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Education 530

A free public presentation

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Second Language Acquisition and  
Teaching (SLAT) Program

## Language Ecology in Multilingual Settings: Towards a Theory of Symbolic Competence

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Ecological approaches to language learning and teaching have captured the interest of language educators as both native and non-native speakers find themselves operating in increasingly multilingual and multicultural environments. This paper examines transcripts of exchanges between Yucatec Maya immigrants and Chinese, Vietnamese and Anglo residents in the Mission District in San Francisco. It supplements the analyses afforded by conversation analysis and sociocultural theory with insights from complexity theory (Larsen-Freeman 1997) and interactional sociolinguistics (Rampton 1999, Blommaert 2005). It outlines the components of a language competence in multilingual encounters that has not been sufficiently taken into consideration by language educators and that I have called 'symbolic competence' (Kramersch 2006).

Claire Kramersch is Professor of German and Foreign Language Acquisition at the University of California, Berkeley, and Director of the Berkeley Language Center. Among her many publications is an edited volume, *Language Acquisition and Language Socialization: Ecological Perspectives* (Advances in Applied Linguistics Series, Continuum International, 2003); most recently she completed a manuscript on *The Multilingual Subject*. Her awards include the ACTFL Nelson Brooks Award for the teaching of culture; the MLA Kenneth Miltenberger Prize for Outstanding Research in the teaching of foreign languages and literatures; the Goethe Medal; the MLA Distinguished Service Award; and a UC Berkeley Distinguished Teaching Award. Dr. Kramersch is past President of the American Association of Applied Linguistics, was co-editor of the journal *Applied Linguistics* and serves on CERCLL's National Advisory Board.