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In memoriam: Craig Chaudron

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In memoriam

It was with great sadness that the Editors of *Second Language Research* learned of the death of Craig Chaudron, whose work has had a major impact on the field. We publish below an appreciation of his life and work by Gabriele Kasper.

Craig Chaudron, 1946–2006

In the early morning of August 21, 2006, Craig Chaudron, professor and graduate chair in the Department of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawai'i, died of a sudden heart failure. Only a few days before, he had participated in the departmental orientation for new graduate students. He was his usual relaxed and confident self entirely on that occasion, reassuring the new arrivals that they had come to the right place and looking forward to teaching his newly designed graduate course on L2 acquisition by young learners.

Craig Chaudron was born and grew up in St. Louis, Missouri. At the age of twelve he traveled the world with his parents, older brother and their pet monkeys, an experience that fuelled his curiosity about different places and languages. He studied French and German at the Université de Strasbourg and earned his bachelor degree in philosophy and French at Wabash College (1968). While working in a kindergarten and EFL adult education in Odense, Denmark (1971–1975), he acquired Danish with a Funen accent. Back in North America, Craig went to Toronto-OISE for graduate studies in educational theory, obtaining an MEd (1976) and a PhD with a specialization in educational linguistics (1982). After briefly teaching at Boston University and UCLA, Craig came to the Department of English as a Second Language (now Department of Second Language Studies) at the University of Hawai'i as an assistant professor in 1983 and had been a full professor in the department since 1994.

Craig Chaudron's scholarship covered a wide scope, and yet the major topics that continued to fascinate him throughout his career go back to his dissertation (*The language of instruction in ESL classes:*

Variations in topic reinstatement and their effect on comprehension). The study examined how different types and degrees of simplification facilitated ESL students' lecture comprehension. It was based on a meticulous experimental design and exemplified the type of classroom-oriented research conducted under laboratory conditions that Craig regarded as a necessary complement to studies in classroom settings. The dissertation foreshadowed the research domains in which Craig made his main contributions: classroom research, psycholinguistics of second language use and learning, especially of listening comprehension, and research methods. His book *Second Language Classrooms: Research on Teaching and Learning* (Cambridge University Press, 1988) won him the Modern Language Association Mildenerger Prize in 1990 and international recognition as a leading scholar in classroom research. After twenty years the book remains a seminal text, and Craig's more recent journal articles (for instance, his historical review of studies on classroom research published in *The Modern Language Journal* over an 85 year period, MLJ, 2001) attest to his continued leadership in the domain. Craig's work on listening comprehension distinguishes itself favorably from much of the applied linguistic literature in this area through its firm grounding in psycholinguistic theory and research. Published in major journals and edited volumes, his work substantially raised the bar for theoretical and empirical sophistication in the study of listening. It was driven by his belief that instructional practices and innovation in second language education must be derived from rigorous data-based studies, a stance that propelled his interest and substantial contributions to the methodology of second language research, such as his chapter on data collection in Doughty and Long's *Handbook of Second Language Acquisition* (2003). He published widely on various research methodological topics and was about to complete a comprehensive study on elicited imitation at the time of his death. Probably the first advocate of research syntheses in second language studies, he was the master of the comprehensive review article, as evident in his early influential paper on metalinguistic judgments (*Language Learning*, 1983) and as recently as this year in his chapter in Norris and Ortega's *Synthesizing Research on Language Learning and Teaching* (Benjamins, 2006), in which he offered a critical evaluation of research syntheses on several second language topics.

A confirmed positivist, Craig did not approve the poststructuralist and constructionist turn in much of applied linguistics and second language studies. Clearly he was not happy to see some of our best students and a few colleagues, including me, abandon the received canon of realist research that he so effectively contributed to. And yet disagreements about the nature of good research never compromised the excellent relationships that Craig had with the students in whose graduation projects he participated, and who he would support with detailed constructive commentary regardless of epistemological differences. We could have heated discussions about the merits of ethnomethodology, which to him were questionable at best, and a topic-shift later have a perfectly harmonious conversation about departmental matters. Craig knew how to integrate or compartmentalize the many different facets of his academic life. In Craig Chaudron's practice as a scholar, educator and mentor, his commitment to high standards of research equaled his deep concern for students' development as teachers and researchers. He was generous with his time and encyclopedic knowledge, and known for his extensive and detailed comments on students' work. Craig was a stickler yet also knew when to scale his perfectionism back and see the student as a person first.

Craig united outstanding scholarship with extraordinary memory and organizational skills, and thanks to this combination he was in high demand for leading administrative and service positions. In his twenty-three years as a faculty member in the SLS Department, he was department chair (1990–1994) and graduate chair (1998–2006) and he excelled at those jobs. He was principle investigator of the US National Flagship Language Program for the teaching of advanced L2 Korean at the University of Hawai'i. He served twice on the Executive Board of AAAL, since 2005 as Secretary/Treasurer, and was the North American editor of *Applied Linguistics* (1989–1994).

No one who knew Craig in one or more of his many academic capacities could fail to notice that he thoroughly enjoyed the many different sides of his academic life. He clearly took pleasure in the intellectual challenges and satisfaction of theory and rigorous empirical research, in guiding students on their way to become teachers and researchers, and serving his department, the University of Hawai'i, and the applied linguistic community nation-wide and internationally. How he managed to

accommodate the multiplicity of professional roles, many of which he held concurrently, and perform them all so well and with such obvious enjoyment remains a mystery, and one of the many reasons why he will be an impossible act to follow. On the morning of Craig's death, Mike Long wrote to the SLS faculty "The true significance – layer upon layer of consequences and implications – will take weeks and months to hit." Mike's prediction proves painfully accurate. Craig's vestiges are intertwined with the department's history and presence, from major policy decisions to such details as his handwriting on all incoming students' forms for course selection. He had the smartest collection of aloha shirts that I have ever seen on an academic and he wore them with style and grace. For this, he will be missed, too.

A memorial fund has been established to recognize Craig's enormous contributions to the University of Hawaii, the Department of Second Language Studies, and to the field of applied linguistics. Tax-deductible contributions can be made by sending a check or international money order payable to UH Foundation (with a note indicating the Craig Chaudron Memorial Fund), 2444 Dole Street, Bachman Hall 105, Honolulu, HI 96822. Online donations can also be made via the UH Foundation website: www.uhf.hawaii.edu "make a gift" section, by typing Craig Chaudron Memorial Fund in the "other program/account" option.

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