In this issue
- Director’s message 1
- Upcoming events 2
- Research collaborations 2-4
- Sharing knowledge 4-8
- Together with the community 9-11
- Forever in our hearts 12

Director’s message

Dear Colleagues, Students & Friends of the Language Research Centre,

A very happy New Year to all of you!

2016 was an eventful year for the Language Research Centre. Our first months within the School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures have been promising.

As part of the “Language of Literature” speaker series, Christopher Rea (University of British Columbia) discussed on September 30 three periods of resurgence of Chinese swindle stories: the 17th century, the early 20th century and the last 20 years. There were two events within the framework of the “Language Acquisition and Language Learning” series: on October 28 Peter Wood (University of Saskatchewan) presented his meta-analysis on the effects of computer-assisted extensive reading on L2 vocabulary acquisition and on November 4 Michael Dabrowski (Athabasca University / University of Calgary) shared his thoughts on the rationale and successes of technological innovation and integration, and presented his open-source fully digital textbook for introductory Spanish. The annual “I Would Like to Know More About…” workshop took place on November 10 and generated, as always, lively interest (see details on pp. 4-6 of this issue of the newsletter).

The very successful Japan Photo Exhibition (see p. 9 of this issue of the newsletter) opened the door for a new initiative spearheaded by X.-Jie Yang: the transformation of the LRC lobby into a permanent exhibition space which will feature our different SLLLC programs, one display at a time. We are currently working on the first of these which will be devoted to the Spanish program. Ideas and proposals for further exhibitions are welcome.

Another novelty is the newly opened meeting space in Craigie Hall D 401B. This is the smallest of the four LRC meeting rooms with a capacity of 8-10, coming to complement Craigie Hall D 419 (capacity of 18-20) and Craigie Hall D 420 and 428 (capacity of 30-34). Our main office in Craigie Hall C 205 has now keys to room D 401B which can be accessed the same way we have been accessing the keys to D 419, 420 and 428. The D 401B meeting space has already become the venue for the weekly sessions of the Japanese Literacy Club (details on p.11 of this issue of the newsletter).

In administrative terms, the Language Research Centre is undergoing a period of transition. The LRC steering committee and liaison persons representing School Divisions met on October 26 to launch conversations about the future of the Language Research Centre within the School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures. There is consensus that the future of the Language Research Centre must be built on the foundation of its successful activities during the first fifteen years of its existence. This
Upcoming Events

In 2017 the LRC will reopen its doors to participants in the two speaker series “Language of Literature” and “Language Acquisition and Learning”, to the regular meetings of our psycholinguistic research group and Cercle Benveniste and to our traditional annual student poster symposium, planned for May 2.

We hope to see all of you at our first event for 2017 on January 13, 3 pm, CH D 420, at which Anthony Wall and Martin Wagner will discuss *Enlightened Aesthetic Theory in Germany and France: The Case of the Ancient Laocoon Statue* as part of the “Language of Literature” speaker series.

Stay tuned for these and other events as they get scheduled and announced on the LRC website and to our mailing lists.

Research collaborations

The Mobile Multilingual Language Laboratory Emerges
- Michael Dabrowski, Athabasca University and Division of Spanish & Italian Studies of SLLLC

In 1995, at the Colloquium of Spanish Professors at the University of Calgary, I presented a paper titled “Voice Recognition as a Tool in Computer Assisted Language Learning” hinting at the possibilities that voice recognition offered for language learning. The paper was mostly about how computers can perform the task and presented a technology that was in its infancy, plagued by poor performance, and available only for exorbitant fees on high-end computing hardware for a very limited selection of languages. Fast forward 20 years, the technology has matured and, due to open source movements, is now available for free. Just about every computer, tablet, and smartphone can use voice recognition for simple functions, like voice dialing, all the way to sophisticated speech to text with near perfect recognition readily available in over 30 major world languages. With the vastly improved performance, ubiquitous presence of devices capable of performing the task, and free global access to the technology, the time has come to capitalize on this innovation in the language classroom.

In 2015, through The Campus Alberta Open Educational Resources - http://albertaoer.com/ (ABOER) Initiative, I received funding for the development of an open fully digital textbook for introductory Spanish. Part

“In the past two to three years, speech recognition was actually improving a lot, benefiting from big data and deep learning to train its neural networks to produce faster, more accurate results.”

James Landay, professor of computer science at Stanford (Source: http://www.pcmag.com/news/347291/smartphone-speech-recognition-is-3x-faster-than-texting)
of the project involved a commitment to the integration of technological innovation into the courseware. Voice recognition was obviously high on my list of priorities because of my many memories of the language laboratories that were present in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These laboratories had students recording their voice and then listening to themselves with a tutor able to listen in on any given student and provide feedback. At best, the students had the tutor’s attention for a couple minutes per laboratory session, and the rest of the time they were completely on their own and relying on their ability to hear proper pronunciation of a foreign language. It always seemed like a cumbersome way to learn how to pronounce properly that I hoped could be automated using voice recognition.

Our initial foray into a tool for coaching pronunciation in language learning is a simple web page with an interface that listens for the target language and converts what is said to text on the screen. The student then compares the text produced by the machine with the original text and looks for differences as indicators of pronunciation problems, much as was done on the audio recording, but with an objective listener replacing the inexperienced student. While the recognition is still imperfect, it is a sufficiently mature technology to indicate deficiencies, thus bringing the student’s attention to areas that require some additional work. In the fall of 2016, during my presentation at the Language Research Center we discussed this and other technologies that will impact the way educators and students approach language learning. Due to interest in this technology from those in attendance, I created a series of webpages capable of voice recognition in Mandarin, Japanese, German, Russian, French, Spanish, and Italian to demonstrate the tool’s versatility and to engage academics in using the technology across the languages taught at the School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures at the University of Calgary. All these tools are currently available under the Creative Commons CC-BY-4.0 (Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International - https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) as they were developed as part of the Open Education Initiative funded by ABOER.

I created a tool based on Google’s open source voice recognition technology, and used it during my Fall 2016 OER classroom pilot at the University of Calgary to help students improve their pronunciation as part of the free OER textbook that was used in the course. While the technology works as anticipated, and provides the replacement for the listening/speaking activities of the past, it has limitations that hinder usability and benefits to the students. Due to the static nature of the content, lessons are provided on different web pages or from other sources requiring students to work with multiple pages or interfaces to complete activities. It is also cumbersome from the professorial perspective, because to produce learning modules the professor needs to actively create generic content that all the students will access.

Upon recognizing the limitations and restrictions imposed by the existing interface, I am gathering a team of volunteer programmers to create a database-driven version so that content can be provided automatically based on student progress in pronunciation, going from phoneme level to full sentence pronunciation analysis. We will initially create analytics that will score the attempt to provide instant impartial feedback to the student flagging discrepancies between the source and recognized text. After this phase, we will integrate remedial activities targeting pronunciation deficiencies determined by the voice recognition process. The last step will focus on scrubbing the web for authentic readings licensed under a Creative Commons license in the target language with the database engine determining appropriate level of content based on previous performance. We will be starting with Spanish first, but just like the voice recognition scripts that were shared with the School of Languages. Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures, any tool that is developed will be easily adapted to the other languages supported by the voice recognition engine.
Global projections for the year 2020, range between 2.9-6.1 billion smartphones connected to the Internet, almost all capable of voice recognition. Additionally, similar projections anticipate another 30-70 billion smart devices to be online by this time, many with limited voice features integrated as part of the user interface. With this proliferation of devices and advances in digital technologies, it is apparent that the mobile language laboratory is at our fingertips. While the initial focus will be on Spanish, we encourage any individuals who would like to participate in adapting these tools to other languages and conduct research on their pedagogical effectiveness to join our open movement.

Source: JÉSHOOTS (CC0)

Sharing knowledge

Cercle Benveniste
- Ozouf Sénamin Amedegnato, Division of French & Francophone Studies of SLLLC

The most significant information about Cercle Benveniste this past fall is its formal recognition as a research group within the Faculty of Arts, beginning in the 2016/2017 academic year. This is a pleasant way to start our fifth season. As such, we can now access up to $500 in financial support for group activities – invited speakers, for example. More importantly, we can now apply for SSHRC grants as a research group, take advantage of funding opportunities that may be reserved to groups rather than individuals, and develop more formal relationships with other institutions, such as (but not limited to) the Prague Linguistic Circle.

In terms of activities, the Circle has held its usual discussion seminars. This year, participants are reading the *Vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* by Émile Benveniste, one section at the time. As a result of the formalization, the Circle is now also hosting occasional formal talks. The inaugural talk, entitled “Les Anglicismes dans le vocabulaire sportif russe”, was given by Federica Gowen on November 4, 2016. It was very inspiring. Two talks are currently scheduled for Winter 2017:

- February 24, 2017, Dr. Tamara Schürch: “Ecocentric Epistemology as a Resistance to Forgetting in Afro-Antillean Poetry”.

- April 07, 2017, Dr. Elena Bratishenko: “Title TBA”.

As always, all are welcome to attend the talks as well as the seminars. Cercle Benveniste meets every second Friday at 2 pm in CHD 412. During the winter term it will meet on January 13 and 27, February 10 and 24, March 10 and 24 and April 7.

The Language Research Centre’s Sixth Annual “I Would like to Know More About”
- Lucas Czarnecki, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary

On November 10th, 2016, the Language Research Centre (LRC) hosted its sixth annual “I'd like to know more about …” workshop.
The goal of the workshop was to provide students, faculty and members of the LRC community an opportunity to engage with and to learn new practical tools and methods related to the study and pedagogy of language.

As a graduate student at the University of Calgary I was excited to share my methods and findings from research in political psychology and computerized text analysis. I had the pleasure to share the stage with two presenters: Dr. Darin Flynn, an Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of Calgary, and Dr. Katherine Bowers, an Assistant Professor of Slavic Studies at the University of British Columbia.

Dr. Darin Flynn ran the day’s first workshop: “Audio Killed Phonetic Transcription! Long Live Phonetic Transcription!” His research and teaching deals primarily with phonology – the study of speech sounds in language – and in Canadian Indigenous languages. Dr. Flynn’s workshop focused on Canadian pronunciation and intonation and the related drawbacks of audio and print dictionaries. The workshop illustrated the importance of phonetic transcription while showing that many English dictionaries often present vowels, consonants and stress patterns according to non-Canadian standards. The workshop compared the transcription of speech sounds across various dictionaries; showing participants that even so-called “Canadian” English dictionaries are not as accurate as many of their users believe. Similarly, audio dictionaries, despite their growing popularity, also prove unreliable in that vowels, consonants, and stress are many times pronounced differently in isolation than in everyday conversation.

Dr. Flynn had various dictionaries brought in to provide hands-on examples of how phonemes and stress are misrepresented in Canadian English dictionaries. He amusingly engaged participants, encouraging us to pronounce various words based on their ambiguous spellings and showing how a single grapheme may be pronounced in different ways. Mild-mannered debates quickly ensued over the “correct” pronunciation of ambiguous words such as gif. Other topics, including how vowels of Canadian English have changed over time – particularly in a phenomenon known as “the Canadian Shift” – made for engaging and insightful discussions both during and after the workshop. In the end, Dr. Flynn demonstrated that the phonetic transcription of words remains useful to English language learners – even in an era of audio dictionaries.

Dr. Katherine Bowers lead participants in our second workshop: “Public Engagement and Student Learning through Social Media”. Her research focuses on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russian literature and culture. Relatedly she is currently working on a book about eighteenth-century gothic writing’s influence on Russian realism. The workshop drew upon Dr. Bowers’ experience organizing and running public engagement projects using social media. Recently, for example, she co-organized a SSHRC-funded conference and digital outreach project “Crime and Punishment at 150,” which celebrated 150 years of Dostoevsky’s novel. Her workshop introduced faculty and students to social media platforms Facebook and Twitter, and drew upon their use for engaging students and the general public. Participants could follow and “live-tweet” her presentation using the hashtag #lrciwish16.

The workshop outlined different approaches for using social networking sites (SNS) to engage the public and promote student learning. To demonstrate how SNS may be used in this area, Dr. Bowers introduced a few of her own projects. Including the amusing @RodionTweets Twitter account, which was run by Dr. Bowers and her colleagues. This innovative project live-tweeted Dostoevsky’s novel “Crime and Punishment” from the perspective of the story’s protagonist, Raskolnikov. For those interested a blog about the project is maintained online and can be found here: http://blogs.ubc.ca/cp150/digital-outreach/rodiontweets/. You may also view the project in its entirety here: https://storify.com/NADostoevskySoc/rodiontweets. The project’s success has inspired similar initiatives; including group readings and role playing exercises. In the latter, students embodied the personas of various Dostoevsky characters on Twitter; tweeting from the perspectives of those characters.

The remainder of Dr. Bowers’ workshop addressed the strengths and weaknesses of using different SNS. Demonstrating that sites like Facebook and Twitter foster different types of online engagement and should be used strategically and sometimes for different purposes. Throughout her workshop Dr. Bowers’ engaged participants with examples of different social media strategies for promoting scholarship and teaching, community engagement, and knowledge mobilization.

Finally, I had the opportunity to present my workshop: “Computerized Text Analysis: The Practical and Ethical Use of Social Media Data for Social Science Research”. I am a graduate student in the Department of Political Science at the University of Calgary and an Early Career Scholar with the International Society of Political Psychology. My workshop drew upon methods that I use in my research, which focuses on how innate tendencies, such as personality and temperament, help shape ideologies across the left-right political spectrum. Using text as data I examine groups with opposing ideologies for differences in their psychology, styles of thinking, and use of language. The workshop explored the use of automated methods for collecting and analyzing textual data – primarily in machine readable format. The workshop began with an introduction to text analysis; covering, among other things,
the history of computerized text analysis, and common procedures for collecting, preprocessing, and analyzing unstructured data. A reoccurring theme throughout the workshop dealt with the practical and ethical use of social media data. With respect to ethics I addressed growing concerns regarding online privacy, and the ethical responsibilities facing researchers working with big data.

More pragmatically, the workshop offered a brief introduction to R (an open-source – i.e. free – programming language used for statistical computations and datamining), a tutorial on how to connect to Facebook and Twitter’s APIs in order to scrape data, and finally, a lesson highlighting common procedures within computerized text analysis for working with text-based data. The workshop was designed to be as hand-on as possible. Participants were encouraged to download R and code alongside my presentation. I also encouraged the use of RStudio, which enables one to work with R in a more user-friendly environment. For those interested all the information, as well as the slides from my workshop, can be accessed on a public Ethernet page. A link to this page is included below:

https://oasis.sandstorm.io/shared/MxIcl76B4AFqZWAhXQ0nZE1w5d3BbwNkymxJQ6MzFo

I would like to thank my fellow presenters Dr. Darin Flynn and Dr. Katherine Bowers. Not only for their insightful presentations, but also their kind words in-between workshops with myself and with other participants. Personally I would also like to thank Dr. Olga Mladenova for giving me the opportunity to share insights from my research. I want to also acknowledge Dr. Dennis Storoshenko who referred my research to the Language Research Centre. In the past Dr. Storoshenko and I have participated in the Text Analysis Interest Group, an initiative from the University of Calgary spearheaded by Dr. Michael Ullyot to network researchers – of all disciplines and skill levels – interested in text analysis. A special thank you also to Saundra Lipton from the Taylor Family Digital Library for assisting the LRC in procuring relevant dictionaries for our first workshop.

Finally, I would like to commend the Language Research Centre for not only continuing this excellent workshop series, but also for fostering a welcoming interdisciplinary environment. This year the workshop touched on topics ranging from phonology, to political psychology, to pedagogy and social media. Despite the wide range of topics covered, it was encouraging to see how much overlap existed. Participants asked relevant questions that engaged all three workshops — sometimes simultaneously. Events such as these convey to me the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and I hope will encourage similar workshops in the future.
Japanese Teachers’ Workshop
- Akiko Sharp, Division of Chinese & Japanese Studies of SLLLC

On November 20, 2016, the Southern Alberta Japanese Language Teachers’ Association (SAJLTA) held a teachers’ workshop entitled, “Thinking about the evaluation of learning activities: performance assessments and using a rubric” at the Language Research Centre. We invited Ms. Mami Saito, the Japanese-Language Education Advisor from Alberta Education, to lead the workshop.

There were twenty-one participants from Japanese schools and universities in Calgary. In the morning session, participants explored a variety of different types of rubrics, their goals, benefits, and challenges. In the afternoon session, participants worked in groups to apply what they had learnt in the morning to draft rubrics and discuss their effects on teaching. Ms. Saito also provided us with new and updated Japanese online teaching resources.

In the final session, Ms. Hitomi Nishikawa (Calgary Japanese School) reported on the Summer Training Program for Japanese Language Teachers which was held from June 27 to 29, 2016 in Edmonton.

This workshop was generously supported by the Language Research Centre, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Japan Foundation.
Chinese language placement has become an increasingly important issue of Chinese language teaching and research in every Canadian university due to the growing number of Chinese learners and the increasing diversity of their language backgrounds. The workshop created a forum to discuss the practices, complications and challenges of Chinese language placement, as well as to generate ideas and disseminate research on the development of placement tests and the implementation of effective placement procedures. Issues addressed in the workshop include placement procedures used in different Canadian universities, development and evaluation of Chinese placement tests, strategies for placing learners with different language backgrounds, correction of placement decisions after classes start, collaborations among institutions, and other related topics.

The workshop will produce a reference document on Chinese language placement in Canadian universities, generate research projects on Chinese language placement, and build connections among different institutions in Canada and China to enable further collaborations.
Photo Exploration of Japanese Culture
- Taylor White, Student of Japanese, SLLLC

From October 17 to 28, the Language Research Centre hosted a photo exhibition co-sponsored by the Consulate General of Japan in Calgary and the School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures at the University of Calgary. The exhibition showcased the works of winners of the 2015 and 2016 Japan Photo Contests, organized by the Consulate General of Japan. The Japan Photo Contests seek to explore Japanese culture and the strong relationship between Japan and Canada, and accept submissions in three categories: Japan & Canada; Culture, food and festivals of Japan; and Nature & landmarks of Japan.

As the only student from the School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures granted an award at the Japan Photo Contest, I was asked to speak briefly at the opening ceremony about my work and experiences. My entry was of two temple buildings at Sensoji temple in Asakusa. I was in and around Tokyo for about a month as a participant in the Japanese group study program offered by the University of Calgary in partnership with Senshu University, located near Tokyo. It was during this time while my group and I were waiting for the start of the spring festival in May that I was able to take the award-winning photo of the temple towers in Asakusa. I had in Japan one of the most amazing experiences of my life, and I must say that I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to travel all the way to Japan and learn so much, more I am sure than I could have otherwise.
The Calgary Persian Library (CPL) was established by a group of Iranian students at the University of Calgary in 2012, with the initial capital provided through fundraising activities. The CPL accommodates numerous cultural activities of the Iranian Graduate Student Association. With more than 1000 books, the CPL’s main goal is to keep Persian speaking immigrants in Calgary connected with their own culture and literature as well as introducing Persian literature to other international communities. The CPL was hosted by the Women’s Resource Center at the University of Calgary before relocating to the Language Research Centre in January 2016.

The generous help given by the Language Research Centre enabled the CPL to continue monthly book club meetings. Additionally, the provided space helped to accept book donations which resulted in diversified subjects on the CPL’s shelves. With the mission of promoting Persian culture and book reading among the Iranian community in Calgary, the CPL plans to further develop the library and continue hosting cultural events to benefit the community, ultimately strengthening multiculturalism within the city. The CPL and the Iranian community are very grateful for the space and opportunities that have been provided, and are looking forward to ongoing collaboration with the School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures in the future.
Japanese Literacy Club
- Jennifer Nguyen, Student of Japanese, SLLLC

The Japanese Literacy Club (JLC) is a new club created in 2016 as a forum for students who are passionate for Japanese literature and culture. Over this fall semester, the club hosted two literacy sessions every week. Much obliged to the Language Research Centre (LRC), JLC was fortunate enough to host their literacy sessions in room CHD 401B. At these sessions, members had the opportunity to read from a wide selection of over 50 Japanese books, including manga, children stories, books for Japanese learners, and many more.

In addition to the weekly literacy sessions, JLC also hosted several fun events, the first one being a fundraiser – a Japanese Snack Sale on September 27 at a table in Science B. They sold Japanese snacks directly imported from Japan to raise funds for the club as well as for the Children’s Cottage Society (CSS). On the proceeds for the Children’s Cottage Society, the club purchased children’s books and donated them to CSS’s Crisis Nursery.

On November 29, JLC had two events: the Japanese Tea Party and Calligraphy Night at the Guildenstern room (MacEwan Student Centre). Fifteen people came to socialize over a free cup of Japanese tea and sweets. Calligraphy Night attracted nearly thirty-five people. It was an honour for the club to welcome Mami Humphreys, a professional Japanese calligraphy master to teach the students “笑” (smile). The calligraphy master started off by showing everyone the strokes and techniques of the character. Then when everybody had had the chance to try on their own, the calligraphy master went around the tables and guided each participant through the Kanji. If you are interested in seeing Mami Humphreys' work or learning more about her, visit her website at www.sho-artworks.com.

The Japanese Literacy Club would like to thank their membership, supporters, the LRC and professors for accomplishing an enlightening and fun semester. For further information on events, please visit the Japanese Literacy Club’s Facebook group (https://www.facebook.com/groups/japaneseliteracyclub/) or email us (uofcjlc@gmail.com).
It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of E. Lisa Panayotidis, Professor in the Werklund School of Education and staunch supporter of the Language Research Centre. Lisa’s interdisciplinary research focused on a number of areas including, but not limited to, the history of education, language and culture, gender studies, and curriculum theory and design. She worked closely with community partners including the Calgary Board of Education and Alberta Education. Within the LRC, Lisa served on the Research Advisory Committee, shared her research at our “Focus on the Learner” speaker series, and regularly attended our events. Diligent and precise in her work and humble in character, Lisa was a consummate academic. She will be missed.