

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

THE DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES
INVITES YOU TO A LECTURE BY

Professor Heather Willis Allen

**"Investigating language-learning motivation
from an activity theory perspective:
Contributions and challenges"**



March 26, 2010

4:30PM

MB 210-01, MLL Conference Room

Refreshments will be served

Why do some students enjoy the experience of learning a second language (L2) and persist in language study whereas others do not? Although research has shown that motivation plays an important role in L2-learning outcomes, academic performance, and student persistence, researchers have disagreed as to what L2 motivation is, what factors affect it, and how motivational processes function. Yet whereas Vygotskian sociocultural theory seems well suited for researching L2 motivation, its motivational dimension has been relatively under-theorized, as researchers have tended to focus more on cognitive aspects of the theory. In my presentation I will posit activity theory, which unifies various concepts from sociocultural theory and focuses on the motivational dimension of human activities, as a useful lens for analyzing L2 motivational processes. Data from L2 learners participating in a study abroad program will be used to illustrate both contributions and challenges of conducting L2 motivation research from this perspective. Finally, I will discuss the relevance of research findings on L2 motivation for university foreign language curricula.

Heather Willis Allen holds a Ph.D. from Emory University. Her work appears in the *ADFL Bulletin*, *Foreign Language Annals*, *The French Review*, *Frontiers: The International Journal of Study Abroad*, the *Journal of Studies in International Education*, and the *Modern Language Journal*.