

To: Dr. Marianne Henn
Acting Chair
MLCS

From: Dr. Jennifer Dailey-O'Cain
Associate Professor of German Applied Linguistics
MLCS

Date: 18 December 2006

Subject: Peer assessment of the teaching of Professor Geneviève Maheux-Pelletier
MLCS 570

On Tuesday, 17 October 2006, from 2-4:30PM, I attended a session of Professor Maheux-Pelletier's introductory applied linguistics graduate seminar. The visit had been pre-arranged the previous week. The topic of that week's seminar was "ethnicity and language choice."

The ten students who were present were arranged in a semicircle, with Professor Maheux-Pelletier at the front of the room. Although it was a lengthy class with a lot of room to grow unwieldy, the two-and-a-half hours were clearly delineated into different components. The first 10 minutes consisted of group work in which different groups looked at different short transcript excerpts from a research project of Professor Maheux-Pelletier's that linked mobility with code-switching (the use of two or more languages in the same conversation), and were asked to analyze them. This was followed by a whole-class discussion on what they had talked about in their groups, and then by an individual "freewrite" about what they'd learned and a meeting in their groups, and then finally by a whole-class "free-for-all" session in which the students together picked out the most important points of what they'd learned. This entire layered exercise took about an hour and a twenty minutes. Next came a ten-minute discussion of the discussion that had taken place over the week on the class blog, followed by a whole-class discussion of the readings, a short break, and a twenty-minute long formal presentation by an individual student.

Overall, I can say that I was very impressed with the way Professor Maheux-Pelletier handled the class, and it was readily apparent that the students learned a great deal from her. Although this particular class consisted of an unusually quiet group of students, they were nonetheless truly engaged with the material, not just passive receptacles for information fed to them by Professor Maheux-Pelletier. In fact, there were times—especially in their work in small groups—where they got very excited about what they were talking about. The classroom atmosphere was encouraging, informal, and not imposing, and the students felt very comfortable asking questions and bringing their own ideas into the fray.

I was also impressed at the degree to which Dr. Maheux-Pelletier managed to make this class a student-driven class while still herself remaining very much a steady presence. While not interfering unduly in the students' group work, she was always available to them, and during the whole-class discussions, she did an excellent job picking out all of the things that were important about what the students were saying and elaborating on them. It was clear that she was very

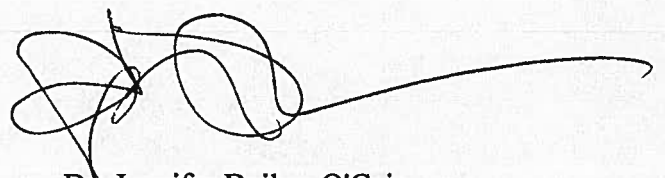
familiar with each individual student's interests, as the comments she made were very individualized and tailored. Finally, the ethics application and consent form she passed out at the end as samples clearly served as a reminder to the students of the practical concerns about doing field research and the need for

My only suggestions for improvement would be as follows:

- Broaden the scope of the analysis used, at least somewhat. While Dr. Maheux-Pelletier did an admirable job teaching students how to analyze ethnicity and language choice from the perspective of qualitative discourse analysis, driving home the point that you can also do different kinds of analysis with similar kinds of data would seem to be called for in an introductory seminar.
- Instead of a freewrite simply about what the students have learned, add another dimension to it and get them to consider how the general information that they learned might be applied to work on their own language of specialization—a leap that is essential in linguistic work but which many students find difficult.
- Pick up the pace just a bit in the large discussions where not everyone was participating—the only place where she occasionally lost a couple of people.

All in all, however, I have to say that I am deeply impressed by Professor Maheux-Pelletier's abilities in the classroom. The atmosphere that she creates ensures that even quieter students feel comfortable volunteering responses readily without anxiety. They all seem to be engaged in the learning process and have their attention focused on the topic. They enjoyed the class, learned a great deal, and appeared to be highly motivated. It was a great pleasure to take part in the class—like Professor Maheux-Pelletier's students, I, too learned a great deal, and I hope to apply that knowledge to my own graduate teaching in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Dailey-O'Cain', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr. Jennifer Dailey-O'Cain
Associate Professor
German Applied Linguistics

Peer Evaluation for Geneviève Maheux-Pelletier

Course: FREN 476

Observer: Anne Malena

Date: February 26, 2008

Unfortunately I arrived late, for which I apologize. I did notice as soon as I sat down, however, that the atmosphere in the classroom was relaxed and that the 8 ? students appeared focused. Dr. Maheux-Pelletier had been fielding questions on the next assignments while waiting for me. I had been provided with a detailed lesson plan ahead of time as well as a list of the exercises that would be done in class. The topic of the day was morphology.

The class started with one student carefully articulating the word "arc-en-ciel" to record it into the computer. Special software then produced a graph of the acoustic trace of the word. This was presented at a good pace, giving students ample time to process information and ask questions. This technological demonstration was also an effective way to create a transition between phonetics, more specifically phonology in this case, and morphology. I also recognized in this segment Geneviève's skills with certain aspects of the communicative approach, namely to start a class with some brainstorming where students discover answers and thereby the right questions to formulate. Once the phonological aspect of "arc-en-ciel" was understood it seemed logical to wonder about ways to divide the word other than by its sounds. Presumably students had read the assigned pages on morphology and done the assigned exercises so that the explanations given by Professor Maheux-Pelletier at this point made sense. One small but unfortunate glitch did occur though when, in the heat of the moment, she referred to the sign and pointed out that morphology's object is the signifier while it is, of course, the signified. I noted it but didn't bring it up until later when the class was working on the exercises. Since some of the students in the class had taken FREN 301 with me the previous term, where I spent one or two sessions on the sign, I did receive a few worried glances. In the end, I believe the confusion was cleared up and I admired Geneviève Maheux-Pelletier for the aplomb with which she handled the situation. It's not easy to admit gracefully that a mistake was made but she did and made sure it was corrected in the students' mind.

A short Power Point summarizing and illustrating the main points of the text book was then presented as a way to prepare the discussion and correction of the exercises. At that point I was surprised to notice that only half an hour of class time, not counting the delay I caused, had elapsed. It seemed much longer because of the amount of information that was introduced, discussed and learned. The class then spent twenty minutes on the exercises. One or two students were obviously having trouble with the material and, in general, answers were rather slow in coming. Professor Maheux-Pelletier was a model of patience and didn't move on to the next exercise until she was quite sure that everyone understood. She had to resort to many different ways of explaining things a couple of times and I was very much impressed with the concern she showed for students' varying learning strategies and abilities. There was also a good mix of standard exercises, from the textbook and elsewhere, and a fun section in which the principles of morphology were demonstrated through French charades, always based on words that

make up another word when put together, poetic neologisms, portmanteau words and truncation. Again the use of class time was impressive during these activities, after which the Power Point was concluded as a way to consolidate what had just been practiced. The class ended on time with students handing in homework and receiving their midterms.

In conclusion, I came away feeling that we are lucky to have a Professor such as Geneviève Maheux-Pelletier, not only because of the expert knowledge she brings into the classroom, but also, and perhaps most importantly, for her excellently trained ability to treat students with the utmost respect and to help them learn difficult material in a relaxed and even fun way. This is accomplished through model preparation and a careful dosage of available resources, including technology, the blending of practice and theory, conversation and good old common sense. Watching her teach was a pleasure and I have no doubt students feel the same way.



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Natalia Pylypiuk, 780.492.3498, natalia.pylypiuk@ualberta.ca

To: Dr. Adrian Del Caro, Chair, MLCS
From: Natalia Pylypiuk
Re: Assessment of Teaching by Dr. Geneviève Maheux-Pelletier

Class Assessed: MLCS 555, "Feedback and Error Correction," 27 October 2008, 14:00-16:50
No. of students: 16 students + 2, who arrived by 14:10.

I am very pleased to offer the following assessment of one of Dr. Maheux-Pelletier's graduate classes in the course "Teaching Strategies for Postsecondary Language Instructors."

This particular class, dedicated to the topic of "Feedback and Error Correction," was superbly well-organized and well-paced. It began in a friendly manner, with the professor first asking the students: "How was your teaching last week?" Responses included acknowledgement that undergraduate charges felt nervous about being observed, that they failed to speak the target language among themselves even if they used it with the TA. Dr. Maheux-Pelletier guided the comments to a discussion of error correction in the classroom, which was the topic of the assigned reading. She elicited some very fine ideas: "Yes, I need to give added input to provide a proper model"; "It is better to tell students when you are (are not) going to correct"; "I cannot correct every sentence." Then she gently queried how they, as teachers, select what to correct, thus leading the group to summarize what they had read in the assigned chapter. Dr. Maheux-Pelletier suggested the use of choral repetition in moments when an overt error correction might make the more sensitive language learners even more self-conscious. Half of the students remained quiet for the most part, but Dr. Maheux-Pelletier did not embarrass them in anyway. The other half actively participated in the conversation, which seamlessly led into an assessment of behaviorist theories, and a discussion of fossilization, especially as it pertains to pronunciation. A moment of levity was introduced when Dr. Maheux-Pelletier remarked that, inasmuch as the chapter had been so well summarized, the class was ready to go home.

After this friendly, thirty-minute introduction, began the next segment. Dr. Maheux-Pelletier showed a cartoon depicting a mother and young son, who announces: "I putted the plates on the table." She corrects him by replying: "You mean, I **put** the plates on the table," upon which the child answers with his own emphatic correction: "**No**, I putted them on all by myself." This humorous illustration led to a discussion of assumptions about error correction. Students worked in small groups for ten minutes, seeking to recognize the various strategies for correction presented on a worksheet. At this point even the shy students engaged in conversation with their peers. Subsequently, the results were presented to the whole class. Students considered the controversies about error correction. Everyone concluded that the choice of strategy depended on context, at which point pragmatics were brought to the fore. Dr. Maheux-Pelletier emphasized the need to distinguish when to focus on grammatical accuracy and when to encourage creative expression.

Modern Languages & Cultural Studies: Germanic, Romance, Slavic
Faculty of Arts

Arts 200 • University of Alberta • Edmonton • Canada • T6G 2E6

Telephone: (780) 492-4926 • Fax: (780) 492-9106

E-mail: mlcs@ualberta.ca / www.humanities.ualberta.ca/MLCS

After a ten-minute break, Professor Maheux-Pelletier began the second period with a DVD that illustrates Spanish being taught according to the ALM. Indicating that that this method purportedly promoted a no-tolerance approach to learner errors, she asked her students to analyze the types of feedback employed by the instructor in the video clip. They worked with a chart showing a number of feedback strategies. A discussion of the drawbacks and benefits (choral repetition and reading out loud) of the ALM ensued. Subsequently, students discussed the need for providing feedback, the types of constructive feedback there are, and the fact that improvement does not always take place after feedback. Much attention was paid to self-discovery strategies as potentially more beneficial. It was evident that students were informed by the various theories in favor of, and against error correction, integrating them seamlessly into their analysis of various situations.

At approximately 16:20 one of the students (Ms Hannah Chan) gave a presentation on writing, describing a group activity she designed for her FREN 111 course. The presentation was accompanied with a detailed summary of the context and purpose of the exercise, its pros and cons, as well as an analysis of student reception. Ms Chan's presentation elicited a lively discussion.

The last twenty minutes were devoted to a discussion of the Teaching Portfolio, which class members would be required to submit as one of the final assignments. Dr. Maheux-Pelletier made it clear that this class project was intended as an exercise in self-reflection. Unlike the professional portfolio, which showcases only one's best features, the MLCS 555 portfolio encourages comparisons between one's early (i.e., weaker) work with one's newest (i.e., stronger) work.

Class activities flowed one into the other in logical fashion and were very enjoyable. Each segment built on the preceding one and progressed in a natural manner. Dr. Maheux-Pelletier's gentle humor and down to earth demeanor put the students at ease. There was nothing intimidating about her. Even when she talked about the theoretical underpinning of various correction / feedback strategies, she did not use jargon. Throughout the class she motivated students to learn through interaction and analysis of self. Her class was an excellent illustration of student-centered teaching and learning, which the TA's could easily apply in their own 2L classes. In spite of the late hour, many students lingered after class, asking her questions.

Dr. Maheux-Pelletier's preparation and lesson plan were excellent. The pace of her class, teaching strategies and ability to sustain interest demonstrate that she is an outstanding teacher. Although not everyone contributed to the general discussion, perhaps out of shyness, everyone did follow her explanations and eagerly participated in small-group work. Evidently, Dr. Maheux-Pelletier has a marvelous relationship with her students.



Natalia Pylypiuk, MLCS

c.: Dr. G. Maheux-Pelletier