Innovation an EASLI Tradition

IU’s East Asian Summer Language Institute is creating new curricula and giving Middlebury a run for the money

Margot Lenhart, associate director of Indiana University’s East Asian Summer Language Institute, is a busy woman. For nine of the ten years that EASLI has been in business, Lenhart has worked to build the national and international prominence of the EASLI program.

By any measure, she has succeeded. Enrollments are up. Evaluations are good. The program attracts talented teachers from around the globe. And, other schools are scrambling to emulate EASLI’s success.

Last year, EASLI’s enrollment topped 130 students, and Lenhart is expecting as many as 150 students to sign up this summer.

The rising enrollments are due, in large part, to EASLI’s growing reputation. Student evaluations of EASLI’s nine-week intensive language program (the equivalent of two semesters of intensive language training) have always been positive.

“Although the program was very stressful and demanding, I believe it was the best way to study Chinese outside China. [Since completing the program] I have had to work with a visiting scholar from Tianjin, and I noticed that my speaking skills have improved greatly,” wrote Cynthia Duncan.

As the reputation of EASLI spreads, the school is beginning to attract students from abroad. “We’ve had students from Hong Kong, Thailand, and Sweden, even some returnees from Taiwan,” said Lenhart.

In addition to attracting numerous students, each year EASLI draws 30 of the top Chinese, Japanese, and Korean

continued on next page

Business Chinese Course Targets Growing Asia-Pacific Markets

The East Asian Summer Language Institute has designed a ten-credit course for students who have taken at least two years of Chinese or who have equivalent proficiency to further develop their facility in speaking, listening, reading, and writing modern Chinese in business related contexts. The course is also structured to increase students’ understanding of the cultural concepts or customs that have influenced Chinese business practices and behavior.

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to do the following:

♦ Assess business situations as described in a given article, summarize the key information and present it in groups or in public;

♦ Identify problems and provide solutions as well as rationales for any business case, as presented;

♦ Read and write business correspondence or brief reports in Chinese and understand the logic of presentation; and,

♦ Become aware of the values/concepts which underlie “Chinese business culture.”

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From left to right: Koichi Miura (U. of Oklahoma), Gregory Kasza (Chair, EALC, IUB), Margot Lenhart (Associate Director, EASLI), Patrick O’Meara (Dean, OIP), Yasuko Ito Watt (former director, EASLI), Ted Yao (U. of Hawaii), and Hyo Sang Lee (Director, 1996 EASLI). Photo courtesy of EASLI.
instructors in the world. According to Lenhart, EASLI strongly recruits established language teachers who are developing new instructional materials.

Due in part to EASLI sponsorship, instructors such as Ted Yao (University of Hawaii) have been able to create a new generation of teaching materials that are widely used at other universities. Yao’s work, Integrative Chinese, for instance, is now being field tested at Washington University, Notre Dame, Harvard, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

EASLI’s emphasis on innovation has given it a comparative advantage over intensive language programs run by schools such as Middlebury which were using 30- and 40-year-old texts in some cases. “Now, the heads of language programs at Middlebury are all former EASLI heads,” said Lenhart.

To maintain its leading role, EASLI has held mid-session language symposia on language teaching every year since 1986. Last year’s symposium focused on “What Makes a Good Language Teacher?” Distinguished panelists included Richard Chi, (U. of Utah, Director of Middlebury Chinese School), Mutsuko Endo Hudson (Michigan State U.), Ruth Kanagy (U. of Oregon), and Chin Wu Kim (U. of Illinois).

EASLI’s commitment to good teaching impresses students. The response of first-level Chinese student Gisela Westwater is typical, “I remain highly impressed with the courses I took and the overall EASLI program. The teaching staff was excellent. Not enough can be said about the teachers of Chinese I.”

During the nine-week summer session, EASLI staffers somehow manage to find time to host a workshop for high-school teachers interested in Asia. For example, this past summer, EASLI hosted 11 high-school teachers who were preparing for a ten-day study trip to Tokyo and the town of Towa-Cho in Japan.

The workshop was part of a larger project on “Enhancing Japanese Language Education in Secondary Schools in Indiana,” sponsored by a $187,000 grant from the Critical Language and Area Studies Program of the US Department of Education. Yasuko Ito Watt (1994 and 1995 director of EASLI and faculty member of EALC) and Akiko Kakutani (professor of Japanese at Earlham College) were co-directors of the project. The 1996 director is Hyo Sang Lee (EASC)

The deadline for applications to the 1996 EASLI program is March 20, 1996.

K-12 Teachers’ Workshop Draws Crowd

Twenty-eight teachers of Korean, Japanese, and Chinese met on the IU Bloomington campus on December 2, 1995 for the first regional workshop held specifically for K-12 teachers of those languages. The one-day workshop, sponsored by the East Asian Studies Center, provided opportunities for the teachers to meet each other, share teaching ideas, and discuss issues related to the theme of the workshop, “What Are Our Goals.”

James Bray, a teacher of Chinese from Noblesville High School, and Kathleen Streit, a teacher of Japanese from Franklin Community High School, were the invited speakers for the workshop. Their talks were followed by an exchange of observations on recent events and changes in China, Korea, and Japan by a panel of teachers who had recently visited those countries. The workshop ended with teaching demonstrations and an introduction to the EASC homepage on the World Wide Web.

Response to the workshop, judging from evaluations and informal comments, was enthusiastic and positive. EASC plans to hold more such workshops in the future and will hold a combined workshop for K-12 teachers and college and university instructors in March.

For more information on upcoming workshops, contact Colleen Berry, the Language Pedagogy Project Coordinator at the EASC; phone: (812) 855-3765; e-mail: jcberry@indiana.edu.