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**The Politics of Paradigms: Questioning Current Practices and Assumptions in
Collegiate FL Learning**

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I. Introduction

Underlying Assumptions:

- the long-term, non-linear, socially embedded nature of L2 acquisition
- collegiate FL learning as an integral part of the humanities curriculum

Naturalized (Fairclough, 1989) practices in collegiate FL education & research:

- Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
- Learner-centeredness
- Study abroad
- Bridge course
- Input and interaction

II. CLT

- 1) Dominant paradigm for past 25 years
 - a. in contrast with traditional form-driven instruction
 - b. emphasis on spoken language use
 - c. consistent with wishes of undergraduate learners (e.g., Harlow & Muyskens, 1994)
- 2) Various permutations
 - a. Naturalistic orientation (e.g., Krashen, 1985)
 - b. Proficiency orientation (*ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*, 1986)
 - c. Meaning-form connection (VanPatten, 1996)
- 3) Provenance and original purpose of CLT
 - a. address functional language needs of growing adult immigrant population in Europe (Trim, 1980)
 - b. language learning and teaching expertise outside of formal, university-level education (e.g., the British Council, the European Community, the Goethe Institute)
- 4) Consequences of CLT's predominance
 - a. limited emphasis on textuality (Kramsch, 1995)
 - b. not supportive of attaining advanced-level abilities
- 5) Alternatives
 - a. literacy orientation (e.g., Byrnes, 2000, 2002b; Kern, 2000, 2002)
 - i. textuality

- ii. emphasis at every level on meaning-form relationships that mark, different genres and discourses, and various kinds of literacies and literatures and are at the heart of inquiry and interpretation, creativity, and critical engagement (Byrnes, 2000)
- iii. potential for a coherent curricular trajectory

III. Learner-centeredness

1) Characteristics

- a. student-centered focus that encourages individualistic creative expression
- b. pair work, group work, and student portfolios
- c. individualistic understanding of language and language use

2) Alternative approach to learner-centeredness

- a. Genre = oral or written rhetorical action that has become typified within a speech community and therefore adheres to general cultural expectations
 - i. genre-based pedagogy (Christie, 1999; Johns, 1995)
 - 1. creative expression *after* understanding the meaning-form relationships of genres within their speech community
 - 2. Bakhtin: “to use a genre freely and creatively is not the same as to create a genre from the beginning: genres must be fully mastered in order to be manipulated freely” (1986, p. 80).
 - ii. genre as a curricular sequencing principle (Byrnes, 2002a)
 - 1. primary vs. secondary discourses (Gee, 1998)
 - iii. genre-based tasks
 - 1. negotiation and appropriation of the lexicogrammatical and rhetorical features of a particular genre for one’s own use

IV. Study Abroad

1) Assumptions

- a. most effective way to advance one’s language abilities
- b. capstone of undergraduate FL learning

2) Consequences

- a. privileges implicit naturalistic learning
- b. overlooks potential of explicit instruction
- c. precludes attainment of advanced-level abilities

V. Bridge Course

1) Impetus

- a. departmental bifurcation
 - i. language vs. content
 - ii. spoken vs. written language
 - iii. primary vs. secondary discourses

- b. limited time for collegiate FL learning
- 2) Assumptions
 - a. one-semester preparation is sufficient
 - b. curricular dysfunction is acceptable
- 3) Alternatives
 - a. comprehensive curricular planning that spans all four years of undergraduate study
 - i. integration of language and content
 - ii. coherently sequenced courses
 - iii. consistent pedagogy
 - iv. attention to FL study as a legitimate intellectual pursuit
 - v. systematic attention to language acquisition at all levels
 - vi. curriculum-dependent materials

VI. Input and Interaction in SLA Research

- 1) Operationalization
 - a. despite calls for conducting studies within coherent curricular frameworks (Doughty & Williams, 1998), research consists of short-term, cross-sectional studies
 - b. participants viewed as individuals operating independently of any context or situation
 - c. focus on sentence-level comprehension and production
 - d. research conducted primarily with ESL learners
- 2) Options
 - a. maintain the current dichotomous curricular existence and rely on SLA research conducted in different contexts to inform pedagogical and curricular practices, OR
 - b. confront the pan-departmental challenge of revising the undergraduate curriculum so that it supports the long-term development of FL learners, provides a new locus for newly conceived SLA research, and, most important, fosters the intellectual learning goals of the department.

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