In this issue...

Featured Alumna M’Balia Thomas
and current PhD candidate, Heather Smyser

Faculty and Student News

CERCLL’s Grant Renewal

New SLAT Masters Program
Hello! I am M’Balia Thomas and I am a Summer 2014 graduate of SLAT. I joined the faculty of the University of Kansas (KU) in Lawrence, KS this fall where I am working in the School of Education’s Department of Curriculum and Teaching as a tenure-track Assistant Professor of TESOL.

Though my job is in the field of Education, I majored in Language Use and Minored in Analysis. My job may seem like a bit of a digression from my major, but it actually fits in quite well with the focus of my dissertation (entitled, “A Dialogic Approach to Oral Narrative Storytelling Analysis in English as a Foreign Language Research”) and my pre-SLAT work experience. Before coming to SLAT, I spent over 10 years teaching in a K-12 setting, working as a public school teacher. My particular background was very attractive to schools with an interest in K-12 Education. Even though I had this relevant background, I did not think my research – which was and is still very theoretical – would be something a School of Ed (SoE) would find appealing. SoEs are professional programs and everything is about praxis and practical, immediate applications for teachers – as they should be given that many of these schools work with practicing teachers and individuals who wish to remain in the K-12 teaching setting (rather than going on to get their doctoral degrees).

However, there is a growing trend in SoEs towards more collaborative work between Schools; work that adopts a language, culture, literacy approach and draws upon theories in Anthropology, Sociology and Critical Studies. I had this knowledge, but with MUCH guidance from Lin Waugh, I was able to parlay this knowledge into real practical course ideas and suggestions for projects that I could work on with other faculty members and even students. Part of this process involved reconceptualizing the key merits of my dissertation to more readily highlight the practical relevance of my work to SoEs.

Fortunately, KU felt that what I had to offer as a junior faculty was what they were looking to add to their TESOL staff, and they hired me. This Fall, I will be working with pre-service and in-service teachers (teaching the teacher practicum course for teachers who will be working with ESL students) and will be teaching an SLA course to undergraduate Education majors in the Spring. My hope is that in my second year I will be able to offer more of the critical theory and language ideology courses that I have spent the last year thinking about as part of my dissertation.

As you head into the job market, feel free to drop me a line if you want some insight into working within a SoE – especially if you are a Use major / Analysis minor and did not expect to head down a road you may consider more apt for those with a pedagogical focus. I’ll be glad to share my experience with you.

email: Mbthomas@ku.edu
Spending a month in Russia seems surreal at best to Heather Smyser, a second-year SLAT student, these days, especially given how that month was spent in Sochi working with NBC for the Olympic Winter Games. Going there, she was expecting this experience to be similar to study abroad where she and her colleagues would have the opportunity to interact with local people while working. However, while she expected to work hard, she did not think to expect to work 12-14 hour days consistently, hours that left little time for her studies, let alone for fostering friendships with coworkers and local workers.

However, serving as an interpreter for her site during the first week prior to the games when she was sent out to try to procure whatever her site needed, such as cables and ski equipment, allowed her ample opportunity to interact with the community and get to know several employees of various businesses. In this capacity, Heather was perpetually exhausted from being continuously “on-call”, ready to interpret at a moment’s notice, which has led her to an even more profound respect for the profession. She says of interpretation, “So many people expect that because a person speaks the two languages of groups that need to communicate, he or she is automatically able to be a reliable interpreter, and yet without adequate training, language speakers have a hard time finding culturally appropriate terms and specific technical vocabulary within the almost instantaneous demands of both consecutive and simultaneous interpretation. Now that I have returned, I see the importance of incorporating the practice of both interpretation and translation into language curricula so that students are better able to meet the demands of the job market and so that they better know what is expected of them if they are asked to translate or interpret for employers.” These skills are not taught that often, unfortunately, even though they provide bi-and multilinguals with excellent opportunities after graduation. Heather hopes to change that.

After serving as an interpreter and needing to find culturally appropriate terms in a quick manner, Heather finds that she is also much more appreciative of efforts to better define, understand, and include intercultural competence in research and classrooms. Being able to understand what exactly is meant by the term and finding ways to practice it herself, she is better able to transfer that knowledge into a classroom setting, since the ability to work well with and understand other cultures is a vital life skill. Without knowledge of her own culture and Russia’s, she would not have been nearly as successful at interpreting or explaining to her colleagues why individuals from one culture behaved in a certain way in a certain context, thus helping to prevent some cultural misunderstandings.

Both translation studies and intercultural competence are topics that are much discussed in the applied linguistics literature, and being able to see first-hand the importance of these in life beyond academia only serves to underscore the need to further research these topics and to include them in our curricula. While those are neither her primary nor secondary research areas in SLAT, knowledge and incorporation of them into her teaching will be a great benefit to her students.
The Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language, and Literacy (CERCLL) at the University of Arizona (UA) was awarded a third Title VI Language Resource Center grant to develop resources for the teaching and learning of foreign languages at K-16 levels across the U.S. The Center is co-directed by professors in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching (SLAT) Beatrice Dupuy (Department of French and Italian) and Chantelle Warner (Department of German Studies), and is housed in the College of Humanities (COH). Established in 2006, CERCLL is a collaborative effort between multiple programs, departments, and colleges at the University of Arizona and other institutions in the Southwest and beyond. Projects are led by UA faculty in the Colleges of Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Education; all three colleges are key contributors to CERCLL’s activities. Further partners include fellow organizations on campus working in international education including the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, the Office of Global Initiatives and the Confucius Institute, as well as several of the 16 other Language Resource Centers around the U.S. In the new grant cycle, CERCLL will also work more closely with local educational institutions including UA South and Pima Community College to expand outreach to under-served and minority student populations. We send our warmest congratulations to our partner!

Contact: Beatrice Dupuy (bdupuy@email.arizona.edu) and Chantelle Warner (warnerc@email.arizona.edu).
Student News

Yasumasa Shigenaga has been employed as a Japanese instructor at the University of Oregon. Katherine O’Donnell Christoffersen received the 2014 Doctoral Dissertation $4,000 Grant from TIRF. Brian Hibbs was hired as a tenure-track professor at Dalton State University! Osman Solmaz published a book review for the most recently released issue of the CALICO Journal. Tamara Boyens and Christopher Vasquez-Wright both received honors as 2013-14 Outstanding GTAs!

Congratulations to our 2014 Grads!
Kathlyn Spires Diaz
M’Balia Thomas
Soomin Jwa
Mohammed Tamimi
Mahmoud Azaz
Jose Aldemar Valencia
Kristin Helland
Katie Burns Al Masaeed
Brian Hibbs
Robert Cote
Sonja Fordham
Katie Angus

Welcome to our New Faculty!
Mahmoud Azaz, Ph.D., University of Arizona
Betul Czerkawski, Ph.D., Hacettepe University
Nick Ferdinandt, Ed.D., University of St. Thomas
Sumayya Granger, Ph.D., University of Arizona
Eddy White, Ph.D., Macquerie University

Welcome to our New Cohort!
Wid Allehaiby
Hicham Assaouii
Tara Hashemi
Ryan Humphrey
Rachel LaMance
Mariela Lopez
Jacob Monzango
Janelle Moser
Timothy O’Connell
Margarita Perez Campos
Kristian Putra
Dunja Radojkovic
Adriana Scheidegger
Laurel Schenkoske
Jennifer Slinkard
Elio Sottoscritti
Chelsea Steinert

Welcome to Our New Staff!
Robin Staples, Program Coordinator
Amanda Pitts, Administrative Assistant

News from SLAT

Beginning Fall 2015, SLAT is launching an innovative new master’s degree in Second Language Learning and Educational Technology! The MA in Second Language Learning and Educational Technology (SLL/ET) trains second language professionals (foreign language as well as English as a second language) in the design and implementation of online and blended teaching materials. Created with the working professional in mind, the MA in SLL/ET may be taken mostly online over two summers and two semesters. The great majority of recent job listings mention training or experience with computer-assisted language learning (CALL), online delivery, or technology. Equip yourself with the knowledge and skills needed to enter today’s technologically advanced language classroom! Applications are being accepted for the inaugural Fall 2015 Cohort.
Dear SLAT Community,

Please accept my greetings from Tucson on this cool, sunny November morning. The year 2013-2014 brought quite a few changes to SLAT. One major adjustment has been in personnel. Our long-time Senior Program Coordinator, Shaun O’Connor, retired in April after more than ten years with SLAT and twenty years at the University of Arizona. Her experience working with the university administration, the institutional review board office, and questions regarding student progress to degree were integral to SLAT and have been missed. Our stability across this transition came from Kelley Merriam Castro, who continues as Program Coordinator, and Hannah Herrick, our part-time student worker who is now in her second year with SLAT. In July, Robin Staples moved into the SLAT Program Coordinator position from a shared Secretary position between SLAT and French & Italian. Robin was already very familiar with many of SLAT’s processes and has picked up the coordinator position with enthusiasm. We are happy to have her on board. In August we also welcomed Amanda Pitts, Administrative Assistant, to the office. Amanda’s time is shared between SLAT and French & Italian, and has learned the position quickly. With these staff members on board, the SLAT office is a warm and busy place.

I am particularly pleased this year to announce the implementation of a new MA in Second Language Learning and Educational Technology. We are currently accepting applications. The program is currently a mix of online and face-to-face classes, but in 2015-2016 we will transition the MA to a fully online degree. We are enthusiastic about this new interdisciplinary program, which formed from the combined efforts of SLAT, the Education Technology program at UA South, the College of Humanities, and the Outreach College. I would like to especially recognize the efforts of Betul Czerkawski, the Program Director for Education Technology, in launching this program.

Please mark your calendars for the 2014 GIDP Showcase event on December 11 and for the SLAT Student Association Interdisciplinary Roundtable on March 6-7, 2015. More details on both events can be found in the body of this newsletter, and last minute RSVPs are more than welcome. We encourage you to join us at these two events, as well as any of our regular colloquia and presentations.

The SLAT program continues to thrive. We graduated thirteen students in 2013-2014 and brought seventeen new students in this fall, bringing our current PhD program enrollment up to eighty-five. We also have eighteen PhD minors. As you can see from some of the student highlights in this newsletter, SLAT students continue to publish their research, present nationally and internationally, hold leadership roles on campus, and find worthwhile employment upon graduation. Our employment rate upon graduation has held steadily above 90%, even in difficult hiring years. We are pleased to know that SLAT prepares its students well for a competitive market.

Finally, my five-year term as SLAT Chair is coming to an end. The search process for a new chair will begin in December. Please expect to hear from a new voice in next year’s edition of this newsletter, full of ideas, energy and new directions for the SLAT program, faculty and students.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Robert Ariew
Chair of SLAT