

## **“Once and Future” Directions in Language Teaching and Life: An Interview with Marianne Celce-Murcia**

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When professor Celce-Murcia retired in 2002, she was interviewed by IAL; back then she talked a little about her early studies and educational background, and about changes she had witnessed not only in the field of applied linguistics and teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) but also within our department, with our newly created undergraduate minor in TESL – Teaching English as a Second Language. In addition, she outlined two of her most impressive works: *The Grammar Book* (co-authored with Diane Larsen-Freeman) and *Teaching Pronunciation* (co-authored with Janet Goodwin and Donna Brinton). But contrary to what one would expect, retiring for her did not mean going home victoriously at last, to find the long-deserved and inviting arms of Morpheus; after all, she had already greatly contributed to society with an impressive list of accomplishments and hallmark books that are still hailed as the best of their kind. Instead, it was just the beginning of a new set of challenges and projects. In this interview, Marianne addresses some of the projects and hardships that awaited her after her retirement, along with her unexpected appointment to serve as dean of English programs at the American University of Armenia, and the creation and co-editing of an innovative discourse-based ESL textbook series.

Professor Emerita of Applied Linguistics & TESL at the University of California, Los Angeles, where she taught and mentored graduate students for thirty years, Marianne Celce-Murcia has published widely in the areas of language teaching methodology (including discourse-based approaches), the teaching of pronunciation, and pedagogical grammar. She has administered various TESOL related programs around the world, including the UCLA ESL Service Course program in 1975, the UCLA Summer Program for Soviet Teachers of English in 1976, and the Fulbright Summer Program for Egyptian Teachers of English at UCLA in 1987. She was awarded the UCLA Distinguished Teaching Award in 1976, selected for the Danforth Foundation’s Associate Program in 1977, and she was acting chair of the department in 1990. In 1997, Heinle & Heinle Publishers presented her with their Lifetime Achievement Award and New York University awarded her the Malkemes Prize for one of her published papers in 2007. Celce-Murcia’s main research interests are (a) empirical corpus-based studies of English syntax, discourse, and lexicon, (b) the application of findings in functional language analysis or applied linguistic theory to the preparation and testing of teaching materials, (c) developments in language analysis (functional syntax and discourse), and (d)

the role of discourse and context in language teaching. Professor Celce-Murcia has published numerous books and articles in which she incorporates her research findings into language pedagogy. Some of her most notable publications include *Discourse and Context in Language Teaching* (2000), with Elite Olshtain; *The Grammar Book: An ESL/EFL teacher's course* (1999), with Diane Larsen-Freeman; *Teaching Pronunciation: A reference for teachers of English as a second or foreign language* (1996) with Janet Goodwin and Donna Brinton; and *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (2001), aka the 'Apple Book'. Finally, she has served on the Editorial Advisory Boards of journals in the field, such as *Applied Linguistics* and *TESOL Quarterly*, and as member-at-large of the Executive Boards of both TESOL and AAAL.

**Bahiyih:** First of all, I have to say it's a great honor to conduct this interview with you. Your books helped me a great deal in my early TEFL training and they are still hallmarks in this field to this date. Having said that, let's start the interview! The 2002 issue of *IAL* asked you questions concerning your educational background and some of your early work and publications. For this reason, we would like to focus on your more recent projects. What have you been doing since you retired from UCLA in 2002?

**Marianne:** First of all, it was my late husband who insisted that I retire when I did because I had put in my 30 years, and I was over 60. So it was financially possible. I had maxed out on my retirement, and he really wanted me to stop working because he was also able to retire then. He was originally a French citizen, but he came to the U.S. and took on U.S. citizenship. We actually met in Nigeria, where I was teaching English and training English teachers, and he was teaching French. We got married there and he came back to the States with me, and we both eventually did Ph.D.'s here at UCLA. He did his in French, and I did mine in linguistics.

He was retiring, and we had bought a small condo in France that we needed to fix up. For two years, prior to retirement, we went there for brief stays, and we were just camping in the place. It needed a lot of work. It needed new furniture, the electricity had to be changed, the plumbing had to be changed. It had to be redecorated. We needed all new things for it. So that was one of our first big post-retirement projects. The other one was selling our little house in Santa Monica, and buying a condo on the west side.

We had to find something that would be secure enough, so that we could lock the door and go to France for four or five months to the place that we had there. And then come back to our place in LA on the west side. Those were time consuming post-retirement projects.

We went to France early in March 2003, and we were working on our condo, when I got news that my colleague, Russ Campbell, had passed away. I knew that he had been ill, but I guess I didn't know exactly how ill. It happened just a few weeks after I'd gone to France, and they had trouble reaching me to let me know

what had happened because our own phone line hadn't been installed yet in the apartment. I think I had given people my mother-in-law's phone number in case of an emergency; then someone left a message with her.

I tried to call someone back here in L.A., and I got the news about Russ having passed away. People were contacting me and saying he had really wanted to talk to me before he passed away because he wanted me to take over his role in Armenia as the Dean of English Programs at the American University of Armenia in Yerevan. And he wasn't able to reach me because of the initial communication problems. By the time we did get our telephone installed, Russ had passed away.

People were contacting me about Armenia, and I sent my CV to the responsible people, and I got appointed to that position in Armenia. That fall, the fall of 2003, I began making two trips a year to Armenia, which is what Russ had been doing, too. It was a distance position. My first trip was to get acquainted with everyone, and to see how things were going, and I could see that things were not in very good shape there because Russ had been sick for a while, so he hadn't been back there for over a year to work with the program. I had to start looking for people to hire, people with Ph.D.s.

They had several M.A.s there on site, but no one with a Ph.D. So I had to hire minimally one person with a Ph.D., and I was able to hire Jo Lewkowicz, who is of dual British and Polish nationality, and has a British education, including a Ph.D. from Lancaster in assessment with Charles Alderson. I was lucky to be able to hire someone of her caliber, and she went on site there, and within a year, was giving me reports. She had been a colleague for many years. I knew her before I hired her. I was pleased that she was one of the finalists, and then I selected her for the position, and she was approved. She was letting me know what the problems were on site.

It was clear that we needed a second person with a Ph.D., and that I really had to put someone like Jo in charge of handling things locally, so I decided to make her the local associate dean. I was able to do that. There was a lot of grumbling because one of the Armenian M.A.s was the assistant dean, and she thought she ought to be the one in charge locally, but things just weren't working out. So I had to make some changes. It was difficult and unpopular, but I look back on it, and it was the right thing to do. The job was wearing Jo down, so when she got an offer from the University of Warsaw to become a full professor in their linguistics department, she accepted that.

While Jo was still in Armenia, we had hired Bill Snyder, another U.S. Ph.D. who'd been working in Turkey and came to Armenia, but he didn't last long. He just lasted for one term, and he left for a job in Korea, so I had to hire two new PhD's. And I was lucky to find a UCLA Ph.D. who had worked with John Schumann, Bob Agajeenian, who is American and a native speaker of English, but ethnic Armenian, who would go there. He is still teaching there. For a while, he was the associate dean on site, but he really didn't like doing the administrative work. Classroom teaching and working with the M.A. students on their theses, he's happy to do, but

he didn't like the administrative work.

I also hired a wonderful classroom teacher of Indian nationality, who had done his Ph.D. in the UK. Who were the people he worked with? Ron Carter and Alan Maley, and people like that. A University of Nottingham Ph.D., Dr. Sivakumar Sivasubramaniam, and he was great. He was very charismatic, a good classroom teacher and the students loved him. But he was unhappy with the situation in Armenia, with the administration at the University, and he left after two years. So it's been difficult. I was in my fourth year on the job, and my husband had become very ill with colon cancer, so it became clear I would not be able to continue with the work in Armenia.

I started looking for someone to replace myself, and we found Antony Kunnan, a UCLA Ph.D. in applied linguistics, teaching at Cal State LA. Now he's in Hong Kong on sabbatical, but he's the new distance dean of the Department of English Programs at the American University in Yerevan. And he hired, as a second Ph.D. to work there along with Bob and to do the administrative work of the department, Dr. Hossein Farhady from Iran, who's also a UCLA Ph.D. in applied linguistics. So, except for Jo Lewkowicz, Bill Snyder and Sivakumar, all of the Ph.D.s who have been working in this Armenian program have come from our own Ph.D. program. Russ would like that.

Even though I only went to Armenia twice a year, I was practically in daily contact online, or by telephone with the people there who were responsible for the day-to-day decision-making and for dealing with the different problems that came up. By that time, I'd gotten to know all of the individuals on site and their personalities, and so on. I could see what was happening.

So we have what started there as a one year certificate program in teaching English as a second or foreign language. And then, just as Russ passed away, they were beginning an M.A. program in TESL. The MA had a weak initial year or two, but then as soon as Jo Lewkowicz was on site it really strengthened and the students started doing excellent research for their M.A. theses, and I believe that this has continued. While I was dean, I read every single thesis, gave feedback and signed off on it. That was part of my role. The students, once their local committee members had approved the thesis, would send it to me online; and I would print it out and mark it up, and send it back to them by express mail so they could make their final corrections and file. That's how we did it.

**Bahiyih:** *So although it was a distance position you were very much involved with the MA students and with the program?*

**Marianne:** Oh, yeah. I was very involved. It was time consuming, and the job in Armenia was the principal work I did, though, there was some overlap between my grammar series project and the end of my work with the American University in Armenia. So I was just very busy with those sorts of things, but then also very preoccupied with my husband's health. The exact nature of his health problem

was discovered in France, so his treatment began there, where he had surgery, and then three different kinds of chemotherapy. And then when it became clear to us all that he was not going to get better, we came home, and I immediately got him into treatment here in Los Angeles, but he didn't even live another full month. He made the supreme effort to come home to see his daughter and grandchildren again, which was very important to him.

I think it was two months after my husband had passed away, Olga Yokoyama calls me on the telephone and says, "Marianne, will you teach a class for us? We're shorthanded." I said, "No, Olga, I can't do it. I can't." I was still...

**Bahiyih:** *Overwhelmed?*

**Marianne:** Overwhelmed, preparing my husband's memorial service, worrying about getting all our records together so I could pay our 2007 taxes with a delay. Our accountant had gotten an extension for me, and I just had so many things to do. Get the name changed from Daniel's name to my name on all of our accounts, from telephone and cable to gas and electricity, and the bank accounts, and everything. These sorts of things are a paperwork nightmare. At first I just said no to Olga. I didn't think I could do it. But, you know Olga; she's very persistent.

She waited another two, three months, and she called back and said, "Marianne, are you sure you can't teach a course, during the winter quarter? You are going to be feeling much differently then." She said it would be good for the department, and "I think it would be good for you, too". So here I am, teaching a class. This time around, I'm teaching discourse-based approaches to language teaching, which makes use of a text I co-authored with another UCLA Ph.D. in applied linguistics, Elite Olshtain, who has been one of the major figures in Israel, and internationally, in English language teaching. She's very well known; Elite and I were students together when I did my M.A. here at UCLA, she was one year ahead of me. This book was something that we did much later together, saying "Let's do a book together. Our ideas are so similar on so many topics. Let's try to write something together", so we did.

**Bahiyih:** *This 'discourse-based approaches to language teaching' course sounds very interesting. Are you going to offer it again in the near future?*

**Marianne:** Well, not this exact course. They want me to do something else next winter. Winter quarter is good because in the Spring and in the Fall, I like to go to France for about a month each time to visit my mother-in-law, and to be sure everything's okay. Right now, I call her on the phone twice a week, but I like to go back there for a while, to check up on our apartment, and also to spend a lot of time with my mother-in-law and see if I can help her with certain things that she's having a problem with, and drive her around to places she has a bit of difficulty getting to.

So that's basically what I've been doing. I've brought you up to the present time where I'm back here teaching at UCLA and I expect to teach again next Winter quarter. I'll do a course where I want people to do some sort of discourse analysis with data. It will be my seminar in contextual analysis that I, over the years, developed as a way of analyzing grammar or even lexicon from a discourse perspective. If people want to work with a lexical item like a discourse marker or something like that, that's perfectly okay. And people can work with any kind of data they want to: conversation, written academic discourse in a particular discipline, etc. Whatever is useful and interesting to them in terms of what they want to research. It will involve writing a research project. In the course I'm teaching now, people are just doing three small projects as we go along, rather than one single large research project. But the class next winter will be a seminar, basically, dealing with analysis of lexico-grammar from a discourse perspective.

**Bahiyyih:** *I believe this seminar will be very popular as well, as everyone here is somewhat involved with discourse analysis.*

**Marianne:** I know. And my approach is a little bit different because if people get data and have learned conversation analysis, that's usually from a particular perspective, where they're looking at the turn taking system, or looking at openings, closings, topic negotiation and management, and things like that. Whereas I like to see what's happening to the grammar and the lexicon while all these things are going on. That's what I would demand that people look at in the class with me. So it's from another perspective.

**Bahiyyih:** *I see. Now, can you tell us a little bit about your latest textbook series, 'Grammar Connection'?*

**Marianne:** Yeah. It's five volumes. It took a long time. This was done over the course of about four years, and it started the last time the TESOL conference was in Long Beach, which was May 2004. That's when the project was born. Maggie Sokolik, who's a Ph.D. in applied linguistics, surprise, surprise, another one of our graduates. She and I got together with the ESL people from Heinle and talked about doing a grammar series that would really be different from the usual ones; that's when it started.

It's not just for general English because there are good series like Diane Larsen-Freeman's *Grammar Dimensions* for general English, and there are more traditional grammar books and textbooks, like Azar's books, that are very widely used. But we wanted to make one series that would be preparation for academic work, and start at a very low level, a beginner level, and work up to a very advanced level, and go through all the structures, but do it through content, using content that became increasingly more academic and authentic as the series evolved.

**Bahiyyih:** *I do agree that the field of ES/FL really needed a series that could take learners to higher proficiency levels – most of the textbooks today go from beginning to high intermediate...*

**Marianne:** Yes. And that's what we did, so that if students were to successfully complete all five books, they would be able to use the grammar. Also, it's not just grammar, it's multi-skills. There's work on listening, speaking, vocabulary development, reading, writing in every lesson. And there are 30 lessons per book. They're really intended to be something that a teacher could do in an hour, an hour and a half. So 30 lessons in each volume, going from the very simple beginning level like third person singular, simple past, statements and negatives and questions, and right on up to complex passives and modifying participles, and work on logical connectors in written academic discourse, and so on.

**Bahiyyih:** *Were you thinking of a specific audience when you created the series, like 'learners planning to go to college in the United States'? Heinle's website seems to suggest it is useful for students planning to enroll in college-level courses, adults planning to return to college, or high school students in preparation for college. Was that what you had in mind?*

**Marianne:** It's really ESL. First and foremost, we thought that a lot of people would use this series in the States; they could use it in intensive English programs, in community colleges, in high schools, where they have an academically oriented ESL program. If they've got a large ESL population, but they're trying to prepare their students for academic work (make them applicants for the university level and so on), then these kinds of materials would be useful because they are really directed towards doing academic work, and participating in some sort of academic discourse community. That's what we're after. And we think that in certain settings overseas, where a program is preparing students to come and study in the U.S. at a university, the program would find these materials very useful, as well.

**Bahiyyih:** *So it sounds like it does cover the four skills. Any particular reasons why you decided to call the series 'Grammar Connection'? Because the title might be a bit misleading, then...*

**Marianne:** Yeah. I don't know. The publisher wanted to highlight 'grammar' in the title. They wanted a grammar series, as it says. Its subtitle is *Structure Through Content*. Here's the lowest level. There are more pictures, and things. But it really is basic. This book is for real beginners, but it builds up and it actually gives little texts and dialogues. Whenever there's a dialogue, there's a CD that goes along with the book. They can listen to the dialogue, and do a variety of exercises. They are supposed to be eventually writing something, like little snippets, doing an email message, or something.

As I say, this is very basic, but it's getting them in there so that they can readily and easily participate in classes where English is the medium of instruction. If you want to contrast book one with book five, with advanced level, have a look at that. It's much more sophisticated. Only authentic texts are used.

**Bahiyyih:** *All these activities you have shown me do seem to be a lot more contextualized than the grammar activities found in other typical grammar textbooks.*

**Marianne:** Yeah. It's because they are based on content. Here they give the content vocabulary. You're going to need these items. If you don't know them, look them up and learn them because you're going to need them in the lesson. And then there's always a grammar point and a content topic.

**Bahiyyih:** *Like the present perfect here, for example.*

**Marianne:** Yeah. It gives examples and explanations, and everything; the reading text is always also recorded so they can listen to it.

**Bahiyyih:** *So a teacher could also use the recordings to provide listening practice before using the text for a reading activity, besides using them together.*

**Marianne:** Yeah, exactly. Then we have all sorts of different ways of approaching the grammar. Here showing a part of a resumé, and then they have to write based on that. Here is an exercise where they read each conversation and underline the verbs that show time changes. We're making them do sophisticated things, here.

**Bahiyyih:** *I see, so learners can gradually build their understanding and mastery of the grammar point. What about this activity here? Is it for conversation practice?*

**Marianne:** Yeah. For pair work or group work. You know, give people things that they are supposed to talk about. Here's another – here is writing that always involves more than just one sentence. Even if it's short texts. And then by the time they get to the end here, there are five errors in the email message below. The first error has been corrected. Find and correct the remaining four. We want to build on their grammar editing skills. A little bit more pair work and small group work, and then grammar and vocabulary, putting it together. They have to write an essay on topic one or topic two. They get a choice. So for each lesson, that would be like the homework assignment. Students write an essay using everything that they've learned in the lesson.

**Bahiyyih:** *So learners can use the new vocabulary and the new grammar point!*

**Marianne:** Yeah. That's what we were trying to do, to make it integrated.

**Bahiyyih:** *And are there suggested projects for them to do?*

**Marianne:** Yes. We give them tasks, and lots of different topics are covered. Here's history, Jamestown. This other lesson is about the Gullah. That's kind of anthropological – this special group of African Americans living on the islands off the east coast, off of South Carolina, that still speak a very special dialect that's heavily influenced by African languages because the Gullah were kind of isolated. Not everybody knows about that particular group in the U.S. There are lessons on science topics, too.

**Bahiyyih:** *I would assume these are all academic topics, right?*

**Marianne:** They're all academic topics and all the texts are authentic. By the time you get to this stage, they should be.

**Bahiyyih:** *And which sources did you use for the authentic readings?*

**Marianne:** It was really up to the authors. This book's author was Cathleen Cake. What Maggie and I did was we helped with the selection of the authors, along with the publisher, and we picked the grammar points to be covered, what should be covered in the 30 lessons in each book. And the authors had some flexibility, as long as they got that material covered. This way one volume would flow into the next, and there would always be a certain amount of review, and then they would go ahead with new aspects of grammar. By the time students get through book five, hopefully they've been exposed to all the grammar they're going to need for academic purposes, and they will have both receptive and productive skills, well developed. They will be ready to take up academic work. I never had the time to do a project like this series while I was a regular faculty member at UCLA, but it was something that was always on my mind.

**Bahiyyih:** *Developing a project like this series is very time consuming, isn't it?*

**Marianne:** It is, very much so. But I wanted to help shape a kind of series for language learning that I think is missing. I'm not embarrassed to say that it has a grammatical syllabus because that's what ensures that all the grammar eventually gets covered from book one through book five. And for advanced students, maybe it's enough for them to do books four and five, that's the high intermediate and the advanced levels. Maybe that's all they need, and that would help them, that would be enough for them.

**Bahiyyih:** *Many EFL learners study English in their own countries so one day they*

*can go to a good university in the US; I believe this book would serve them well. And as for ESL learners within the United States, most of them are taking classes because they want to go to college, so they need good materials to develop their English proficiency for that purpose.*

**Marianne:** Yeah. I'm hoping it will fill a niche in the publishing world, to help these learners by the material really being content-based and discourse-based, I'm getting away from the old one line grammar exercises. There are a few of them just as kind of warm-up or transition, but the objective is always to do something more, to do something larger. To process discourse, to produce discourse. Both in terms of the discussion-type tasks that the students have to do in their pair work and group work, and then the essays, and the writing assignments that they get. They have to produce that as a part of each lesson. If you don't take that extra step, then grammar just remains declarative knowledge. It doesn't really get fully internalized, and made automatic so that people can really use it. And as I said, we give attention to error correction and editing, and so on; that starts very early. There are even some exercises like that in book one that get them to look at and edit a text. They look at a text like an email message, or a little note, a personal note or letter that someone's written to somebody, and they correct it. This is not just correction at the sentence level.

**Bahiyyih:** *And have you been working on any projects in the field of Linguistics and TESL?*

**Marianne:** The other big project that I have spent quite a bit of time on the last two years, and it's almost coming to an end now, is working on the second edition of *Teaching Pronunciation* with Donna Brinton and Janet Goodwin. We're just in the very final throes of that, and once the publisher puts everything together, we have to proofread the manuscript.

**Bahiyyih:** *Sounds like a lot of work!*

**Marianne:** Yeah, that is a lot. But we'll proofread the manuscript, and then the final changes will be made, and it will go to press. So it might be ready by late 2009 or early 2010. They just wanted it to be updated, revised and refreshed. And we got some good suggestions from colleagues who use it as a textbook as to what we should change. We've tried to follow all of the good suggestions. I can't say we followed every suggestion, but we really tried to follow what we felt were the good and productive suggestions that we got from people. And then again, this text is unique – there were either books on describing the phonetic system of the language, or there were little books on pronunciation pedagogy. And here at UCLA, we had one course where we had to do both.

**Bahiyih:** *Like the class that Janet Goodwin currently teaches here at UCLA?*

**Marianne:** Yeah, exactly. Teach the North American English sound system and teach people how to teach pronunciation at the same time; these things had to be integrated. And no one had ever tried to do that in one book because I used to teach that course in the past, and Donna Brinton used to teach it in the past. I think now it's just Janet who's teaching it here. But we used to have more people teaching it. That was one of the first courses I had to teach after I was hired. And I'd put packets of materials together, you know –

**Bahiyih:** *Was it because there were no published materials you could use?*

**Marianne:** Yeah. In fact, all of my major books have been like that, really. Only two of my books – like the one I did with Elite, I wasn't thinking specifically of a course, but I thought, that it could be used in an advanced methods class for getting people to rethink how to do everything from a discourse perspective. After they're familiar with the language areas and the skills, and everything. Let's take an overview again and think about doing all of this from the perspective of discourse. So I had it in mind as maybe a specialized advanced methods course, which is what I'm teaching this quarter.

But all my major books, like the methods book, AKA the apple book, and the grammar book that I did with Diane Larsen-Freeman, they came out of a need for the classes that I was teaching here at UCLA. There just was nothing really good on the market. It was a matter of understanding what my students needed and meeting their needs.

**Bahiyih:** *ESL teachers aren't usually trained to teach pronunciation, so what happens is that even if a textbook offers pronunciation practice, it's usually skipped because teachers don't know how to handle it. Right?*

**Marianne:** Right. They don't know how to handle it. They don't understand it. Even if it's – as you say, even if it's in the textbook, that some conscientious textbook writers put it in there when they teach morphological endings, or when they teach the intonation contours with the questions, and things like that. But as you say, the teacher who's had no training, will just tend to ignore that sort of thing, which is a pity, it really is. Because learners do need to get that.

**Bahiyih:** *Yeah... What have you missed and what have you 'not' missed about teaching at UCLA?*

**Marianne:** Well, I missed classroom teaching and working with students, like working with students on theses and dissertations. I always loved that part of my job. The teaching and the working with students. I have not missed meetings, hav-

ing to serve on lots and lots of committees to do all kinds of other work, whether it's academic senate here at UCLA, or the system-wide academic senate meetings where I would have to represent UCLA with all of the academic senates coming together. This was always a lot of extra work. It was very time consuming, and not my favorite part of things. Coming back to teach a class is nice. It's enjoyable. I was worried about my effectiveness because I'd been away from teaching for some time, but we'll see.

**Bahiyih:** *Which do you like best? Producing materials, or working in the classroom, teaching?*

**Marianne:** Oh, it's hard to say. It goes hand in hand, because the kinds of materials I've produced, they've always seemed to be drafts of things that I wanted to try out in the classroom. I always did try to continue to do some EFL teaching, so that every second or third year, I'd say well, give me a pronunciation class to teach to non-native speakers. Not just doing the teacher training. But let me work with the students again in pronunciation, or maybe teach 33C. I haven't done that for a long, long time. Let me do that again. So that was always nice.

I have one project sitting on the guest bed at home, and that's doing an error analysis of compositions written by students in Armenia at the university there – at the American University. They have to use English as a medium of instruction there. And the biggest problem for them was writing. I'm sure some of them had problems with listening too, but I didn't have a chance to assess that real closely, like giving people some dictation and some other tasks where I would have found out how good or bad their listening skills were.

But I did have access to compositions that had been given as part of a placement exam there. So I took 15 or 20 of the lowest placing students, and I did an error analysis of their compositions that proved very useful for modifying and enhancing the language program, the intensive English program that they had there for preparing these students at the university. What I had also wanted to do, and then my husband's illness and death intervened, was to look at the so-called best writers, the ones who got the highest scores on their placement exam, and to do an error analysis of these students, and compare the results with those of the real low students.

I left the ones in the middle out. I said, mm-mmm, you know, I can't do everything. So I just sampled from the bottom of the pile and the top of the pile, from the best and the worst. I thought I'd get a good snapshot of what their language problems are, and that includes mechanics, punctuation and spelling, and paragraphing, and so on. Not just the grammar and vocabulary. I look at all the problems that they're having.

**Bahiyih:** *Did you find any transfer problems?*

**Marianne:** Yeah, but my only difficulty was – see, these students were pretty much bi-lingual in Russian and Armenian, and since I know neither Russian nor Armenian – French and German are my foreign languages – when I identified a problem, some of the Armenian teachers could tell me, “Oh, that’s transfer from Armenian,” or “That’s transfer from Russian.” So there were – there were a lot of transfer errors in what the students produced.

**Bahiyih:** *Do you think it would be more common to find transfer errors in lower levels?*

**Marianne:** Yeah, but there could be some transfer even at the higher level, so if I get my analysis done, and I write the paper for that, I want to show it to the Armenian teachers, and have them tell me what the transfer errors are. I think, from what they told me, Armenian just has tense, that it doesn’t have a tense-aspect system, like English. So that makes for some problems there. Except Russian’s got aspect, and in Russian, aspect is very prominent. So in a way, it should prepare them for learning the English system because if they’ve got the tense from Armenian, and then the aspect from Russian – they can handle both in English.

**Bahiyih:** *What do you think has changed in the fields of applied linguistics and functional linguistics in the past six years?*

**Marianne:** I don’t think that much has changed. Maybe I’m missing something, but I see the same trends, the same topics that people are talking about – maybe discourse has become even more important overall in the field than when I left. There may be a better recognition of the need to deal with language at the discourse level, if we’re going to make some progress with teaching language in such a way that learners get something they can really use for purposes of communication, or academic work, or for business purposes, or whatever. So it’s not just declarative knowledge stored somewhere in their brains.

I think maybe this perspective that I have had for years and years has become strengthened across the board. But I still see people interested in the same sorts of things here: conversation analysis, corpus analysis, socio-cultural analysis, sort of a Vygotskian approach, and people who are very interested in assessment, in the teaching of reading, or the teaching of composition from a discourse perspective. So I see a lot of the very same concerns.

**Bahiyih:** *What books have most influenced your teaching and research?*

**Marianne:** It’s almost more authors than books, okay? When I first started out I did my work in the linguistics department, and I did a syntactic analysis of the comparative construction and related constructions in English. That was my dissertation. But early on, I was very influenced by someone who did not teach here

at UCLA. Though I did have a teacher here at UCLA who influenced me greatly, Sandra Thompson, the functional linguist who's now at UC-Santa Barbara. She was a co-chair of my doctoral dissertation, and was a great influence on my work and on getting me into a more functional mind set on language.

I also audited a course that she co-taught with Talmy Givon, who's also a functional linguist, and has produced books on functional approaches, and so on. So even as I was finishing my degree and doing post *Aspects*, Chomskyan syntax for my dissertation, I was already thinking a lot about some things that I'd been learning from Thompson and Givon. And someone else who influenced me, as I came over here to English and started teaching in the TESL certificate and M.A. program, which were housed in the English department at the time, was Dwight Bolinger, a linguist at Stanford University. He was a brilliant linguist; he read and understood Chomsky, but always kept a little bit apart, and had a very semantically based approach to things.

I just read a lot of his books and articles. I liked his work. So from the point of view of linguistics and early influence of someone who was not here at UCLA, it was Dwight Bolinger at Stanford. Another source that really influenced me at the time was Charles Fillmore's monograph *The Case for Case*. And then for language pedagogy, I always loved the work by Earl Stevick, and he, of course, wasn't on the faculty here. I met him and talked to him at conferences. But I already had read three of his books and a lot of his articles before I met him for the first time. I just found his work to be so helpful and insightful, for all the pedagogical work I did.

I had very good pedagogical mentors here at UCLA, too. Clifford Prator, Lois McIntosh, Donald Bowen. These people were very good on the ESL pedagogical side of things, and were excellent mentors. However, if I talk about someone outside of my immediate circle here at UCLA, apart from people I took classes with and worked with, and was directly influenced by, it has to be Earl Stevick for pedagogy, and Dwight Bolinger for his approach to language analysis. And then, while getting interested in functional grammar, I started reading Halliday and Hasan. Getting the British perspective, from their systemic functional grammar.

I did a little reading in Prague school linguistics, too, but it's so heavily topic-comment and theme and rheme oriented that it works better with Slavic languages than it does with English. I did more reading of Halliday and Hasan, and their work. Also the work of other people working within the framework of systemic functional grammar. But I just used this as a strong influence, and for ideas. I sometimes used their textbooks as class materials, as class readers, and had my students read chapters that could influence them for the work and the research they were doing. But again, I never adopted it completely because it struck me as being a lot less rigorous than American linguistics. There was just something kind of fuzzy about it.

But I liked a lot of the insights and the direction, so I read a lot and I used their work a lot, and had my students get familiar with their work too. But then I want any analysis I do to be very data-based. I don't want to generate the data up

here in my head, like they do in theoretical linguistics. That was always something that bothered me. I have a very practical, pragmatic type of logic that I work with, I think any one individual's native speaker intuition has limitations. You know?

You collectively have to see what everybody's doing with a particular construction, or an important word, or something like that. And then, be very descriptive, become very analytic and descriptive based on a rich data set. Hopefully a very rich data set that you have to draw on. And that's my view of how language analysis ought to proceed.

**Bahiyih:** *And today there are several corpora sources we can use, which helps this type of language analysis.*

**Marianne:** Yeah, it helps. Except there are still things that it's very hard to call up mechanically in a corpus, where either the corpus has to be very well tagged, or you have to go in and find certain items, or certain constructions that you want to look at.

**Bahiyih:** *Right, so you either narrow down your search or it can't be done.*

**Marianne:** Yeah. So there are still interesting things from the point of view of qualitative research, where you just have to go in and find your data with your eye and your hand, and say yeah, this is it. This is the kind of thing I'm looking for, and that I want to analyze. And I think that's what I found to be very appealing about conversation analysis, you know, that they'll gather the data and it will be richly transcribed, and then they'll go over it very carefully, every little detail will be looked at. They don't just go to the computer to call up the data that they're going to look at.

**Bahiyih:** *Which leads to the inclusion of gaze and gestures in the transcription. Aren't they as important as speech?*

**Marianne:** In conversation, that's very important. I'm not an expert in that, and I don't look at that. I haven't found a connection with grammar or use of lexical items for these sorts of things. It's very important when you're looking at conversational interaction. I agree. The whole work with gaze and body movements and gestures, and everything. It's very important to look at that, as well. The complete communicative context. As I say, I come at it from the lexico-grammar perspective, where generally it would be really good to hear a recording to get the intonation or the stress on something, but many times, just having the visual transcripts available and looking at the language forms, going through the transcripts will be adequate for my purposes, for what I'm looking for and getting at, and using. But it's interesting. It's been an interesting collaboration. I've always had fantastically interesting discussions with John Schumann about language and the brain, and

grammar. He's got his opinions about grammar, too, and with Chuck and Candy Goodwin, about conversation, and the role of grammar in conversation.

**Bahiyih:** *Marianne, thank you so much for doing this interview with IAL. It's been an unforgettable experience for me.*

**Marianne:** My pleasure.

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