.org

LLDAA NEWSLETTER
LLD Active Alumni
Linguistics & Language Development
San José State University
One Washington Square
San José, CA 95192-0093

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
SAN JOSE, CA
PERMIT NO. 816

Return Service Requested