



**ITALIAN LANGUAGE RESOURCE LABORATORY
JOHN D. CALANDRA ITALIAN AMERICAN
INSTITUTE**

**“INTERCOMPREHENSION” & MULTILINGUALISM
TEACHING ITALIAN TO ROMANCE LANGUAGES SPEAKERS**

**MARKUS MULLER, CSULB
SEPT. 14, 2013**

CONTEXT

- **Language and literature departments have come under increased pressure**

Efficiency; lack of flexibility at language course level; time to degree; language studies are a “distraction”

- **Publishing**

Cost of textbooks; competition from competitors such as Rosetta Stone and LiveMocha; outdated content; changing student tastes and interest; different learning styles = interactivity; native digital content; largely linear approach

- **Communicative Approach**

Proliferation of individual teaching approaches or interpretations of what CLT is; training and mentoring of instructors; national guidelines



CONTEXT

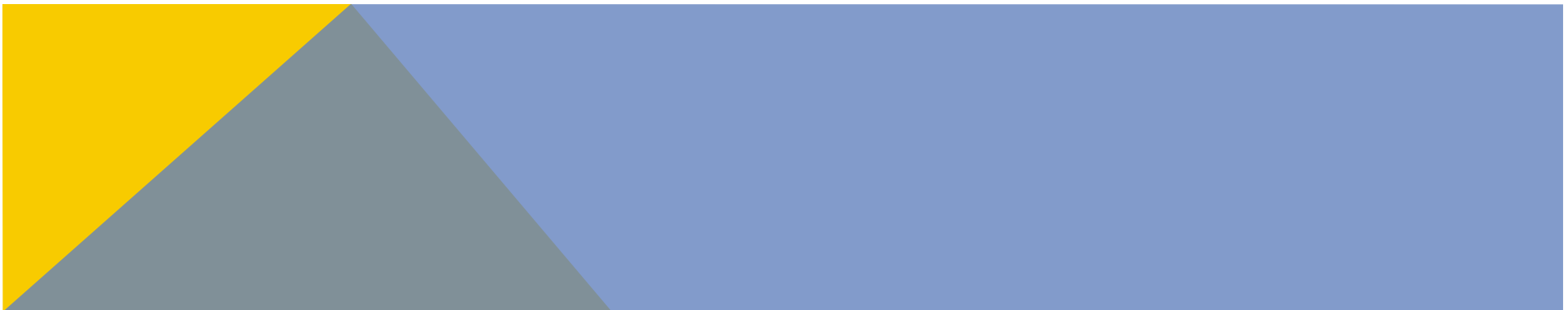
- **Formats / Methods of instruction is changing**

Hybrid, online, MOOCs or BOOCs; flipped classroom

- **Standards**

What are our criteria by which we measure students' progress?

Units, time, competence ?



COURSE SEQUENCE COMPARISON

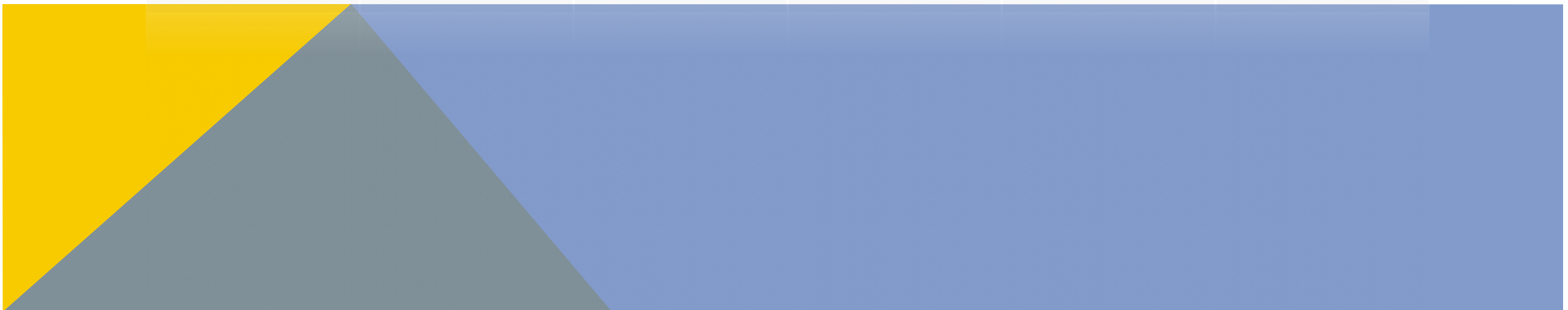
	Trad. Course Sequence 4 cr. per sem	Italian for Spanish Speakers
S 1	Italian 101 A (4)	Italian100 A (4)
S 2	Italian101 B (4)	Italian 100 B (4)
S 3	Italian 201 A (4)	Italian 200 (6)
S 4	Italian 201 B (4)	Upper-Div. Course
T	16 units	14 units

COURSE SEQUENCE COMPARISON

	Trad. Course Sequence 4 cr. per sem	Italian for Spanish Speakers
S 1	Italian 101 A (4)	Italian100 (6)
S 2	Italian101 B (4)	Italian 200 B (6)
S 3	Italian 201 A (4)	Upper-Div. Course
S 4	Italian 201 B (4)	Upper-Div. Course
T	16 units	12 units

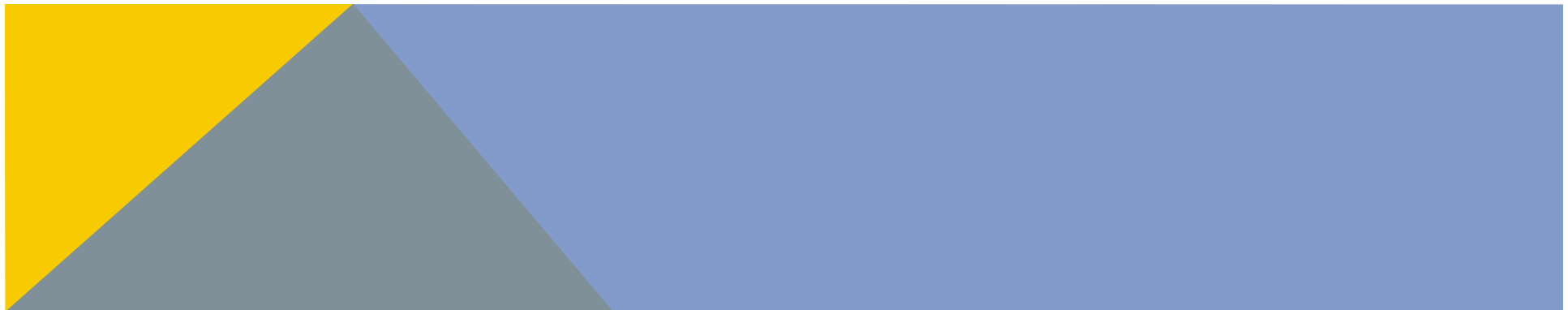
NUMBERS

	Sp 2007	Fall 07		Sp 12	Fall 13
Majors	10	10		30	35
Minors	17	16		15	25
Total	27	26		55	60

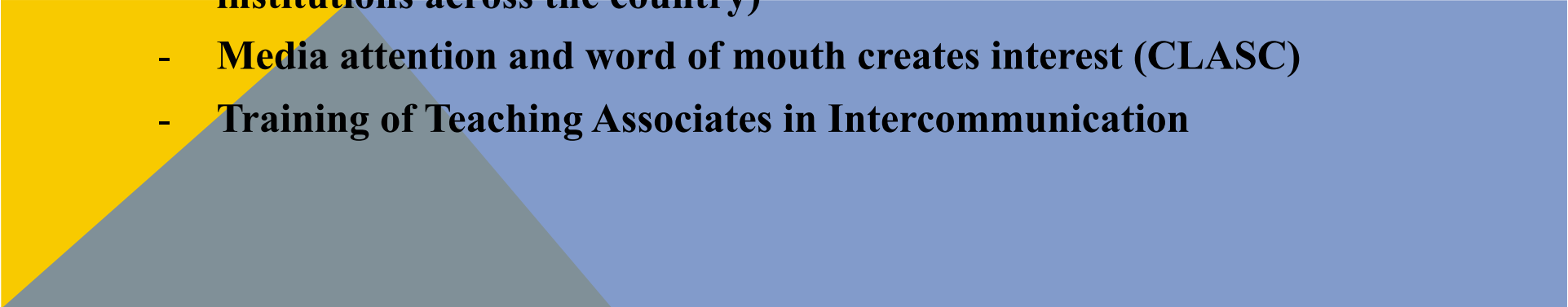


YESTERDAY

- **Started with a single course in one language (French) without proper catalog identification**
- **Recruitment of students**
- **Low enrollment**
- **Integration**
- **Colleagues and criticism of program**
- **Training of instructors**
- **Course sequence**

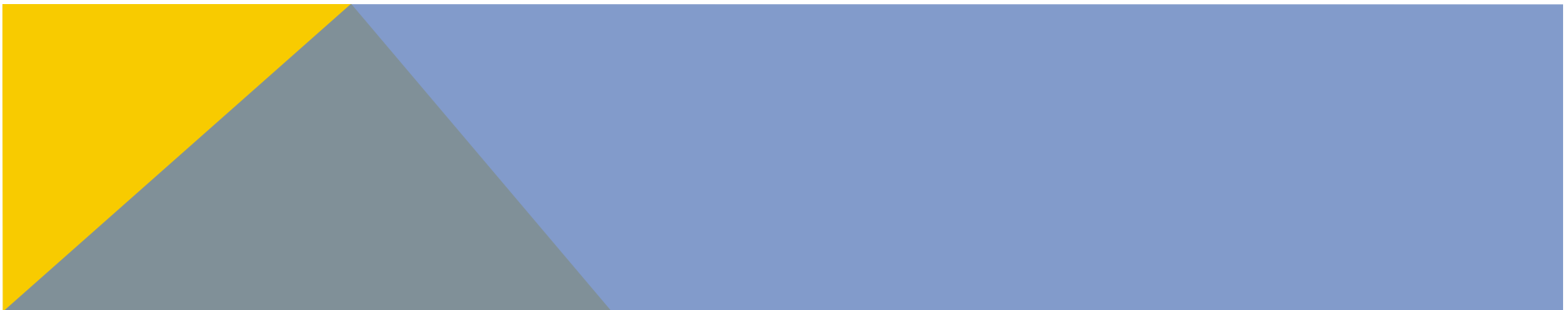


TODAY

- **We offer well-enrolled sections for first- and second-year in both French and Italian**
 - **Enrollment for first-semester course in Italian high enough for 2 sections**
 - **Hybrid courses provide faster access to upper-division courses (and the minor and major)**
 - **Courses went through curricular process and have their own course numbers**
 - **Campus advising knows about project and is supportive**
 - **Dean likes flexibility (hybrid courses now for our regular language classes)**
 - **Outreach to high schools and community colleges (and other institutions across the country)**
 - **Media attention and word of mouth creates interest (CLASC)**
 - **Training of Teaching Associates in Intercommunication**
- 

BENEFITS

- **Learning community (students travel together through sequence)**
- **Psychological impact (Spanish as language and culture is validated and an asset rather than a liability)**
- **Success**
- **More interaction among TAs (who learn another language) fosters very healthy work environment**
- **Project caters to upward-oriented and motivated students**
- **Integrate all language knowledge (use all pre-existing knowledge)**



CLT

Some fundamental tenets of Communicative Language Teaching:

- A 4-skill approach (taught in context of culture)
- **Immersion** in target language (often with exclusion of other language backgrounds) often causes silence instead of true communication
- Prevalent classroom practices tend to be behaviorist in nature and mostly deductive in their approach
- Output-oriented (speaking over writing)
- Students are taught one language at the time
- Students are not encouraged to reflect on the system of language thus do not develop metalinguistic competence



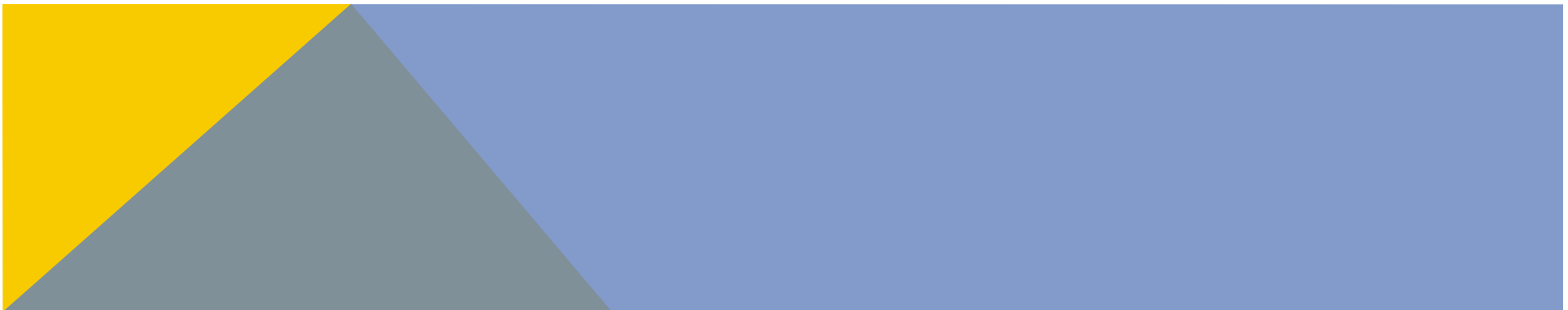
CLASSROOM REALITY

- **Accuracy oriented**
- **Grammar oriented**
- **Superficial treatment of culture**



INTERCOMMUNICATION: A STEP FORWARD

- Integrate all language knowledge (use all pre-existing knowledge)**
- Value of native language knowledge = value of native culture**
- Foster natural communication by allowing code- switching**
- Provide students the tools to recognize and understand how languages are connected**
- Encourage comparative thinking => build metalinguistic knowledge**
- Develop deeper understanding: focus on comprehension/reading first (instead of target language speaking)**



CONT.

“...the monolingual discourse in the textbook, presented as ahistorical truth and embedded in the vocabulary and the grammar selected for instruction, clashes with the multilingual habitus of the students in the class.” (Kramsch, *The Multilingual Subject*, 117).

- **Motivation / Engagement / Emotional investment**
- **Personalization**
- **Teacher (as a multilingual subject)**
- **Reflection**

