

Educational Linguistics

Emily Heidrich Uebel
Felix A. Kronenberg
Scott Sterling *Editors*

Language Program Vitality in the United States

From Surviving to Thriving in Higher
Education



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To my husband, Matthew, a constant source of support for everything I do. – Emily

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Starting Your Path from Surviving to Thriving Language Programs



Emily Heidrich Uebel , Felix A. Kronenberg , and Scott Sterling 

Abstract Are language programs in the United States really in crisis? While there have been numerous articles about declines in world language enrollment and departments, we know that such concerns are not new. If this is, indeed, an old conversation, what does this edited volume add to it? Why now? This volume formalizes and focuses efforts and research on program vitality and enrollments, which has been relegated to scattered initiatives and informal discussions. This chapter gives an overview to the volume and its three overarching themes: (1) Setting the Scene, (2) Student Voices, and (3) “Solutions to Thrive,” which feature innovative ways to increase language program vitality.

Keywords Enrollment · Language students · Recruitment · Credentials · Curriculum change

1 Introduction

Are language programs in the United States really in crisis? There have been plentiful articles about declines in world language enrollment and departments (e.g., Johnson, 2019), but we know that such concerns are not new; Whitcomb (1972) emphasized the need to “halt the downward trend” in enrollments over 50 years ago (p. 11). If this is, indeed, an old conversation, what does this edited volume add to it? Why now?

It is an understatement to say that the years between 2018 and 2023 were years of extreme uncertainty, which prompted a great many changes – or at the very least some intense discussion of changes – in society and in education. This period also

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saw a growing concern about the rapid increase in costs of education. With tuition growth of well over 130% over the past 20 years at all types of universities (Kerr & Wood, 2022), “the value of college, once taken for granted by most people, has steadily intensified as a point of debate” (Busteed, 2019). As Harrison (2017) noted, many employers nowadays expect their recent hires to be able to “add value immediately.” A focus on the value of degree led to many language programs and departments feeling a need to justify language study.

In 2018 and 2019, respectively, the preliminary and final reports on world language enrollment from the Modern Language Association (MLA) were published, which showed marked declines in the majority of surveyed languages. It was during this time that a number of universities undertook studies to better understand the landscape of why students were (or were not) studying languages (e.g., Murphy et al., 2022; Van Gorp et al., forthcoming; and several chapters in this volume) and to experiment with innovative solutions to increase their program’s vitality.

Starting in the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced institutions to experiment with a variety of technologies in order to facilitate emergency remote instruction, which differs from intentionally designed online courses. Although many programs are still learning how to harness the full power of designed online instruction, the experience of the virtual classroom during emergency remote instruction changed the course of many institutions’ offerings. There is a new openness and sense of experimentation in the academy, meaning that the time is ripe for language programs to innovate.

2 Overall Volume Structure

Language Program Vitality in the United States: From Surviving to Thriving in Higher Education provides viewpoints and data from all levels of the academy (institutional, departmental, program, and course level) and is aimed at world language and second language studies scholars, language educators, and language program administrators. It is aimed at a wide variety of language scholars from diverse disciplines including literature, language, linguistics, cultural studies, language teaching/education, and general humanities. The data provided in this book can serve as a launching point for discussions and as inspiration for innovation. The co-editing team designed this volume to highlight a combination of research, theory, and praxis; readers will not only gain theoretical knowledge, but they will also be able to take away actionable items that can be implemented in their programs and departments.

This volume has three overarching themes: (1) “Setting the Scene,” (2) “Student Voices,” and (3) “Solutions to Thrive,” which features innovative ways to increase language program vitality.

3 Theme 1: Setting the Scene

The volume begins by “Setting the Scene” (Sect. 1), with contributions from authors analyzing Modern Language Association language enrollment data. First, Lusin provides an update to the ongoing MLA enrollment survey along with a discussion of how it connects to previous versions of the survey. The two subsequent chapters focus on historical enrollment trends and provide a nuanced look at the data. Tripiccone analyzes undergraduate enrollments trends from 1974 to 2016 and argues for adapting our absolute view of these data. Karmanov dives into enrollment data to show how diversity in language study in the USA has increased, even amidst a decline in several European languages. To round out this section from a different perspective, Nagano then explores the historical language enrollment data with a focus on community colleges.

4 Theme 2: Student Voices

In “Student Voices” (Sect. 2), authors call attention to student perspectives and voices regarding world language education, including qualitative and quantitative data from both large-scale studies and smaller case-studies. In this section, authors identify barriers to language study and motivational factors in the language classroom. It highlights student views on core issues affecting enrollment such as the language requirement, whether to continue studying their chosen language, as well as their prior experiences with learning languages.

The first cluster of chapters examine students’ reasons to choose to enroll in language. Murphy and Martin present findings from a large-scale study of undergraduate students to examine why students are (not) studying languages other than English and how to increase the relevance of language courses. D’Amico and Sterling investigate reasons for not enrolling in language courses at a medium-sized, midwestern university in a qualitative study. Linford investigates factors that promote/demote students’ decisions to enroll in university world language courses. Crum and Kivik investigate the motivation of LCTL students and how they compare to those enrolled in a commonly taught language (Spanish). Simonsen provides a perspective from a different population by analyzing high school students’ opinions of the importance of language learning and provides implications for university language programs. Cinaglia examines one university’s articulation of the language requirement as well as the perspectives of undergraduate students toward their language learning experiences.

The final two chapters in this section examine how programs have used or can use surveys to examine their own student population, as well as how such examinations can impact recruitment and retention. Spino provides examples of using inexpensive survey designs to engage and attract students into language programs. Sommer-Farias and Carvalho examined student analytics and surveys in their program and highlight how the results impacted their curriculum, recruitment, and departmental accountability.

5 Theme 3: Solutions to Thrive

The remainder of the volume are parts of the theme “Solutions to Thrive,” which includes innovative ways to increase language program vitality. There are four topics within “Solutions to Thrive” (Parts 3–6 of the book), each featuring a variety of initiatives and strategies implemented in institutions of varying size and location across the United States.

5.1 *Planned and Imagined Initiatives*

The first topic in “Solutions to Thrive” is “Planned and Imagined Initiatives,” which explores ideas that are either planned and not yet executed or ideas that have been tested on a smaller scale. Sokolosky reminds us that language learning is not an isolated activity that takes place only in a language department and that there are many ways to unite and excite students about learning a language. Borden and Anderson propose a planned interdisciplinary and collaborative initiative based on their institution’s strategic plan to boost both recruitment and retention in enrollment. Fees hypothesizes that programs can increase enrollment through content-based courses for professional purposes at the elementary level and highlights an example of how one institution has implemented a beginning Medical Spanish course. Blaise discusses a plan to harness the power of community-based programs to provide innovative ways for students to develop language and cultural skills while making a social impact.

5.2 *Adjustments to Curriculum/Tried Initiatives*

The “Solutions to Thrive” theme continues with the documentation of initiatives that have been implemented on course, programmatic, or institutional levels. Court, May-Chu, Williamson, and Wipplinger describe the development and implementation of fully online, elementary German language courses to reach audiences beyond their face-to-face courses. Thompson and Agoke provide a unique option for expanding offerings in less commonly taught languages through a structured, autonomous language learning approach that guides students in setting and working toward their language learning goals.

Three chapters highlight Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) and how it is woven into their programs. Miller, Benjamin, Chenoweth, and Maggin focus on how LSP can be used to motivate and retain students. Langley features a case study of a mid-size regional institution and its structural, programmatic, and cultural challenges to language study, including its program redesign and results. Rubio discusses the complete overhaul of the language major offered at a business-focused institution.

Three chapters focus on programmatic changes in both commonly and less commonly taught languages such as Hebrew, Korean, and German. Raz focuses on a programmatic change through a “pedagogical and methodological overhaul” of the Hebrew program and the impact of such changes. Cho and Chun highlight strategies such as professional development, increasing community involvement, and adding a major and certificate program to stabilize enrollment in a Korean program. Lange and Windham highlight several initiatives focused on community, curriculum, and career that stemmed from a survey of German students about their motivation to study German.

Duclos and Hirata begin the institutional-level focus by discussing ongoing efforts to effectively implement a newly approved language requirement and to change institutional perceptions of language study as an integral part of the institutional core curriculum. Reisinger features the Cultures and Languages Across the Curriculum program and how it has increased opportunities for students to deeply engage with language across a variety of topics. Armengot concludes the subsection on tried initiatives by highlighting the development of a new degree option at the Rochester Institute of Technology.

5.3 *Recruitment*

Even though recruitment has been a secondary theme of several other chapters, the chapters contained within the recruitment subsection specifically highlight ways to encourage language study and attract students. Eckerson and Jacobs implemented a recruitment strategy targeted at incentivizing language study through the Seal of Biliteracy. Maggin, Baskerville, Benjamin, and Pendergast discuss a language orientation event which allows programs to promote their languages and empowers students to make informed choices about their course of language study. Edwards and Lynd describe a university-wide initiative called Internationalize Your Major that focused on creating personalized 4-year plans of study.

5.4 *Credentials*

Credentialing, including minors and certificates, have long been a way to augment the traditional college degree or demonstrate competency in areas of specialization. However, the way that programs and universities currently use credentials is constantly changing. These chapters feature a variety of ways that universities can consider recognizing skills and competencies, and also give their students the necessary understanding to communicate this with future employers. Ulland introduces a certificate in Workplace Intercultural Competency as a means of helping students connect language learning with twenty-first century job demands. Rosen, Kong, and Xu discuss a course sharing program and its pedagogical innovations and

structures, including regular assessments and the ability to receive badges. Cox, Wilcox, and Clifford examine one university's experience in encouraging lifelong language development through the adoption of a Language Certificate program. Baumann, Dursun, and van den Hout reflect on the development of the Global Honors academic distinction at the University of Chicago.

6 Conclusion

This collection of chapters will, we hope, be an informative and energizing reading experience. The contributions can be read in any order. We encourage readers to take small ideas, whole chapters, or the global themes and takeaways from the volume as a whole (as highlighted in Chapter “[You Have Reached the End: Now the Work Begins](#)”) to discuss with their colleagues and adapt to their own contexts. If you use information from book, we also encourage you to find ways to document, measure, and share your experiences (positive or negative) and grow a community of practice for supporting language programs. Who knows, maybe *your* experience will be highlighted in a second edition of this volume?

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Part I
Setting the Scene

MLA Language Enrollment Trends



Natalia Lusin

Abstract This chapter examines various trends in the Modern Language Association (MLA) language enrollment census over the long span of its existence, from the first census in 1958 to the current ongoing 2021 census. It first describes how the census is conducted, then analyzes enrollment results over time, with particular emphasis on the most recent censuses. Enrollments are analyzed by language as well as by institution level (2-year and 4-year). Trends in less commonly taught languages are discussed. The decline in enrollments in the 2013 census, the 2016 census, and the 2020 sample survey, as well as the projected decline in the 2021 census are analyzed. A comparison is done of the decline in overall student enrollments at colleges and universities and the decline in language enrollments.

Keywords Modern Language Association · MLA · Language enrollment census · Language enrollments · Colleges and universities

In an early Modern Language Association (MLA) language enrollment graph, the legend had a category for enrollment increase, but not for decrease. This omission shows how vibrant the development of language study was in the late 1950s and 1960s. But times have changed.

The Modern Language Association has conducted 26 censuses of enrollments in languages other than English since 1958.¹ Enrollments are gathered from colleges

¹From 1958 through 2009, the MLA conducted its censuses with the support of the United States Department of Education. In 2013, the census was partially funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Security Education Program, and in 2016 it was partially funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The 2020 sample survey was partially funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Mellon Foundation, and the 2021 census was partially funded by the Mellon Foundation and the United States Department of Education. We thank the grantors for their grants and for their support of our work. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect those of the grantors.

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and universities in the USA, and currently over 2600 institutions are in our database. MLA enrollment census results are recognized as the standard in the field for measuring language interest in higher education in the United States.

We ask that institutions report all for-credit enrollments in all language courses and in all courses in which teaching or reading is primarily in a language other than English. We also ask that institutions report first and second year undergraduate courses, third and fourth year undergraduate courses, and graduate courses separately. Students enrolled in more than one course, even in the same language, are counted in the enrollments for each course.

In the post-Sputnik era, government funding and attention to languages led to robust growth in language enrollments that can be seen through the 1970 census (see Fig. 1). In the 1970s and continuing through the 1980 census, language enrollments suffered a downturn that is widely attributed to the elimination or weakening of language requirements at many colleges and universities in the USA. An uneven recovery followed, with a significant decline in 1995. Enrollments were just over one million through the 1990s, but the first decade of the twenty-first century saw tremendous growth in enrollments, from 1,395,807 in 2002 to 1,673,566 in 2009, the all-time peak in language enrollments.

The 2013 and 2016 censuses showed the first declines in language enrollments since 1995 (Looney & Lusin, 2019). The start of the downward trend began with a 6.7% drop in enrollments in fall 2013 and was followed by a 9.1% drop in fall 2016. The 2016 loss in enrollments was the second largest decline in the history of the census up to this point (the largest one, 12.6%, was in 1972). Some possible reasons for the change in fortune will be discussed later.

Note: The dashed line indicates the period of time in which enrollments did not include Latin and Ancient Greek; the 1965 census was the first to include Latin and Ancient Greek. Number of institutions reporting in 2016: 2,547.

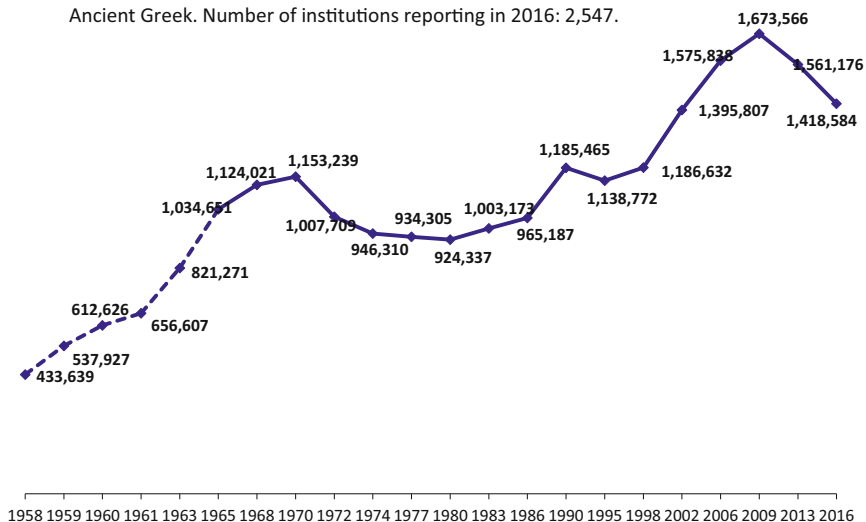


Fig. 1 Fall language enrollments by year

Two-year institutions suffered greater declines than 4-year institutions. In the early years of the census, enrollments at 2-year institutions grew faster than they did at 4-year institutions, but then the growth slowed and eventually reversed itself. Between fall 2013 and fall 2016, enrollments declined by 7.3% at 4-year institutions while declining by 15.8% at 2-year institutions.

The less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), which for the purpose of this study are defined as all languages not included in the top 15, remained flat in 2016, with aggregated enrollments of 34,747 in 2016 (compared with 34,746 in 2013). In the face of widespread declines in enrollments in 2016, the stability of LCTL enrollments is an achievement, especially since many are taught in vulnerable circumstances: the programs may be very small, and the courses may be taught by adjuncts, whose employment is precarious.

Because of the COVID pandemic, the MLA postponed the full language enrollment census planned for fall 2020 to fall 2021. But we decided to do a sample survey in fall 2020, to take a snapshot of language enrollments at that very difficult time. Our sample was created by circumstances and availability. It consisted of those institutions that list their enrollments online and as a result have enrollments that can be gathered relatively easily and quickly. We used an “apples to apples” comparison of 2016 and 2020 enrollments: we included only those institutions for which we gathered enrollments in both 2016 and 2020. There were 1308 institutions in the snapshot, which equals approximately 50% of the institutions in the full MLA language enrollment census. Enrollments for 2016 came to 912,829 in the sample, and enrollments for 2020 came to 772,150. Of the total, 431 institutions were 2-year schools, and 877 were 4-year. Almost 18% of the enrollments were for 2-year schools.²

The results from the 2020 sample survey show devastating losses for many languages. As Table 1 shows, German declined by 32.2%, while Arabic, Chinese, French, Italian, Latin, and Russian lost between 21 and 27% of enrollments. Spanish, Portuguese, and Modern Hebrew had relatively lower percentage losses, but they were still significant. Even Japanese, which was doing well in recent censuses, lost 7.8%. Three languages, American Sign Language, Biblical Hebrew, and Korean, showed gains in enrollments, with Korean increasing by 25.4%. The aggregated LCTLs did very well, with an increase of 12.4%. Hawai’ian, one of the largest LCTLs, increased by 24.1% and surpassed Biblical Hebrew, the fifteenth most commonly taught language. If Hawai’ian moves into the most commonly taught

²Our fall 2020 sample was fairly representative of the census as a whole. Four-year institutions were slightly overrepresented: 68.0% of the institutions in the 2016 census were four-year institutions, while 69.3% of the institutions in the 2020 snapshot were four-year institutions. Public institutions were overrepresented (54.9 to 64.5%). Very small institutions (those with less than 1000 students) were underrepresented (15.5 to 6.7%). Institutions granting an Associate’s degree were underrepresented (25.5 to 23.0%) while doctoral granting institutions were overrepresented (31.3 to 37.0%). HBCUs were overrepresented (3.3 to 4.4%) and Tribal colleges were underrepresented (1.2 to 0.3%).

Table 1 Fall language enrollment sample, 2016–2020. (Languages in order of percentage change)

Language	2016	2020	# Change	% Change
GERMAN	55,785	37,819	–17,966	–32.2
ARABIC (ALL)	20,876	15,167	–5709	–27.3
ITALIAN	34,549	26,116	–8433	–24.4
RUSSIAN	13,740	10,434	–3306	–24.1
FRENCH	115,032	89,321	–25,711	–22.4
LATIN	16,476	12,955	–3521	–21.4
CHINESE	33,561	26,528	–7033	–21.0
PORTUGUESE	6288	5105	–1183	–18.8
SPANISH	464,966	394,170	–70,796	–15.2
HEBREW, MODERN	2639	2329	–310	–11.7
JAPANESE	46,936	43,268	–3668	–7.8
GREEK, ANCIENT (ALL)	5640	5468	–172	–3.0
AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (ASL)	65,595	68,590	2995	4.6
HEBREW, BIBLICAL (ALL)	1828	2017	189	10.3
KOREAN	9033	11,323	2290	25.4
Total	912,829	772,150	–140,679	–15.4
LCTLS	20,827	23,419	2592	12.4

(Include languages also included in Arabic (All), Greek, Ancient (All), Hebrew, Biblical (All))

category when the final results for fall 2021 are calculated, it will become the first Indigenous language to do so.³

The differential between 2-year and 4-year institutions was not as great as it was in 2016: 2-year institutions declined by 17.2% and 4-year institutions declined by 15.0%. But the relative closeness was a result of greater losses at 4-year institutions, not improvement at 2-year institutions. Enrollments declined for courses at all levels, introductory, advanced, and graduate, but graduate enrollments were particularly hard hit. Introductory courses declined by 15.4%, advanced by 13.8%, and graduate by 34.0%.

At this writing, the 2021 enrollment census is still in the data gathering phase.⁴ The 2021 results presented below are therefore preliminary, and are based on the responses that have been entered into the MLA's interface by this point—there are 1245 responding institutions entered, just under half of the total number of

³Throughout this report, various forms of Ancient Greek, Arabic, and Biblical Hebrew (such as Koine Greek, Moroccan Arabic, and Classical Hebrew) are included in the categories of Ancient Greek, Arabic, and Biblical Hebrew. The aggregated languages are labeled Arabic (All), Greek, Ancient (All), and Hebrew, Biblical (All).

⁴We are grateful to the MLA researchers on the 2021 census, Natalia Sokolova, Terri Peterson, Christine Sulewski, and Rizwana Zafer, who applied their considerable research abilities, organizational skills, and diplomatic talents to the complex tasks of collecting and organizing the enrollment data and following up with nonresponding institutions. We are also grateful to all the researchers who worked on all earlier censuses. Our thanks also to Judy Strassberg, MLA Senior Data Analyst, who provided much-needed technical expertise.

institutions in the database. The data have been checked but not thoroughly cleaned. The final report on the 2021 census is expected to be published in fall 2023 and will be available on the MLA enrollment page.⁵

Enrollments for this partial group of 2021 respondents are 775,438. Out of this group, 276 institutions are 2-year, 935 are 4-year, and 34 are currently unspecified. Over 13% of the enrollments are for 2-year schools.

What results can we expect for the 2021 census? To answer that question, we must first put the 2021 census into the context of the most recent censuses. Table 2 shows enrollments for the past two decades for the 15 most commonly taught languages and for the aggregated LCTLs. Figure 2 shows the percentage change between successive censuses; highlighted cells indicate increases in percentages. The highlighting tells the story: between 1998 and 2009, declines in enrollments were a rarity, after 2009, they were the norm. The last column in Fig. 2 shows the estimated change in percentage in enrollments from 2016 to 2021. The estimates were calculated by taking those institutions for which enrollments were available in the interface for both 2016 and 2021 for a given language. Since these enrollment

Table 2 Fall language enrollments. (Languages in descending order of 2016 enrollments)

Languages	1998	2002	2006	2009	2013	2016
SPANISH	649,245	745,215	822,148	861,015	789,888	712,962
FRENCH	199,064	201,985	206,019	215,244	197,679	175,710
AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (ASL)	11,420	60,781	79,744	92,068	109,567	107,059
GERMAN	89,013	91,100	94,146	95,613	86,782	80,594
JAPANESE	43,141	52,238	65,410	72,357	66,771	68,810
ITALIAN	49,287	63,899	78,176	80,322	70,982	56,743
CHINESE	28,456	34,153	51,382	59,876	61,084	53,069
ARABIC (ALL)	5505	10,584	24,010	35,228	33,526	31,554
LATIN	26,145	29,841	32,164	32,446	27,209	24,810
RUSSIAN	23,791	23,921	24,784	26,740	21,979	20,353
KOREAN	4479	5211	7146	8449	12,256	13,936
GREEK, ANCIENT (ALL)	16,381	20,376	22,842	21,515	16,961	13,264
PORTUGUESE	6926	8385	10,310	11,273	12,407	9827
HEBREW, BIBLICAL (ALL)	9099	14,183	14,137	13,764	12,596	9570
HEBREW, MODERN	6734	8619	9620	8307	6743	5576
LCTLs	17,946	25,316	33,800	39,349	34,746	34,747
Total	1,186,632	1,395,807	1,575,838	1,673,566	1,561,176	1,418,584

⁵MLA Language Enrollments reports can be found at: <https://www.mla.org/Resources/Research/Surveys-Reports-and-Other-Documents/Teaching-Enrollments-and-Programs/Enrollments-in-Languages-Other-Than-English-in-United-States-Institutions-of-Higher-Education>

Languages	Percentage change between:					ESTIMATED
	1998- 2002	2002- 2006	2006- 2009	2009- 2013	2013- 2016	Percentage change: 2016-2021
SPANISH	14.8	10.3	4.7	-8.3	-9.7	-14
FRENCH	1.5	2.0	4.5	-8.2	-11.1	-18
AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (ASL)	432.2	31.2	15.5	19.0	-2.3	-5
GERMAN	2.3	3.3	1.6	-9.2	-7.1	-27
JAPANESE	21.1	25.2	10.6	-7.7	3.1	2
ITALIAN	29.6	22.3	2.7	-11.6	-20.1	-16
CHINESE	20.0	50.4	16.5	2.0	-13.1	-10
ARABIC (ALL)	92.3	126.9	46.7	-4.8	-5.9	-20
LATIN	14.1	7.8	0.9	-16.1	-8.8	-16
RUSSIAN	0.5	3.6	7.9	-17.8	-7.4	-2
KOREAN	16.3	37.1	18.2	45.1	13.7	31
GREEK, ANCIENT (ALL)	24.4	12.1	-5.8	-21.2	-21.8	-6
PORTUGUESE	21.1	23.0	9.3	10.1	-20.8	-17
HEBREW, BIBLICAL (ALL)	55.9	-0.3	-2.6	-8.5	-24.0	12
HEBREW, MODERN	28.0	11.6	-13.6	-18.8	-17.3	-13
LCTLS	41.1	33.5	16.4	-11.7	0.0	-2
Total	17.6	12.9	6.2	-6.7	-9.1	-12

Fig. 2 Percentage change in fall language enrollments

totals are far from complete, we expect that these percentages will change when the final calculations are done. Because the estimates are rough, they have been rounded.

With that caveat in mind, we can say that the partial results from 2021 show that we should anticipate declines in most of the commonly taught languages. German again appears to be hit hardest, with a 27% anticipated decline. Arabic, which had been showing enormous increases from 1998 through 2009, could decline by approximately 20%. The drop for French, Portuguese, Italian, and Latin will most likely be in the 16–18% range. Spanish, which in the 1990s rose to take more than 50% of all enrollments in the census, faces a 14% anticipated decline. Modern Hebrew, with a possible 13% decline, and Biblical Hebrew, with a possible 12% increase, are moving in opposite directions.

The average drop for all languages is estimated at 12%, and several languages, although declining, appear to have done better than that: Chinese (–10%), Ancient Greek (–6%), and American Sign Language (–5%). Both Chinese and ASL had been growing vigorously, and had increases in their enrollments in 2013, when most of the commonly taught languages dropped in enrollments. The decline for Russian and the LCTLs is anticipated to be small, at 2%. Russian appears to be stabilizing after a considerable drop between 2009 and 2016. The LCTLs, after showing impressive growth through 2009, while not growing now, are relatively stable in the face of a general decline.

Three commonly taught languages, Korean, Japanese, and Biblical Hebrew, are anticipated to have gains in enrollments in 2021. The increases for Korean have been uninterrupted since 1974, when it had 87 enrollments. Japanese enrollments have dropped only three times since the first census: in 1995, 1998, and 2013. Biblical Hebrew has followed a more uneven trajectory, but its history is harder to track because in earlier census years it was sometimes grouped with Modern Hebrew. Among the LCTLs with the highest enrollments, Hawai'iian and Vietnamese are anticipated to increase in the fall 2021 results, and Swahili/Kiswahili is expected to decline.

Most of the commonly taught languages recovered some ground between 2020 and 2021, but because the 2020 enrollments are a sample, they are generally not included in the tables and graphs that show trends over time in the censuses. So that uptick is not visible, and the trend between 2016 and 2021 is unfortunately downward. Both the 2020 sample and the 2021 census are compared to 2016 throughout this article. As a result, the declines reported for 2020 and 2021 should not be seen as cumulative.

The decline in enrollments by institution level is anticipated to be somewhat better than in the 2020 sample, where it was 17.2% for 2-year institutions and 15.0% for 4-year institutions. Two-year institutions are anticipated to decline by approximately 15% for 2021, and 4-year institutions by approximately 12%.

Enrollments are expected to decline for courses at all levels, introductory, advanced, and graduate, but graduate enrollments are again, as in 2020, expected to decline the most, although not as severely as in 2020. Introductory courses are anticipated to decline by 13%, advanced by 10%, and graduate by 15%.

Note that the numbers in the tables and figure in this article show slightly different enrollments than those given in the enrollment reports. This is because of revisions in the numbers that we have made after the reports were published. The revisions are small and trends are unaffected.

The enrollment decline started well before the pandemic, but did the pandemic exacerbate the enrollment decline? Certainly, the pandemic has had a serious effect on language teaching for a number of reasons. The transition to remote learning was sudden and difficult. In classes that were held in person, students had to socially distance, which required a smaller number of students or larger classrooms. In addition, language study requires observing how the mouth forms particular sounds, and masks hinder that important part of language study. And finally, many study abroad programs were suspended, and study abroad enrollments are counted in the census.

A great deal has been written about the recent decline in overall student enrollments, especially during the pandemic, at colleges and universities in the USA. To what extent can the decline in language enrollments in the latest censuses and sample survey be attributed to this drop? After all, if there are fewer students overall, then the pool of potential language students is smaller. But the overall student decline explains the language enrollment decline only in part.

As mentioned earlier, we count the number of enrollments, not students, and students who enroll in more than one language class per semester will be counted

Table 3 Percentage change in total number of students and in language enrollment census

	Total number of students	% change in total number of students	% change in language enrollment census
2006	16,688,279		
2009	18,578,440	11.3	6.2
2013	18,718,238	0.8	-6.7
2016	18,664,796	-0.3	-9.1
2021	17,465,147	-6.4	-12

more than once. It should therefore be noted that the number of students in colleges and universities and enrollments in language courses are not equivalent groupings. Nonetheless, the percentage change over time in both categories does give us an indication of trends.

We analyzed data from the National Center for Education Statistics (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021) and the National Student Clearinghouse (National Student Clearinghouse [NSC], 2021)⁶ to determine the overall student decline in enrollments between censuses and between the 2016 census and the 2020 snapshot. Note that year-to-year declines were not what we looked at, but rather census-to-census declines. We excluded for-profit institutions from our calculations, since for-profits are not included in the census. Because of these parameters, our percentages do not match the widely publicized numbers cited in the press with regard to the recent decline in student enrollments.

For the sake of simplicity we included only the censuses in Table 3. But because of the severity of the language enrollment drop between the 2016 census and the 2020 sample survey, we looked at the change in student enrollments in that time span. We calculated that there was a 3.7% overall drop in students enrolled at colleges and universities between fall 2016 and fall 2020, while the decline in language enrollments in the 2020 sample survey was 15.4%.

Between 2016 and 2021, the number of students overall declined 6.4%, and the number of language enrollments in the 2021 census is expected to decline by 12%. In 2013 and 2016, when student enrollments were relatively flat, language enrollments declined by 6.7% in 2013 and by 9.1% in 2016. So language enrollment declines outpace overall student enrollment declines, and as a result overall student enrollment declines cannot explain language enrollment declines.

A detailed exploration of the reasons for the large decline in enrollments over three consecutive censuses is well worth doing, but is beyond the scope of this chapter. It may be that we are suffering a correction after the tremendous enrollment growth of the 2000s and are returning to the level of enrollments that we had in the

⁶The figures for 2006–2020 are derived from data in the *Digest of Education Statistics, 2021*, National Center for Education Statistics, Table 303.10; the figures for 2021 are derived from data in both the *Digest* and *Current Term Enrollment Estimates, Fall 2021*, National Student Clearinghouse, Table 1. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/2021menu_tables.asp and https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/CTEE_Report_Fall_2021.pdf

1990s. Or it may be that the common, and misguided, theme that language study will not lead to a job, so often repeated in the popular press, is a significant factor.

The focus of interest for language specialists is necessarily on the decline in enrollments in the most recent censuses. But when we look at the larger picture it is obvious that language enrollments are constantly in flux. In 1958, the year of the first MLA enrollment census, French, German, and Spanish were the undisputed three top languages, with French in the first position. In that same census, Korean had only 26 enrollments. But Korean is now among the top 15 languages, and continues to grow, completely unaffected by the overall decline in enrollments since 2009. Other languages have also gained prominence. For a long time, American Sign Language was not considered a full-fledged language, and was reported to us for the first time only in 1990. It is now listed as the third most studied language in the USA.

It is often said that the increasing enrollments in Korean among college students can be attributed to the popularity of K-pop, and that the increase in Japanese is connected to the popularity of manga and anime. Not every language is lucky enough to have popular boy bands, but fortunately students study languages for many reasons. We have seen recent increases in a number of less commonly taught languages, among them Hawai’ian, Vietnamese, Farsi/Persian, and Hindi/Urdu. The rise in enrollments in these and other languages shows that the cliched phrase, “students aren’t interested in languages” simply isn’t true. The question to ask is, “which language will be the next one to gain prominence?”

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Beyond the Crisis: Tools for Analyzing Historical Enrollments in Languages Other Than English



Lidia Tripiccione

Abstract This short chapter analyzes fall undergraduate enrollments in languages other than English in postsecondary institutions from 1974 to 2016 on the basis of the MLA Historical Enrollment Database 1958–2016 and data from the National Center for Education Statistics. The main contention is that the distribution of these enrollments has historically been unequal from a variety of perspectives and that, for this reason, specific assessment tools looking at data beyond absolute trends must be devised to anchor the analysis to diverse contexts. The analysis will start with a general overview of enrollment trends and will then introduce different parameters, such as geographical location, enrollment size by institution, and institution type to contextualize and better understand absolute findings. The analysis will end with a focus on less commonly taught languages. The chapter hopes to stimulate further analysis in the field and to contribute to a discussion on the current state of affairs in the sphere of languages other than English beyond the often-repeated narrative of crisis.

Keywords Languages other than English · Enrollments · Quantitative analysis · Postsecondary education

1 What Happened in General: On the “Crisis”, and More

A narrative of “crisis” has long steeped the discussion on languages other than English in the United States at all levels of the education system. It gained traction especially in the last decade, amidst waning enrollments and fears for a time when studying languages could become obsolete.

Drawing from the MLA Historical Enrollment Database 1958–2016 and from National Center for Education Statistics data, this short chapter analyzes fall undergraduate enrollments in languages other than English from 1974 to 2016, and

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displays a series of easily repeatable operations on the data to meaningfully assess and contextualize it.¹ The chapter contributes to the overall discussion on the state of language teaching in postsecondary education by showing that, when it comes to the analysis of key quantifiable parameters like enrollments, we are well-equipped to push beyond the narrative of crisis.

To start, a general overview of enrollment trends is in order. In absolute terms, between 1974 and 2016, after a slight decrease between 1974 and 1980, enrollments increased steadily. In 1995, enrollments declined visibly if compared to 1990, but this setback was short-lived, as numbers started rising rapidly in the following decade and reached their highest point ever recorded in 2009. Between 2009 and 2016, enrollments declined sharply. If the contention that the field is going through a critical period was popular before (Simon, 1980a, b; Swaffar, 2003; Wiley, 2007), news of plummeting enrollments after 2009 immediately sparked numerous concerned discussions (Berman, 2012; Kaye, 2017; Johnson, 2019).² Most of these arguments draw either on absolute numbers or on percentage variation, and speak only of the most widely taught languages, like Spanish, French, German, Japanese, etc. While addressing the current situation in the field is crucial, we need more specific parameters to move past this first layer of discussion and take a deep dive into the data, following the example of recent MLA reports (Looney & Lusin, 2019, 2021) (Fig. 1).

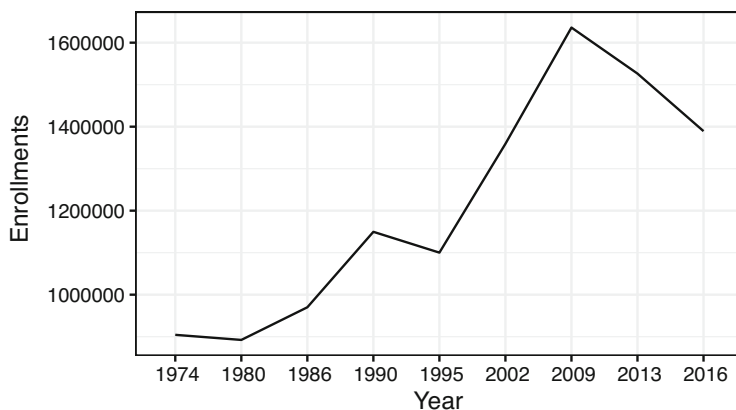


Fig. 1 Enrollments in languages other than English in selected years

¹In what follows, the term “enrollment” should be interpreted as “fall undergraduate enrollment in languages other than English”, unless differently specified. This work was conducted as part of a Princeton GradFUTURES fellowship at the MLA. I would like to thank Natalia Lusin for supervising the work and James Van Wyck for organizing the fellowship.

²The MLA historical enrollment database stores data from 1958, but because before 1974 they did not distinguish between undergraduate and graduate enrollments, this analysis begins with this distinction. For reasons of readability and space, the plots do not display data from all years available in the dataset between 1974 and 2006.

Absolute numbers might not afford the best perspective: after all, enrollments in languages other than English are dependent on overall university enrollments, and an increase in the latter might inflate the former even as relative parameters are decreasing. A metric such as the share of enrollments in languages other than English per each 100 overall enrollments provides a more objective understanding of the situation. This analysis is achievable by merging MLA and NCES data (Modern Language Association, n.d; Digest for Education Statistics, 1990 and 2016).³

This ratio plummeted between 1974 and 1980, grew in the 1980s, temporarily diminished between 1990 and 1995, shot up in the 1990s (with a brief setback in 1995), peaked in 2006 at 9.2 enrollments in languages other than English per 100 enrollments, and then started rapidly declining (Fig. 2).

Looney and Lusin (2019) performed the same operation without distinction between graduate and undergraduate enrollments, thus capturing a wider chronological span. The figures recorded by those authors and here are very much comparable, so the present analysis can be confidently expanded by drawing on their report.⁴ If figures were highest in the 1960s, when languages other than English accounted for over 13 enrollments for every 100 overall enrollments, numbers started decreasing quickly in the 1970s, hit their lowest in 1980 (7.3), and then shot up in the 1990s and early 2000s (with a brief setback in 1995) before plummeting again after 2006.



Fig. 2 Enrollments in languages other than English every 100 undergraduate enrollments

³Table 303.70 of the 2016 Digest of Education Statistics reports data on total undergraduate fall enrollments at postsecondary institutions in the USA for selected years. As table 303.70 has no data for the years 1974 and 1977, I also drew from Table 157 of the 1990 Digest. Following MLA reports, enrollments in “for profit” institutions have not been counted, as these have been historically excluded from the MLA census.

⁴This is expected, as graduate enrollments are much less numerous than undergraduate enrollments.

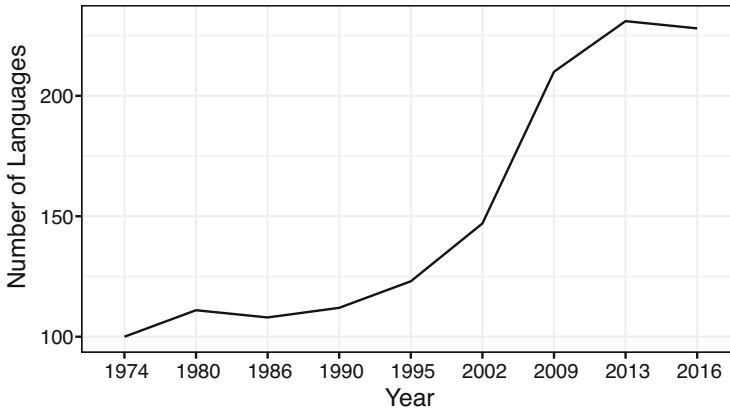


Fig. 3 Number of languages offered in selected years

Another indicative parameter that can be initially measured in absolute terms is the diversity of linguistic offerings. More languages are being taught now than at any other point recorded in the database, and linguistic diversity seems to have been only marginally affected after 2009 (Fig. 3).

These preliminary remarks point to a complex situation: whereas absolute numbers reflect an almost constant increase from the 1970s to 2009, relative figures like the share of language enrollments for every 100 overall enrollments tell a slightly different story, one where a decade-long downward trend turned around in the 1980s, shot up in the late 1990s, and plummeted again after 2006. What seems evident, however, is that a positive period, from the 1980s to 2006/2009, where numbers grew in both relative and absolute terms, and when linguistic diversity expanded, was followed by a critical period. However, this “crisis” is not a historical *unicum*, as relative figures had dropped similarly in the 1970s before increasing again in the 1980s.

1.1 Breaking Down Absolute Numbers: A Realm of Inequality

Relativizing the notion of “crisis” through a broad historical analysis, however, is not enough. The reason why enrollment trends should never be considered only in absolute terms is that languages other than English in postsecondary education in the USA are a realm where “inequality” rules. Most languages, no matter what year we take into consideration between 1974 and 2016, will have an enrollment of less than 100. Few languages will reach 200 enrollments, and enrollments in all languages that historically commanded the analysts’ attention (Spanish, Italian, French, Japanese, etc.) are significantly higher than the others. The absolute trend in Fig. 1 does not

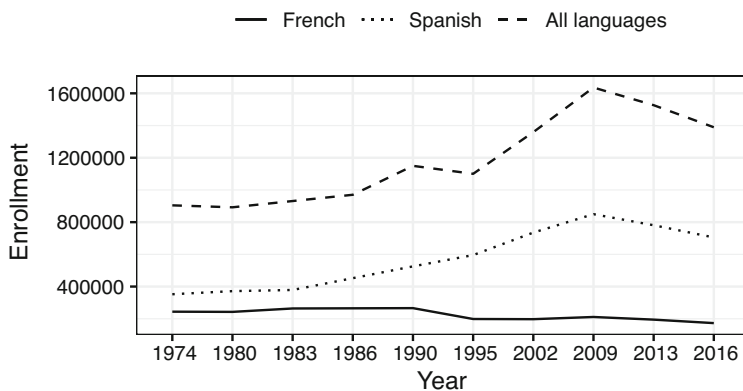


Fig. 4 Comparison of enrollments in Spanish, French, and enrollments in all languages in selected years

perfectly coincide with Spanish's trend, but it is influenced by it to a significant degree, as enrollments in Spanish are disproportionately higher than those in other languages, even widely taught ones like French (Fig. 4).

Further, one needs to ask whether the enrollments are equally distributed among institutions, or whether, much like for income distribution, a small subset of the survey participants gobbles up a disproportionate share of the output. Here, institutions are divided into 5 incremental macro-categories (very small, small, medium, big, and top 5%) based on their yearly enrollments for all languages other than English. These categories are based on percentiles. Very small institutions make up the lowest 25th percentile, meaning that schools falling into this category in a given year reported enrollments lower than 75% of institutions for that year. The small category comprises institutions between the 25th percentile and the 50th percentile, while the medium institutions are between the 50th and the 75th percentile. Because more granularity was needed at the higher levels, I assigned the category "big" to the institutions whose enrollment fell between the 75th percentile and the 95th, while the remaining institutions make up the top 5%, which includes schools with enrollments higher than 95% of institutions. Accordingly, the very small, small, and medium schools will each account for 25% of the total number of institutions each year, big institutions represent 20% of the total, with the top 5% completing the picture.

As it turns out, differences at the level of enrollment size are astounding. At any given time, big and top 5% institutions (accounting for a mere 25% of total institutions) have recorded the lion's share of all enrollments. The bottom 25% (the very small schools) are numerically insignificant.⁵ Enrollments went slightly down in 1977 and 1980 only because top 5% institutions reported losses. Similarly, big institutions and the top 5% were the sole culprits for the 1995 dip, with the latter

⁵For this reason, and to make the plots readable, very small institutions are not represented in the graphs.

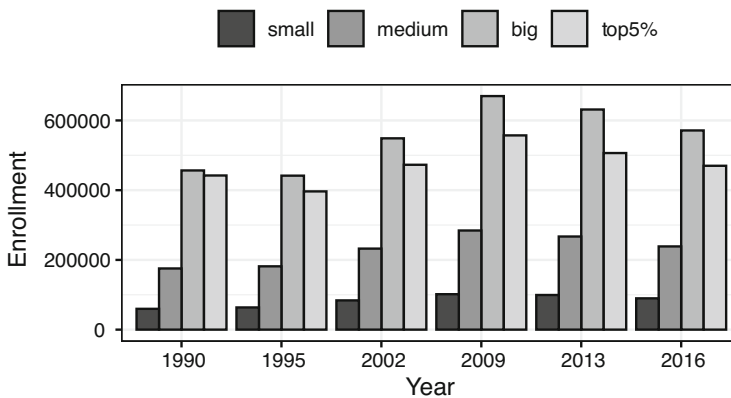


Fig. 5 Breakdown of enrollments by institution size in selected years

visibly losing more than the former. The other categories remained stable until the 1990s and then visibly increased.

The late 1980s and early 1990s reshuffled the cards a bit, with big institutes gaining and then decidedly surpassing the top 5%. The inequality in enrollment distribution was somewhat mitigated in the 1990s, where medium institutions gained enrollment at a faster rate than the two upper categories. After 2009, contrary to 1995, no category was spared losses: while the three bottom categories held out better than the two main ones in 2013, they fared worse in 2016. (Fig. 5)⁶

Analogously, diversity of language has not been equally propelled by all groups. The top 5% and the big institutions have been leading the way, even though all groups expanded their offerings between 1995 and 2009. Notably, the diversification of language offering has been less negatively affected after 2009 than other parameters. Indeed, big institutions continued to expand beyond 2013 (Fig. 6).

What must also be said is that institutions with the biggest enrollments are usually four-year colleges. Only a very small part of big institutions in any given year are 2-year colleges, which are even more rarely found among the top 5%. In general, overall enrollments at 4-year colleges dwarf their 2-year counterpart, so that absolute numbers will reflect only what happens at 4-year colleges while obscuring trends and significant phenomena at the 2-year level.

Geographical location is another big factor affecting the distribution of enrollments. By dividing the institutions into 8 geographical macro areas (New England, Mid East, Great Lakes, Plains, Southeast, Southwest, Rocky Mountains, Far West) we observe that the Far West, Southeast, and Mid East have historically accounted

⁶In 2013, the top 5% lost the most (−9%), followed by the big (−5%), the medium, the very small, and the small (these last one losing only 2%). In 2016, the very small lost 11%, the medium 10%, the small 9.6%, the big 9.5%, and the top 5% around 7%.

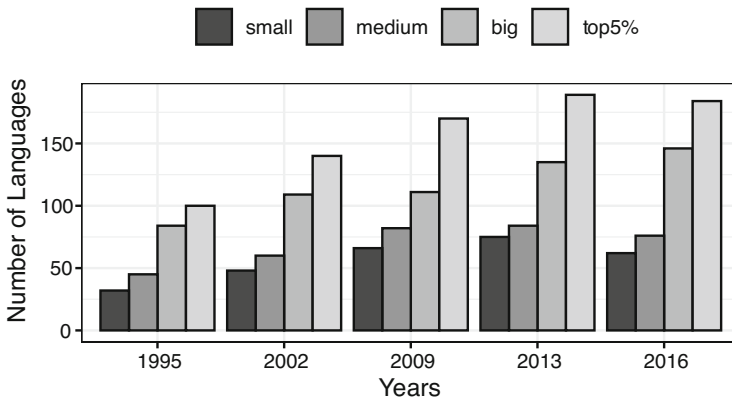


Fig. 6 Languages offered by institution size in selected years

for most of the enrollments in any given year, whereas the Rocky Mountains and the Plains have limited enrollments.⁷

Further, not all regions were equally affected by “crises”: enrollments in the Southeast and in the Southwest did not decrease from 1990 to 1995, enrollments in the Plains remained stable, and those in the Rocky Mountains actually increased. More importantly, the downward trend after 2009 was so steep because the second most populous region, the Far West, was the most affected, losing a whopping 9 and 11% of enrollments in 2013 and 2016 respectively. Other regions, like the Southeast and the Southwest were much less negatively impacted (Fig. 7).⁸

Geographical distinctions are of capital importance for 2-year schools, where enrollments in the Far West are vastly more numerous than enrollments in other regions. The Mid East, which is second in terms of enrollments at the 2-year level, recorded enrollments which are only a half of those in the Far West in 2016, and the gap used to be wider (Fig. 8).

To summarize, while absolute trends are a good starting point to orient one’s analysis, one also needs to consider that they reflect only what happens at the level of the most widely taught languages at a small minority of institutions – mostly 4-year schools – disproportionately concentrated in some geographical areas. Enrollments have historically been unequally distributed from different parameters: geographical location, college type, and enrollment size by institution are all easily quantifiable parameters that need to be considered when studying general or language-based trends if we want to capture the historical progression in as much detail as possible.

⁷The macro area analysis is achievable by merging MLA and NCES data. More specifically, the NCES variable “OBBEREG” provides the following geographical breakdown: New England (CT ME MA NH RI VT), Mid East (DE DC MD NJ NY PA), Great Lakes (IL IN MI OH WI), Plains (IA KS MN MO NE ND SC), Southeast (AL AR FL GA KY LA MS NC SC TN VA WV), Southwest (AZ NM OK TX), Rocky Mountains (CO ID MT UT WY), Far West (AK CA HI NV OR WA).

⁸The Southeast lost 1% in 2013 and 4% in 2016, whereas the Southwest lost around 5% both years.

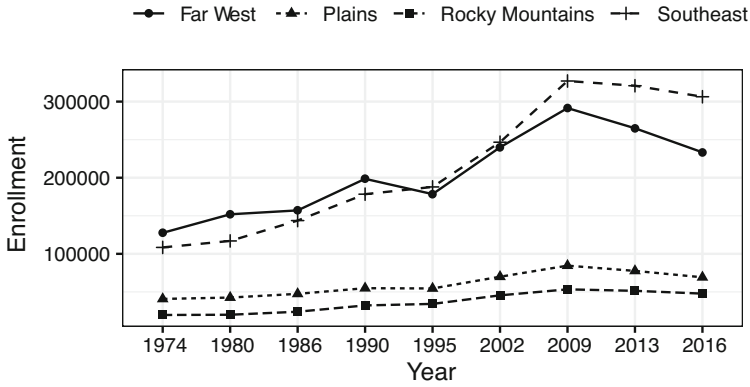


Fig. 7 Enrollments in selected geographical macro areas for selected years

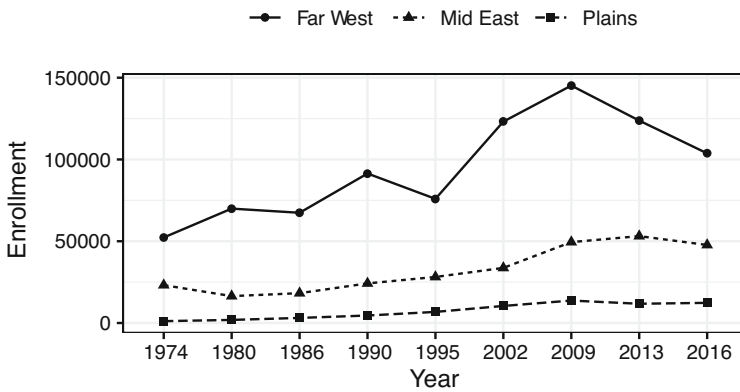


Fig. 8 Comparison of enrollments at community colleges in the Far West and in other regions

In what follows, the analysis will concentrate on several less commonly taught languages.

2 The Dynamics of Emerging Languages

Researchers must make a conscious choice about the languages they will analyze. Historically, many studies have focused on a limited set of languages, usually selecting the most widespread ones, such as Spanish, French, German, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, etc. Since the 1970s, languages like these could count on a solid infrastructure and on a widespread presence across 4-year colleges and 2-year institutions, and across geographical areas.

Other languages have not enjoyed the same attention, even if some of them increased their enrollments dramatically since the 1970s and especially in the 1990s. To achieve a representative list of languages that displayed a strong upward trend, but which are not among the most widely taught in the United States, I first computed, for each year, the top 15 nationwide fastest-growing languages by percentage increase.⁹ I then selected those languages that appeared with the highest frequency while not being amongst those that consistently ranked in the top 15 by enrollment between 1974 and 2016.¹⁰ Here, these languages will be called “emerging”:

- American Sign Language.
- Cherokee
- Dakota and Lakota¹¹
- Farsi/Persian
- Filipino/Pilipino/Tagalog
- Hawai’ian
- Hindi and Urdu¹²
- Hmong
- Korean
- Navajo
- Ojibwa/Ojibway/Ojibwe and Chippewa¹³
- Swahili/Kiswahili
- Vietnamese

2.1 Overview

Looking at raw numbers, enrollments in ASL have increased at an unparalleled rate, going from 0 in the 1980s to more than 100,000 in 2016. In part, this spectacular growth is due to the fact that ASL was excluded from MLA surveys until 1990. Secondly, the quality of the data recorded might have changed and improved over time, so that the actual growth of ASL might have been much less pronounced than it

⁹I have restricted this operation to languages that have a nationwide enrollment of at least 100, otherwise, I would have mostly recorded fluctuations in the enrollment of very small languages.

¹⁰Languages always appearing in the top 15 most widely taught (1974–2016) are: Ancient Greek, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Latin Portuguese, Spanish, Russian.

¹¹I summed enrollments for the labels Dakota, Dakota/Lakota, and Lakota. Before 2009, most enrollments in these languages were listed under Dakota/Lakota. From 2009, the differentiation started, even if the label Dakota/Lakota was not abandoned. A degree of confusion in labeling LCTLs, so I had to repeat the same operation for other languages as well (see footnote 10 and 11).

¹²This is the sum of Hindi, Urdu, and Hindi/Urdu.

¹³This is the sum of Ojibwa/Ojibway/Ojibwe and Chippewa.

seems at first glance. Still, as of 2016, ASL undoubtedly commanded a significant portion of yearly enrollments in the dataset.

Other than ASL, Korean has been the fastest-growing emergent language. In 2016, Korean was bigger than Portuguese (respectively, approx. 13,000 enrollments vs 9500), whereas all other emerging languages still have relatively small enrollments, with the biggest of them hardly topping 3000 in 2016.

Unfortunately, except for Korean and ASL, many emerging languages suffered greatly after 2009 or 2013, especially Hindi/Urdu, Swahili/Kiswahili, Hawai'ian, and Dakota and Lakota.

2.2 Differences by Institution Type

Contextualization is key for the study of emergent languages, as they provide yet another example of the uneven distribution of enrollments.

First, the enrollment expansion for these languages was propelled in great part by 4-year institutions. At 2-year schools, enrollments in emerging languages are mostly concentrated in the Far West – which is unsurprising given what was said before – and most regions have very low or even non-existent enrollments in these languages.

There are, however, some notable exceptions. Nationwide American Sign Language's enrollments were higher in 4-year schools than in 2-year schools in 2016 (respectively 58,000 and 47,000) but the reverse had been true before that.

Vietnamese also had significantly higher nationwide enrollments at 2-year institutions than at the 4-year level up until 2009 (1465 vs 1231), however, after that, it plummeted at community colleges, recording a mere 820 enrollments in 2016.

Ojibwa/Ojibway/Ojibwe and Chippewa's tale is the opposite of Vietnamese's. After 2009, enrollments at 4-year colleges collapsed, while 2-year schools were able to grow after some losses in 2013. Hence, in 2016, the two college types were numerically almost equivalent.

The concentration of enrollments in emerging languages at 4-year institutions, coupled with the fact that 4-year schools and community colleges' enrollments were often affected in very different degrees after 2009, reiterates the need for a high level of granularity in the analysis.

2.3 Regionalization

The second salient feature that an analysis of emergent languages reveals is their "regionalization". Without distinction between 4-year and 2-year, the bulk of enrollments for most emerging languages will be found in one single macro-region. Only ASL is by now very well represented in all regions both at the 4-year and at the 2-year level, and even Korean has achieved this status only at the 4-year level, where

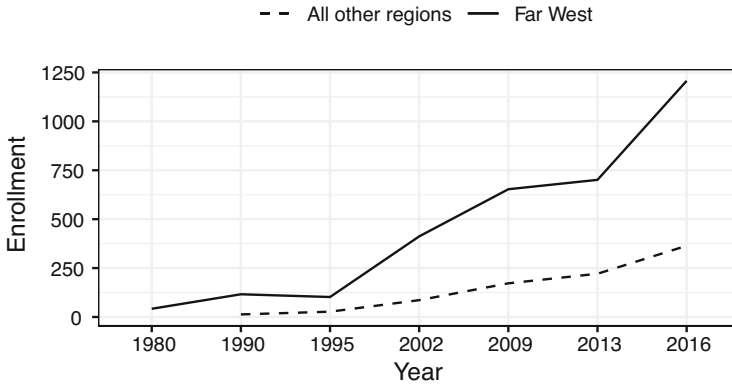


Fig. 9 Community college enrollments in Korean in the Far West vs all other regions

it has displayed a strong, constantly upwards trend since the late 1980s in some regions and since the late 1990s in others.

By contrast, the great majority of Korean enrollments at community colleges are concentrated in the Far West. Many other regions simply do not have significant numbers (Fig. 9).

At 4-year institutions, Swahili is strongest in the Great Lakes, followed by the Southeast and the Mid East. The highest enrollments by far of Farsi/Persian are concentrated in the Far West, while Vietnamese is taught almost exclusively there and in the Southwest.

For 2-year colleges, the Far West’s primacy in the teaching of Vietnamese is basically complete. Hindi/Urdu -probably the least regionalized among emerging languages other than ASL and Korean – is strong in New England, Mid East, Southwest, Southeast, and Far West at the 4-year level.

Pilipino/Filipino/Tagalog is also highly regionalized both at the 4-year and at the community college level, being present almost exclusively in the Far West, a “new entry” present in the database only since 1990, is represented in the Far West and in the Great Lakes at both 4-year and 2-year schools. Aramaic is almost solely present in the Mid East and almost exclusively in 4-year colleges. Like Vietnamese, Filipino enrollments at 2-year colleges plummeted after 2009. On the plus side, both these languages fared much better in 4-year institutions, where Filipino showed a strong upward trend.

Indigenous languages are also mostly present in the regions where the tribes reside, and all of them but Cherokee are taught both at 4-year colleges and community colleges. Almost all enrollments in Hawai’ian are in the Far West, Dakota and Lakota are almost exclusively taught in the Great Lakes at 4-year institutions, while Cherokee and Navajo are taught in the Southwest. Ojibwa/Ojibway/Ojibwe and Chippewa have enrollments in the region of the Great Lakes and the Plains.

2.4 *Regionalization and Immigration Trends*

Research has been carried out on the relationship between world language curricula and immigration (Diaz, 2021). While the question cannot be touched in depth here, the data strongly suggest that some emerging languages are taught primarily in the region(s) of the USA where the presence of immigrants speaking those languages is strongest.

According to data from 2015–2019 from the Migration Policy Institute, an independent think-tank based in Washington DC, 39% of Vietnamese foreign-born lived in California, 13% of them lived in Texas, 4% in Washington State and Florida (Harjanto & Batalova, 2021).

California also hosted almost half of the Filipino born community in 2006, with later data confirming California's primacy (Gallardo & Batalova, 2020). Considering Vietnamese and Filipino/Pilipino/Tagalog's high level of regionalization, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that immigration from these countries contributed to changes in university curricula.

Iranian foreign born are also concentrated in California according to data from 2015–2019 (Lai & Batalova, 2021). However, Farsi/Persian, while predominant in the Far West, does not show the same level of Far West exclusivity as Vietnamese and Filipino, signaling that different dynamics are at play for different languages.

To summarize, between 1990 and 2009 “emerging languages” showed strong upward trends. However, except for ASL, and, in part, Korean, most of these languages have yet to achieve a widespread presence across geographical regions and college types, as their growth was propelled mostly by 4-year schools in selected regions. Further, we can preliminarily observe a correlation between immigration and upward enrollment trends for some languages.

These observations, which would be impossible to make based on absolute trends, are simply crucial to analyze emerging languages.

3 Conclusion

In this short chapter, I have tried to make the case that an analysis of enrollments in languages other than English must specify a variety of parameters. Enrollments are simply too unevenly distributed for absolute numbers to be of much use in an in-depth analysis.

If we want to counter the “crisis” that languages other than English are facing, our assessment of the situation must understand the specificities of the diverse contexts that make up postsecondary education in the USA. The simple operations displayed here can easily be repeated to deepen the analysis in various ways: for instance, by grouping languages in macro-areas (East Europe, Central Asia, East Asia, etc.), we can map closely their historical progression, understand in which regions and at which levels they have been strongest, and when and where they have faced a critical

situation. If a language is taught only at a handful of institutions, then we can attain an even greater level of granularity and observe the trend institution by institution.

To conclude, access to excellent data and to excellent historical reports should empower us to push beyond a narrative of crisis to tailor our response to concrete contexts.

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The Increasing Diversity of World Language Study in the United States, 1958–2016



Fedor Karmanov

Abstract While the total decline in language enrollments in the United States has been well-documented, long-term changes in interest in specific languages remains understudied. The following report considers the shape of postwar world language interest in the United States, with a particular focus on the rise and fall of individual world languages during this period. This chapter puts forward two findings. (1) The data confirm the slow decline of several core European languages (aside from Spanish), which began in 1968 when the study of these languages peaked. (2) The data also show that there has been a steady and consistent growth in enrollments in non-European languages, notably a cluster of East and South Asian, African, and Native American languages. These findings suggest that the coming decades may see a significant shift in enrollments away from the languages of the Global North towards the study of the languages and cultures of the Global South.

Keywords World languages · Less-commonly taught languages · Humanities crisis

1 Introduction

Between 1958 and 2016, the Modern Language Association (MLA) has collected and catalogued the language enrollment data for most U.S. higher education institutions: a total of around 23,290,842 course enrollments, spanning across 354 unique languages. While the rise and fall in total enrollments has been well-documented in the general Enrollment Reports published by the MLA, long-term trends in unique language enrollments remain understudied. The following report considers the long durée of postwar world language study in the United States, with a particular focus on the rise and fall of individual world languages during this period.

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This chapter puts forward two findings. (1) The data show the decline of several core European languages (aside from Spanish), which began in 1968 when the study of these languages peaked. (2) The data also show that there has been a steady growth in enrollments in non-European languages, notably a cluster of East and South Asian, African, and Native American languages. These findings suggest that the coming decades may see a significant shift in enrollments away from the languages of the Global North towards the study of the languages and cultures of the Global South.

The following report is broken up into three sections, roughly divided by the first top-6 enrolled languages, known as the “core” group, the next 8-highest enrolled languages, the “emerging” group, and then the rest of the language enrollments, known here as the “other” group. The core languages —French, German, Russian, Italian, Latin, and Spanish —are represented by the largest portion of the stacked area graph in Fig. 1, and account for most of the total enrollments in language study in the U.S. across this period. The “emerging” languages are represented by the second-largest portion of the graph above: Japanese, American Sign Language (ASL), Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Ancient Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Portuguese, and Korean, which have been growing steadily since the 1980s. Finally, we will consider the total growth of “long tail” of the less commonly taught languages, represented by the smallest area, making some inferences about rising interest in less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) in the United States.

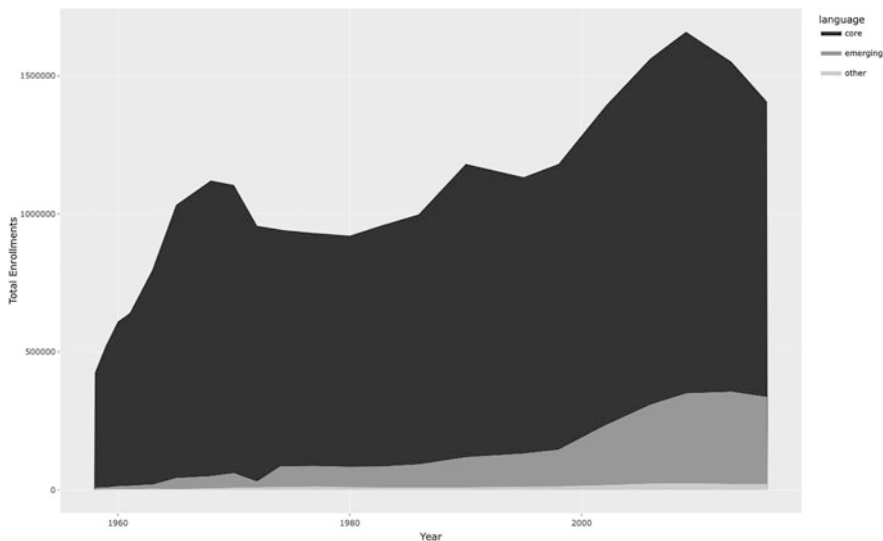


Fig. 1 Total enrollments, by core, emerging, and other groups, <https://rpubs.com/fed-ka/core-emerg-other>

2 Core Languages

From 1958 and until 1968, the enrollments of six languages — French, Spanish, German, Italian, Russian, and Latin — completely dominated almost all world language study in the United States. The largest of these six was French, which in 1968 had swelled to 386,694 total enrollments. Beginning with the 1970 census, French and German, the two most-enrolled core languages up until that point, began to decline, experiencing three more major drops in 1975, 1995, and 2013. The latter, which follows the 2009 recession, affected almost all world language enrollments surveyed by the MLA. As of 2016, enrollments in French are less than half of what they were in 1968. Latin, included in the core languages group due to its popularity in 1965, when it was the fourth most-enrolled languages, declined significantly by 1990, remaining relatively stable until 2009 (Figs. 2 and 3).

Two core languages have bucked these larger trends. Italian has grown slowly over the course of this period, peaking in enrollments in 2009. Russian, which had a peak in 1968, peaked to its highest enrollments in 1990, before declining again to half of its enrollments in the 1990s. Spanish, on the other hand, has grown exponentially throughout this timeframe, usurping French as the most taught world language in the United States in 1970 when it began to mirror enrollments more accurately in secondary schools across the United States (Brod, 1972). Spanish would continue to grow through the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, reaching its

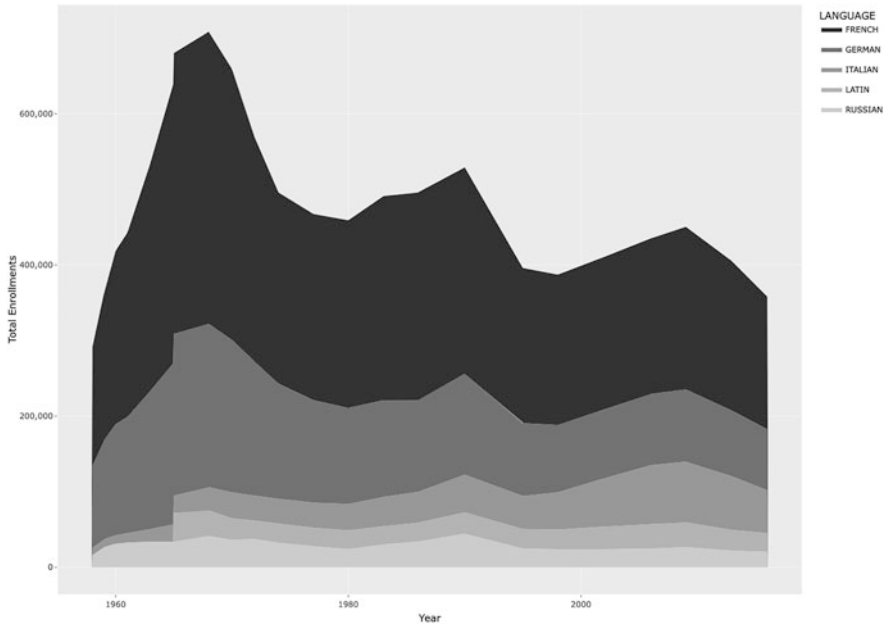


Fig. 2 Core languages, excluding Spanish, <https://rpubs.com/fed-ka/core-no-spanish>

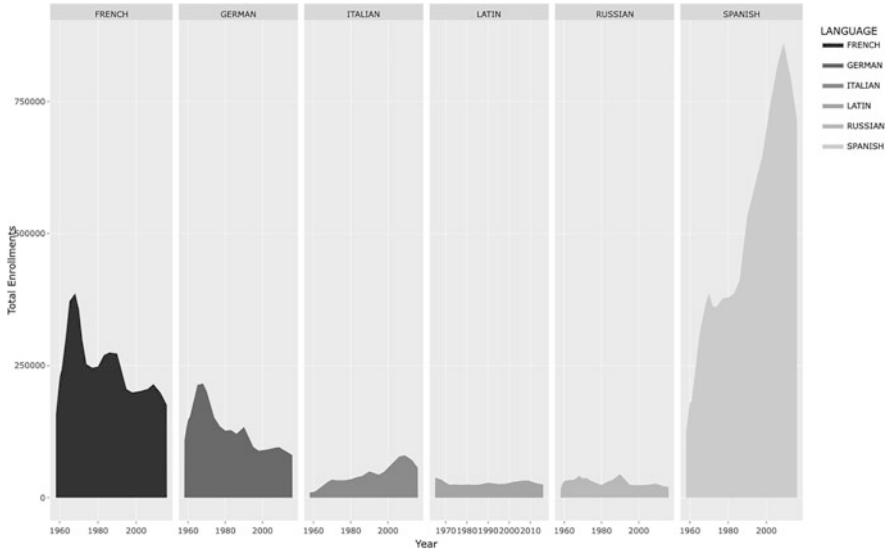


Fig. 3 Core languages, small multiples, including Spanish, <https://rpubs.com/fed-ka/core-sm>

highest peak in 2009 with 861,029 enrollments. As of 1995, most language study in the United States is composed of enrollments in Spanish (Looney & Lusin, 2019) (Fig. 3).

3 Emerging Languages

The enrollment trends of the next eight most enrolled-in languages join Spanish in their precipitous rise over the course of the second half of the twentieth century (Fig. 4). As a cluster, the emerging languages category has consistently experienced strong growth since 1970, almost tripling in size between 1998 (115,792) and 2009 (302,149). Enrollments in East Asian languages, such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean not only increased steadily until 2009, but experienced a much smaller relative decline than many of the core languages — Japanese and Korean, for instance, experienced almost no decline between 2009 and 2016, among the few languages to do so. Arabic, which was relatively stable through the 1980s and 1990s, spiked in the early 2000s, experiencing a negligible drop in 2009. Portuguese, a language with very little presence in the 1960s, has tripled in size over the course of the postwar period, peaking in 2009 and remaining strong in 2016. Another high-growth language in this category is American Sign Language (ASL), which was added to the world language census in 1990, and which is outpacing most of the

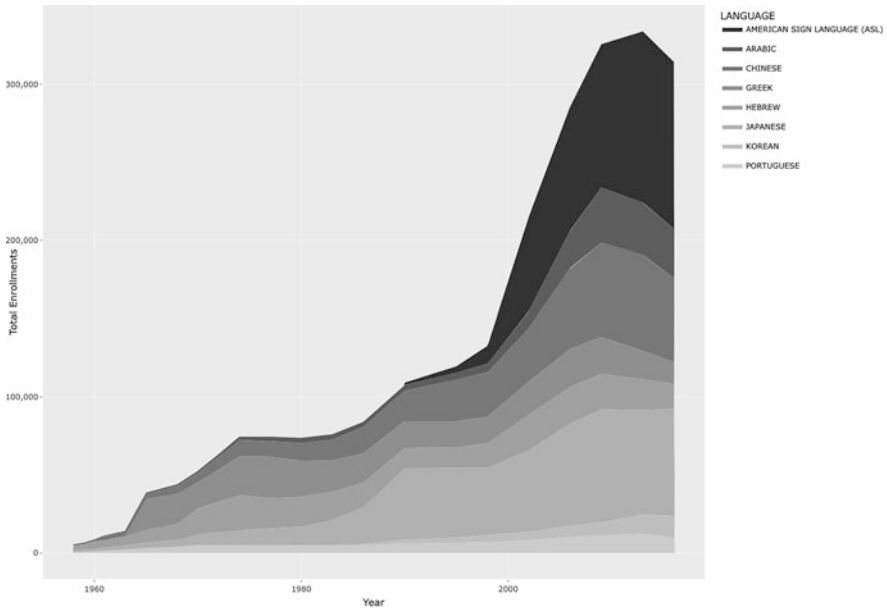


Fig. 4 All emerging languages, <https://rpubs.com/fed-ka/emerging-total>

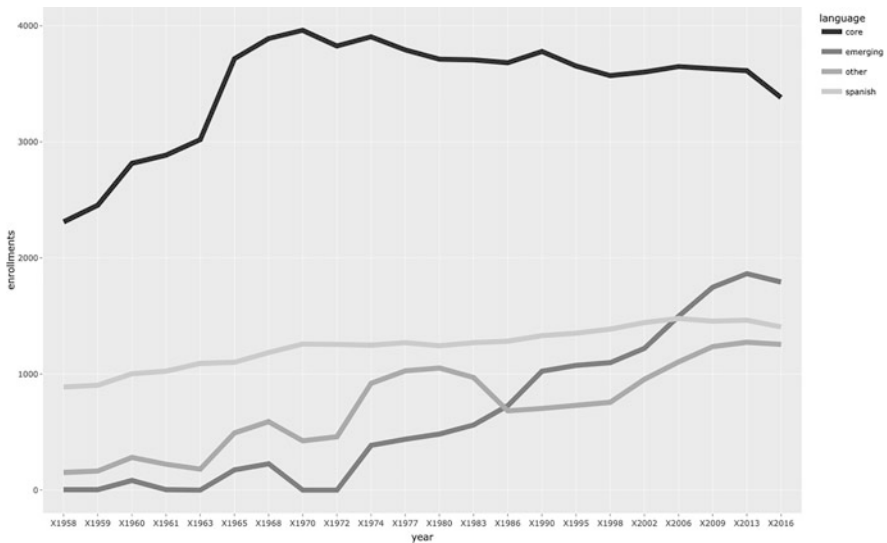


Fig. 5 Total courses offered over time by course, emerging, and other groups

other emerging languages in enrollments by a significant degree. Overall, many of these languages have done well to resist the “crises” that are so prevalent in the core group (Fig. 5).

4 Other Languages

While the top-14 languages — in both “core” and “emerging” categories — encompass over 90% of the total enrollments, the remaining 10% of enrollments in just about 339 languages of the MLA surveys nevertheless provide us with a set of valuable trends that can tell us a bit about the future of language study in the United States. As we can see from Fig. 6, the number of courses offered in both the “emerging” and the “other” categories has been steadily increasing, while courses offered in the “core” group have been steadily decreasing. Looking at these languages in aggregate tells an important story regarding the importance that non-European languages have had to play in the last two decades of undergraduate enrollment.

This same trend is visible if we look at total enrollments across the top-22 languages in the “other” category. Noticeable growth occurs in a variety of emerging languages from the Global South: Aramaic, Armenian, Farsi/Persian, Filipino, Hindi, Swahili, Turkish, and Vietnamese. Substantial and steady growth is also seen in the indigenous languages of the Americas and Pacific Islands: Ojibwe, Navajo, and Hawai’ian have all experienced sizable increases in the 1980s and 1990s. Other languages in this group have either remained stable or declined, many of them European or Eastern European languages. Czech, Polish, and Dutch have largely remained a similar size during this survey. Norwegian and Swedish, on the other hand, have declined significantly in total enrollments since 1968. For a more detailed look at the individual patterns and trends of these languages, see the chart here: <https://rpubs.com/fed-ka/945732>.

Nevertheless, seeing all “other” languages in aggregate, as we see in Fig. 7, suggests that there is an increase in both the number of different languages available for study and the total enrollments in those languages in the United States. In 1968,

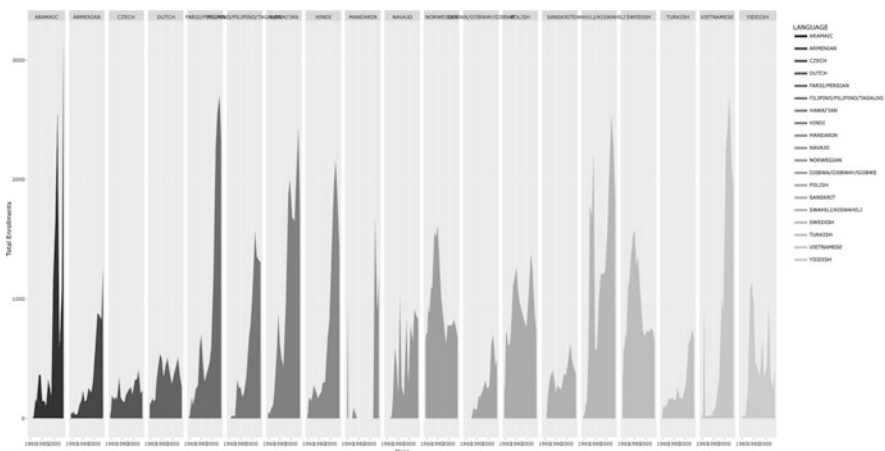


Fig. 6 Total courses offered by year, <https://rpubs.com/fed-ka/total-enrolls>

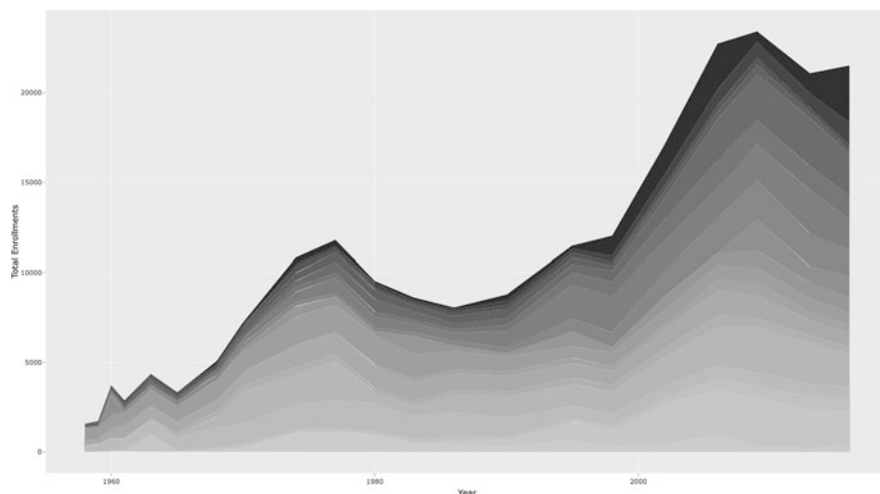


Fig. 7 All less commonly taught languages, stacked area graph, <https://rpubs.com/fed-ka/all-lct1>

the languages in this “long tail” accounted for under 5211 total enrollments — by 2009, that number was close to 24,056 total enrollments. By looking at the “other languages” category in more detail, we can see that it is undoubtedly true that the diversity in language study in the USA has increased significantly over the course of the twentieth century and will likely continue to increase over the course of the twenty-first century.

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World Language Enrollment at Community Colleges in the United States Between 1960 and 2010



Tomonori Nagano

Abstract This chapter explores world language (WL) enrollment at community colleges between the 1960s and the 2010s. Like 4-year institutions, community colleges experienced a major increase in WL enrollment up to 2009, but the WL enrollment at community colleges started to experience continuing declines to the present day. A major factor in the growth of WL enrollment until the 2010s was the increase in total undergraduate enrollment at community colleges, which was primarily triggered by higher participation rates of non-traditional students such as students of color, students from working-class backgrounds, and students with an immigrant origin. The chapter presents data for WL enrollment trends at community colleges and introduces the results of the *Students and Instructors of Languages at Community Colleges Survey* (Nagano et al., 2017), which has examined changes in the demographics of students taking WL classes at community college, highlighting the rich and diverse linguistic experiences that students bring into classrooms.

Keywords Community colleges · World language enrollment · SILCC survey

1 Introduction

This section explores the world language (WL) enrollment at community colleges,¹ which collectively accounted for nearly 40% of the total undergraduate enrollment in the U.S. at its peak in 2010 (de Brey et al., 2022). Many students at community colleges come from underprivileged populations, including children of immigrants,

¹Community colleges in this section generally refer to only public and private not-for-profit 2-year institutions granting associate degrees. Private for-profit 2-year institutions, which include many of the vocational and technical institutions, are not included because they have a different development history and educational mission from those of public and nonprofit 2-year institutions.

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students of color, and students from minorities and working-class families (Cohen et al., 2013; Levin & Kater, 2012; Teranishi et al., 2011). Despite the sheer number of students that community colleges serve and their unique role in providing equitable access to higher education in the U.S., only a few studies have systematically examined the WL enrollment at community colleges.² In this manuscript, trends of WL enrollment at community colleges between 1960 and 2020 will be reviewed with multiple sources of data points including the MLA Enrollment data (Looney & Lusin, 2021).

According to the MLA Enrollment data (Looney & Lusin, 2021; Chapter “[MLA Language Enrollment Trends](#)” of this volume), WL enrollment at both 4-year institutions and 2-year institutions had substantial growth in the last half century. The WL enrollment peaked in 2009, followed by a declining period that continues to the present day. Figure 1 shows WL enrollment trends at 4-year institutions and 2-year institutions between 1959–2016 (from MLA’s Language Enrollment Database).³ The overall trend shows a gradual increase in the number of students who studied a WL at community colleges between 1959 and 2009, followed by a rapid decrease in the enrollment in the 2010s.⁴ WL enrollment at community colleges increased fivefold between 1960 and 2009 while 4-year institutions saw only a

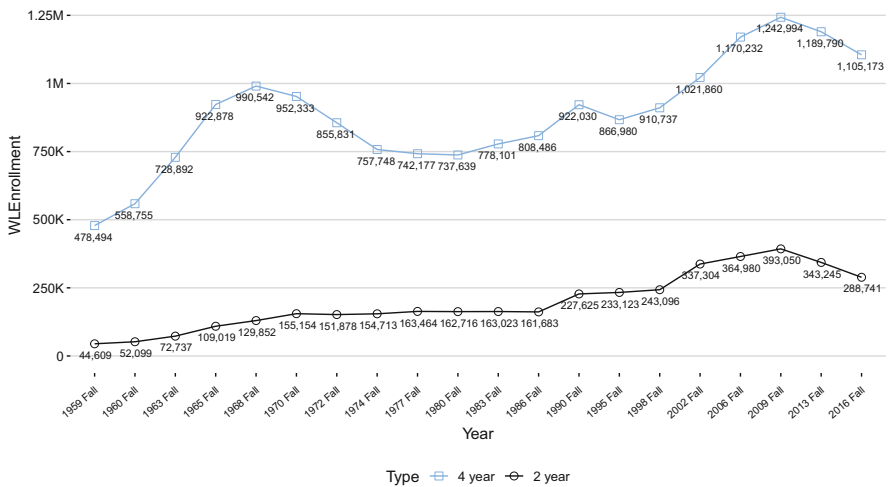


Fig. 1 Undergraduate world language enrollment by year and institutional type

²The MLA recent reports by Looney and Lusin (2021) and Lusin (2005) carefully examined and presented analysis of the MLA’s modern language enrollment data for 2-year institutions.

³Enrollment numbers in Fig. 1 are slightly lower than those reported by Lusin (this volume) since I only report undergraduate enrollment. The MLA’s enrollment surveys include both undergraduate and graduate enrollment.

⁴The declining trend happened even before topsy-turvy enrollment erosion at community colleges during the pandemic. The impact of the pandemic between 2020–2022 is outside of the scope of this review.

modest increase (128.9%) during the same time period. To put it differently, WL enrollment at community colleges accounted for only 8% of the total WL enrollment in 1959, but its proportion in WL enrollment had increased to 20% in 2016.

I will discuss several possible explanations for these enrollment trends with data. The goal of this chapter is to familiarize readers with the institutional history and mission of American community colleges and to make a proposal for collaboration between the WL faculty at community colleges and 4-year institutions in developing streamlined paths for community college students to 4-year institutions.

2 A Brief History of Community Colleges in the U.S.

2.1 Foundation of Community Colleges in the U.S.

Community colleges, defined in this manuscript as open-access institutions granting associate degrees, are a relatively new and evolving product of the U.S. higher education system. Community colleges, which were called “junior colleges” early in their history, were proposed by several educators in the twentieth century such as Harry Tappan (the University of Michigan), William Rainey Harper (University of Chicago), Alexis Lange (the University of California), David Starr Jordan (Stanford University), and Edmund J. James (the University of Illinois) (Cohen et al., 2013).

The idea of junior colleges was well received by some academics influenced by the early European style higher education system, in which universities primarily focused on research and were separated from non-universities, which would provide general education and vocational training programs (such as College of Higher Education and Further Education College in the U.K. and *Fachhochschule* in Germany). However, the role of junior colleges in U.S. higher education was marginal in the beginning. There were only 74 junior colleges in 1915 (Snyder, 1993; Cohen et al., 2013) and the overwhelming majority of them were private institutions, mostly former high schools and schools affiliated with churches.

As shown in Fig. 2, the number of 2-year institutions, especially public 2-year institutions, started to increase in the late 1920s and the number plateaued at around 1,000 institutions by the 1970s. The number of students attending community colleges also started to increase. In 1931, only 85,000 students were reported to attend community colleges (accounting for only 7.5% of undergraduate enrollment), but the number consistently increased until 2010, when the community college enrollment peaked at 7,683,597, or 42.5% of undergraduate enrollment (See Fig. 3) (Snyder, 1993; de Brey et al., 2022).

2.2 Expansion of Community Colleges in the 1960s and Accessibility to College Education

A massive expansion of community colleges took place in the 1960s (see Figs. 2 and 3), during which community colleges started actively recruiting students with non-traditional backgrounds such as students of color, mature students, and immigrant-origin students. In 1947, President Harry Truman’s Commission on Higher Education published *Higher Education for American Democracy*, proposing to make higher education accessible for all Americans through a network of community colleges and using Federal spending for scholarships and grants. In 1965, the Pell Grant, a Federal financial assistance program for low-income families, was established by the *Higher Education Act (HEA)* of 1965. A more diverse body of students, including women, minorities, working class students, and older students, would need places for post-secondary education. The infrastructure of community colleges was ready for an expansion in the 1960s. Cohen et al. (2013) report that many community colleges had already been built within a reasonable commuting distance (within 25 miles) for most potential community college students. Several states (California, Florida, Illinois, New York, Ohio, Michigan, and Washington) had established a mature system for public community colleges by the 1970s. Demographic patterns, an expected increase of college-age population among the Baby Boomers and the increase of immigrants after the passage of the *Hart-Cellar Act* in 1965, also presented a favorable prospect for community colleges.

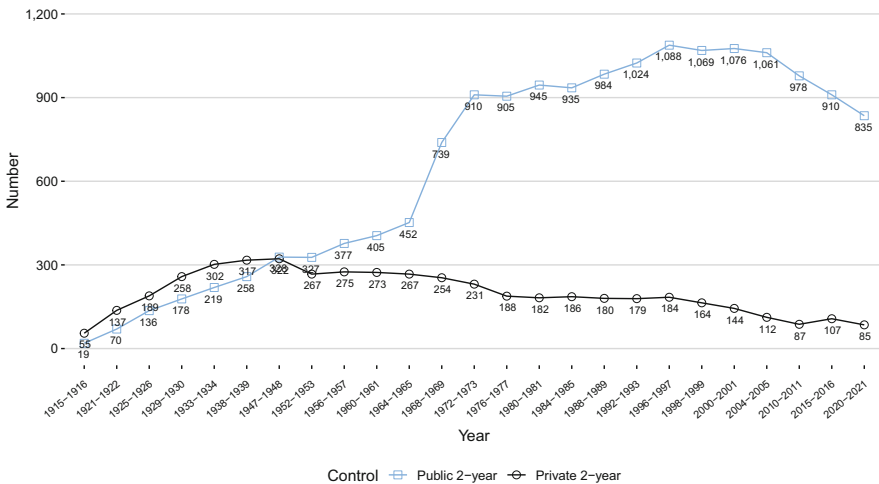


Fig. 2 Number of community colleges by year and control. (Data from 1915 to 2010 are from Cohen et al. (2013) Table 1.1. Data between 2011–2021 are from the USED Digest of Education Statistics 2021 Table 317.10)

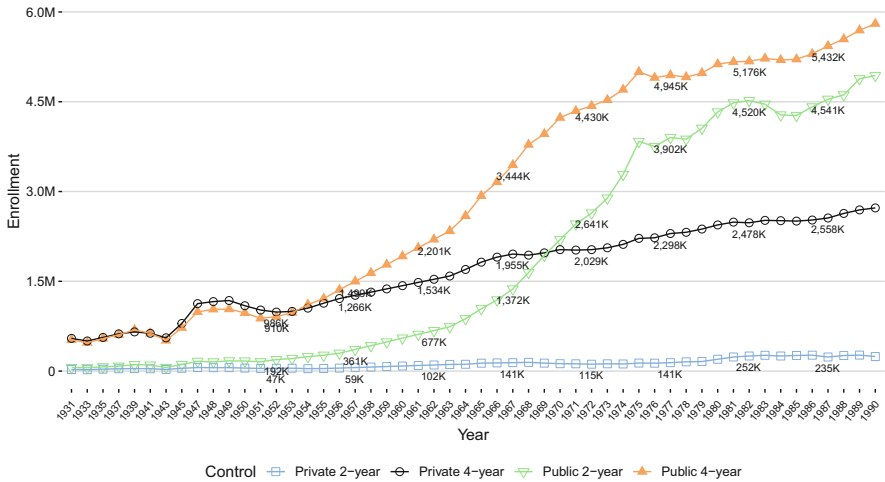


Fig. 3 Enrollment of higher education institutions by control and type of Institution. (The data between 1957 and 1962 are missing in Snyder (1993) and have been extrapolated from the adjacent years)

Accessibility to higher education, also known as an open-admission policy, has become the central mission for community colleges since this transformational period. An open-access policy is the standard for the overwhelming majority of public community colleges, which actively recruits students from non-traditional backgrounds such as women, minorities, immigrants, low-income students, and those academically less prepared for post-secondary education (Cohen et al., 2013). Many classes are scheduled in the evening, early morning, and on weekends for students with work and/or family responsibilities during the day. Curriculum has been redesigned for students who seek to transfer to 4-year institutions after community college. Community colleges have expanded their Liberal Arts offerings and have re-focused on general education curricula, including Basic Skills courses such as Remedial Math and English as a Second Language (ESL). Financial assistance programs, such as Pell Grants and the GI Bill, became available to a wider population. Many community colleges, especially those built as part of a larger higher education systems in major metropolitan areas such as California and New York, have become feeder institutions for 4-year institutions. Geographic distance, flexible schedule, general education curricula, and financial assistance were attractive to non-traditional students without the means for 4-year institutions, which often entailed relocation, full-time enrollment, financial commitment, and academic readiness for post-secondary education.

This historical analysis of community colleges presents a few important considerations for how to analyze the trends of world language enrollment. First, we will need to analyze WL enrollment trends in comparison with the growth in

undergraduate enrollment over the same period. While WL enrollment increased between 1959 and 2009, so was undergraduate enrollment during the same period. In other words, we need to control for the general growth of undergraduate enrollment in order to see the net growth of students who opted to study world languages. Second, community colleges cater to students from non-traditional backgrounds. Through a comparison of WL enrollment trends at 4-year and 2-year institutions after the 1960’s, we can postulate major changes in the student demographics that took place in the U.S. higher education as well as in the WL classroom.

2.3 Undergraduate Enrollment and World Language Enrollment

A quick comparison between the MLA’s modern language enrollment data (Fig. 1) and the overall increase in undergraduate enrollment in the past 50 years (Fig. 3) shows remarkable similarities. In the following sections, I will argue that much of the growth in the WL enrollment between the 1960s and the 2010s owes itself to the growth in undergraduate students in the past half century. In fact, if we control for the growth of general undergraduate enrollment at 4-year and 2-year institutions, the enrollment trends in WL suggest new interpretations of the MLA’s data. Figures 4 and 5 show growth rates of WL enrollment and undergraduate enrollment between 1970 and 2016 at community colleges and 4-year institutions, respectively.

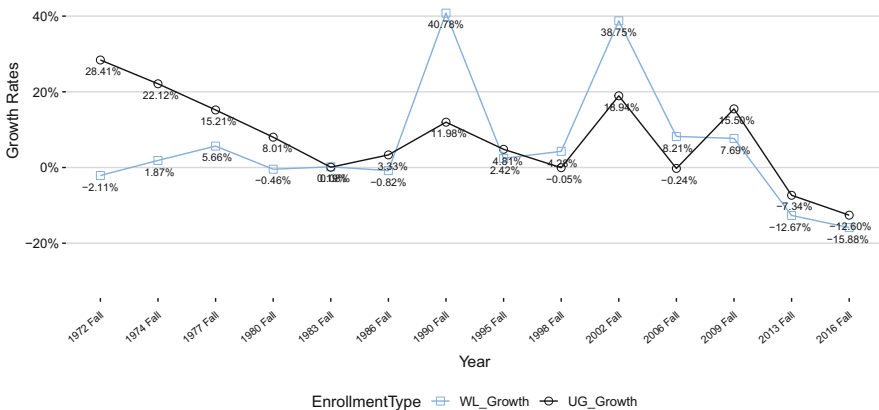


Fig. 4 Growth rates of undergraduate enrollment and world language enrollment at community colleges. (Data from the USED Digest of Education Statistics 2021 Table 303.70. The data for 1972, 1974, 1977, and 1983 are not reported in the dataset and have been extrapolated from the adjacent years)

At community colleges (Fig. 4), the overall enrollment growth usually outpaced the WL enrollment growth except for periods in 1990 and 2002. The gap in the 1960s and the 1970s is remarkable. For example, between 1970 and 1972, while the overall enrollment at community colleges grew by 28.4%, the WL enrollment went down by a few percent. Overall, WL departments/programs at community colleges were unable to take advantage of their general enrollment growth until the 1980s. After 1986, however, WL enrollment at community colleges outpaced overall enrollment until 2009, especially in 1990 and 2002. After 2009, both the undergraduate enrollment and WL enrollment started to decline; the loss was slightly larger in the WL enrollment. To put it differently, fewer community college students than expected chose to enroll in WL courses throughout the history of MLA’s Enrollment Survey, except for brief moments in 1990 and 2002.

Four-year institutions (Fig. 5) show a similar pattern, but with a lot less variability between the two enrollment trends. Like community colleges, the WL enrollment at 4-year institutions slightly lagged behind the overall enrollment between 1970 and early 1980s, but with a much smaller gap between the two enrollment trends. The widest gap took place in 1974, in which the general enrollment at 4-year institutions increased by 5.0% while the WL enrollment decreased by 11.5%. This pattern flipped after the late 1980s until 2009, but again the gap between the two trends remained much smaller at 4-year institutions than that of community colleges.

In sum, it appears that WL enrollment in the past half century is, to a large extent, a function of the total undergraduate enrollment, especially at 4-year institutions. However, this explanation alone falls short to explain why community colleges had a much larger gap between undergraduate enrollment and WL enrollment compared to 4-year institutions.

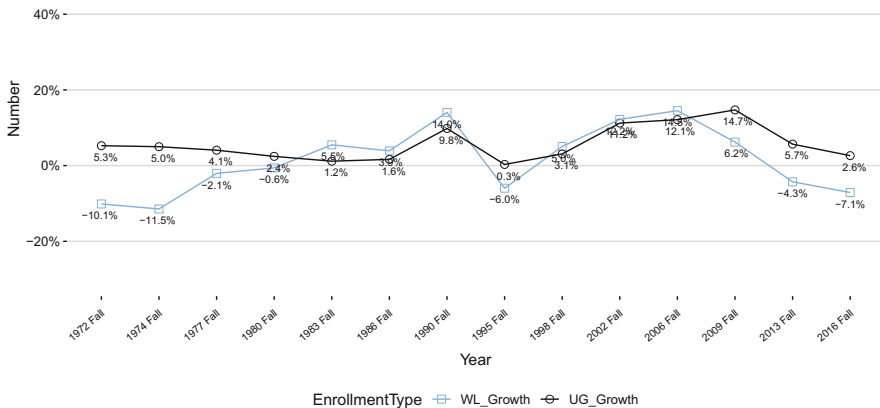


Fig. 5 Growth rates of undergraduate enrollment and world language enrollment at 4-year Institutions. (Data from the USED Digest of Education Statistics 2021 Table 303.70. The data for 1972, 1974, 1977, and 1983 are not reported in the dataset and have been extrapolated from the adjacent years)

2.4 *Accessibility to College Education for Students of Color and Immigrant-Origin Students*

Cohen et al. (2013) and Snyder (1993) discuss two underlying causes for the increase of the overall undergraduate enrollment after the 1960s. After the baby boomers' mass entry into higher education, undergraduate enrollment has been sustained by two new student populations. The first group is students from non-traditional backgrounds such as women, students of color, and low-income students. The second group is immigrant-origin students. Community colleges were essential to make higher education accessible to those two emerging new student populations.

After the 1960s, higher education has become more accessible to a wider group of high school graduates. Cohen et al. (2013) show that college participation rates (the ratio of college-age population attending post-secondary education institutions to the total college-age population) increased from 18.3% in 1960 to 41.2% in 2010. Table 1 shows college participation rates by type of institution (2-year vs. 4-year), sex, and race/ethnicity. College participation rates have increased across all dimensions of student types, but most notable among student groups that were underrepresented until the 1960s. For example, only 20.3% of female at 18–24 years olds participated in higher education in 1970, but female students' participation rates reached 44.5% in 2020 and surpassed the male participation rates by 8.9%. College participation rates among students of color nearly doubled between 1970 and 2020; for example, Black students' participation rates increased from 15.5% in 1970 to 35.8% in 2020 and Hispanic students from 15.8% in 1990 to 35.8% in 2020.

The college participation rates for 2-year college (i.e., the proportion of 18–24 years old who attend 2-year colleges) in Table 1 indicates almost no change between 1975 (9.0%) and 2020 (9.1%), but this is due to an artifact of data analysis. Community college enrollment has had a massive expansion after the 1960s and a significant number of new students entering to community colleges were from non-traditional backgrounds. Cohen et al. (2013) note that the increase of non-traditional students at community colleges are not properly represented in the United States Education Department (USED) data. It is because the USED historically used the age range of 18–24 to measure the college participation rate and missed a large part of community college students who are older than 24 years old. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, 2022), the average age of community college students is 27 years old and students above 22 years old represent 56% of all community college enrollment. Therefore, if we include mature students (those older than 24 years old), the actual participation rates among students with non-traditional backgrounds is a lot higher, especially at community colleges.

Immigrant students are another new group that added to the total enrollment in U.S. higher education after the 1960s. The most significant contributor to the increase of immigrant students is the Hart-Cellar Act, a landmark immigration policy that eliminated the national origins quota system for new immigrants (Hugo-Lopez

Table 1 Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college, by level of institution and sex and race/ethnicity (USED Digest of Education Statistics (2022) Table 302.60. Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college, by level of institution and sex and race/ethnicity of student: 1970 through 2020)

	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Total	25.7%	26.3%	25.7%	27.8%	32.0%	34.3%	35.5%	38.9%	41.2%	40.5%	40.0%
2-year		9.0%	7.1%	7.4%	8.7%	8.9%	9.4%	9.6%	12.9%	10.6%	9.1%
4-year		17.3%	18.6%	20.4%	23.3%	25.4%	26.0%	29.2%	28.2%	29.9%	30.9%
Male	32.1%	29.0%	26.4%	28.4%	32.3%	33.1%	32.6%	35.3%	38.3%	37.8%	35.6%
Female	20.3%	23.7%	25.0%	27.2%	31.8%	35.5%	38.4%	42.5%	44.1%	43.2%	44.5%
White	27.1%	27.4%	27.3%	30.0%	35.1%	37.9%	38.7%	42.8%	43.3%	41.8%	40.9%
Black	15.5%	20.4%	19.4%	19.6%	25.4%	27.5%	30.5%	33.1%	38.4%	34.9%	35.8%
Hispanic		20.4%	16.1%	16.9%	15.8%	20.7%	21.7%	24.8%	31.9%	36.6%	35.8%
Asian					56.9%	54.6%	55.9%	61.0%	63.6%	62.6%	63.7%
Pacific Islander								50.6%	36.0%	24.1%	33.6%

et al., 2015). After the passage of the Hart-Cellar Act in 1965, the foreign-born population in the U.S. increased to 45 million in 2015 from 9.6 million in 1965 (Hugo-Lopez et al., 2015). Students with an immigrant background, especially the children of immigrants, have become a major part of the student body in the current higher education.

Information on immigration background is rarely available in the major higher education data sets such as IPEDS and Digest of Education Statistics, but a few studies have explored this topic. Batalova and Feldblum (2020) analyzed the Current Population Survey and estimated 5.3 million students in the U.S. higher education system have immigrant origins as of 2018. Immigrant-origin students account for 28% of total undergraduate enrollment, which increased from 2.9 million immigrant-origin students, or 20% of the total undergraduate enrollment, in 2000. Much of this increase is due to second-generation Americans (i.e., U.S.-born children of immigrants), who saw a 131% increase between 2000 and 2018. In terms of race/ethnicity, the majority of immigrant-origin students are Latino (43%), followed by AAPI (22%), White (19%), Black (13%), and Other (4%).

Since most higher education data do not actively collect immigration backgrounds of students, it is not entirely clear how many immigrant-origin students choose community colleges over 4-year institutions as their starting point to higher education. However, community colleges actively recruit students from non-traditional backgrounds and students in need of remedial English training are one of the typical student populations that they seek. Anecdotally, a large number of immigrant students are currently attending community college for their proximity to their home, affordability, and academic support for non-traditional students such as remedial education.

3 Student Linguistic Diversity in the WL Classroom at Community Colleges

As discussed above, non-traditional and immigrant-origin students represent a significant part of the current enrollment at community colleges. This dynamic shift of the student population has had a direct impact on WL enrollment at community colleges.

One major change is the level of linguistic diversity among students in WL classroom at community colleges. Students from minority and immigrant-origin backgrounds tend to speak minority languages at home, or are more likely to be exposed to them in their community. These immigrant-origin students display an interesting linguistic *mélange* with diverse heritage languages, which students bring into WL classroom. An unprecedented level of linguistic diversity at community colleges is anecdotally evident, but very few studies have documented the level of linguistic diversity that WL classrooms at community colleges are experiencing now. This motivated my colleagues at a National Language Resource Center at the CUNY Graduate Center and me to conduct a large-scale survey on this topic.

In order to capture a snapshot of the dynamic student demographics in the WL classrooms at community colleges, the *Students and Instructors of Languages at Community Colleges* (SILCC) Surveys collected information from 1756 community college students in the WL classes as well as from 140 WL instructors at 101 community colleges in 33 different states (Nagano et al., 2017, 2019; Ketcham et al., 2020). The survey data showed that about a half of the survey respondents were either first-generation immigrants (9.5%), 1.5-generation immigrants (8.8%), or second-generation immigrants (29.5%). While gender of students in the WL classroom was similar to the general demographics of community college students (56.5% female in the WL classroom while the national average of female students at community colleges is 57.1% [American Association of Community Colleges, 2022]), there were some notable differences in ethnicity and age. The study found that a lot fewer Black students were in the WL classroom (7% while the national average for CC students is 14.9%) while Hispanic (27.5% while the national average for CC students is 21.5%) and Asian (13.9% while the national average for CC students is 5%) were overrepresented. In terms of age, students in the WL classroom were a lot younger than the national average; 71.7% of students in the WL classroom were 24 years old or younger, while the equivalent figure in the national average is 53.8%.

The most significant finding in the SILCC Surveys was the level of linguistic diversity that students had already possessed before entering into the WL classroom. The survey results showed that 42% of respondents spoke a language other than English at home (home/heritage language). In addition, 8% of respondents identified themselves as native speakers of a language other than English. In other words, only half of the survey respondents were second language learners who had not been exposed to a non-English language outside of the classroom setting (that is, English-monolingual students with or without prior experience in learning a WL at school).

Among those who spoke languages other than English at home, an overwhelming majority spoke Spanish (58%), followed by small groups of speakers of other languages such as Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) (4%), Korean (3%), German (3%), Tagalog/Filipino (2%), French (2%), Arabic (1%), Japanese (1%), Vietnamese (1%), ASL (1%), Italian (1%), and Portuguese (1%). The level of linguistic diversity that students represented was astonishing. In the survey, there were 737 students speaking languages other than English at home and they reported a total of 43 different languages. Also, a large number of the survey respondents (9%) reported speaking more than two languages other than English at home.

The level of linguistic diversity in the WL classroom at community colleges is remarkable and it has undoubtedly impacted the teaching and learning of WL at community colleges. From an instructional perspective, students' linguistic resources are an important asset for developing advanced-level language competency among WL students. Researchers and policy makers identify heritage languages as a national resource (Bradburn, 2016; Fanton, 2017) since heritage language speakers often have a high level of proficiency, many with a native-like phonological performance, as well as cultural fluency in their heritage language and culture.

It's important to note that not all community college students are actively engaged in developing and taking advantage of their home/heritage language skills. The SILCC Surveys show that only a half of heritage language students study their heritage language in the WL classroom. In other words, despite their familiarity and fluency in the heritage language, many students decide not to attempt to refine their heritage language skills in the classroom setting. The data show that 45% of heritage language speakers are learning a language different from their own home language. It is perplexing because there are many obvious advantages in learning one's own heritage language, including a higher grade and an opportunity to improve one's career and employability with advanced heritage language skills. Despite numerous advantages, many students decide to study a new language rather than their own heritage language. One reason seems to be curriculum. If students speak a language other than Spanish (such as Mandarin Chinese or French), the likelihood of taking their own heritage language significantly decreases to 19%. External factors, such as availability of a WL course in their heritage language, play a major role in determining which language to study for students who speak a world language other than Spanish. However, some heritage language students voluntarily choose a language other than their own heritage language too. Even among students who speak Spanish at home, only 63% of students chose to learn Spanish in the classroom despite the fact that Spanish is the most frequently offered world language at community colleges. In other words, 37% of Spanish heritage language students opted out of learning Spanish even when their own heritage language is offered as a world language class.

4 What Can We Learn from Analyzing World Language Enrollment at Community Colleges?

The MLA's Enrollment Survey shows steep declines in the WL enrollment at both 4-year institutions and community colleges after 2009. As Looney and Lusin (2021) put it, the declining pattern found in 2013 was "the beginning of a trend rather than a blip" and the overall decline in the WL enrollment between 2009 and 2016 reached as high as -26.5% .

What's troubling in this declining period is that, unlike previous times, the decline is happening at both 4-year institutions and 2-year institutions at the same time. In addition, at both types of institutions, the decline of WL enrollment is happening a lot faster than the decrease in the general undergraduate enrollment. In 2016, the general undergraduate enrollment at 4-year institutions increased by 2.6% while WL enrollment slightly decreased (-7.1% ; see Fig. 5). At 2-year institutions, the general undergraduate enrollment decreased by 11.5% and the decrease of WL enrollment was 12.6% (see Fig. 4).

We need to muster our effort urgently to revitalize world language enrollment and reverse this ominous enrollment pattern in our field.

At community colleges, it is necessary to reconsider the world language curriculum in light of their unique student population and their untapped linguistic talents. It is fair to say that community college faculty usually make their best effort to emulate the world language curriculum and teaching practices at 4-year institutions for their community college students. Learning objectives for world language classes at community colleges are frequently judged against those for the equivalent courses at 4-year institutions, which are considered the gold standard. Students are expected to master subject matter sufficiently enough for a smooth transition to a subsequent level at a 4-year institution. This practice, however, overlooks both the foundational mission of community colleges as well as students' unique linguistic skills.

A unique WL curriculum for community college students is also important given the previous linguistic knowledge that community college students bring into the WL classroom. For example, more WL classes specifically designed for heritage language speakers should be offered at community colleges given the advanced-level proficiency in heritage/home language that many community college students have prior to enrolling in a WL class. Such WL courses for heritage language speakers typically focus on the areas where heritage language speakers have a limited command, such as high-register vocabulary, less frequent grammatical structures, and expressions in the formal social settings. The curriculum for home/heritage language students should be designed to assess students' previous linguistic experience such as oral fluency and familiarity with colloquial expressions rather than to penalize them for not fitting the usage and style within the parameters of standardized linguistic norms. Curriculum properly designed for community college students and their unique needs will be a first step to revitalize WL enrollment at community colleges.

Finally, if the primary mission of community colleges is equity in higher education rather than students' scholarly excellence, the curriculum for individual classes must reflect its institutional goal. For students with family and work responsibilities, the curriculum should allow some level of flexibility in terms of its schedule, modality of instruction, and assessment. Community college instructors should be able to spend time helping first-generation students or students with insufficient academic preparation as much as delivering instruction in the subject matter. For example, the WL curriculum at community colleges might include additional instructional time such as individual tutoring and lab practice for elementary-level WL classes, which may not be common at 4-year institutions.

Four-year institutions that are interested in collaborating with community colleges should understand the history and the institutional ethos of community colleges in order to establish a successful collaboration between the two. Community college faculty take pride in how they contribute to equity and accessibility in higher education more than individual students' scholarly excellence. Community college students face multitudes of challenges, including insufficient opportunities for quality education in K-12 and the lack of familial support for post-secondary education. Many community college faculty value the progress that students have made from the first day in class as much as their final product at the end of the semester.

Without understanding where professional goals and pride reside among the community college faculty, it is not easy to establish a meaningful collaboration among the WL faculty at 4-year institutions and community college students.

5 Conclusion

WL enrollment at community colleges accounts for a significant part of students studying WL at post-secondary institutions, but only a few studies have carefully investigated it on its own account. In this manuscript, WL enrollment trends, especially those at community colleges, between the 1960s and the 2010s have been reviewed and a few unique institutional characteristics of community colleges have been introduced. Given the current devastating trend of decreasing enrollment in WL at all types of post-secondary education institution, it has never been more urgent for WL faculty to analyze and learn from the past history of our own field and strategize collaborative effort to reverse the current trend in the WL enrollment.

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Part II

Student Voices

Amplifying Student Voices: US. Undergraduate Student Perspectives on Expanding Access and Increasing the Relevance of Courses in Languages Other Than English



Dianna Murphy and Jana Martin

Abstract This chapter presents findings from a census survey of the full undergraduate student population at a U.S. university to investigate student reasons for (not) studying languages other than English (LOTEs) at the college level, and student ideas for how LOTE courses could be made more accessible and relevant to them. Participants in the study were undergraduate students who both had and had not enrolled in LOTE courses at the university. Findings suggest that for both groups of students, scheduling challenges, and the need to prioritize courses that fulfill degree requirements, were the main reasons students chose not to take LOTE courses. Student ideas for expanding access to LOTEs at the university included offering more options for class meeting times, fully or partially online courses, courses with fewer weekly class meeting times, and lower- or variable-credit courses. Student ideas for making LOTE courses more relevant to them were for courses to focus on aspects of contemporary life and culture in societies in which the language is used; to emphasize everyday language, especially in speaking; and to facilitate highly personalized learning in which LOTE study is linked with their individual academic and personal interests, and their professional goals.

Keywords L2 motivation · Undergraduate students · Barriers to language study · Relevance of language study to students · Survey research

1 Introduction

Research to understand student reasons for studying additional languages (L2) largely draws on theories of language learning motivation, of which the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS; Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Dörnyei &

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Ushioda, 2021) is by far the most influential (Boo et al., 2015).¹ The L2MSS draws on self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) and the construct of *possible selves* (Markus & Nurius, 1986) to posit possible future L2 selves that explain individual differences in L2 motivation: “Possible selves denote a powerful and at the same time versatile motivational self-mechanism, representing individuals’ ideas of what they *might* become, what they *would like* to become, and what they are *afraid of* becoming” (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015, p. 87). The *possible selves* of the L2MSS are not the only components of the model, however: student attitudes toward the *L2 learning experience* were also posited as a core, if under-theorized and under-researched (Dörnyei, 2019) component. Dörnyei (2019) suggested how engagement with the L2 learning experience might be conceptualized in the model, with different facets that include the school context, syllabus and teaching materials, learning tasks, one’s peers, and the teacher (p. 25).

Some scholars look to broader, systemic factors – some of which are conceptually related to the school context of the *L2 learning experience* of the L2MSS – that may help to explain U.S. postsecondary students’ participation in LOTE study. Unlike research based on L2 motivation, which to date has been based on empirical studies of students who are already participating in instructed language learning, this complementary line of research takes a broader view to examine aspects of the educational context such as racially based educational inequities, educational policies, and institutional discourses and barriers that may shape student attitudes and behaviors related to LOTE study, and may shed light on the reasons that U.S. students both are and are not studying additional languages. Anya (2020), for example, in an examination of the underrepresentation of African Americans in LOTE programs in the United States, makes the case that “lack of desire and motivation . . . do not fully explain the low rates of participation of African Americans in world language study . . . Their underrepresentation originates from a history of systemic exclusion and marginalization in U.S. education” (p. 98). Considering educational policies, Lord (2020) reflects on the history of the relationship between changes in institutional policies related to language requirements and the decrease in U.S. LOTE course enrollments. Diao and Liu (2020), who followed a number of U.S. students in their transition from secondary to postsecondary education, revealed a number of institutional barriers to postsecondary LOTE study: despite the interest among their participants in continuing to studying a LOTE (in their study, specifically Chinese) at the postsecondary level, such study was “incompatible with STEM majors” (p. 6), and students “aborted Chinese learning to ‘stay on track’ to fulfill their major or general academic requirements. . .” (p. 12).

¹The large body of research on L2 motivation is primarily based on English as an additional language, however, with scant studies that focus on the study of languages other than English (LOTEs) in English-dominant countries such as the United States (Boo et al., 2015; Mendoza & Phung, 2019; see also the Modern Language Journal 2017 special issue on *Beyond Global English: Motivation to Learn Languages in a Multicultural World*).

Murphy et al. (2022) found similar institutional barriers to postsecondary LOTE study among undergraduates. That study surveyed the full undergraduate population of a U.S. university to investigate student reasons for choosing to enroll – or not to enroll – in LOTE courses. For participants in the study who had not studied a LOTE at the university (–LOTE), their top reasons for not taking LOTE courses were related to aspects of the educational context that had nothing to do with the students’ interest or motivation to learn additional languages, or with language learning at all: they were that LOTE courses weren’t required for the students’ major and that LOTE courses did not fit in the students’ schedule. Among all of the study participants, students indicated that they would be more likely to enroll in LOTE courses if there were course options that worked better for their schedule (–LOTE $n = 951$, 57.6%; +LOTE $n = 1037$, 62.9%). Both groups of students also indicated that they would be more likely to enroll in LOTE courses if the courses focused on topics of professional interest (–LOTE $n = 1037$, 62.8%; +LOTE $n = 1233$, 74.8%) or of personal interest (–LOTE $n = 1004$, 60.8%; +LOTE $n = 1205$, 73.1%) to them (p. 16).

This chapter expands on the findings reported in Murphy et al. (2022) by presenting an analysis of qualitative data from that same study that provide insights into undergraduate student perspectives on (1) ways to expand access to university-level LOTE study by addressing scheduling issues, and (2) how LOTE courses might be made more relevant to students by addressing topics that are of professional or personal interest to them. The chapter addresses the following two research questions:

1. What are U.S. undergraduate students’ ideas for expanding access to LOTE courses, in terms of scheduling?
2. What are U.S. undergraduate students’ ideas for making LOTE courses more relevant to them?

In addressing these research questions, the chapter aims to center and amplify the voices of U.S. undergraduate students regarding their perspectives on postsecondary L2 study.

2 About the Study

This section provides a brief overview of the study participants, research instrument, data collection, and qualitative data analysis.²

²More detailed information about the study methods, including details about the quantitative data analysis, is in Murphy et al. (2022).

2.1 *Participants*

The study was based on a census survey of the full undergraduate population of the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) in mid-September 2019. Participants ($N = 3298$) were degree-seeking undergraduate students who were over age 18 and who had not requested that their contact information be withheld from the university directory. Approximately half of the participants ($n = 1648$, +LOTE) were enrolled in a LOTE course at the time the survey was administered ($n = 979$, 29.7%) or had enrolled in at least one LOTE course at the university in the past ($n = 669$, 20.3%); the other half ($n = 1650$, -LOTE) had never enrolled in a LOTE course at the university. The demographic profile of participants was largely representative of the full undergraduate population, with some over-represented groups (Asian, Women, and First-Year students), and two under-represented groups (Men and Fourth-Year students).

2.2 *Study Questionnaire*

The study instrument, available in an appendix in Murphy et al. (2022), was an online questionnaire developed at UW-Madison, following a collaborative and iterative approach to item development that included student and faculty focus groups, piloting and beta testing, and a technical review by survey experts with the UW Survey Center (UWSC). The questionnaire was comprised of 94 branching items that asked students to indicate how important the ability to speak LOTE³ was to them personally, about their reasons for enrolling – or not enrolling – in LOTE courses, and about conditions that would make them more likely to undertake or continue LOTE study at the university in the future. The questionnaire also included numerous demographic items.

Most of the questionnaire items were closed response, with the exception of several open-ended questions that asked students to explain or provide more information on their response to a closed question. The data that were analyzed for this chapter were responses to three open-ended questions that were presented to a sub-set of participants (#1 and #2, below) or to all participants (#3), as follows:

1. Students who indicated that they would be more likely to study LOTEs at the university if there were course options that worked better with their schedule were asked to describe what would work better for their schedule.
2. Students who indicated that they would be more likely to study LOTEs at the university if courses focused on topics of personal or professional interest to them were asked to describe those topics of interest.

³Following feedback from students in focus groups, LOTE proficiency was operationalized in the questionnaire as the ability to speak languages other than English.

3. All students were given the option to respond to a final open-ended question to provide additional thoughts related to improving language learning at the university.

2.3 *Data Collection*

The survey was administered online by the UWSC to the full UW-Madison undergraduate population ($N = 30,203$).⁴ Student contact information (names and email addresses) was obtained from the University Registrar. Invitations to participate in the study were sent out by email over a 3-week period beginning in mid-September 2019, with multiple follow-up invitations sent to non-respondents. The final response rate, after incomplete questionnaires were removed, was 10.9%.

The study was reviewed as exempt by the university's Institutional Review Board.

2.4 *Qualitative Data Analysis*

The study's qualitative data, student responses to open-ended questions on the questionnaire, were initially delivered by the UWSC separately from the quantitative dataset. To prepare the qualitative data for analysis, the researchers worked with the UWSC to link student responses to the open-ended questions with their responses to certain demographic items. The resulting master datafile was reviewed to remove any information that could potentially identify individuals and uploaded to NVIVO 12 for analysis.

A pair of researchers⁵ began the analysis by reading through the data several times and meeting to discuss the major themes that seemed to be emerging from the preliminary review. Then, working in NVIVO, they began to code the data for themes, establishing an initial taxonomy of themes and subthemes as they coded. The researchers coded several hundred responses together to make sure that they had a common understanding of the coding process and theme categorization. They then coded the rest of the responses separately, consulting regularly with each other. The researchers followed an inductive process when coding, noting and following patterns that emerged from the data rather than referring to a hypothesis (Abbuhl & Mackey, 2017). The coding process followed Baralt (2012), with the researchers meeting frequently to discuss difficult-to-interpret student responses and to recode, merge, reorganize, and "winnow" the data (Creswell, 2007, p. 152) until they agreed

⁴Students who did not give permission for the University Registrar to release their name and email address, or who were under age 18, were excluded from the study.

⁵Coding of the data was completed by the second author of this chapter and Kristin Dalby, former assistant director of the UW-Madison Language Institute.

on a final taxonomy and shared definitions of themes and several levels of subthemes.

After the coding was completed, the authors ran NVIVO queries to obtain frequencies of the themes and sub-themes by groups of students, +LOTE and –LOTE, and by the number of mentions of each (sub)theme. They then created tables with both frequencies and percentages to compare the two student groups, and to show the relative frequency that a given theme was mentioned. Finally, they reviewed the student responses to the open-ended questions again in NVIVO to select responses that were illustrative of major themes, and that represented both +LOTE and –LOTE students, and students with majors in different schools and colleges in the university. In Sects. 3.2 and 3.3, the number and relative proportion of mentions of each theme by –LOTE and +LOTE students are presented in tables. In line with the chapter's goal to amplify student voices, examples of student responses that illustrate each of those themes are presented after the tables, with minimal framing and commentary by the authors.

3 Results and Discussion

In expressing their ideas for expanding access to LOTE courses, students also described their reasons for *not* studying LOTEs at the university. This section thus begins with a discussion of those reasons, followed by findings to address the research questions related to undergraduate student ideas for expanding access and increasing the relevance of LOTE study for them.

3.1 *Reasons for Not Taking LOTE Courses*

The qualitative data analysis revealed two main inter-related themes explaining student reasons for not taking LOTE courses: students described (1) needing to prioritize their major or other degree requirements over LOTE study; and (2) not having enough room in their schedule for LOTE courses, given the way that LOTE courses are scheduled, the frequency of LOTE class meetings, and the number of credits of many LOTE courses.

3.1.1 **I Need to Prioritize My Major or Other Degree Requirements Over LOTE Study**

Students from both groups (–LOTE and +LOTE) described the need to prioritize courses that fulfill degree requirements over LOTE courses, although such comments were much more prevalent among –LOTE students. At UW-Madison, these degree requirements include university-wide general education breadth requirements

for all undergraduates; requirements based on the school or college in which the student is earning a major; and the requirements of the student's major(s) or certificate(s).⁶ Coursework in LOTEs is only required for students in the College of Letters & Science, although LOTE courses may be used to fulfill humanities requirements in some other schools and colleges. For those students not planning to major or earn a certificate in a LOTE, then – even those that are interested in LOTE study – courses that fulfill degree requirements are prioritized more highly than LOTE courses that don't.

Some of the students' discourse on this topic frames undergraduate education as an investment of both time and money to obtain credentials associated with a degree. If LOTE study doesn't fulfill a requirement or lead to a major or certificate, it was viewed by some students as an unaffordable – if desirable – luxury. LOTE courses, which are typically offered at the beginning levels for four to five credits, were viewed as being too “costly.” These views were found in the responses of both +LOTE and –LOTE students, as illustrated by the following examples:

Well, it's really about prioritizing what I need to get done specifically for my major. So right now, to take a language course is a luxury, because with time and money, it is not efficient for me to take a language course.

+LOTE student in Agriculture & Life Sciences

Language classes here at UW are around five credits. That's a lot considering that I'm not doing a language as my major. I'm a Legal Studies major, and I need to fulfill requirements for both L&S and my major. . . I would love to have taken Chinese language courses as I took the Chinese language in high school and even went to China!

–LOTE student in Letters & Science

3.1.2 Not Enough Room in My Schedule

The prioritization of courses that fulfill degree requirements was related to a second major theme explaining student reasons for not studying LOTEs, which was students not having enough room in their schedule to take LOTE courses. Students described challenges related to scheduling in several ways. First, as the following two examples illustrate, some students indicated that their schedules were already full, given coursework requirements related to their degree and the importance of graduating on time:

Well I have to take a lot of prerequisite course or courses focused on my major so there's no room for extra classes.

–LOTE student in Health Sciences⁷

⁶UW-Madison offers undergraduate certificates, not minors.

⁷The category of Health Sciences was created as a variable in Murphy et al. (2022) to account for students in the School of Nursing, School of Pharmacy, or who intended to apply for graduate programs in the School of Medicine and Public Health. Health Sciences is not a school or college at UW-Madison.

I am an engineer so if I wanted to take language classes, I would have had to graduate late.
 –LOTE student in Engineering

Other students described scheduling challenges in terms of the frequency of LOTE class meetings (especially compared with how other courses at the university are scheduled) and the students' other commitments or obligations, including work. At UW-Madison, most beginning-level LOTE courses are offered for four to five credits and meet 4–5 days per week at the same time of day. To the best of the authors' knowledge, no other subject area at the university follows this schedule of class meetings, making it difficult for students to fit LOTE study in. Moreover, for many less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), and for upper-level courses in other LOTEs, there is often just one section of the course offered, making it even more difficult for students to fit the specific LOTE course that they want or need in their schedule. Students described these challenges as follows:

It is incredibly difficult to fit in a class that I have to be at every day into my schedule. It limits my ability to make a schedule that works well with being involved in other clubs and organizations and having a job because I'm having to work around this class that is every day at the same time.
 +LOTE student in Letters & Science

One thing that could use improvement is the scheduling of class times, especially at the early levels. While I agree that the frequent session meetings are beneficial for students learning a new language... it also discourages students from trying to learn a new language. . . . I wanted to start learning a second foreign language while at UW, but I would be unable to given the demanding schedule of class sessions.
 +LOTE student in Business

. . . if I were to take a language class, it needs to be three credits and have the courseload of a three-credit class, not more.
 –LOTE student in Agriculture & Life Sciences

Finally, for this student, the frequency of LOTE class meetings was reminiscent of a high school, not a college, schedule:

The teacher was great I just remember hating meeting so many times a week. I wish more of the work was independent I just felt like I was in high school again, so I think I sort of started to resent the class.
 +LOTE student in Letters & Science

3.2 *Expanding Access to LOTE Courses*

In this study, the student ideas for expanding access to LOTE study are primarily related to scheduling. Murphy et al. (2022) found that both –LOTE ($n = 951$, 57.6%) and +LOTE ($n = 1037$, 62.9%) students would be more likely to enroll in LOTE courses if there were LOTE course options that would work better for their schedule (p. 16). The findings below are from a sub-set of those students who

Table 1 Themes related expanding access to LOTE courses

Themes	LOTE course enrollment					
	Mentions by –LOTE students ($n = 833$)		Mentions by +LOTE students ($n = 1015$)		Total mentions ($n = 1848$)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Offer more LOTE class time options	305	36.6	428	42.2	733	39.7
Offer online or partially online LOTE courses	227	27.2	198	19.5	425	23.0
Schedule fewer weekly LOTE class meetings	114	13.7	178	17.5	292	15.8
Make LOTE study count toward major or certificate	89	10.7	135	13.3	224	12.1
Offer lower- or variable-credit LOTE courses	98	11.8	76	7.5	174	9.4
Total	833	100.0	1015	100.0	1848	100.0

responded to follow-up open-ended questions to provide more information on their ideas regarding what scheduling would work better for them.

Table 1 shows major themes related to expanding access to LOTE courses by the number of mentions that correspond with those themes by both –LOTE ($n = 833$) and +LOTE ($n = 1015$) students. The two groups of students were identical in terms of a hierarchy of themes by the relative number of mentions. The greatest difference between the two groups was in their interest in online or partially online LOTE courses, which was more desirable for –LOTE students ($n = 227$ mentions, 27.2%) than for +LOTE students ($n = 198$ mentions, 19.5%).

3.2.1 Access Theme 1: Offer More Class Time Options

Student suggestions for offering more options for LOTE class meeting times included conflicting suggestions for scheduling LOTE courses at different times of day (e.g., later in the afternoon or evening, early in the morning, or at specific times that were desirable for individual students), scheduling LOTE courses at times that are more typical for other subjects in the university (e.g., on a Monday/Wednesday/Friday or Tuesday/Thursday schedule) and scheduling LOTE classes at different times on different days of the week:

...Classes that were not every day Monday-Friday, but instead were maybe Monday, Wednesday, Friday, etc.

–LOTE student in Letters & Science

It would help if language courses were offered at different times on different days. For example, if a language course is at 11:00 every day, it is difficult to fit that into my schedule given that other courses are likely to be during that time. Another option is to have more availability of languages that have longer classes that are not every day.

+LOTE student in Letters & Science

3.2.2 Access Theme 2: Offer Online or Partially Online Courses

To address challenges with scheduling, while still providing opportunities for daily language practice, some students were also interested in fully or partially online LOTE courses. The total number of mentions of this theme was relatively small ($n = 425$). The following examples are typical of student responses:

Language courses take up a lot of in class time and it is difficult to block off that amount of time and have space for all my other courses including lengthy labs. A fully online immersive option would be awesome. I don't care for classes that are mix of online and in-class but it could be a good option for a language class, where interaction is important.

–LOTE student in Agriculture & Life Science

A partially online class would be beneficial because it would keep the constant practice that is needed in learning a language but still be flexible with many people's schedules.

–LOTE student in Engineering

I would be taking a second language if the introductory courses were not five credits and met every single day during the week. An option to complete introductory courses online would guarantee my participation. Or, at the very least, offer courses that don't meet so frequently so those interested in learning a second (or third) language in addition to pursuing their primary studies could do so.

+LOTE student in Letters & Science

3.2.3 Access Theme 3: Schedule Fewer Weekly Class Meetings

For some students, LOTE courses would be more accessible to them if they were offered fewer days per week. For this student, classes that would meet as few as two times per week would be desirable:

It would work better for my schedule to have less classes per week. Instead offering a section that only met twice a week for longer class times would benefit me. It would give me more time in class to thoroughly cover the content and alleviate me from coming to campus four times a week.

+LOTE student in Letters & Science

3.2.4 Access Theme 4: Make LOTE Study Count Toward Major or Certificate

Although not prompted to do so, some students described the importance to them for LOTE study to lead to a degree credential, such as a certificate. This desire aligned with their prioritization of taking courses to fulfill degree requirements (Sect. 3.1.1). For those students, taking LOTE courses without a certificate or other credential that would formally recognize their language study felt like a waste of time:

Many people I've met felt discouraged from taking (language) because it does not have any non-major degree options for non-business students. I personally was disappointed by this, and it discouraged me from taking further (language) courses. Alternative certificate

programs would be excellent for students who would like to improve their (language) proficiency for their future professions without the academic aspects of the full major.

+LOTE student in Agriculture & Life Sciences

Adding a certificate so I have something to show for my study (Don't have room in my schedule to take classes that don't count towards something.)

–LOTE student in Letters & Science

They [LOTE courses] would work better with my schedule/4-year plan if I was able to use them for something useful, such as a certificate, but I have too many classes to take with engineering to waste time on . . . classes that don't amount to anything academically for me.

+LOTE student in Engineering

3.2.5 Access Theme 5: Offer Lower- or Variable-Credit Courses

Finally, and related to holding fewer class meetings, a small number of students mentioned that LOTE courses that were offered for a fewer number of credits, or for variable credit, would work them. These students envisioned LOTE courses that would be offered for three credits, in line with many other courses at the university; or that would offer flexibility for students in choosing to take more or less accelerated LOTE courses, with a corresponding flexibility in the number of credits:

A normal three-credit course like pretty much any other department at the university. The structure and schedule burden of language classes . . . is absurd.

–LOTE student in Letters & Science

Language classes take a lot of time to put in them, so if there was a way to make certain classes have alternative sections that go slower and have fewer credits per semester.

–LOTE student in Engineering

3.3 *Increasing the Relevance of LOTE Courses for U.S. Undergraduates*

Murphy et al. (2022) found that both –LOTE and +LOTE students indicated that they would be more likely to study LOTEs at the university if LOTE courses focused on topics of professional interest to them (–LOTE $n = 1037$, 62.8%; +LOTE $n = 1233$, 74.8%) or of personal interest to them (–LOTE $n = 1004$, 60.8%; +LOTE $n = 1205$, 73.1%) (p. 16). This section presents findings from the analysis of student responses to the follow-up question regarding topics in LOTE courses that would be of special interest.

Table 2 shows the major themes and sub-themes from the content analysis of those responses. Two aspects of the data presented in Table 2 merit elaboration. First, the majority of student responses were captured by three main themes: students were interested in LOTE courses that focus on contemporary culture ($n = 1299$,

Table 2 Themes related to increasing the relevance of LOTE courses to undergraduates

Themes and example sub-themes	LOTE course(s) enrollment					
	Mentions by –LOTE students (<i>n</i> = 1527)		Mentions by +LOTE students (<i>n</i> = 2117)		Total mentions (<i>n</i> = 3644)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Focus on contemporary culture	520	34.0	779	36.8	1299	35.6
Popular culture, daily life, food, sports, literature, music, sports, arts, etc.						
Link LOTE courses to my academic major or professional goals	496	32.5	556	26.3	1052	28.9
Diverse areas, including biology, business, computer/data science, engineering, healthcare, law, literature, medicine, natural and physical sciences, psychology, other STEM fields, etc.						
Focus on everyday language, especially in speaking, with opportunities for functional language use	350	22.9	496	23.4	846	23.2
Conversational language, colloquial language and slang, practice with native speakers						
Focus on history	65	4.3	115	5.4	180	4.9
Other interests	73	4.8	93	4.4	166	4.6
For example, environment and climate, social justice, other						
Focus on politics, world issues	23	1.5	78	3.7	101	2.8
Total	1527	100.0	2117	100.0	3644	100.0

35.6%), in LOTE courses that are linked in some way to the students' academic major(s) or professional goals (*n* = 1052, 28.9%), and LOTE courses that focus on everyday language, especially in speaking (*n* = 846, 23.2%). There were relatively fewer mentions from both –LOTE and +LOTE students related to an interest in other foci. Second, the responses from –LOTE and +LOTE students were fairly similar, with one major exception: there were relatively more mentions by –LOTE students (*n* = 496 mentions, 32.5%) that described interest in linking LOTE study to their major or professional goal than by +LOTE students (*n* = 556 mentions, 26.3%).

The remainder of this section presents example student responses that illustrate each of the three main themes represented by the majority of student mentions.

3.3.1 Relevance Theme 1: Focus More on Contemporary Culture

More than any other possible topical focus for LOTE courses, students in this study described an interest in learning about contemporary culture(s) in which the

language is used. Their interests were primarily in contemporary popular culture (e.g., related to music, sports, literature, and other arts), and in aspects of daily life. In their responses, some +LOTE students implicitly contrasted their interest in contemporary culture to the historical approach to teaching culture through literature that they found in their courses. The students framed their interests in contemporary culture as being necessary for being able to understand and function in societies in which the language is spoken:

Cultural rather than historical literature. I want to know what is that country or culture like today. Reading ancient literature is interesting but doesn't help me much if I'm trying to live and work in that country. What can I learn that will provide me the skills I need to succeed in modern (country) society today?

+LOTE student in Engineering

I am taking a (language) culture class that focuses more on the history of (country), but I think it would be nice if there were a class about customs and culture today in (country) that would be helpful if I were going to study abroad.

+LOTE student in Letters & Science

3.3.2 Relevance Theme 2: Link LOTE Courses to My Academic Major or Professional Goals

Students who described their interest in linking LOTE courses to their academic majors or their professional goals described or listed over 60 different academic subject areas and possible career trajectories. The subjects were across the spectrum: they included academic subjects related to fields such as biology, business, computer/data science, engineering, healthcare, law, literature, medicine, natural and physical sciences, psychology, and other STEM fields, just to name a few. Most student responses were comprised of just one or two words to describe their major or professional area of interest. Others offered more detail, as well as ideas for how LOTE courses might be modified to incorporate their academic or professional area(s) of interest:

Spanish for running or managing a dairy farm, talking to employees about cattle and how to effectively communicate.

–LOTE student in Agriculture & Life Sciences

Topics could be focused on specific major-related content. For example, since my major focuses on biology, having language content that crosses over with the sciences for a little bit of the course would make the language more relevant to me.

+LOTE student in Letters & Science

Having discussion sections that focused on building vocabulary necessary for different areas of study such as technical language for engineering or words commonly used in business.

–LOTE student in Engineering

3.3.3 Relevance Theme 3: Focus More on Everyday Language, Especially in Speaking

Over one-fifth of student responses from both –LOTE ($n = 350$ mentions, 22.9%) and +LOTE students ($n = 496$ mentions, 23.4%) included mention of an interest in LOTE courses focusing more on everyday language. Students seemed to conceptualize everyday language primarily in terms of speaking, in both informal (e.g., in everyday conversation with peers in which more colloquial language would be used) and more formal (e.g., professional) contexts. Those students looking to the possibility of using the language in future study, travel, or work abroad, or in local communities in which the language is used, frequently mentioned a desire for LOTE courses to prepare them for daily life in which they envision speaking playing a more important role than writing. Similar to the above (related to the theme, *focus more on contemporary culture*), some +LOTE students described their interest in a focus on everyday spoken language in contrast to LOTE courses they have taken that focus on literary studies and writing:

Speaking! I have traveled to several different countries, and not once have I ever found a use for being able to write the language I'm learning. Look at how we learned our first language it wasn't until we were almost fluent that we started to read and write. More talking, more listening, more actually learning the language!

+LOTE student in Agriculture & Life Sciences

If the courses focused more on real skills needed in everyday conversation, like by placing people into contexts where the language is necessary to communicate.

–LOTE student in Engineering

More focus on speaking and professional life. Please, please offer more courses that specialize in oral communication. I would also appreciate more practical language courses that center on business life, not so much on literature.

+LOTE student in Letters & Science

Please offer more courses that are cross-listed with International Business/International Studies or otherwise take a more practical approach to learning a foreign language. I know literature is important and valuable for learning about the culture behind a language. As much as I love that, I really strongly believe that any course that centers more on oral communication and professional life would also be extremely valuable to students, especially students like me that are in 7th+ semester of a foreign language and would like to take something besides literature and writing practice.

+LOTE student in Letters & Science

3.3.4 Relevance as Personalization

Overall, the undergraduate students in this study indicated an interest in LOTE courses that would be highly personalized, connected to their immediate or imagined future lives, and linked in some way with their individual academic and personal interests, and their professional goals.

The 70+ topics that the students described as being of interest were highly diverse. Some of these topics were clearly related to the students' academic major(s) or professional interests, as described above (see *Relevance Theme 2*), but others were more related to personal interests:

activism, agriculture and farming, animé, archaeology, architecture, art, bilingual education, biology, biopharma, business, chemical engineering, childcare, church, climate, colonialism, community development, computer science, cooking, communications, counseling, culture, current events, daily life, economy, engineering, environmental science, family dynamics, film, finance, fishing, food, games, gender, genetics, healthcare, higher education, history, identity, human rights, immigration, interior design, international relations, law, LGBTQ+ rights, linguistics, literature, manufacturing, medicine, military, modern fiction, media, music, nutrition, politics, pop music, public health, retail, science, science communication, slang, social justice, social media, special education, sports, sustainability, theater, using language for career/at work, video games, volunteering, wellness, wildlife, women's rights, world issues.

4 Conclusion

This chapter presented findings from the analysis of qualitative data from a census survey of undergraduate students at one U.S. university that shed light on some of the self-reported reasons that students are *not* taking courses in LOTE at the university, and on their ideas for making LOTE courses more accessible (in terms of scheduling) and relevant to them. In doing so, the chapter aimed to foreground the voices of undergraduate students who had and hadn't taken courses in LOTE at the university, complementing L2 motivation research that looks only at students already participating in additional language learning.

In line with the findings from Diao and Liu (2020), this study found that for many U.S. undergraduate students, despite the value that they report to place on proficiency in LOTE for themselves personally (Murphy et al., 2022), students prioritized taking courses that fulfilled major or other degree requirements over LOTE courses that did not. To address barriers to access to LOTE study related to scheduling, some of the students in this study indicated an interest in LOTE courses that would be more modular and flexible, with traditional face-to-face, or partially or fully online LOTE courses that are better aligned with the typical credit load and weekly schedule of courses in other subject areas at the university. Overall, participants in the study expressed an interest in more personalized LOTE courses that would enable them to integrate their individual academic, professional, and personal interests with their LOTE study. The topics in which students expressed an interest in linking with their LOTE study were broad and diverse.

The chapter shared data from -LOTE and +LOTE students in different schools and colleges in the university. It did not, however, look at other sub-groups, based on, for example, student demographic profiles. Research that amplifies the voices and experiences of minoritized students in LOTE study in particular is very much

warranted to better understand the barriers to access and the relevance of LOTE study for those students (Anya, 2020). As one student in this study commented:

Language professors should also be trained on instructing students of various backgrounds (e.g. individuals with disabilities, minoritized racial groups). I have noticed that language curriculum tends to target mainstream American culture as its audience.

+LOTE student in Letters & Science

The chapter also did not discuss the potential pedagogical, programmatic, or administrative implications of the study's findings. LOTE programs wishing to be more responsive to student interests might consider administering a similar survey of students on their campus to better understand what the barriers to access to LOTE study might be for their students, and what types of curricular or other programmatic innovations might attract a broader population of students to their courses. U.S. LOTE programs may find student voices to be useful to inform discussions about possible programmatic or curricular change, balanced with the voices – and expertise and experience – of LOTE instructors and program administrators.


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Understanding Student (A)motivation Towards Learning a Language: Students' Perspectives on Continued Language Study



Melanie L. D'Amico and Scott Sterling 

Abstract This year-long qualitative project investigated students' stated reasons for not enrolling in language courses at the college level. Using structured interviews, we surveyed 49 undergraduate students at a medium-sized midwestern university who had no plans to take language courses beyond the school-required minimum. In looking at our results in an optimistic fashion, participants appeared to be language positive, valued foreign language skills for both the individual and society, and believed that an additional language would increase future earnings. In many ways, participants parroted the talking points typically used to convince students to take language courses. Even though participants appeared to internalize the recruitment message, none of them had any plans to study a language. Their reasons for not doing so included scheduling/time constraints, a general sense of futility at learning languages, and a frustration at past inability to learn a language. The results largely show that students understand the importance of learning languages but that they face considerable roadblocks, both internal and institutional in nature. Discussion includes suggestions for updating recruitment efforts aimed at increasing the rate of USA college students in language courses.

Keywords Amotivation · Student voices · Learning barriers

1 Introduction

Like many universities in recent years, our language department has seen a continued downward trend in the number of students choosing to study foreign language beyond the university's non-native language requirement (see Lusin, this volume). In setting out to investigate this problem, we chose to speak to students on our campus who did not appear to be interested in taking foreign language courses while working towards their undergraduate degree. The goal of this was simple; we wanted

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to hear from the students themselves about their attitudes toward foreign language, their reasons why they chose not to enroll in language courses, and their experiences with prior language learning (if any).

One of the other principal goals of this research was to consider how our language courses are marketed to students, and to see if we are truly addressing their needs and interests. Like most language programs, our faculty develops our flyers, online posts, and other advertisements designed to recruit students. Our faculty are highly proficient language learners with a deep love of learning and using languages, but only a limited knowledge in marketing. The idea behind these advertisements is to provide students with reasons why they should take language, according to our expertise. However, without considering the students' perspectives, we grew concerned that we may be offering ideas that do not appeal to students nor resonate with their personal goals. Additionally, the faculty themselves are highly successful learners who may not share the same motivations towards language study or they may not have experienced language learning struggles that undergraduate students often do. In other words, in most cases, when we develop a campaign to entice students to take our classes, we are giving them what we think they want (which is in truth what *we* would have wanted to hear), rather than asking what they want.

Within the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) it is generally well accepted that motivation is a key factor in dedicated language study that leads to achieving higher levels of proficiency (e.g. Cheon & Reeve, 2015; Cigan, 2014; Dörnyei, 1994, 2005, 2009; Gardner, 1988; Gardner & Lysynchuk, 1990; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Grey & Jackson, 2020; Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009; Yu, 2019). As one of the most highly investigated individual differences in L2 learning, the field has uncovered a great deal about motivation and its role in helping a person achieve proficiency in their L2. Nonetheless, the body of research completed on motivation tends to focus on participants already enrolled in language classes or language programs. While this certainly is understandable given the goals of those research projects, it also shows a gap or bias in the research. Understanding the motivation of students already in language programs tells us little about the motivations of those who have opted to not study languages.

When we think of students who chose not to take language classes at the university, we have a tendency to consider them as amotivated, in other words, lacking interest in foreign languages and cultures, and with negative attitudes towards L2 learning. Likely, we assume that they are not studying languages because they somehow do not understand just how cool, interesting, or useful it is. However, this is an overly harsh judgment to make given the lack of data collected on these types of students. Research on amotivation has found these results primarily for students who are required to take a language course and while in that course, do not have high motivation to learn (e.g. Bećirović & Hurić-Bećirović, 2017; Heidrich & Kraemer, 2018; Khazaie & Mesbah, 2014; Kondo-Brown, 2006; Mohammadian, 2013; O'Reilly, 2014; Wang, 2014). If our goal is to attract more students to our language programs, and we intend to do so on our own campuses, we need to have a better understanding of the students we have yet to reach, not the ones who are already in classes.

One additional point we considered in completing this project was the motivational approach used in recruitment. If we consider the instrumental versus integrative motivation model (Noels et al., 2000), we find that integrative motivation is the stronger of the two, leading to greater dedication in studying the language, and as an antecedent towards achieving high, or native-like, proficiency. Yet, in reviewing strategies used by language programs, we see that there is often a tendency to appeal to instrumental motivation. Marketing materials often center on the usefulness of language in careers and travel. In general, the thinking is to use instrumental motivation as a means of bringing students to us, and then finding ways to help them develop integrative motivation through their experience in our classes. However, we might question if appealing to instrumental motivation is sufficient to motivating students to take courses in the first place.

2 The Site

We conducted our project at a mid-size public university with an enrollment of approximately 11,000 students at the time of the data collection. Undergraduate students are required to take two semesters of foreign language courses at the 100 (or above) level. Students may choose to fill these classes with the same or two different languages. Many students meet this requirement by taking foreign language during high school. The department regularly offers French, German, Japanese, Latin, and Spanish as language choices, and occasionally offers Arabic, Chinese, Korean, and Greek. Students who wish to study beyond the language requirement can take a combined Language Studies major (39 h) with a concentration in a particular language, a Language Studies Teaching major (30 h), or a Language Studies minor (21 h). All three programs allow students the flexibility to specialize in one particular language, in linguistics, or combination of both.

3 Methodology

Our participants were 39 undergraduate students who were not seriously studying a foreign language at the time nor had plans to seriously study a language in the future. We defined seriously studying a language as a student who was minoring/majoring in foreign languages, were taking additional courses beyond the requirement, or studying a language outside of a formal course. Since it can be challenging to find people who are not doing something, participants were selected through a semi-random process. Research assistants, both graduate and undergraduate students, went to common areas on campus and approached students. They asked two screener questions: (1) are you an undergraduate student?, and (2) are you currently taking a foreign language class? Students who qualified for the study were then asked if they would be willing to participate in a short oral interview about foreign language

Table 1 Interview questions

Interview questions
1. Why have you chosen not to study a language?
2. If you could magically speak any other language, which one would you choose and why?
3. Have you tried learning a language in the past? What was your experience like?
4. Why are you not successful in learning a language?
5. [University] requires that all students have the equivalent of 2 semesters of language experience what do you think of [university]'s language requirement?
6. Is learning a language hard? Why yes or no?
7. How many years do you think you would need to learn another language? How many hours per day would you need to practice that language?
8. What would motivate you to learn another language?
9. How much extra money do you think you can earn if you were to know another language?
10. How important is it for Americans to speak another language?

learning. Biographical data was not collected due to ethical considerations, however, our research assistants disclosed that all participants appeared to them to be “typical undergraduate students” approximately between the ages of 18–25 and likely with English as their first language. All of the participants had prior foreign language learning experience before starting their undergraduate degree. This was not a required factor to participate in the study; however, it is a common trait of students at this university.

Two graduate students and one undergraduate student research assistants collected data through oral interviews. These interviews consisted of ten questions on the participant’s personal experience with language learning and on their opinions about language learning in general (see Table 1). The interviews were designed to be fairly brief, lasting an average of 4 min. All interviews were audio recorded and then later transcribed for analysis. Consent was provided orally for the study and the whole research process received IRB approval.

Following qualitative research practices, the interviews were first analyzed for major themes and a coding system was developed. The interviews were then re-coded to allow for the refinement of the themes and organization of the ideas presented by the participants. This process was repeated twice by each of the authors to ensure careful coding and consideration for the variety of information within the interviews. In some instances, simple percentages were used in grouping participants’ answers, particularly when the answers were a numerical value (for example, years of study).

4 Results and Discussion

Data analysis revealed four major themes (see Table 2) that were present throughout the participants’ responses. Each theme along with examples will be discussed in the subheadings below.

Table 2 Themes

Themes
Knowledge of SLA
Understanding the importance of L2 acquisition
Prior experience with L2 learning
Roadblocks to L2 learning

4.1 *Knowledge of SLA*

The first theme dealt with the participants' knowledge of SLA and languages in general. Please note that we did not choose to use comments from the interview transcripts for this first theme only because the answers were mostly numeric. What we found in this theme was that students' understanding of language learning and the overall process of acquiring a second language (L2) varied greatly with some knowledge being rather accurate or at least within the realm of possibility. However, in other cases, students were inaccurate or lacking in knowledge all together. Where students appeared to be the most knowledgeable was in how many hours of practice they should do a week to be successful in learning a language with 95% of participants saying that a person needs 1–3 h of weekly practice. This is in line with the general guidelines provided with most language programs. Obviously, more language practice would be helpful, but most language teachers would probably be thrilled if they could get their students to practice for this amount of time outside of class. These answers demonstrated that students were generally realistic about the amount of work they would need to be successful. It is possible that through their previous foreign language study, the participants had seen that 1–3 h of practice was the expectation for outside of class work or that they were told this number. This result is promising in that students did not believe that language learning required a vast number of hours per week to be dedicated to the process.

When asked how many years it would take to learn a new language, results were mixed and were only somewhat in line with standards found in SLA. The least amount of time provided was between six and 18 months (6.5% of participants). Arguably, too little time for most people to achieve anything resembling being a proficient user of the language. On the other extreme, about a quarter of participants (22.5%) responded that it would take 5–10 years to learn a language. While this is not an unreasonable amount of time to suggest, when we connect it to a topic we will discuss later (the need for perfection), we would argue that the 5–10 year timeframe is more indicative of a lack of knowledge of what language ability resembles at various levels. Finally, the most common response provided was that it takes around 1–4 years of study to learn a language (71% of participants). This number matches well with the length of most high schools and/or university programs. The lower number might represent the time required to complete a minor while 4 years of study will often complete a major. However, prior research has shown that on average, undergraduate students in the U.S. only reach ACTFL proficiency level of Intermediate High after 4 years of college-level language study (Fraga-Cañadas, 2010; Gass

et al., 2016; Moeller, 2013; Rifkin, 2005; Tschirner, 2016) which again indicates that this amount of time might not be enough for students to reach their desired programmatic outcomes.

Another metric we asked students was to estimate the amount of increased salary a person might receive from speaking additional languages. More than half of the students (56%) were unable to assign a specific dollar amount but had a general attitude that language skills would result in higher earnings. Participants who provided a specific salary indicated an increase in earnings that stretched from \$1000 to \$20,000 more annually. The main goal of asking this question was not for accuracy sake, but was to tap into their knowledge of value of language skills for their future career. It should be noted that we did not have financial information on how much extra money could be earned in various career paths in our local area. We are thus not better able to answer this question than our students, potentially showing an area of growth for our department to consider. What these responses showed us was that while many participants had a general idea that language skills did provide for additional income, they did not have a solid understanding of how much those earnings might be. However, as is often the case with the data from this study, even though students believed that language skills provided additional monetary benefits, those benefits were not enough to push them into actually taking language classes.

4.2 Understanding the Importance of L2 Acquisition

When participants were asked to reflect on the importance of foreign language study in the U.S., their attitudes and responses were overwhelmingly positive in nature. These positive attitudes surprised us, as the area in which we conducted the study does not have a stellar record in language diversity or inclusion. We entered this study fully expecting to receive hateful comments to these questions and overall negative attitudes towards learning languages. We were delighted that this was not the case. The majority of these students believed that Americans should be exposed to other languages and cultures.

“I think it’s really important honestly. The rest of the world most of them are bilingual. . . and it’s just Americans only knowing English kind of hurts us. So. . . I think it’s pretty important.” Participant A4

“I think it is very important just cause it’s like. . . for Americans in general because uh, we’re not the only country in the world and. . . and uh it’s important to you know uh learn about other cultures cause this is a world culture that we live in. It’s important to integrate into the other cultures.” Participant B5

Students also frequently mentioned that the American system for learning L2s was deficient or inadequate when compared to other countries, particularly European countries. There seemed to be a common opinion that Americans could benefit from greater amounts of language study, often throughout their academic careers as is common in other countries.

“I think it’s just as important as Europeans speaking multiple languages. It’s just we don’t want to for some reason. I think it’s pretty important.” Participant C3

While responses were most often positive in nature, they were also more generic rather than personal. This is partly due to the wording of the questions which focused on “Americans” at large. Nonetheless, we found there was a sense from some students that L2 learning was beneficial for some people, but not necessarily for themselves. So while they agreed in theory that L2 learning was important, it was not particularly important for them to learn an L2.

“I think it is important that some Americans speak another language, but I don’t think it is important that everybody has to speak another language.” Participant A2

“Well I think as Americans we think that we should only know English and expect everyone else to know English. Even though it is a pretty common language over the world to be more of a fully developed person I think it’s important to at least try to understand other language. Even if you can’t speak it fluently. It’s important to be able to know how other people think and be able to communicate with other people.” Participant A14

“It’s pretty important I would say. Because a lot of uh. . . I mean even legally. . . I mean immigrations. . . I mean it happens a lot I mean we’re a land of immigrants so uh. . . we get a lot of that. People that speak a lot of different backgrounds from different languages so I think it’s important. I think I definitely think it would be. It’s uh something that’s coming in the future that’s gonna be expected a lot more of I would reckon.” Participant A20

In a similar vein, students also expressed support for our university’s non-native language requirement and stated that they liked the policy as they felt it was important to have some exposure to an L2 and to other cultures. Moreover, there was a fairly decent number of students who felt the requirement should be expanded to include more language classes.

“I like that requirement. Um. . . I think it is good cause I think you need to have like at least some type of uh. . . experience with a different culture or anything like that. Cause I mean even. . . even if uh. . . even if it wasn’t part of it it’s just an interesting thing to be a part of. So yeah I, I think that is a good thing that they have it, I don’t think it should change any time soon.” Participant A6

“I mean I think it is good. Everyone should expand their. . . minds. But it’s just difficult for a lot of people.” Participant A5

“I think it should be, I think it should be more semesters that we have to uh take a foreign language or the at least to the max so we can max it out. Um cuz we are especially in the America, we are more getting integrated with other cultures and then there’s a lot of us who’s travelling wanting to see the world more uh it’s imperative that we learn how to, learn how to communicate with the others. Uh and America tend to tends to have this idea that you know people come here and I’m here they have to learn our language and we tend to study abroad and so we tend to have that idea of that I think when we leave and then go to other countries and that’s not fair. Uh if we are asking people to learn English we should learn theirs as well.” Participant C10

This result was unexpected, as discussions within higher-ups at the university often made it seem as though students disliked this policy and found it frustrating and burdensome. We initially believed that students would complain about the policy and use this interview as a chance to vent. Even with the six participants who

reported not liking the policy, there was little animosity towards the language classes themselves. Students disliked the policy more because it felt unnecessary for their degree rather than through a dislike of languages. Thus, the complaints the university has received in the past might have come from a smaller segment of the population and not be generalizable to the whole campus.

"I think it makes sense why... uh... but seeing it at a collegiate level I don't see the importance of it because I would think that... if it was something that you were going to want to pursue you would already have the uh... foundation of it settled in high school or before. So I think coming into college and making kids take it is a waste of students' time and waste of faculty resources that could be used towards students that are pursuing it for a reason not just a credit." Participant A18

"I don't think that we need it because what if it's not in your profession to speak with people who have a different language." Participant B2

There were a few participants that felt that L2 study was not important to Americans, mentioning English's status in the world as a lingua franca and noting that many visitors to the U.S. already speak English.

"I don't think it's too important if here in (*state of the university*) we don't really... I don't really come in contact with someone who doesn't know how to speak English. There's people who have English as a secondary language but they're pretty good at it here. Uh... so as American and uh... the central area of America, United States I don't think it's too important. But if you live in Florida there's a lot of Spanish people speaking people there. I think it would be more important to live... I mean to speak. Uh... Spanish or another language." Participant A10

"For Americans? Not that important, but oth- for other people to speak English is very important cause it's on the come-up of being like the #1 language. Isn't Spanish the #1? You don't know? We don't know uh@@@ but yes, not, not that important, but yeah still important, but like not that important" Participant B7

While this represented a minority opinion in the data, it is noteworthy that some students felt that language learning was not necessary for them or others. We had expected to hear this type of opinion more often in the data since we targeted students who had already decided to not pursue language studies. It was surprising that this opinion was not more widely expressed as anticipated. One possible reason for this may have been that two of the research assistants were international students with non-native accents. There is a chance that the participants did not feel as comfortable expressing negative opinions towards people who were themselves L2 English speakers. However, response patterns were not different between data collected by the international students compared to the domestic student.

"It's not really important for Americans at all. We're just kind of, we're all speaking English for the most part. You know that's... it works I guess." Participant A16

Overall, this theme demonstrated the sense of value that the participants placed on foreign language knowledge and the importance that having language skills can have, even in an area where English is a dominate language. Nonetheless, we should recognize that this value appeared to be more hypothetical in nature. Learning an L2 was seen as beneficial for others as these values were not enough to push students into taking classes beyond the required minimum.

4.3 *Prior Experience with L2 Learning*

As mentioned previously, all the participants in this study had prior experience with L2 learning before attending college with the majority of participants taking foreign language classes in high school. While they expressed a mixture of opinions, their overall attitudes towards high school language learning was frequently negative. The root of this negativity was typically about the difficulty of learning an L2, or was directed at the teachers or programs available to them. We had expected students to discuss the difficulty of language learning and therefore, comments on how hard it was to learn or how the person did not have the mindset for language learning were anticipated.

“I did, I uh... I took Spanish for three years of high school and I still know a little bit, but I don't really remember much of it and... it was kind of hard so... I don't know, it's just hard because it's like a different aspect of something I do every day and it's just hard for my mind to really like comprehend.” Participant, B3

“Uh... in high school I was never the best at it. Uh... I would always get Cs and so uh... And I worked really hard at Spanish it's the only um... Spanish is the only other language I really have uh... have experiences with. Uh... so I just didn't... I see the value in it but I just didn't feel like I would should go in that direction.” Participant A10

In many instances, students felt that their teachers were poorly prepared to teach the L2, or were not overly knowledgeable about the language itself. It is unclear on what basis the participants used to make these judgments since most lacked knowledge of the language beyond a novice level. We can see this attitude expressed by Participant A17 below who appears to be judging the teachers' abilities based on their own lack of success, and by Participant C8 who also felt qualified to judge their teacher's language knowledge. It is important to note that the actual knowledge held by the teacher is unknown.

“I took German and Spanish in high school. But like I said earlier the teachers probably weren't qualified to teach that language. They are just filling in so uh... It wasn't beneficial to me I didn't learn as much as I expected.” Participant A17

“It wasn't that good, because the teacher didn't know Mandarin that well so it was yeah kind of a joke.” Participant C8

Additionally, some of the ideas expressed about the quality of programs were not always clear. For example, several participants mentioned that they did not have the same teacher for their language classes each year and they felt this was indicative of a poor program. Having multiple teachers in a single area or high teacher turnover is common. Why this particular area was seen as a detriment to L2 learning success is unknown, but it was brought up in responses by multiple participants.

“My experience wasn't very good because my high school didn't have a strong program for it, so it was hard to learn and we kept getting new teachers each semester” Participant B1

“Uh... I really liked it but uh... in the process of going through it we were in between professors so I don't feel like I learned as much as I should have but I still enjoyed it. I still got a lot from it. I just... I don't know. I felt... like I could've learned more. @@@ [yeah ok] if we weren't in between teachers.” Participant A13

Anecdotal accounts of negative experiences in prior learning are common and so these findings confirmed our expectations that poor experiences in high schools might negatively impact later decisions to formally study a language. It continues to be a struggle then to attract students to a university foreign language course, when their prior experiences have not been rewarding nor pleasant.

Not all responses to these questions were negative. Several participants discussed the joy they had found in language classes while others noted that these courses were easy and even fun. Some participants expressed an interest in continuing with language study in the future, but commented that they had not yet been able to do so at the university and likely would not.

“I took Spanish like in middle school and high school. [ok] before I got to [university]. You know I enjoyed it. I wasn't the best at it but I went to uh Spanish speaking countries and I used a little bit of it. So it came handy.” Participant A12

When asked about their success with L2 learning, our participants were split with 45% claiming that they were successful and 55% stating that they were not. We expected most participants to feel as if they had not been successful in prior experiences learning languages and so the high number of students who felt they had performed well in their foreign language courses was a surprise. Some students indicated that they would like to be able to pursue more language study but were not able to do so.

“I actually really like it a lot. Um I did use some of it. Um I thought of taking another year of it but I just [inaudible]” Participant C5

“I've always really loved it. I loved it in high school when I took it. And like I wish I had more time to put into just knowing more.” Participant C6

Of the students who said they were unsuccessful learners, we found that many mentioned issues related to perfection to be the key issue. There was often a clear sense of viewing language success as only being accomplished if one had high (maybe native-like) fluency. This all-or-nothing approach was illustrated by Participant A3 and Participant C3 who did not consider themselves to be successful despite years of study.

“I studied Chinese when I was a kid for like 11 years. But I was really bad at it I didn't pick it up at all. [follow-up question] Um. . . Chinese was just really difficult for me. And we would always have new teachers come in, and that I think was the biggest problem for me is that a new teacher would come in every like two years and restart. [uh-huh] So I never continued and like progressed like I should have. [ok]” Participant A3

“Um I took like 7 years and it was okay, I . . . didn't do well, toward the last section by the [inaudible] section. . . I can understand it I just can't construct the sentences” Participant C3

These students expressed a sense of uselessness at having language skills if one was not able to achieve a perfect or ideal native-like ability. This result indicates a mismatch between what students are being taught about proficiency and how to set appropriate expectations. For instance, while novice level students will not sound like native speakers, they will still have the starting foundation for basic, everyday conversation and will be able to use their language skills in many low-stakes communication settings. Finding a way to help university students see and understand this value might assist us in bringing more students to classes.

4.4 Roadblocks to L2 Learning

In considering why they were not currently taking a foreign language course, participants most commonly answered that they did not have sufficient time in their schedule to allow for a language course.

“Um I feel like I don’t have time. Like my major requires more work than what I thought I was going to do and I have a lot of foundational classes so I just wanna get those out of the way first I guess. Still an option though. We’ll see” Participant C2

“I don’t want to study a language because I honestly don’t have enough time in my course with my minor and my major” Participant B2

“. . .if I had more time, like I’m a senior this year and I’m like in between school, work, and interning if I had more time I definitely would probably think about it more.” Participant C5

If a language was not required for their degree program, students were unlikely to have flexibility in their course plan to accommodate language study. As our university has a four-year guarantee to graduation, many major programs are planned out meticulously to allow for minimal outside coursework and to limit the amount of credit hours a student can take. In general, if a student is not required to take a specific course or is advised by their program to take a course, they have little interest in seeking out additional credit hours on their own. This is understandable as students are already busy with their degree programs and asking them to take additional courses they deem as not useful will not be successful.

“Uh. . . just because like my schedule has been filled with other classes that I have to complete first but I haven’t fully decided if I want to take one because my major doesn’t necessarily need one.” Participant A19

“For my major we weren’t required to take one. So that’s just why I never took it.” Participant A4

There is a need to find ways to promote our programs as a useful add-on to other programs across campus and to incorporate language study in as many degrees as possible. We also need to study other programs’ credit plans to see where students would be able to successfully add language classes that could work within their already crowded schedule or to find meaningful reasons for why additional time should be spent on learning languages. If we can identify programs with more flexibility, it would behoove us to work with those programs first.

An additional roadblock that was discovered in the data was that the majority of the participants had completed the language requirement in high school and therefore had no incentive to take language classes at the university. It appears that students viewed language as a box to check off in a list of university requirements, and once that box has been completed there was no need to pursue additional study. This was true even when students reported enjoyment of languages, success at L2 learning, and a positive high school experience.

“I took uh. . . French in high school. I took it for four years so I didn’t feel like I needed to take it in college.” Participant A13

“Uh. . . I think that the requirement is good I mean because most people usually finish it in high school. Uh. . . and it is a good skill to have once you get out of high school” Participant A11

This finding demonstrates a need to get the message about language study at the university level at an earlier time when potential students are still in high school. If we wait until students are on campus, they may already see language study as ‘complete’ for them. Additionally, we need to provide incentives for students that go beyond a traditional language minor or major. We must be realistic that not all students will be able to complete a minor nor a major but still desire to take language courses. If we can develop programs that are more accessible or remove roadblocks from taking language courses, we may be able to attract more students to continue their language study in ways that make sense to their college trajectory.

5 Realizations and Ideas for Improvement

From the overwhelmingly positive nature of the interviews, we found that students were not anti-language, nor did they demonstrate animosity towards L2 learning as we expected at the beginning of this project. If anything, this study illustrated that students have heard our messages about the importance and usefulness of knowing a foreign language. In many cases, they parroted back phrases and buzzwords that we frequently use in our advertising. On one hand, we can be reassured that our message has been clearly received. However, this message is not sufficient to persuade students to enroll in our classes. Therefore, we need to develop messages that will help students see the value in adding language classes into their program of study.

Part of this new message to students should include ways of educating students about the usefulness of ‘imperfect’ L2 learning and demonstrating to them concrete examples of what they can expect to do with language at different proficiency levels. Consider for example a flyer or social media post that provides clear examples of 100-level language skills in a variety of real world settings that would appeal to students. This would also help students understand what we mean when say someone is at the beginning or novice level. In fact, it might be preferable to stay away from traditional proficiency terminology and use terms that students understand. For example, instead of saying Novice we could call that level “Basic” or “Tourist.” We might also want to work with language teacher education programs to help them realize that language perfection might be the enemy. Developing the idea that language is messy and that perfection is never the goal might help ease students into studying languages. We would take 100 imperfect language students over ten perfect students any day.

Similarly, we should strive to help students understand a more accurate timeline of proficiency. We want students to have goals for L2 learning but those goals need to be realistic. Just as we let students know that a 4-week study abroad program will not make them fluent in the L2, we need to give students real expectations for

acquisition based on semesters or years of study. This message could easily accompany information on the different skill levels. Additionally, programs might want to consider setting goals around individual student plans instead of static programmatic outcomes. Not all people learning a language will want to read literature or understand cultural practices. Some might only want to watch movies in their L2 or have the base knowledge to live abroad for a year.

In further increasing student knowledge about L2s, it would be beneficial to include other types of value statements such as salary differences for people with language skills or perhaps the increased likelihood of being hired with particular language knowledge. We should stress however that this type of information needs to be specific and detailed. As well, it will require faculty to seek ways of obtaining this information either through personal investigation or in tandem with the university's career center. Although we like to believe that L2 learning can apply to any field, if we present it in that way to students it can be seen as too vague. Targeted messages that look at particular career fields that are popular at universities might be more attractive to students than a general platitude that language "goes with everything".

Additionally, it would be advisable to find ways to speak to students about their needs and expectations for a language class and/or a language program. This may mean designing new courses and new styles of programs that are more attractive to other types of students beyond the traditional minor or major foreign language student. As mentioned before, creating shorter and/or more accessible programs is highly recommended to overcome the roadblocks that students face.

Moreover, in considering the challenges that students see with adding language to their already overcrowded schedules, it would be potentially helpful to speak to our colleagues across campus about what L2 study can provide for their students. Since other faculty are the ones who primarily advise students outside of our departments on whether or not they should take foreign language, we need to foster better relationships with them. As with their students, faculty in other areas may not be aware of the benefits of L2 study for their students or the ease with which it could be paired up with their programs. If we seek to build up faculty knowledge as well as student knowledge, we have a great chance of reaching more potential students for our classes.

One of the primary takeaway messages we found from this research is that we can see that our students already have overall positive attitudes towards L2 learning. Meaning we do not need to convince them to like languages. Furthermore, we did not find evidence of amotivation in the classic sense, which again is an encouraging result. Nonetheless, we have to be aware that liking language or seeing its value is not a strong enough motivator for students to enroll in courses. Our reasons for taking language classes need to come from students' wants. In order to stay in tune with students' opinions and challenges, we must continue to talk to students who are not enrolled in classes and discover more about what would get them into the L2 classroom.

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Why Doesn't Everyone Take a World Language Class? University Students' Perspectives on World Language Learning



Bret Linford

Abstract This chapter investigates whether factors such as students' pre-college world language (WL) experiences, opinions and attitudes towards WL learning and cultures, knowledge of the WL benefits, and different types of motivating factors affect their decision to enroll in WL courses at the university level. A total of 336 undergraduate university students completed a survey that included a variety of items eliciting information such as past and current academic experiences, performance, opinions and goals; attitudes toward WL learning and cultures; etc. Results indicate that students who have enrolled or plan to enroll university-level WL courses tend to have more extensive and positive pre-college WL experiences, are more aware of the benefits of language learning, indicate a greater awareness and appreciation for foreign cultures, and have more intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to study languages than those who haven't ever enrolled in a university WL course and who don't plan to in the future. Furthermore, the differences from the latter group tend to be even greater when comparing to students who are minoring or majoring in a WL. These findings provide insights into students' perspectives of WL study which will benefit discussions regarding world language advocacy and how to better meet the needs of current and future students.

Keywords Second language acquisition · World languages · Enrollment

1 Introduction

The Modern Language Association (MLA) reported that between 2013 and 2016, enrollment in world language (WL) courses at institutions of higher education dropped by 9.2% overall (Looney & Lusin, 2019) and this downward trend has continued (Lusin, this volume). This trend is reflected in the number of degrees awarded in Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics dropping 22.7%

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between 2012 and 2021 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021). The overall decrease in WL enrollment is a clear concern for language instructors and programs and, as VanPatten (2018) suggests in his American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese President’s message, research is needed to better understand these declines.

Experts such as Rosemary Feal, the former executive director of the MLA, and Gillian Lord, the Associate Dean for College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Florida, suggest that the drop in WL enrollment could be an artifact of the overall decrease in humanities enrollments (Flaherty, 2015). In fact, data from the NCES shows that overall bachelor’s degrees in the U.S. in the humanities,¹ when excluding Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics, fell by 23.9% between 2012 and 2021. Although the declines in WL enrollment are likely connected to the overall declines in enrollment in the humanities, more research is needed to discover the underlying reasons why students are opting to forgo university WL study.

2 Background

It is well documented that motivation plays a key role, not only in the process of acquiring an additional language, but in the decision to begin learning an additional language in the first place. Dörnyei (2005) indicated that motivation “provides the primary impetus to initiate [second language] learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process” (p. 65). Motivation to learn a second language can be integrative or instrumental (see Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Learners with integrative motivation learn a second language to be able to interact with native speakers and having positive attitudes toward the speakers and the cultures of the language, whereas those with instrumental motivation learn due to an interest in learning a second language for a practical goal such as benefiting a future career or fulfilling an academic requirement.

Some feel that one of the reasons for fewer students enrolling in WL courses is related to their perception of what skills they need to be prepared for their future job (Stein-Smith, 2019; Flaherty, 2015). Kissau et al. (2015) found that older high school students commonly had “a specific career in mind and did not see its connection to foreign language study” (p. 298). However, a recent survey of U.S. employers by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) indicated that “9 out of 10 U.S. employers rely on employees with language skills other than English” (ACTFL, 2019, p. 8). Despite the career benefits of speaking additional languages, many popular majors do not require WL courses and therefore may lead students to believe they are not beneficial or necessary.

¹This includes bachelor’s degrees awarded in Area, Ethnic, Cultural, Gender, and Group Studies; English Language and Literature/Letters; Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities; Philosophy and Religious Studies; and History.

Low WL enrollment may also be due to ignorance of other benefits not directly related to a future career that WL learning provides learners. Studies have shown there are various cognitive, academic and social benefits of learning/speaking more than one language (e.g., Armstrong & Rogers, 1997; Bialystok et al., 2004). Perhaps few students are aware of these benefits and as such, have decreased motivation to enroll in language courses.

Additionally, declines in WL enrollment may be due to a lack of appreciation for and/or awareness of cultures associated with world languages other than English. In fact, it has been suggested that “[t]he current political trend towards nationalism and isolationism is rendering world language education vulnerable. . .” (Waldvogel, 2021, p. 37). Waldvogel (2021) describes how learning world languages can be perceived by some as going against “sentiments of patriotism or nationalism” (p. 39) that are prevalent among some politicians. If what Waldvogel (2021) describes is connected to students’ reasons for studying languages, then it would make sense that students who have a greater appreciation for and/or awareness of cultures in which world languages other than English are spoken would be more likely enroll in WL courses.

It could also be that students’ experiences with WL before entering college is a strong predictor of why they decide to enroll. For instance, those who begin WL study earlier may be more likely to continue studying the language at the university level. Indeed, studies have shown that students who begin studying a WL in middle school gain greater proficiency, have less anxiety about language learning and have higher motivational intensity than those who begin in high school (Kissau et al., 2015). Additionally, it is reasonable to assume that students’ specific experiences and opinions toward their WL courses at the K-12 level may likely relate to university WL enrollment with those having more positive experiences being more inclined to enroll in WL courses at the university level.

Finally, it may be that students believe there is no need to enroll in WL courses at the university level because they believe there are more cost-effective ways to learn languages such as language learning mobile applications like Duolingo, Memrise, and Babbel. Despite experts believing that classroom instruction is overall better than learning using a language learning app (see Popiolek, 2020), recent research shows that language learners are satisfied with and enjoy their experiences with these apps (Berti & Prenga, 2021) and others find that apps can be an effective tool for language learning (Jiang et al., 2021; Loewen et al., 2020).

3 Methods

3.1 Research Questions

The current study seeks to better understand the students’ decision to enroll in WL courses at the university level and whether factors such as experiences with world language learning, beliefs/attitudes toward world language learning and cultures,

knowledge of the benefits world language learning, and different types of motivation relate to their decision. The research questions are: How does university WL enrollment status relate to undergraduate university students' . . .

1. previous experiences with WL learning?
2. beliefs/attitudes toward WL learning and cultures?
3. knowledge of the benefits WL learning?
4. intrinsic and extrinsic motivation?

3.2 *Participants*

There were 336 undergraduate students from a large midwestern regional public university that participated in the study between October and December of 2019. There were 250 females, 79 males and 7 non-binary/no response participants with a mean age of 20.6 years. Over 90% of the participants identified as White/Caucasian and 94.9% indicated that they spoke English as a first language. Almost all (98.2%) had completed at least 1 year of a WL before college. A total of 157 were underclassmen (freshman/sophomores) and 179 were upperclassmen (juniors/seniors). The most common reasons participants selected for attending college were all career-focused: *Necessary for my future career choice* (58%), *Want to get a good job* (52%), and *To be able to make more money in the future* (45%). Of the total participants, 170 had never enrolled in a university-level world language course, whereas 166 had enrolled in a language class at some point in their university career. Of the students who had enrolled in a WL course, the great majority had enrolled in Spanish (92 students), followed by French (35 students), then fewer than ten students for each of the other languages (i.e., Arabic, Chinese, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian).

3.3 *Tasks*

Students completed an online survey that consisted of 57 questions including fill-in-the-bank, multiple-choice selection, and statement rating types. The survey gathered demographic data including age, gender, parents' education levels and professions, political views, etc.; academic background and performance at the secondary and university level²; linguistic profile and language learning background; and opinions

²The item in the survey which asked students to indicate their reasons for attending college was based on a similar question in the CIRP Freshman Survey (Higher Education Research Institute, 2019).

and attitudes regarding university courses, choice of major/minor, and world languages (learning & courses). A print version of the survey can be accessed here: <http://tiny.cc/wlsurvey>

3.4 *Analysis*

In order to discover factors that correlated with university language course enrollment, participants were split into three groups based on language course enrollment status at the time they completed the survey:

- Never enrolled (NE) (n = 158): Participants had never enrolled in a university-level WL course, were not language majors/minors, and did not indicate plans to enroll in the future.
- Not major/minor (NMM) (n = 119): Participants had enrolled or planned to enroll in a university-level WL course, but were NOT majors/minors.
- World language minors/majors (MIN/MAJ) (n = 59): Participants were minoring or majoring in a world language.³

In order to determine significant differences between groups, SPSS 27.0. was used to run Chi-Square & One-Way ANOVA tests.

3.5 *Hypotheses*

Given the previous research and assumptions, it is hypothesized that students'

- (a) whose previous experiences with WL learning are more extensive and/or positive,
- (b) whose awareness of WL cultures and opinions and attitudes toward them are more positive,
- (c) whose opinions and attitudes toward WL learning are more positive and who value classroom language learning,
- (d) that have greater awareness of the benefits of WL learning

would be more likely to enroll in a WL course at the university level. In addition, it is projected that those with more intrinsic/integrative motivation toward WL learning and cultures will be more likely to enroll in WL courses.

³Seven WL majors were also minoring in a WL. Also, one WL major and two WL minors had never enrolled in a university-level WL course.

4 Results

This section begins by presenting the findings regarding the participants’ K-12 WL experiences and opinions, then their reasons for (not) enrolling in WL courses, then students’ opinions and attitudes towards WL learning and cultures and finally students’ knowledge of the benefits of language learning are presented.

4.1 K-12 WL Experiences and Opinions

In this section, the results for factors that related to K-12 experiences with WLs are reported. That is, when the participants reported beginning their WL study, whether they took the AP test in a WL, and what their experiences and opinions were toward their K-12 WL courses.

As shown in Table 1, around one in five NE and one in four NMM students began studying a WL during elementary school. In contrast, nearly half of the MIN/MAJ group began studying a WL at the elementary level. Games-Howell Tests for multiple comparisons indicated that the MIN/MAJ group was significantly different from the NMM group ($p = .003$, 95% C.I. = [.02, .39]) and the NE group ($p = 0.022$, 95% C.I. = [.07, .42]), but the overall effect size (η^2), or “the magnitude of the difference between groups” (Sullivan & Feinn, 2012, p. 279), was small. For AP test taking, it was found that almost no participants in the NE and NMM groups took the AP test whereas nearly a third of the MIN and MAJ groups did so. Games-Howell Tests for multiple comparisons showed that the MIN/MAJ group was significantly different from the NMM group ($p < .001$, 95% C.I. = [.10, .40]) and the NE group ($p < .001$, 95% C.I. = [.11, .40]). In this case, the effect size was medium.

Table 2 shows the participants’ overall ratings of their K-12 WL courses ordered by level of significance from the One-Way ANOVAs.

The results of the One-way ANOVAs indicated that the ratings of the first four statements had significant differences between groups and the following five did not. With regard to the statements for which no significant differences in ratings were found, all groups at least slightly agreed with each statement. With regard to significant differences, the only factor that was found to have a large effect size was statement 1 “Courses/instructors inspired me to continue studying language” in which there is a progression from disagree to agree as level of WL enrollment increases. Statements 2 “Courses were beneficial” and 3 “I enjoyed my world

Table 1 Percentage of students beginning WL study in elementary school and taking the WL AP test by group

Factor	NE	NMM	MIN/MAJ	<i>F</i>	η^2	<i>p-value</i>
Elementary (PreK-4) WL study	20%	24%	44%	7.180	.041	<.001
AP test taken	3%	4%	29%	23.726	.125	<.001

Note. η^2 (effect size) scale: small = 0.01–0.05, medium = 0.06–.13, large = 0.14+

Table 2 Ratings of K-12 WL courses by group

Statement	Group			F	η^2	p-value
	NE	NMM	MIN/MAJ			
Courses/instructors inspired me to continue studying language	-0.7	0.0	+0.9	35.441	.176	<.001
Courses were beneficial	0.0	+0.2	+1.1	17.561	.095	<.001
I enjoyed my world language course(s)	+0.1	+0.4	+1.2	15.349	.084	<.001
Instructors spoke primarily in the target language	-0.1	-0.1	+0.4	3.968	.023	0.020
I had great world language teacher(s)	+0.3	+0.3	+0.8	2.666	.016	0.071
Understanding cultural perspectives was an integral part of courses	+0.3	+0.2	+0.6	2.513	.015	0.083
I made a concerted effort to do well in my language courses	+0.7	+0.8	+1.0	1.507	.009	0.223
We primarily focused on grammar and vocabulary	+1.0	+0.9	+1.2	1.444	.009	0.238
Often practiced real-life skills: Listening/reading/speaking/writing	+0.7	+0.8	+1.0	.972	.006	0.380

Note. 5-point Likert scale: -2 = strongly disagree, 0 = neutral, +2 = strongly agree

language course(s)" show a similar trend but with only a medium effect size. Finally, statement 4 "Instructors spoke primarily in the target language" had a small effect size with the MIN/MAJ group being the only one that slightly agreed with the statement.

Reasons for (not) enrolling in WL courses.

In this section, the results for why students did or did not enroll in languages are presented. First, the reasons selected by the NE group for not enrolling in a WL course are presented in Table 3.

More than half of the participants indicated that they did not enroll in a WL course because it was not required for their major or they were too busy with their other courses. In addition, nearly one in four participants indicated that they did not enroll because they were not interested in languages, and around one in five indicated not enrolling because there are free ways to learn a language, it would be a waste of time and money and/or they were too difficult. Few students selected other reasons for not enrolling with the least selected option being that they felt they only needed to speak English to be successful.

Table 4 highlights the reasons for enrolling in a WL course by those who had enrolled are presented.⁴

Around half of the MIN/MAJ group selected "Love learning about foreign cultures," "Travel the world," "Communicate with more people" and "Benefit my

⁴Participants in the NMM, MIN/MAJ groups that had never enrolled in a university WL course (n = 15) did not answer this question.

Table 3 Main reasons for not enrolling in WL course (NE group)

Reason	% selected
Not required for my major	60.8%
Too busy with my other courses	54.4%
Not interested in languages	23.4%
Free ways to learn a language	22.8%
Would be a waste of time and money	20.9%
Too difficult	20.3%
Probably wouldn't get good enough to be able to use it	16.5%
Wouldn't want to risk my GPA with unnecessary courses	14.6%
Not helpful for my future career	12.7%
I would never use the language	11.4%
I can already communicate in a language other than English	6.3%
Other	3.8%
Only need to speak English to be successful	3.2%

Note. Participants were allowed to select up to four reasons

Table 4 Main reasons for enrolling in a WL course. (NMM, MIN/MAJ groups)

Reason	Group		<i>t</i> (164)	Cohen's <i>d</i>	<i>p</i> -value
	NMM	MIN/MAJ			
Love learning about foreign cultures	21%	49%	-3.7	-.645	<.001
Travel the world	22%	48%	-3.5	-.592	<.001
Communicate with more people	19%	44%	-3.4	-.586	<.001
Have a knack for learning languages	4%	17%	-2.5	-.485	.014
Benefit my future career	29%	51%	-2.8	-.462	.007
Fulfill a requirement for my major/minor	52%	31%	2.8	.446	.007
Advance my academic and career trajectory	15%	31%	-2.2	-.390	.028
Improve my interpersonal skills	9%	17%	-1.3	-.234	.184
They are fun/interesting	30%	37%	-1.0	-.157	.334
Expand my circle of friends	2%	2%	0.1	.013	.936
I find them easy	4%	5%	-.41	-.067	.432
Learn more about my heritage	6%	8%	.46	-.115	.635

Note. Participants selected up to four reasons; Cohen's *d* (effect size) scale: small ($d = \pm 0.2-0.49$), medium ($d = \pm 0.5-0.79$), and large ($d = \pm 0.8$ or higher)

future career" as one of the main reasons for studying a WL whereas the NMM group selected these reasons significantly less frequently. In contrast, more than half of the NMM selected "Fulfill a requirement for my major/minor" as a primary reason for enrolling in a WL course whereas less than a third of the MIN/MAJ group selected this option. Indeed, the first three reasons had the greatest effect size (medium), suggesting that they distinguished the two groups greater than any other factors.

Opinions and Attitudes towards WL Learning and Cultures.

In this section, the results for the students' opinions on a variety of topics related to WL learning and enrollment in WL courses are presented. For the sake of clarity, this section is organized based on the type of statement organized into four groups: benefits of WL learning, then WL cultures, followed by WL course enrollment, and finally WL learning in general. Regarding students' opinions related to the benefits of (learning) languages, there were significant differences between group ratings overall for each statement based on the One-Way ANOVAs as shown in Table 5.

For the first two statements, "Speaking a second language is beneficial for my future career" and "Knowing more than one language is crucial in today's global society," all groups were on the agreement side of the spectrum. However, the level of agreement increases significantly as the level of WL enrollment increases, and the effect size was large for the first statement. The ratings for the statement "In addition to teaching, it's clear what types of jobs a language major would lead to" also showed an increase in agreement as level of enrollment increased but the NE group slightly disagreed and the other groups slightly agreed. In contrast, all groups disagreed with the statements "Not all world languages are beneficial" and "Majoring in a language would make it more difficult to find a good job," but as the level of WL enrollment increased, the level of *disagreement* increased.

In Table 6, we see the ratings for the statements related to WL cultures.

Table 5 Ratings of statements regarding the benefits of WL learning by group

Statement	NE	NMM	MIN/ MAJ	<i>F</i>	η^2	<i>p-value</i>
Speaking a second language is beneficial for my future career	+0.2	+0.5	+1.6	24.643	.145	<.001
Knowing more than one language is crucial in today's global society	+0.1	+0.5	+1.2	18.940	.115	<.001
Not all world languages are beneficial	-0.1	-0.6	-1.1	12.292	.078	<.001
In addition to teaching, it's clear what types of jobs a language major would lead to	-0.3	+0.3	+0.5	11.829	.075	<.001
Majoring in a language would make it more difficult to find a good job	-0.3	-0.6	-1.0	7.145	.047	<.001

Table 6 Opinions toward WL cultures by group

Statement	NE	NMM	MIN/ MAJ	<i>F</i>	η^2	<i>p-value</i>
I think other cultural perspectives are as valid as my own cultural perspectives	+1.3	+1.4	+1.7	3.889	.026	0.018
It's very difficult to understand cultural perspectives w/o speaking their language	+0.1	+0.3	+0.6	3.514	.024	0.029
I can interact in a culturally sensitive manner with foreigners without learning their language.	+0.4	+0.2	+0.4	1.221	.008	0.738

For the statement “I think other cultural perspectives are as valid as my own cultural perspectives,” all groups’ ratings fell between “agree” and “strongly agree,” but the strength of agreement increased with level of WL enrollment. A similar trend was found for “It’s very difficult to understand cultural perspectives w/o speaking their language,” but in this case, the ratings fell between “neutral” and “agree” only. However, the effect size was small for both statements. Finally, for the statement “I can interact in a culturally sensitive manner with foreigners without learning their language,” all groups slightly agreed with this statement but there were neither significant differences nor clear trends between groups. Table 7 presents each groups’ average rating for statements WL course enrollment.

First, all but one of the statements showed significant differences between groups. Additionally, the first 3 statements had a medium effect. For the statement “My parents/friends would be excited/supportive if I were majoring in a WL,” whereas the NE group slightly disagreed with the statement, the other groups agreed. The next three statements show an inverse trend of less agreement as WL enrollment level increases. Hence, overall, the students enrolled in WL at a higher level disagree more with the following statements: “It makes sense to study a second language as a minor, but not a major”; “Language courses unnecessary because you can learn a language on your own”; “Language courses are only beneficial if you can communicate well in language after.” For the last statement, “For language courses to be beneficial, you need to get past 2nd year courses,” there were not significant differences or clear trends and all groups slightly agreed with it.

In Table 8, we see the results for the ratings of statements related to WL learning in general. In both cases, groups disagree with the statements “Learning a second language is not necessary due to advances in technology” and “In today’s world it is not necessary to learn second language if you speak English.” However, as with the ratings for many of the other statements, we see a consistent trend going from one group to the next: there is an increased level of disagreement as level of WL enrollment increases.

Table 7 Opinions toward WL course enrollment by group

Statement	NE	NMM	MIN/ MAJ	<i>F</i>	η^2	<i>p</i> -value
My parents/friends would be excited/supportive if I were majoring in a WL	-0.4	+0.3	+0.7	17.118	.105	<.001
All university students should be required to take language courses	-0.9	-0.1	+0.1	14.435	.090	<.001
It makes sense to study a second language as a minor, but not a major	+0.2	-0.3	-0.6	10.087	.065	<.001
Language courses are unnecessary because you can learn a language on your own	-0.4	-0.7	-1.0	7.089	.046	<.001
Language courses are only beneficial if you can communicate well in language after	+0.4	+0.1	-0.2	5.738	.038	0.004
For language courses to be beneficial, you need to get past 2nd year courses	+0.4	+0.3	+0.4	.553	.004	.576

Table 8 Opinions toward WL learning in general

Statement	NE	NMM	MIN/MAJ	F	η^2	p-value
In today's world it is not necessary to learn second language if you speak English	-0.7	-0.9	-1.2	4.511	.030	0.012
Learning a second language is not necessary due to advances in technology	-0.6	-0.7	-1.0	4.346	.029	0.014

Table 9 Awareness of WL learning benefits by group

Statements	NE	NMM	MIN/MAJ	F	η^2	p-value
...increase critical, analytical & interpersonal skills?	75%	84%	93%	5.228	.035	.006
...improve your academic abilities?	71%	75%	89%	4.072	.027	.018
...benefit other areas of study such as healthcare, business, social work & criminal justice?	88%	88%	96%	1.804	.012	.167
...help increase your ability to interact with others in a culturally sensitive manner?	90%	90%	96%	1.360	.009	.258

4.2 Overall Knowledge of Benefits of Language Learning

In this final subsection of the results, the overall percentage of students for each group that indicated whether they were aware of the listed benefits from WL learning is presented.⁵ Each question began with "Did you know that speaking a second language/language courses can..." followed by each of the statements in Table 9. Participants were given three options to answer these questions: Yes, No and Not sure.⁶

Almost all students in every group indicated that they were aware that speaking a second language/language courses can help increase their ability to interact with others in a culturally sensitive manner and benefit other areas of study such as healthcare, business, social work and criminal justice. Furthermore, albeit to a slightly lesser degree for some groups, the majority of students in each group indicated that they were aware that speaking a second language/language courses can improve their academic abilities as well as increase their critical, analytical and interpersonal skills. However, although they had small effect sizes, there were significant differences between groups with regard to these two benefits and in both cases, the MIN/MAJ group indicated the greatest awareness of these benefits.

⁵These results come from the 294 participants that fully completed the survey.

⁶Since "Not sure" indicates partial awareness, these responses were assigned half a point when calculating the percentages.

5 Discussion

The goal of the current study was to discover the factors related to level of enrollment in university-level WL courses in an effort to better understand students' reasons for deciding whether to take them. Based on the previous literature, four broad hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Students' whose previous experiences with WL learning were more extensive and/or positive are more likely to enroll in WL courses at the university level. The results overall supported this hypothesis given that significantly more students who were minoring or majoring in a WL began studying world languages during elementary school and had taken the AP test in a WL than non-language majors/minors. This makes sense given that previous research has shown that earlier language learning can lead to greater proficiency and increased motivation in the target language (Kissau et al., 2015). In addition, it was found students minoring/majoring in a WL had much more positive experiences in the K-12 WL courses including viewing them as more enjoyable, beneficial and inspiring as well as having language teachers who spoke more often in the target language than the non-minor/major students. In fact, students who had never enrolled in a university-level WL course generally disagreed that K-12 WL courses/instructors inspired them to continue studying the language and were neutral with regard to their enjoyment of language courses.

Hypothesis 2: Students whose awareness of WL cultures and opinions and attitudes toward them are more positive are more likely to enroll in WL courses at the university level. The results partially supported this hypothesis given that students with a higher level of enrollment in WL courses more often selected love for foreign cultures as a main reason for enrolling and agreed more strongly that other cultural perspectives are as valid as their own cultural perspectives. However, regardless of the level of university WL enrollment, all groups slightly agreed that understanding cultural perspectives was an integral part of their K-12 courses.

Hypothesis 3: Students whose opinions and attitudes toward WL learning are more positive and who value classroom language learning are more likely to enroll in WL courses at the university level. The results also support this hypothesis given that students who had enrolled or planned to enroll in a WL course agreed more strongly than those in the NE group that speaking a second language was beneficial for their future careers and that knowing more than one language was crucial in today's global society. Moreover, they more strongly disagreed with the statement that not all world languages were beneficial and that learning a second language was not necessary due to advances in technology. Furthermore, more than one in five of the NE group indicated that a main reason for not enrolling in a university-level WL courses was because they were not interested in world languages, there are free ways to learn a language, it would be a waste of time and money, and they were too difficult. Indeed, the NE group only slightly disagreed with the statement that language courses were unnecessary because you can learn a language on your own whereas all other groups more strongly disagreed.

Hypothesis 4: Students that have a greater awareness of the benefits of WL learning are more likely to enroll in WL courses at the university level. The hypothesis was only partially supported. First, increased WL enrollment led to stronger agreement with statements related to languages benefitting future careers and for living in a global society. Additionally, the MIN/MAJ group was the only group that slightly disagreed with the statement that language courses are only beneficial if you can communicate well in the language after taking them and more strongly disagreed that in today's world it is not necessary to learn second language if you speak English. In addition, those with higher levels of WL enrollment showed significantly more awareness of WL learning benefiting critical, analytical, and interpersonal skills as well as academic abilities. However, when asked directly about whether they were aware of the benefits of language learning, most students indicated awareness of all the listed benefits of WL learning regardless of their level of WL enrollment. In addition, very few of the NE group indicated that a main reason for not enrolling in WL courses was due to them not being potentially beneficial for their future career and/or success.

Hypothesis 5: Students who demonstrate more intrinsic/integrative motivation toward WL learning and cultures are more likely to enroll in WL courses at the university level. This hypothesis was also partially supported by the results. When examining the different types of motivation for enrolling in a WL course, we see that students at all levels of WL enrollment had both instrumental and integrative reasons, but there were several differences across groups. Whereas one of the top reasons that WL minors and majors selected for enrolling in WL courses was a love for learning about foreign cultures (integrative), the main reason for NMM students to enroll in a WL was to fulfill a requirement for their major/minor (instrumental). Indeed, the main reason for NE group for not enrolling in a WL was that it was not required for their major. In addition, significantly more WL minor/major students selected the intrinsic/integrative reason of having a knack for languages as a main reason for enrolling in WL course. On the other hand, around a third of both the MIN/MAJ and NMM groups indicated that a main reason for enrolling in a WL course was because the intrinsic motivation of them being fun/interesting. As for instrumental motivation for students minoring/majoring in a world language, a large percentage indicated reasons such as traveling the world and benefitting their future careers, as some of their main reasons for enrolling in WL language courses whereas significantly fewer students selected these reasons from the options. In addition, WL minor/major students agreed more strongly that their parents/friends would be excited/supportive if they were majoring in a WL, suggesting that the extrinsic motivation of pleasing family and friends motivated their decision as well. Taken together, the students minoring/majoring in a WL not only appear to have more intrinsic motivation than the other students, but more extrinsic motivation to learn languages as well.

6 Conclusion

So why doesn't everyone take a WL class? Results showed that higher levels of WL enrollment are related to the students' pre-college experiences and opinions toward WLs, students' opinions and attitudes towards WL learning and cultures, and students' knowledge of the benefits of WL learning. Specifically, the results suggest that students whose pre-college experiences with WL learning are more extensive and/or positive, whose opinions and attitudes toward WL learning and cultures are more positive, who value classroom language learning to a greater degree, have greater awareness of the benefits of WL learning, and have greater overall intrinsic/integrative and instrumental motivation toward WL learning and cultures will be more likely to enroll in WL courses. However, it is important to note that although the findings suggest a causal relationship between the factors studied and WL enrollment, the statistics are only correlational. It could be that the suggested factors that influence WL enrollment are in fact influenced themselves by WL enrollment. For instance, being enrolled in WL courses could lead to increased intrinsic motivation to learn languages and/or greater awareness of the benefits of language learning. In addition, the participants were rather homogenous with regard to demographics and pre-college educational and WL experiences, so samples of students from more diverse backgrounds would give us more generalizable results. Additionally, most of the significant findings had either a medium or small effect size, suggesting that the magnitude of the difference between groups was not always robust and as such, should be interpreted with caution. Finally, although there is some qualitative evidence as to why some language programs have more robust WL enrollment (Goldberg et al., 2004), more data is needed to discover programmatic features that lead to increased enrollments in languages.

7 Considerations

The results of the current study led to some questions about how we can advocate for WL learning and enrollment at the university level. First, language instructors and program administrators should consider ways to help raise awareness of the intrinsic value of language learning. In addition, we can educate those in the community of the wide-range of benefits of WL study and encourage PreK-12 school systems to consider beginning language study earlier given the benefits of earlier and more extensive language study. Furthermore, we can increase opportunities for WL teaching workshops and seminars to help improve K-12 WL teacher development so that the K-12 students' experience is as positive as possible. Finally, on a departmental level, we can collaborate with other departments to make sure students are aware of the benefits that WL learning has for myriad careers.

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Motivational Factors Affecting Language Student Enrollment and Retention in Higher Education



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Abstract This study seeks to understand the motivation of less commonly taught language (LCTL) students and compare their profile to the students of one commonly taught language (CTL), Spanish. The study asked what factors influence student enrollment and continuing in their language program. The data were collected in a survey of 420 students of Spanish, Arabic, Slavic, Altaic, Niger-Congo, and other languages at a large Midwest university unit with a foreign language requirement. The results supplement recent large-scale research of world language enrollment studies at U.S. universities (Murphy et al., 2021, 2022; Van Gorp et al., 2021) with a focus on small LCTLs. Both personal interest and future career goals motivate the study of LCTLs, whereas academic career (fulfillment of program requirements) motivates enrolment in Spanish. The study has implications for language program administrators and K-16 educators by providing insight into what motivates initial enrolment and persistence with enrolment in higher level courses. Specific target strategies developed through the results of this study could be used in advising, recruiting, and retaining L2 students in colleges.

Keywords Small LCTL · Spanish · Retention · Recruitment · Survey · Advising

1 Background and Motivation for the Current Study

The study was motivated by our need as faculty to understand the dynamics underlying enrollments in our language programs and to improve recruitment approaches. As instructors of less commonly taught languages (LCTL) at an institution that offers a large variety of foreign language programs, we found ourselves looking for answers to how students in our small LCTL programs may differ from

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larger CTL programs in terms of their motivation to choose these languages in post-secondary education as well as motivation to persist in the language program. We asked how the students' motivation and perception of attainable goals changes after completing the first year of language study.

In more abstract and programmatic terms, the study was inspired by Kramersch (2014) laying out the goals for twenty-first century foreign language instruction and in more concrete, motivational research terms by Murphy et al. (2009) and Magnan et al. (2012, 2014) large-scale surveys. Both the data analyzed in the Magnan et al. surveys as well as the observations by Kramersch pointed to the need to study the various motivational profiles of learners of different languages and language groups such as LOTE (languages other than English), MCTL (more Commonly taught languages) and LCTL as there are important differences between the learners of languages belonging to these groups as well as individual languages and language programs. Wesely's (2012) review article concluded that except for heritage learners, factors/characteristics/individual differences of foreign language learners such as, different genders, racial and ethnic groups, and economic backgrounds are understudied, and lamented the lack of data from secondary education. Several large-scale or review studies (Magnan et al., 2014; Thompson, 2017; Ushioda, 2017) have emphasized the need to collect data from maximally varied programs, institutions, and geographical locations to understand what motivates college foreign language learners and to enable foreign language programs as well as learners to benefit from the scholarship.

Research has established that the demographics and motivations of students learning LCTLs vs (M)CTLs differ (see overview in Magnan et al., 2012, p.174). There are differences in goals, expectations, and desired attainment (Howard et al., 2009; Magnan et al., 2012). While Magnan et al. investigated the alignment of the students' goals with the National Standards, they revealed significant differences between the LCTL and CTL groups that added detail and precision to observations by earlier comparisons (Brown, 2009; Howard et al., 2009; Murphy et al., 2009). As a next step, individual languages and programs can be compared against the results of large-scale studies. Thus, Murphy et al. (2020), following up on the Magnan et al. (2014) study of National Standards and learner goals, found that learners of Russian differed from all other LCTL learners taken together on their perception of the importance of several standards.

In this study, we analyze data from post-secondary education, which were collected at an institution that had not been surveyed earlier and includes LCTLs that had not been featured in earlier studies. We decided to compare LCTLs with Spanish, excluding other major European languages, for two reasons. The special status of Spanish in the United States has been well documented, and Spanish could be expected to provide a maximal contrast in terms of Common vs Less Common choices for foreign language study in college. On a practical level of student recruitment, when talking to students, parents, and advisors about the undergraduate

students' prospects of studying LCTLs, we most often hear Spanish mentioned as the preferred choice.

This study obtained basic demographics for the two groups as well as data about motivational factors for starting and persisting in the language program. Our survey study collected quantitative and qualitative data; this report focuses on a subset of the quantitative data.

2 Literature Review

Current psychological approaches to L2 motivation view the motivational self as a system of possible selves (Dörnyei, 2009): multiple goals and agendas that develop and change over time (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Ushioda (2017, p. 417) noted that central to L2 motivational research is “focus on the future goals and purposes of language learning, and the degree to which these are internally driven (e.g., ideal L2 selves), socially driven (e.g., externally regulated extrinsic goals, or ought-to L2 selves), or locally negotiated and contested (e.g., investment and identity goals).”

Within this framework, Thompson (2017) is relevant to the current study. Using Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), it focused on the concept of *self* as the three constructs of *ideal*, *ought-to*, and *anti-ought-to self*. The participants, L1 English language learners in the U.S., were grouped as follows: learners of (1) Spanish, (2) French/German/Italian and (3) LCTLs. The learners who chose to study Spanish in college had the lowest score for *anti-ought-to self*, confirming the hypothesis that motivation to learn Spanish would differ from motivation to learn other languages, due to the role of Spanish in the United States. Thompson (2017, p. 496) reported the students' perception of the social obligation or “usefulness” of Spanish, possibly due to the study being conducted in Florida, a heavily Spanish-speaking area. The results corroborated the earlier finding by Thompson and Vásquez (2015) and Lanvers (2016) that an important motivational factor for learning languages other than English is reactive to the expectations of others, going against the cultural or societal expectations: *rebellious self* (Lanvers) or *anti-ought-to self* (Thompson & Vasquez). These learners are motivated to do what is seen as difficult or discouraged by others. Difficulty of the target language was also observed as a motivator in case of LCTLs by Murphy et al. (2009).

A number of studies have observed that the learners of LCTLs vs CTLs differ in demographic characteristics. Brown (2009) compared the student demographics of CTL (Spanish, French and German) against the LCTL (Arabic, Hebrew, Japanese, Turkish, Greek, and Italian) in the first- or second-year university foreign language courses, finding that the LCTL students were older, more advanced in their academic career and included more heritage learners. They displayed more personal interest and found the class more difficult.

Overall, the comparisons between LCTL and CTL (especially Spanish) learners on various surveys of motivational factors indicate the prevalence of non-utilitarian motivation for LCTLs. There appears to be a decline of utilitarian motivation on a scale from Spanish through more widely spoken and taught world languages to smaller less commonly taught languages. Magnan and Tochon (2001) found that French and German students were much more influenced by humanistic benefits of language study than Spanish students, who were more equally divided between utilitarian and humanistic reasons. In turn, Murphy et al. (2009) and Howard et al. (2009) found that the learners of widely spoken, global languages (French, German, Spanish) reported significantly lower degrees of interest in literary or artistic pursuits as a reason to study the language, compared to learners of LCTLs. Murphy et al. results differed from Brown (2009) in suggesting that most students learn languages for personal enjoyment but concurred with the study in observing that there was more personal enjoyment and heritage motivation among the LCTL group. Similarly, Thomas's (2010) results indicated that students of Spanish strongly favored an instrumental orientation for language study, while certain LCTL students favored communication factors and sentimental reasons.

In their large-scale survey, Magnan et al. (2012) found that contrary to expectations, the goals of the LCTL learners were more closely aligned with those laid out in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (2015) than the goals of the CTL learners. While for three of the 11 Standards both groups showed similarly high alignment, for the other eight, the LCTL group was more aligned. The possible explanation was sought in the reasons why LCTLs are studied: personal interest and importance of culture.

Magnan et al. (2014) observed the following LCTL-CTL motivational factor differences: while communication in relationships was important for both groups, CTL group mentioned distant relationships more (workplace, travel) while LCTL mentioned close relationships (family, friends). The LCTL group valued cultural involvement, culture as relevant for personal knowledge, while the CTL group valued cultural knowledge (for removing barriers to interaction, not being misunderstood). In terms of attainment goals, CTL learners wanted to get by in everyday interactions, LCTL learners wanted to become fluent.

As we have come to understand motivation to be a dynamic concept, it is important to look at change over time. Murphy et al. (2009) focused on students' reasons for enrolling in first and third semester language courses. While for all students the reasons of *personal interest, enjoyment and curiosity* and *meeting a degree requirement* stayed the same from first to third semester courses, the percentage of students indicating *personal interest, enjoyment, and curiosity* dropped from 43 to 32% for the third semester (Murphy et al., 2009, p. 52). The reason defined as *use in my future career* increased 13% from the first semester, which was attributed to rising awareness of professional opportunities due to language skills. LCTL and CTL groups differed significantly in primary reasons for enrollment in the

first semester, confirming the idea that LCTL students are more likely than CTL students to be motivated by humanistic rather than utilitarian reasons. These differences were no longer significant in third semester enrollments, where personal interest was the most important reason for all learners.

Students of CTLs were more likely to enroll in first-semester courses “to satisfy a degree requirement, to enroll in third-semester courses to prepare for travel and for applications to graduate and professional school, and to continue into the third semester to become more proficient to meet career objectives and gain credentials for graduate and professional schools” (Murphy et al., 2009, p. 59). Students of LCTLs were more likely to enroll in both first and third-semester courses for heritage reasons. Continuing into the third semester, the LCTL group was more influenced by their developing interest in the target language and culture and less interested in developing proficiency. Enrollment primarily for a degree requirement was observed for approximately one quarter of all the students.

3 Aims of the Study

The present study focuses on the goals and expectations of LCTL students in comparison to students in Spanish (CTL) courses. The study also examines the relationship between the intention to continue studying the target language and the type of the L2 studied. Additionally, the study provides insight into student recruitment. We formulated our research questions with the intent to find out whether students’ self-reported motivation is related to them planning to continue studying the language at upper levels. We also compared the students of two language groups (Spanish and LCTL) as to the motivational factors the students reported. We then investigated if the two language groups differed according to their willingness to continue language learning. Finally, we were interested in recruitment, asking if there is a difference between the two language groups in how students were recruited, surveying the students about how they learned about the language program they had enrolled in.

4 Method

4.1 Participants

Participants in this study were 402 introductory and intermediate level LCTL students ($n = 234$) and Spanish students ($n = 168$) at a large research university in the midwestern United States. The LCTL group was comprised of the following languages: Arabic, Bamana, Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, Czech, Estonian, Finnish, Hungarian, Kurdish, Mongolian, Pashto, Persian, Polish, Russian, Swahili, Turkish, Tibetan, Uyghur, and Uzbek. All of these languages can be studied for three years (Introductory through Advanced courses).

Age of Spanish and LCTL student demographics are shown in Figs. 1 and 2. A narrow age group distribution on the survey was introduced as the previous research has shown LCTL students to be in the older student population than CTL. Therefore, it was essential to have an age group distribution different than typical studies. The sample included all students in language classes, both graduates and undergraduates and the demographic characteristics of the groups matched those in earlier studies. Of the 168 Spanish students who participated in our study, 82.1% were between the ages of 18 and 20 and 16.7% were between the ages of 21 and 23.

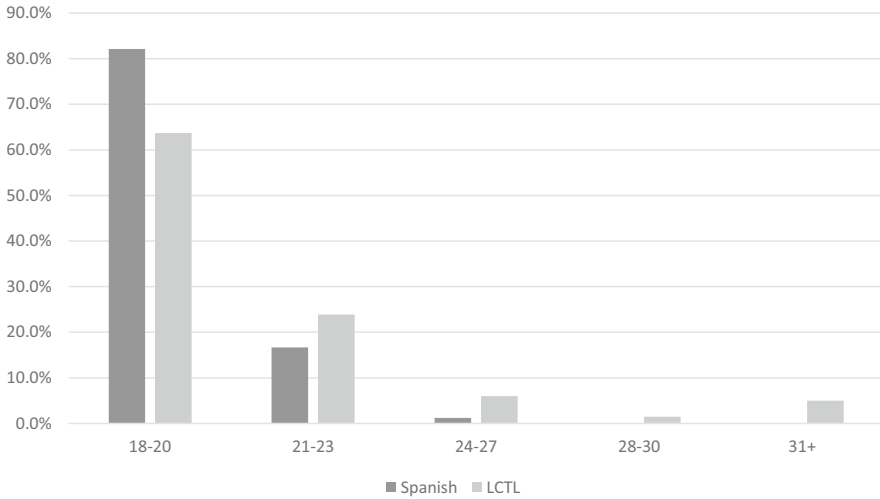


Fig. 1 Age distribution by language type

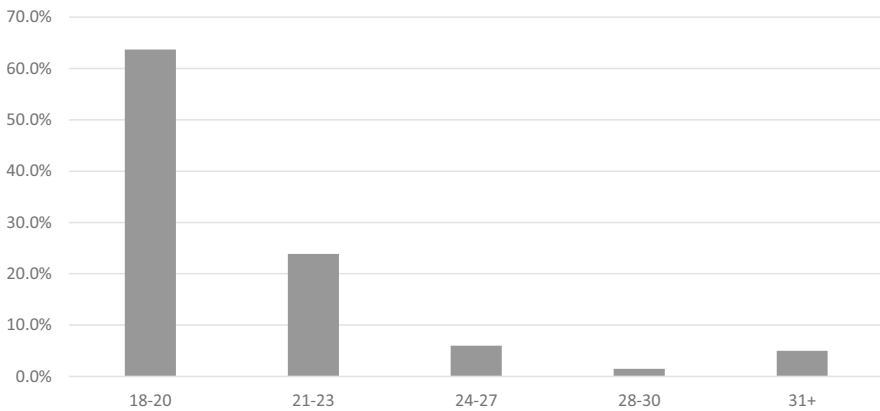


Fig. 2 Student age distribution

Only 1.2% of learners in that group were above the age of 23 (Fig. 1). Regarding the 234 LCTL students, 63.7% of the students were between the ages of 18 and 20, and 23.9% were in the 21–23 ages range (Fig. 1). 12.5% of students were above the age of 23 (Fig. 1). Among the total number of respondents, the largest share of L2 students fall within the 18–20 (64%) (Fig. 2).

4.2 Instrument, Data Collection and Analysis

A pilot study conducted with 75 students of Arabic, Chinese, Persian, Russian, and Turkish during summer session courses used a survey questionnaire modeled on the instruments used by Brown (2009), Murphy et al. (2009) and Magnan et al. (2012). As a result of the pilot study, we modified survey item wording to reduce any ambiguity reported by the participants. The revised survey consisted of 37 items based on open- and closed-ended self-rating scale, consisting of three subcategories: demographics, academic data, and L2 goals and motivation. Demographics elicited information on participants' age and gender. Academic data consisted of participants' academic status, language studied in high school, language currently studied, level of difficulty of the currently studied L2, L2 course level, major field of study, and the recruitment method. The L2 goals and motivation component elicited data on the factors influencing student enrollment in LCTLs and continuation in the program. Intermediate year students were asked additional questions about their motivation to continue.

The data in this study were collected during Fall semester classes. We requested access to Spanish and LCTL classes from instructors and gatekeepers and handed out paper copies of surveys during the last 10 min of classes, in order to maximize the return rate. The study was approved by the university Institutional Review Board.

The data were analyzed quantitatively using the SPSS 28 software. T-test and chi-square test of independence were performed on both levels to examine the relation between two groups of language learners and the nominal variables that were statistically significant.

5 Results

In this section, we present the results of the quantitative data analysis for our research questions regarding motivational factor differences for students planning or not planning to continue their language study (both beyond Introductory and Intermediate years), differences between Spanish and LCTL students in motivational factors (Sect. 5.1) as well as differences in the student recruitment into language programs (Sect. 5.2).

5.1 Comparisons of Student Groups

First, we investigated the students' intent to continue in the language program. Those Introductory level students who stated that they intended to continue with their language studies had significantly higher scores for five of the eight motivation-related survey questions (Table 1). That is, they indicated stronger agreement with the statements (on the scale of 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree, see Appendix for questionnaire items). Their motivational factors due to personal interest, career interest, future travel or study abroad, interest in the language and culture as well as the literature of the language studied was significantly higher than for those who did not plan on continuing. At the same time, academic requirement as a motivator did not significantly correlate with their intent to continue language study.

We also asked additional questions of the students at the Intermediate level, as they had already been studying the language for more than a year (see the survey questions 9–20 in Appendix). Students stating that they intend to continue with their language studies had significantly different scores for nine of the 11 motivation related survey questions, compared to those not intending to continue. Those wanting to continue were more motivated by intent to travel to the country where the language is spoken (mean scores 3.99 vs. 2.84). Important factors correlating with intent to continue were growing interest (mean scores of 4.38 for those continuing vs. 3.57 for those not), contact with people met when studying the language (3.62 vs. 2.91), increased proficiency and desire to become more proficient (4.71 vs. 3.61), and interest in the literature of the languages (3.83 vs. 2.71).

Table 1 Results of T-Tests for the statistically significant roles of motivation in the student's choice to continue with additional classes of the language – introductory level

	Continue additional language classes?	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Personal interest	Yes	183	4.12	1.04	3.27	37	<.001
	No	33	3.21	1.54			
Career interest	Yes	179	3.29	1.24	3.3	210	<.001
	No	33	2.52	1.23			
Future travel and/or study abroad where this language is spoken	Yes	184	3.74	1.15	2.17	215	0.016
	No	33	3.27	1.18			
Interest in the language & culture	Yes	185	4.14	0.95	4.04	216	<.001
	No	33	3.39	1.14			
Interest in the literature of the language	Yes	183	3.22	1.18	3.36	214	<.001
	No	33	2.48	0.97			

Those not intending to continue had higher scores for fulfilling a requirement for their major as a motivator (2.74 for those planning to continue, 3.18 for not planning). See the Appendix, Table A2 for all significant results.

Next, we present the comparison of the student groups based on their target languages, Spanish vs LCTL. How did the Spanish learners and the LCTL learners differ in their responses to motivation questions? First, in the Introductory year, for five of the eight questions about motivation, the LCTL students had significantly higher mean scores indicating higher agreement with the factors as motivating them: questions focused on personal and career interest (LCTL group mean scores 4.62 and 3.62, respectively, vs. Spanish group 3.12 and 2.59), future travel and study abroad (LCTL 3.97, Spanish 3.29), interest in the language itself and related culture (LCTL 4.52, Spanish 3.4), interest in literature (LCTL 3.62, Spanish 2.46). At the same time, for the students learning Spanish, the mean scores for the motivation to meet a foreign language requirement were significantly higher (especially meeting a requirement for their major: 4.26 Spanish vs 2.66 LCTL).

For the Intermediate year learners, the pattern was similar. The LCTL students' motivational profile compared to the Spanish students here was like that of Intermediate students in both language groups (Spanish and LCTLs) willing to continue language study beyond fourth semester (in Appendix Table A1). The LCTL students were significantly more motivated by the desire to read literature in the language (mean score of 3.91 vs. Spanish 2.84), by increased motivation since starting the language (4.28 vs. Spanish 3.88) and contacts with people made through studying the language (3.76 vs. Spanish 2.86), also the desire to become more proficient (4.47 vs Spanish 4.19) and by travel and study abroad (3.8 vs. Spanish 3.37), (see Appendix Table A2). The Spanish students were more motivated by requirement for their minor (3.74 vs. LCTL 2.55).

5.2 *Method of Recruitment to Their Language of Study*

An analysis was performed for both the LCTL and the Spanish language student groups to compare the difference in recruitment methods. The differences were statistically significant (see Table A3 in Appendix). Students studying LCTLs were more likely to have used the university website (66.5%) to access information about the language of study than Spanish language students (25.2%) (Figs. 3 and 4). Students studying Spanish were more likely to have received information about their selected language class from university advisors (57.7%) than LCTL students (16.5%). College recruitment days, language promotion events, flyers, social media, and class visitors combined to promote second languages were found to be not very effective in recruiting students to language classrooms (15% for LCTL and 4% for Spanish, Figs. 3 and 4).

Fig. 3 How did you learn about your language class? (LCTL)

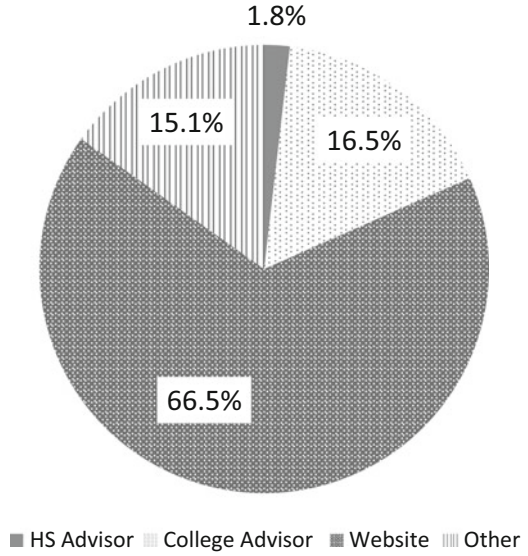
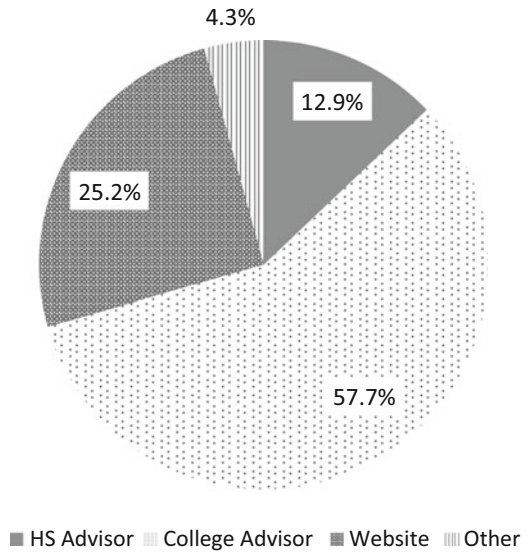


Fig. 4 How did you learn about your language class? (Spanish)



6 Discussion

As expected, based on the previous research, personal interest was strongly correlated with expected/potential persistence in the program, so was the intention to travel to a foreign country. Usefulness for career was important but less than personal interest (corroborating Murphy et al., 2009). For students beyond their first year, those who chose to study the language to fulfill a requirement (either for their major, their minor or the 2-year foreign language requirement) were less likely to continue beyond fulfilling that requirement. Thus, the academic requirements are important motivators for initial enrollment and persistence until fulfillment. The LCTL students are more likely to continue language study beyond their Intermediate year, as fulfilling academic requirements is not a primary motivator for them.

In addition to the personal interest and interest in culture, which were expected to be higher for LCTL learners based on the literature, career interest, travel, and study abroad were also more important for introductory year enrollment in LCTLs than Spanish. It may be due to the increased focus on careers in security and foreign relations for several critical languages included in the sample compared to earlier studies, including increased travel opportunities (the survey was conducted before the Covid-19 related travel restrictions).

The LCTLs stood out for developing student intrinsic motivation over the first year of study. The importance of motivating factors, such as meeting new people while learning the language, and developing more interest while studying the language point to the importance of community building and socialization in connection with language study, which is probably happening in the LCTL languages much more than Spanish. The small class sizes and the intensity of new cultural learning may contribute.

The more pronounced interest in literature of the target language by LCTL learners was somewhat surprising (the mean score for LCTL was 3.62 in the Introductory group and 3.91 in Intermediate), especially given that the participants in the LCTL groups were not more advanced than fourth semester, but it should be interpreted in the framework of the overall importance language learners attribute to culture, e.g., in the survey by Murphy et al. (2021).

The finding that Intermediate LCTL students were more likely to report the intention to continue with language learning than the Intermediate Spanish students is most likely due to fulfilling a 2-year foreign language requirement being the dominant motivator for Spanish learners. Again, this points to the importance of getting students to start a LCTL, as they may grow intrinsic motivation over the course of study. Murphy et al. (2009) found that their LCTL group was more influenced by their developing interest in the target language and culture and less interested in developing proficiency. Since personal interest is overall a more important factor for continuing in a language program in this study as well, it is conceivable that the LCTL learners have more personal interest still in the Intermediate year that keeps them motivated to do more.

As earlier found by Thompson (2017), the students of Spanish appear to be “conformists,” i.e., motivated in their foreign language choice by social expectations, and possibly, specifically by advisor recommendations. We see that less in terms of the perceived usefulness for future career as the usefulness is primarily reported in terms of college career, that is, fulfilling a requirement. Fulfilling an academic requirement as a primary motivator for enrolling in CTL courses has been observed before, e.g., Brown (2009). Spanish in our study may be closer to other CTLs than in Thompson’s (2017), due to this study not being conducted in a primarily Spanish speaking area (in fact, some open-ended answers mentioned plan to work elsewhere after graduation where Spanish will be needed). The overwhelming role of college advisors and high school career counselors is directly relevant here, as they are the primary source of directing students to enroll in college Spanish courses, possibly in order to facilitate graduation on time. The LCTL-choosing students in our study appeared to be more independent in their choices (or not as dependent on the institutional pressures), consistent with findings by Thompson (2017) that their motivational self is, at least to some extent, *anti-ought to* in their language choice. It is also possible that they had fulfilled their requirement with, e.g., Spanish, already.

7 Limitations and Future Directions

This study was small scale and did not include other major European languages or Chinese and Russian, learners of which are likely to appear an “intermediate” group between the more pronounced differences between the LCTL and Spanish students (cf. Thompson, 2017). The data were collected at the same time from all levels of language classes, thus there is no longitudinal tracking of motivation change in the cohorts. The existing dataset can be used for asking additional, more nuanced questions about the motivational factors. This report did not include responses to open-ended questions. Future studies could integrate survey items from recent multi-site surveys, include the perspectives of parents and academic advisors, track motivation dynamics longitudinally, and feature interview data to detail the language learning histories and experiences of the participants. New extrinsic motivators such as student funding earmarked for LCTLs (*Foreign Language and Area Studies* scholarships) should be investigated.

8 Conclusion and Implications

The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between Introductory L2 students’ personal and career interest, possibilities for future travel/study abroad, as motivation factors and the intention to continue with their language studies. As for the Intermediate level, the L2 students who intended to continue with their language

studies had significantly higher scores on personal interests, desire to attain higher academic proficiency, and prepare to travel to a target language country. This study also shows that there is a significant difference between Introductory LCTL and Spanish students' motivational profiles: the motivation to meet a college foreign language requirement was higher for learners of Spanish than their LCTL peers, whereas the LCTL students were more motivated by personal, academic, and career interests. The results supplement other research studies of world language enrollment studies at the U.S. universities (D'Amico & Sterling, 2021; Murphy et al., 2021; Van Gorp et al., 2021) with a focus on small LCTLs in contrast with Spanish. The study has implications for language program administrators and K-16 educators by providing insight into what motivates students to enroll in LCTL and CTL (Spanish) courses and what motivates them to persist in those programs. Based on the results of this study, target strategies could be developed and used in advising, recruiting, and retaining all L2 students in colleges. For instance, based on the motivational profiling of students, the Spanish learners were more motivated by fulfilling the requirement and college advisors were identified as the main source of guidance for their college language course selection. LCTL and CTL recruitment strategies should prioritize collaboration with college advisors and make sure they are aware of the motivational differences in both distinct groups of L2 learners.

This study further demonstrates the differences between learners according to target language and underscores the need to study groups of foreign language learners rather than the whole student population (cf., D'Amico & Sterling, 2021). A recent study of Russian programs (Murphy et al., 2020) concluded that the "personal interest" factor is quite diverse, and in addition to the interest in the culture and interaction with speakers of the target language, it may also comprise interest in the language itself, as a formal system. As the authors suggested, tapping into the particular "personal interest" of any group or learners may make a real difference in retention, thus learner-centered approaches are essential.

The survey responses indicating growth or intrinsic motivation due to positive experiences of language learning suggest creating incentives to diversify the language choice (for example, some majors requiring another foreign language in addition to Spanish or any previously studied major language that the student can "test out of"). The change in motivation points to the importance of quality pedagogy and curriculum and the increased opportunities for learners to pursue their personal interests and proficiency goals in LCTL classes.

The practical motivation for the authors to conduct this study stemmed from our work as instructors and administrators of LCTLs in a setting of a university with numerous foreign language programs. There is constant institutional pressure to maintain and increase enrollments in foreign language courses, even with historical data showing considerable stability in these local numbers against the overall decline of most foreign LCTL enrollments in the country. Instructors and departments are pushed to enhance and rethink recruitment strategies. For this purpose, we felt we needed to understand our student populations better. We aimed at retention specifically, as we were observing learners staying in the LCTL programs beyond fulfilling their 2- year foreign language requirement without always having a clear academic need for upper levels of proficiency.

Magnan et al. (2012) observed that all learners valued the Communities standard highly, a fact that should be taken into account in curricular planning, but “for students of LCTLs in particular, Cultures and Connections should also be prioritized” (p.184). The present study adds strength to the belief that culture, community connections and the use of language in the context of other disciplines are particularly important for the LCTLs. Murphy et al.’s (2009) suggested curricular changes based on the change in motivation over time: integration of culture and personal interests of students into the curriculum and introduction of professional opportunities. We concur in considering instructor awareness of these motivational changes crucial for retention in LCTLs. We also see that student awareness of the opportunities available in LCTL classrooms could be promoted by gatekeepers such as high-school and freshman advisors. Since websites are a major source of information for LCTL learners, these should be enhanced, showcasing the positive learning experiences of students. Overall, the data obtained directly from students at our institution will help us make curricular and recruitment decisions relevant to these programs, while also contributing to the growing database of research on foreign language learners in the United States.

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Appendix The Questionnaire Items

Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Neutral 3 Agree 4 Strongly Agree 5

For Introductory students, questions 1–9 and 20–25.

The reason I’m studying this language is because:

1. It is a requirement for my major.
2. It is a requirement for my minor.
3. It meets my foreign language requirement.
4. Personal interest.

4a Please provide additional information on any personal interest:

5. Career interest.

5a Please provide additional information on any career interest:

6. Future travel and/or study abroad.
7. I’m interested in the language and culture of this language
8. I’m interested in the literature of this language
9. Are you planning on continuing with additional study? Yes No

9a. If yes, please explain why.

9b. If no, please explain why.

For Intermediate and beyond students, answer questions 9–22.

The reason I'm continuing my studies in this language is because:

9. I became more interested in the language and culture after I started studying it.
10. It helps me to remain in contact with people I met through studying the language.
11. It is required for my major.
12. It is required for my minor.
13. I'm doing well, so I thought I would continue.
14. I want to become more proficient.
15. I need to take a second year of the language to fulfil a requirement other than for a major.
16. I believe that having more language proficiency will be useful for graduate study.
17. I believe that having more language proficiency will be useful for my career objectives.
18. I am preparing to study abroad or another experience in a country where this language is spoken.
19. I'm interested in literature of this language
20. Are you planning to continue your studies in this language? Yes No
 - 20a. If yes, please explain why.
 - 20b. If no, please explain why.
21. What level of proficiency do you ultimately wish to attain in this language? (Circle only one)
 - a. I just want a general idea of how the language and/or culture works.
 - b. I want to be able to have short everyday conversations with native speakers of this language.
 - c. I want to be a fluent and/or literate second/language user of this language.
 - d. I want to be as close to native-speaker ability as possible.
 - e. I just want to fulfill the foreign language requirement.
 - f. I want to read literary texts.
22. What level of proficiency do you expect to attain in this language by completing your studies in the IU languageprogram? (Circle only one)
 - a. I expect to gain a general idea of how the language and/or culture works.
 - b. I expect to be able to have short everyday conversations with native speakers of this language.
 - c. I expect to be a fluent and/or literate second/language user of this language.
 - d. I expect to become as or almost as proficient as a native-speaker.
 - e. I just want to fulfill the foreign language requirement.
 - f. I expect to read literary texts.
23. What is your major field of study? (Circle only one)
 - a. Science, Technology, or Engineering
 - b. Business
 - c. Medical/Public Health
 - d. Humanities, Communication or Social Sciences

- e. Undecided
- f. Other (Please specify):

24. How did you find out classes in this language you are currently studying? Circle one.

- a. high school advisor
- b. college advisor
- c. professors
- d. [college] website
- e. friend who has studied/is studying that language
- f. college recruitment day
- g. flyers at [college]
- h. class visitors promoting foreign languages
- i. [college] language promotion events (/.../ Expo, workshops, Global Village, etc) _____ (please specify)

Table A1 Statistically significant results of T-Tests for the role of motivational reasons in the student’s choice to continue with additional language classes for intermediate level

	Continue additional language classes?	N	M	SD	t	df	p
More interest after starting to study the language	Yes	119	4.38	0.71	5.65	85	<.001
	No	56	3.57	0.95			
Contact with people I met studying the language	Yes	119	3.62	1.11	3.92	173	<.001
	No	56	2.91	1.13			
Required for major	Yes	121	2.74	1.55	1.73	175	0.042
	No	56	3.18	1.55			
Doing well	Yes	119	3.87	0.92	3.04	90	0.002
	No	56	3.34	1.13			
Want to become more proficient	Yes	119	4.71	0.54	7.14	68	<.001
	No	56	3.61	1.09			
More proficiency useful for graduate study	Yes	118	4.1	1.13	3.62	172	<.001
	No	56	3.43	1.19			
More proficiency useful for career	Yes	119	4.63	0.64	5.91	74	<.001
	No	56	3.71	1.07			
Preparing to study or travel abroad where this language is spoken	Yes	120	3.99	1.13	6.13	174	<.001
	No	56	2.84	1.22			
Interest in the literature of the language	Yes	119	3.83	1.08	6.2	172	<.001
	No	55	2.71	1.17			

Table A2 Statistically significant results of T-tests for the role of motivation in the student's choice of language type for intermediate level

	Language type	N	M	SD	t	df	p
More interest after starting to study the language	Spanish	69	3.88	0.93	2.99	174	0.002
	LCTL	107	4.28	0.81			
Contact with people I met studying the language	Spanish	69	2.86	1.07	5.39	174	<.001
	LCTL	107	3.76	1.09			
Required for minor	Spanish	70	3.74	1.3	5.58	175	<.001
	LCTL	107	2.55	1.44			
Want to become more proficient	Spanish	69	4.19	1.03	1.99	174	0.024
	LCTL	107	4.47	0.82			
Preparing to study or travel abroad where this language is spoken	Spanish	70	3.37	1.33	2.23	175	0.014
	LCTL	107	3.8	1.22			
Interest in the literature of the language	Spanish	69	2.84	1.18	6.19	173	<.001
	LCTL	106	3.91	1.06			

Table A3 Results of Chi-Square Tests for the relationship between the type of language class and the method of recruitment for introductory and intermediate combined

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	120.14 ^a	7	<.001
Likelihood ratio	128.27	7	<.001
N of valid cases	402		

^a 4 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.93.

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Preparing for the Future: What Do High School Students Think About Language Learning?



Russell Simonsen

Abstract University language programs can only thrive if faculty understand incoming students' perceptions of and motivations for learning languages. However, we know relatively little about what motivates high school (secondary) students to continue or discontinue language study. The current chapter aims to address this gap by examining 122 United States high school students' short essays in which they explain their view of the importance (or lack thereof) of learning a language other than English (LOTE). The essays were analyzed and coded for themes. Although the perceptions were diverse, the analysis revealed three dominant themes. Students highly valued language learning because it can provide career advantages, opportunities to connect with cultures, and opportunities to connect with new people. These results will be discussed in conjunction with findings from other studies that have examined the perceptions of language learners at both the high school and university level. Finally, recommendations for university language programs will be provided.

Keywords High school students · Language learning · Languages other than English (LOTE) · Perceptions · University students

1 Introduction

For language programs to thrive in higher education, it is crucial to understand secondary students' (school years 9–12, typically) perception of the value of learning a language other than English (LOTE) and their motivations for continued language study.¹ It is during these formative years that many students decide to discontinue their study of a LOTE, often with a dramatic decline in enrollment each year from year 9–12 (Clayton, 2022). This exodus of language learners at the

¹Secondary students will often be referred to as high school students when referring to the United States context given that this is the most common terminology.

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secondary level clearly has a negative impact on the vitality of language programs at the university level. Researchers have investigated the reasons that students choose to continue or discontinue language study and have found a complex interplay of factors that influence this decision, including scheduling conflicts, perceived difficulty of the course, and even parental (dis)encouragement (Lanvers & Martin, 2021; Taylor & Marsden, 2014). In many English-dominant countries, however, there is also a pervasive belief that learning a LOTE is not needed—even for international travel—given the expansion of Global English (Clayton, 2022).

While we understand some of the factors that influence secondary students' decision to continue or discontinue the study of a LOTE, researchers have rarely directly asked students about their general perception of the importance of language learning. The exigency of language learning from their perspective is undoubtedly an important factor in their decision of whether to continue on with the study of a LOTE. Additionally, we know relatively little about high school students' perceptions of language learning in comparison with university students' (Antes, 1999; Magnan et al., 2014a-b), especially in the USA. This study aims to begin to fill this void by analyzing 122 short essay responses from United States high school students in which they describe the importance (or lack thereof) of language learning. These responses were submitted as a part of an online writing activity that accompanied the New York Times article "Do you speak my language? You should" (De Montlaur, 2019). The responses were coded for themes using a modified coding scheme from Lanvers and Martin (2021). These themes will be reported and discussed in conjunction with findings from other studies on student perceptions of language learning. Finally, implications and recommendations for university language programs will be discussed.

2 Background

The majority of research on students' motivation and perceptions of language learning has focused on learning English as a second language (Boo et al., 2015). Of the studies that have examined student perceptions of learning a LOTE, most have focused on the university level (Boo et al., 2015). There is a relatively small pool of studies that have examined secondary students' perceptions of LOTE learning, and of those, most have been conducted in predominantly English-speaking countries outside of the USA. It is the findings from this small collection of studies that are most relevant to the current study, and they will be reviewed in the following subsection. Although the research context of these studies has most commonly been the UK or Australia, their results are still relevant given that the USA is also a predominantly English-speaking country; students from these countries often have shared perspectives. Additionally, because there is a lack of research specifically on United States high school students' perceptions of language learning, some research on this topic from the university level will also be discussed.

2.1 *Secondary Students' Perceptions of Language Learning in English-Dominant Countries*

In many predominantly English-speaking countries, interest in LOTE learning has been declining (Taylor & Marsden, 2014). One reason may be due to the expansion of Global English. As English has become more predominant across the world, some students feel that there is less need to learn other languages (Lanvers, 2017). Clayton (2022) found this to be a powerful sentiment among secondary students in Tasmania, the island state of Australia. In fact, students' belief that they could just continue using English when traveling internationally was the number one reason that they reported to have discontinued studying a LOTE. The second most common reason for not taking a language class was that students did not need it for their future studies, and the third was that they could not fit it into their course of study. These findings were concerning because they showed that students stopped studying a language primarily due to a lack of interest rather than other obstacles; they simply did not see the need for the language in their future.

Taylor and Marsden (2014) analyzed Year 9 students' (13/14 years old) perceptions and attitudes about LOTE learning in England. Their study was experimental and was designed to determine whether two different interventions—a panel of speakers discussing the relevance of language learning versus a language lesson with a tutor—would affect students' attitudes toward language learning and the likelihood that they would ultimately enroll in an elective language class. The authors found that the panel intervention resulted in students having a more favorable attitude about language learning, but the tutored lesson did not. Students also rated the importance of language learning *for themselves* (personal relevance) versus *for others* (wider societal relevance) before and after the interventions. After listening to the panel speak about the importance of language learning for personal and societal benefit, only students' perception of the importance of language for themselves increased. The tutored lesson had a slightly negative effect on the perceived importance of language learning. Additionally, the perceived importance of language learning for oneself was a predictor of whether students ultimately decided to continue with the study of a LOTE. The more they felt it was personally relevant for themselves, the more likely they were to continue. Conversely, the more students perceived that language learning was broadly beneficial to society, the less likely they were to take a language course. In sum, students appeared to be driven mostly by personal relevance rather than societal relevance when choosing to take a language course.

It should be noted, however, that the ultimate decision of whether to take a language class was unaffected for three-quarters of the participants in Taylor and Marsden's (2014) study. That is, they appeared to have decided by the beginning of Year 9 what their intentions were and stuck with them. In this same vein, students' initial perceptions of language learning were also significantly correlated with their reaction to the interventions and ultimate decision to take a language. Students who

had a negative attitude about language learning from the outset tended to react less positively to the interventions and were less likely to sign up for additional language study. On the other hand, students who came in with a positive attitude were more likely to react positively to interventions and continue language study. This suggests that even by Year 9 of school, students already have fairly well-established attitudes about language learning, and a short intervention at that point is not sufficient to convince many of them to change their minds. Taylor and Marsden point to the need of understanding the effect of earlier interventions for language learners.

In general terms, secondary students tend to be poorly motivated language learners, and their motivation declines over the secondary years (Lanvers, 2017). These students are often driven by instrumental motivations (e.g., to accomplish an objective) and perceived ideas of what they “ought to do” (the ought-to L2 self; Dörnyei, 2009) in order to meet educational and parental expectations.

2.2 University Students’ Perceptions of Language Learning in the USA

Antes (1999) surveyed 358 university students enrolled in first- and second-year Spanish and French courses. They were asked to rate their interest in different aspects of language learning. Conversational skills were rated highest, followed by interest in learning grammar. The author reported that very few students listed “culture” as one of their top three interests. Students were also asked to characterize the overall importance of language learning. 79.3% of all students agreed or strongly agreed that language study was important, but roughly 36% of respondents reported taking a language course only because it was obligatory. In fact, this was the number one motivation for taking the course among both Spanish and French students. For Spanish students, the second most important motivation for studying a language was career relevance (32.8%), followed by general interest (23.2%). These two motivations were reversed for French students: 34.5% enrolled in the course due to interest, and 23.6% for career relevance. Language departments at the university level seem to have taken notice of students’ desire to connect language and careers. The 2016 MLA Report (Looney & Lusin, 2019, p. 17) describes the nationwide creation of tracks, certificates, majors, and minors that are connected to specific careers as a positive trend that has helped stabilize and grow language programs. Scholars such as Doyle (2018) have also strongly advocated for the strengthening of curriculum in Language for the Professions, describing it as a “fundamental, renewable long-term investment in the relevance, and therefore the centrality, of the study of [language]” (p. 95).

Magnan et al. (2014a) investigated college students’ ($N = 16,529$) perceptions of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the twenty-first Century* (National Standards, 2006). Specifically, the aim was to determine whether postsecondary students’ goals were in line with those established in the *Standards*, and to better

understand students' priorities in language learning. Students were asked to rank the five standards areas in order of importance: Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities. Although teachers have long prioritized Communication and Cultures in language classes (ACTFL, 2011), students ranked Communities and Communication as the highest. This indicates that university language students feel strongly about their desire to use the language both within and beyond academic settings and to become lifelong learners (Communities), and they want strong communication skills overall (Communication).

To delve deeper into the results, Magnan et al. (2014b) also interviewed 200 of the participants. In an open response question at the beginning of the interview, 34% of students expressed that fluency was one of the goals they wanted to achieve, which aligns with their high ranking of the Communication standard. The high importance placed on developing fluency has also been documented among university students in the UK (Busse & Williams, 2010). Additionally, 42% of the students in Magnan et al. who mentioned fluency described its importance in instrumental terms; they envisioned it helping them achieve career goals or accomplish other tasks. Students were less preoccupied with the other standards areas, including Cultures. In fact, the authors noted that not a single language learner considered Cultures to be the "main point of language learning," which contrasts with the greater emphasis that teachers tend to place on this area (ACTFL, 2011).

3 The Current Study

Although some notable trends have emerged in students' perceptions of language learning in the previous sections, there is still a critical need to understand high school students' perceptions of language learning in the USA. Their level of interest in this area of study will largely determine the future vitality of university language programs in this country. The current study aims to provide a broad overview of the themes that appear in United States high school students' description of the importance of language learning. Given that the target audience of this book includes stakeholders of various backgrounds, including professors, department chairs, and university administrators, the analysis in this chapter will diverge from the common practice of using critical discourse analysis and motivational theories (e.g., the L2 Motivational Self System; Dörnyei, 2009) to interpret findings. While these types of analysis are valuable and have led to a more nuanced understanding of L2 learners' motivations (Ushioda, 2019), they can sometimes be inaccessible to general readers. In addition, because I did not create the question prompts that students responded to nor collect detailed background information about them, an in-depth qualitative analysis would be difficult to complete. The main contribution of the present study will be the identification of general themes that emerge when high school students discuss the importance and value of language learning.

3.1 Study Context and Question Prompts

In 2019, the cultural counselor of the French Embassy in the United States, Bénédicte de Montlaur, penned the New York Times (NYT) article “Do you speak my language? You should”, in which she strongly advocated for language learning. The NYT then invited students (13 and older) to participate in an online writing activity in which they expressed their thoughts on language learning after reading the article. I archived these student responses, which are the data source for this study. Students composed their short-essay responses by responding to six question prompts. Because it would be beyond the scope of this chapter to analyze student responses to all six prompts, only the responses to the three questions related directly to students’ perception of the importance and benefits of learning a language will be addressed. These include:

1. How important is knowing a foreign language?
2. How has knowing another language affected and benefited your life?
3. How persuasive is Ms. de Montlaur’s argument that Americans need to study a foreign language?

3.2 Participants

In total, there were 122 unique responses from high school students from different parts of the United States. All respondents appeared to be students who were currently enrolled in a LOTE course. The only demographic information that all students provided was their name and location, although most also provided the name of their high school. The different states represented in the activity included California, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Florida, Maryland, and Rhode Island. The ages of respondents were assumed to be roughly between 14 and 18 given that all school names listed were high schools and the lower age limit for the NYT activity was 13 years old. Even though I did not have personal oversight of the data collection, the NYT did mention in the activity instructions that all responses would be moderated and go through an approval process before being made public. As a result, all responses appeared to be legitimate and focused on the activity. In a few cases, there were several students all from the same high school, which indicates that they completed this response to the NYT as an assigned activity for a class. Given that respondents appeared to be currently enrolled in a LOTE class, the results will only reflect how current language students feel about the importance of language learning. However, their perspective is especially valuable since the effort to stave off declining enrollments includes retaining current language learners in addition to recruiting new ones.

3.3 Method

All responses were read and searched for emerging themes. The vast majority of comments were favorable toward language learning, which was expected considering that respondents were current language learners, and presumably many were studying a LOTE as an elective course. Additionally, the NYT article they were responding to discussed language learning favorably. Because the negative comments were far and few between (less than 5%), an extensive analysis of them was not possible; these comments will be characterized briefly at the end of the results section. For the positive comments, a modified coding scheme from Lanvers and Martin (2021, p. 97) was judged to adequately capture the breadth of themes. Comments were coded using the open-source software Taguette (Rampin et al., 2021). A theme was counted only once per student. For example, if a student talked about the importance of connecting with and understanding other cultures in a LOTE class, this theme related to culture was tallied only once, even if it was mentioned several times in the response.

4 Results

A summary of the positive themes in students’ responses can be found in Table 1.

Most student comments fit into one of four categories, in order of highest prevalence: Perceived usefulness-career advantages, connecting with and understanding other cultures, connecting with other people, and travel/tourism. Representative student comments from each of these areas will be provided below for additional context.

Perceived usefulness-career advantages

[language] sets you aside from other applicants when applying for a job which as a result, increases your probability of being hired

I applied for a job and in the interview, they asked me [if] I was bilingual and this help[ed] me to get a better job

Table 1 Positive themes in student responses

Code	Number of comments
Cognitive benefits of language learning	3
Connecting with and understanding other cultures	49
Connecting with other people	35
Enjoyment of language	10
Perceived usefulness- career advantages	77
Perceived usefulness- travel and tourism	14
Perceived usefulness- college acceptance	8

By learning more languages, students gain life skills that make them more competitive for jobs on a global and national scale. They will be able to find jobs not only in the U.S. but in other countries as well

Connecting with and understanding other cultures

more people should understand that learning a foreign language is also understanding others and their culture

learning about different cultures and their languages is an important aspect to world peace

I've been able to gain a greater appreciation of other cultures as well as what my own offers.

Connecting with other people

Being able to talk, joke, and laugh with someone you do not share a language [with] is very difficult, but even just knowing some of their language it is amazing.

Taking German allowed me to travel to Germany, where I developed lasting connections with people.

Differences in languages are putting up barriers between potential partnerships and friendships.

Travel and Tourism

In the future if I ever want to travel to, or even move to, a Spanish speaking country, I will be able to do so easily.

If we visit a different country we could communicate with the locals because we know the foreign language.

I was able to travel to Germany for three weeks this past summer and it is an experience I will never forget.

Negative comments about language learning.

While most comments about language learning were positive given the background of the respondents and the topic of the NYT article, there were seven negative comments in the responses. A sample of these responses are shown below.

Jeff Bezos, the richest man in the world, only speaks English. This is an example of why knowing another language is not necessary.

I think everyone not speaking the same language limits what we can accomplish as a society.

I believe that schools should not require the learning of a second language. The more you force upon someone in a country, the less "free" that country becomes.

5 Discussion

Based on the number of mentions in their essay responses, the high school students seem to be driven first and foremost by perceived career advantages. Many assume that knowing a language will be an asset for their profession when it comes to the competitive application process ("[language] sets you aside from other candidates").

Others mentioned that speaking another language might also translate into a higher salary in some fields of work. The focus on career prospects echoes Antes's (1999) finding among university Spanish students in the USA who reported career relevance as the second most important factor in taking a LOTE course (recall that language requirements were the number one reason). Magnan et al. (2014b) also documented many comments about career advantages in their interviews with university language students. All of these findings support the calls to strengthen the connection between language classes and careers (Doyle, 2018; Looney & Lusin, 2019).

I also interpret the prevalence of the career advantages theme in the present study to be in line with Taylor and Marsden's (2014) finding that secondary students are largely driven to take LOTE courses for reasons related to personal growth, not societal growth. Students at this level are concerned with what language can do *for them*. In the USA, it seems that many high school students are already thinking about personal growth in terms of career and monetary advantages. In more general terms, these students prioritize the instrumental value of language learning, which is a trend that has been reported among secondary students in the UK as well (Lanvers, 2017).

Still, it is clear that many students also value the connections with cultures and people that learning a LOTE can make possible, considering that these were the second and third most common themes in the responses. This lesser focus on culture among students follows a trend from several other studies (Antes, 1999; Magnan et al., 2014a). Students discussed how learning a different language involves learning about cultural differences in addition to linguistic differences. One student added that learning about other cultures can help people reflect more on the uniqueness of their own culture(s). Students also expressed a desire to connect with others on a human level; they wanted to "talk, joke, and laugh" and develop lasting relationships with people who speak other languages. The high occurrence of this theme was not surprising in light of Magnan et al.'s (2014a) finding that university students highly prioritize the Communities standard, which includes using the language outside of the classroom (including socially) and becoming lifelong language learners.

Beyond the top three themes, there was a significant drop-off in terms of prevalence. The fourth most common theme was travel and tourism, which mostly centered around the usefulness of knowing a language when traveling or living internationally. There were also several comments about the perceived advantage of knowing a LOTE when applying for college, and about the enjoyment of learning the language. Finally, there were seven students who rejected the need to learn another language even after reading a positive article about the topic. A couple of the negative comments reflected the sentiment that it is not necessary to know a language other than English, which has been shown to be common in other English-dominant countries (Clayton, 2022; Lanvers, 2017). Other comments contained quite specific objections. One student pointed to Jeff Bezos's exceptional success as a monolingual as evidence that only English is needed to be successful. Another considered language requirements to be an affront to our freedom.

The issue of how to change perceptions among the students who have a negative view of language learning is a difficult one. As Taylor and Marsden (2014) reveal, there are some students who already have a negative view of language learning by the beginning of secondary school, and these negative perceptions may not change even with interventions. Language learning in primary or middle school has been shown to have a positive impact on students' decision to continue with the study of a LOTE in high school and beyond (Linford, this volume), but additional research is still needed in this area. Despite our best efforts, there will always be a subset of students who take language courses simply because they are required as long as schools and universities have language requirements (Antes, 1999). As Aski and Weintritt (2020) point out, these students are unlikely to ever reach advanced proficiency and may ultimately retain more intercultural competence than functional communicative competence. However, it is clear that many students do want to use a LOTE at an advanced level and plan to use the language functionally as part of a career. This seems to be the case for many of the high school students in the present study. In addition to intercultural competence, these students would need advanced proficiency and potentially additional specialized skills, such as the ability to translate and interpret (Simonsen, 2022). They would benefit from the continued strengthening of the link between language and specific career paths (Doyle, 2018; Looney & Lusin, 2019). This may be most relevant and achievable at the university level, but middle and high school students may also benefit from learning about the connection between careers and languages so that they can begin to appreciate the full value of their language skills.

6 Limitations

It is important to point out some limitations to the analysis in the current study. First, I did not interact with the participants personally and they provided limited demographic information. The findings therefore had to be presented in a fairly general way. Another potential limitation is that some of the respondents appeared to have completed the writing activity as an assignment in their language class. Assuming many of them were taking this class as an elective, there might have been a skew towards favorable views of language learning. Other students who completed the writing activity independently rather than as part of an assignment might have also been biased because they would have been intrinsically motivated to participate, which means that they might have felt particularly strongly about language learning (either positively or negatively). Finally, it should be reiterated that the NYT article that students were reacting to expressed very favorable views of language learning (although the prompts for the NYT writing activity did allow for disagreement with the author), so this could have influenced their perceptions. A more controlled research design in the future will be needed to support the findings reported in this chapter.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

The present study is a broad examination of a sample of United States high school students' perceptions of the importance and value of learning a LOTE. Overall, students hoped that LOTE would connect them with careers, cultures, and people. Based on these findings, I offer two general recommendations to strengthen university language programs and make them relevant for incoming students.

7.1 Recommendation 1: Find a Balance Between Vocational and Humanistic Applications of Language

Many students have an expectation that language learning will provide them with career advantages. This expectation has not gone unnoticed, as evidenced by the emergence of more career-focused language programs throughout the United States in recent years (Looney & Lusin, 2019). However, there are still many language programs across the country that have a strong humanistic tradition of literary and cultural analysis, but offer few opportunities for students to develop their language skills for specific professional purposes. Doyle (2022) emphasizes that this humanistic tradition is highly valuable, but that the practical/vocational application of languages is also essential. He advocates for finding a "golden mean" in which the practical and humanistic are carefully balanced as to benefit and interest all learners. If language programs are balanced in this way, they are likely to attract a broader population of students.

What might a balanced language program look like? In addition to offering humanistic courses in language, culture, and literature, a Spanish department could establish an interdisciplinary program with the department of nursing at the same university and create a Spanish for Healthcare certificate. Or, a language department could develop a similar relationship with a business department. The reality is, however, that some universities may not have the resources or support to create such interdisciplinary programs. In this case, a language department might start by linking just one of its courses with a healthcare or business course. Showstack et al. (2021) provide a detailed account of how they successfully connected students of Spanish translation/interpreting with nursing students through a collaborative interprofessional learning experience at Wichita State University.

In the 2016 MLA Report (Looney & Lusin, 2019), St. John's University is highlighted as another institution that has found a productive balance between the humanistic and vocational. Their Italian program, which has the highest enrollments in this language in the USA, has a very diversified curriculum. Students can work towards a traditional major rooted primarily in cultural studies, but they can also pursue another track that includes The Art and Skills of Translation, Italian for Business, and international internships. In St. John's language programs, students have the opportunity to directly connect their language with careers in the following

areas: Education, International Business, Business Administration, International Communication, Library Science, Hospitality Management, and Accounting (Looney & Lusin, 2019). Ultimately, it is important to avoid creating an unhealthy competition between humanistic and vocational preparation in language programs (See Doyle, 2022). After all, in many careers, language learners may need to rely heavily on the cultural knowledge and intercultural competence that they acquired in their cultural studies courses. The two foci should be understood as complementary in a diversified language program.

7.2 Recommendation 2: Ensure that Students Have Opportunities to Personally Connect with Language and Culture

Language students also value the connections with other people and cultures that they have built and might build in the future. Therefore, universities may wish to review their language programs to ensure that students have plenty of opportunities to build personal connections with languages and cultures. Many universities are increasingly using online conversational platforms such as TalkAbroad and Boomalang in their language classes, which allow students to speak with native speakers from around the world about a variety of topics. These platforms sometimes offer students their first opportunity to speak with native speakers over a sustained period of time, which can make the language feel more “real.” Study abroad programs also provide students with powerful experiences for personal growth. In the present study, some students mentioned that knowing a LOTE allowed them to develop positive lasting connections with new people when they studied in a different country. Therefore, well organized study abroad programs can be considered a component of a strong language program.

Although they can offer transformative experiences, study abroad programs may not be an option for all students due to their high cost. Luckily, there are other ways to make language meaningful and personal for students without leaving the country. Many universities now offer service-learning courses, which allow students to use their language skills as part of a service project in their own community. Other initiatives such as language conversation tables, language clubs, film events, require relatively little funding and provide students additional contexts in which they can use or are exposed to the language they are learning. The specific programming that language departments can provide will depend on the language, available funding, and the motivation and interests of students and faculty. However, any thriving language program will likely provide students with an array of interesting opportunities to use their language skills outside of the context of a traditional classroom.

The suggestions offered above are motivated by the findings from the current study on high school students’ perceptions of language learning. Because high school students are the future clientele of university language programs,

understanding their perceptions and needs is crucial to maintaining healthy university language programs. The high school years are when many students decide whether to continue or discontinue language study (Clayton, 2022; Lanvers, 2017), so it is imperative to continue examining the factors that lead to this decision in future research.

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University Students' Beliefs About the Language Requirement: Policy as Articulated and as Perceived



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Abstract Many university students in the USA stop studying world languages after satisfying their institution's curricular requirement (Looney & Lusin, 2019; Modern Language Association, 2007), leading some universities to remove their language requirement or dissolve their language department entirely (Jaschik, 2018). Studies examining students' experiences have highlighted the challenge of institutional curricular policies that may play a role in students' decisions to discontinue world language study (Diao & Liu, 2021; Thompson, 2017; Warner et al., 2021). Adopting a language policy perspective (Hult, 2018), this study examines the world language requirement as articulated by one university in the USA as well as perspectives of undergraduate students toward their language learning experiences. While framed as part of a diverse liberal arts curriculum, analysis of policy documents and student interviews suggest that language study is deprioritized within the university's larger curriculum and viewed by students as a formality, unlikely to lead to actual language development. Based on these observations, implications are drawn for language policy articulation and the framing of language curricular offerings in the hope of supporting student investment in world language study.

Keywords Language policy · Language requirement · Student perceptions

1 Literature Review

Recent work has drawn attention to the “crisis” of world language study in anglo-phone contexts (Lanvers et al., 2021), including low levels of language uptake in schools and universities where English is a majority language. An examination of

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learner conditions reveals the unique challenges faced by English-L1 learners of languages other than English (LOTE), including an English monolingual mindset and language education policy that does not support investment in language learning, among other factors (Lanvers et al., 2021). Specific studies examining students' decisions to continue or discontinue taking world language classes have illuminated the complexity of their decision: Rather than being uninterested in language learning, many students often face a tension between their individual interest in language study and institutional policies that prioritize other subject areas and reduce world language classes to a mere requirement (Diao & Liu, 2021; Thompson, 2017). Such policies can be explicit, as in the case of Diao & Liu's study, where general education requirements limited the amount of curricular space students had for language study. Policies can also be more implicit, as in both Diao & Liu and Thompson's studies, where students described advice from their advisors to complete language requirements as early as possible and not continue to pursue language study. Whether implicit or explicit, language policies reflect ideologies and wider discourses underlying them (Shohamy, 2006), such as how they position language itself and individuals engaged in language study, and thus should not be ignored when investigating students' experiences with language learning.

An example study exploring the articulation of language policy is Liddicoat (2021), who examined how language is positioned within larger university curricula by analyzing universities' website descriptions of language course offerings. Liddicoat's study highlights how whether such statements are public-facing or private can reflect an institution's priorities and the implicit ideologies underlying educational opportunities for its students. An additional study exploring ideologies framing language education is Warner et al. (2021), who examined public discourses surrounding language learning in the USA alongside testimonials from students engaged in language study, focusing on how students' experiences offered counter-narratives to broader assumptions about language education. While the authors did not adopt an explicit language policy approach, their study reflects the complexity of discourses surrounding language study and individuals' language learning experiences.

Recently, Hult (2018) has called for adopting a language policy perspective in researching world language education. In this chapter, I draw on Spolsky's (2009) three-part model of language policy, which examines practices, beliefs, and management within contexts of language use. From this perspective, language education policy consists broadly of such aspects as curriculum design, materials development, teaching practices, assessment and evaluation procedures, and stakeholder experiences and attitudes. A language policy perspective may be useful for examining students' decisions to (dis)continue studying world languages, since top-down policies (such as institutional requirements for language study and program-mandated curriculum) are understood and negotiated by stakeholders (teachers and

students) in multiple ways. Below, I describe these three interrelated elements of Spolsky's (2009) language policy framework in relation to the present study.

Language policy *practices*, according to Spolsky (2009), include stakeholder behaviors and choices that may support or challenge expectations surrounding language education. Hult (2018) notes that such practices can be both explicit, such as a teacher interpreting a curriculum document to create a lesson plan, and implicit, such as language choice and interactional behaviors that create classroom norms. Language policy *beliefs* can be understood as stakeholder perceptions, attitudes and ideologies shaping educational practices. Hult (2018) suggests the concept of beliefs can be used to understand how stakeholders think about certain elements of course curricula and the teaching and learning process, as well as how these beliefs inform policy creation and affect buy-in to existing policy. Finally, Spolsky (2009) outlines language policy *management* as consisting of efforts to shape practices and beliefs related to language and language education. As Hult (2018) observes, examples of language policy management can include institutional policy documents that inform and guide language education, as well as program websites, mission statements, and descriptions of course offerings (see Liddicoat, 2021).

Focusing on two of these three elements—management and beliefs—the present study aims to investigate language education policy in one institutional context by examining official policy documents (policy-as-articulated) and student perspectives (policy-as-perceived), considering how both sources discursively position language, language learners, the process of language learning, and the course requirement itself. In particular, this study considers how policy documents reflect ideologies about language and language education as well as how stakeholder beliefs toward language policy may affect buy-in among students and shape their decisions to discontinue studying a world language.

2 Methodology

The context for this study is Liberal Arts University (LAU, a pseudonym), located in the northeast USA. Originally founded by a religious order over 150 years ago, the curriculum reflects a liberal arts tradition and includes a General Education Program (GEP) with required courses that all undergraduate students must take. Among these is a two-semester language course requirement, which will be analyzed in greater detail below. Language courses are offered through the Department of Modern and Classical Languages, including American Sign Language, Arabic, Chinese, French, Gaelic, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Russian, and Spanish. While the department offers academic major and minor programs, the majority of LAU students take

language courses as part of the GEP two-semester requirement (the focus of this study). Participants were ten undergraduate students enrolled at LAU at the time of the study. Students who had recently completed the required two-semester language course sequence were invited to participate in the study. Specifically, these ten students were enrolled in two consecutive Spanish courses (SPA 102: Beginning Spanish II and SPA 201: Intermediate Spanish I) during the 2019–2020 academic year, in which I was the instructor.

It is important to note that at the time of the study (October 2020), I was no longer working at this university or as an instructor (I had begun a doctoral program at a different university), mitigating an important conflict of interest that would have otherwise compromised the data collected. At the same time, my working relationship with participants allowed for an open and honest conversation about their experience with language courses at LAU, and my insider status granted me familiarity with the GEP curriculum from a faculty perspective.

Two types of data were analyzed for this study: (1) university-articulated policy descriptions and (2) interviews with students. Descriptions of the language policy were obtained from the university's websites for the GEP and for the languages department as well as from publicly available curricular assessment documents. These documents included descriptions of the components and rationale behind the university's language requirement. Analysis focused on how each policy statement framed language, students, the process of language learning, and the curricular requirement itself. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants online via Zoom. Interviews explored students' general ideas about language learning, their opinions about LAU's language requirement, and their reflections on their year-long learning experience. Interviews were recorded via Zoom and transcribed using the Wreally transcribe platform. Qualitative thematic analysis was performed using the MAXQDA software and sought to identify emergent themes among participants' responses. Similar to the analysis of policy statements, interviews were analyzed to examine how students' responses positioned language, themselves as learners, the process of language learning, and the language requirement. Ultimately, the analysis sought to compare discursive positioning of these elements among policy statements and student reflections.

3 Findings

In the two subsections that follow, I discuss each source of data. First, I present and analyze language used in a series of policy document texts (policy-as-articulated). Following that, I present and discuss emergent themes from student interviews (policy-as-perceived). All student names used are pseudonyms.

3.1 *Policy-as-Articulated: LAU's Description of the Language Requirement*

In a typical 4-year undergraduate program of study (i.e., five courses per semester for eight semesters), students at LAU take approximately 20–25 GEP courses, 10 academic major courses, and 5–10 elective courses. The GEP consists of several different curricular requirements, ranging from humanities to natural and social sciences. The rationale behind the GEP is rooted in LAU's liberal arts tradition, as illustrated in the description of student learning outcomes in Table 1.¹

Despite articulating goals of “broad knowledge, essential skills, appreciation of diversity, and ethically informed perspective”, the GEP language requirement in particular does not seem to be equally aligned with such goals when compared to other GEP requirements. Consider, for example, the following portions of several GEP requirements outlined on the GEP website:

Table 1 GEP student learning outcomes

The General Education Program (GEP) at LAU involves a distinctive liberal arts education. General education is essential to the University's mission, providing all students with broad knowledge, essential skills, appreciation of diversity, and ethically informed perspective. Course-level GEP learning objectives directly support the following six Student Learning Outcomes that are expected of all undergraduate students at LAU:	
<i>Communication</i>	Students will communicate effectively through written and oral modes of expression across academic, professional, and social contexts using appropriate technology.
<i>Critical thinking and inquiry</i>	Students will think critically and construct reasoned arguments to support their positions using skills appropriate to the context, such as deductive reasoning, scientific inquiry, quantitative reasoning, aesthetic judgment, or critical examination of form, style, content, and meaning, conduct inquiry, analyze problems qualitatively or quantitatively and formulate creative responses.
<i>Ethics and social justice</i>	Students will assess and respond to ethical and social justice issues informed by ethical values and other theoretical frameworks.
<i>Diversity</i>	Students will engage respectfully, in a local and global context, with diverse human beliefs, abilities, experiences, identities, or cultures.
<i>Discipline or program specific competencies</i>	Students will acquire the essential knowledge and skills to succeed and make well-reasoned judgments personally, professionally, and in their chosen area(s) of study.
<i>Liberal arts intellectual tradition</i>	Students will examine forces that have shaped the world they have inherited through instruction in the liberal arts educational tradition which includes the study of the humanities, philosophy, theology, history, mathematics, and the natural and social sciences.

¹Some descriptions have been modified to anonymize LAU's institutional identity.

Excerpt 1: GEP Requirement Descriptions

GEP Art/Literature courses teach students to appreciate the beauty and artistic or literary expression. . .

GEP Natural Science courses promote scientific literacy through the study of fundamental scientific principles and concepts, the method of scientific inquiry, and the role/application of science in everyday life. . .

GEP Social/Behavioral Science courses allow students to understand and appreciate behavior at the individual, institutional, and/or societal levels. . .

GEP Philosophical Anthropology courses examine selected issues concerning the nature of personhood and the human condition. . .

These GEP requirements clearly specify intended goals for students to apply a variety of perspectives toward understanding and appreciating social activity and the human condition. By contrast, the description of the GEP language requirement offers no mention of an intended learning outcome for students:

Excerpt 2: GEP Language Requirement Description

Non-native language: Placements in language courses are based on the student's high school record and score on the LAU placement test. A student must take the course(s) in which s/he was placed in order for those courses to satisfy the GEP language requirement. Level changes for foreign language classes will be considered only in extraordinary situations. If a student believes that s/he cannot successfully complete the course in which s/he was placed, the student in most instances will not be permitted to change to a lower level. The only alternative is for the student to begin a new language.

A stark contrast is noted between the description of the language requirement and those of the other requirements. Instead of reflecting a specific student learning outcome, the language requirement description focuses only on logistical policies, such as placement level, eligible courses, and options for languages to study. From a discursive positioning perspective, language is framed here as a mere object of study, understood in terms of grades and scores. The label of "non-native language" for this GEP requirement reflects a monoglossic language ideology that favors so-called standard language norms (discussed further below). Language learners are positioned here as subject to curricular policies, having little autonomy. This description mentions nothing about expected language development outcomes or the rationale behind the language requirement. This lack of alignment relative to other GEP requirements suggests a lack of prioritization for the language requirement within the overall fulfillment of the GEP's educational goals.

An additional example of how language seems less prioritized relative to other GEP components is apparent when considering how the language requirement maps on to GEP learning outcomes and how this connection is presented to university stakeholders. In a curriculum assessment document used by faculty for program

Table 2 Language requirement alignment with GEP learning goals

Goal	How language course supports goal
<i>Demonstrate foundational knowledge of Western civilization and its dynamic interactions with other cultures.</i>	Students will demonstrate knowledge about the civilization whose language is under study.
<i>Communicate effectively.</i>	Students will communicate at an appropriate level of proficiency and creativity in the target language in a variety of modes (interpersonal, presentational, and interpretive). Students will read and interpret authentic target-language documents.
<i>Reflect critically on their own beliefs and values as well as those of others and to discuss respectfully religious, social, and cultural difference.</i>	Students will be able to articulate and explain major similarities and differences between their native culture(s) and the target culture(s), including ideas and behaviors, cultural assumptions and sociolinguistic realities.

evaluation at LAU, GEP requirements are described in relation to corresponding learning goals (see Table 2, below), which relate to GEP student learning outcomes specified in Table 1 (above).

In this document, we see a different framing of language, language learners, the process of learning, and the requirement itself as compared to the framing in Excerpt 2. More than just an object of study, language is positioned here as a means for communication and reflective of linguistic and communicative diversity. Language learners are positioned as able to develop specific competencies, including demonstrating knowledge and communicating information through language. The process of language learning is actually apparent in this description, and the requirement is framed here as explicitly connected to goals of increasing students' awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity as well as developing their communicative abilities. Despite all of this, the fact that this policy document, while publicly available, is likely only viewed by program directors and is not directly distributed to other stakeholders (e.g., instructors, students) reflects a lack of transparency in articulating this aspect of the GEP curriculum, a theme that emerged from student interviews. Some students admitted to not knowing why language courses were required, and one student in particular commented that reading the GEP learning outcomes was like seeing "behind the scenes":

I just need to take two semesters. . . I don't really know why, I just know I have to take two semesters of Spanish and that was it. . . I don't know the actual reason behind why the school has it as a required class. (Zach)

I don't know why. I guess taking a language is kind of like different than anything else. . . I really wonder what the purpose is and like why two semesters. That's interesting. (Bridget)

I don't think [I've ever seen this], but it's cool. It's interesting to kind of see the behind the scenes and like what they think going into like the different classes. (Haley)

A final example of language study not prioritized within the GEP is visible when examining descriptions of language study from the Department of Modern and Classical Languages (MCL) website. One of the first things seen on the homepage of the languages department website is a statement about broad course offerings, interdisciplinarity, and the multiple benefits of language study. The excerpt below is a portion of this statement:

Excerpt 3: MCL Website Description of Language Study

Courses [in the department] are interdisciplinary, highlighting connections with fields as varied as linguistics, history, fine arts, philosophy, gender studies, film studies and the social and natural sciences. The study of languages, cultures and literature of the world enables us to become more globally aware and culturally sensitive, and it informs the way we think about ourselves.

The Department of Modern and Classical Languages encourages students to relate their work in the classroom to other areas of study. Many of our majors opt to complement their language studies with a double major or a minor in disciplines such as political science, international relations, linguistics, English, math, biology, psychology, education, business or fine arts. . .

Curriculum requirements offer students flexibility and choice and majors and minors participate in shaping their own program of study, incorporating their individual interests and specializations into their class research and creative projects. Students have opportunities to study abroad for a summer, semester, or academic year through several outstanding affiliated and fully accredited programs in Argentina, Chile, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain.

From this excerpt, we see language framed as thematically connected to other areas of study and consisting of cultural and literary manifestations. Language learners are positioned both as being expected to develop a sense of global awareness, cultural sensitivity, and reflexivity, and as autonomous in charting their own course of study. Instead of describing linguistic outcomes, the process of language learning itself is not explicitly reflected in this statement; instead, the goals of awareness and sensitivity are explicitly highlighted as the purpose for language study.

While this description undoubtedly aligns with the university's liberal arts focus on developing students' awareness of the world around them through academic study, it is also apparent from this excerpt that these priorities may only be relevant for certain students. The second part of this description describes opportunities and flexibility available to language majors and minors. Student interview data points to the reverse: a lack of perceived flexibility or opportunities for students who are not majoring or minoring in language. Elsewhere on the MCL website is a page specifically for the GEP language requirement, which offers a different framing of language study:

Excerpt 4: MCL Website Description of GEP Language Requirement

In order to complete the GEP language requirement, most students take a two-course language sequence (101-102; 102-201; 201-202; 202-301; 301 only). Students who receive an Advanced Placement (AP) score of 5 are given credit for the two-course sequence at the 202/301 level. With an AP score of 4, students are given credit for one course at the 202 level and must complete the 301 course level in order to fulfill the language requirement. If you choose a language which you do not speak and did not study in high school, you will start at the 101 Beginner's level. You do not need to take a language placement test. If you plan to continue your study of a language from high school, or to study a language spoken by family members, you must take the language placement test. Your required course sequence will be determined by your language placement according to your chosen program's policy. It is highly recommended that you satisfy your language requirement in your freshman year so that you can continue your study of the language while it is still fresh.

In contrast to the homepage description, here language is framed once again as a required object of study and sequence of courses, described in terms of course levels and scores. One sentence refers to language as a means for communication, but this aspect is less about anticipated learning outcomes and more about conditions related to the placement testing policy. Unlike the homepage description in Excerpt 3, here learners are positioned as more passive, either receiving credit, being required to comply with curricular policy, or having decisions made for them. While two sentences refer to "choosing a language" and "planning to study", these are additional aspects referring again to placement testing policy. The process of language learning is hinted at in the final sentence, which assumes students would have been studying language immediately prior to college and suggests not interrupting the process of language development by pausing language study. This suggestion to complete GEP language courses during students' first year resonates with student perspectives of feeling pressure to "get it out of the way", discussed below. There is no apparent rationale or purpose for language study in this description, further suggesting that the expected learning goals and possibilities outlined above do not apply to students taking GEP language courses.

Together, these LAU policy documents reflect framings of language, students, the language learning process, and language study that suggest language is a less prioritized area of study in terms of LAU's mission and liberal arts-related learning goals. The lack of transparent alignment between language study and GEP learning outcomes as well as the apparent bifurcation of groups of students for whom these learning outcomes are prioritized point to an articulated language policy that may not be realized in practice. From a language policy perspective, these texts can be understood as institutional practices reflecting ideologies that discursively shape their articulation and interpretation by various stakeholders, including faculty and students (Shohamy, 2006). Public-facing texts like these send messages to students about what is or is not prioritized in language study, raising questions about how programs might best articulate curricular offerings to students. These implications will be discussed in greater detail below.

In the next section, student interview data is presented to highlight student perspectives toward this language policy.

3.2 *Policy-as-Perceived: Students' Perspectives Toward the Language Requirement*

In this section, interviews with students are presented that focused on their ideas about language learning in general, their opinions about LAU's language requirement, and reflections on their language learning experience at LAU. Interview data is presented below according to four themes: students' positioning of language, themselves as language learners, the process of language learning, and the requirement itself.

3.2.1 Language

In their reflections of language study at LAU, two primary ways students positioned language were as a marketable skill when seeking jobs and as a topic of study competing with other course offerings. When asked why they might want to continue studying Spanish, students' responses reflected an orientation to gaining marketable skills for future employment:

In the job market if you're a bilingual that definitely looks really good and is an asset. (Amy)

In any job I feel like if you can speak two languages, it's always kind of a step up from other people. (Haley)

I feel like it's just a good thing to have if someone's looking at your resume. (Bridget).

Considering that the GEP policy descriptions of the language requirement available to students do not specify explicit GEP learning outcomes, it may be up to students to infer for themselves why it might be worthwhile to engage in world language study.

Most students described language study in terms of available space in their schedule when discussing the possibility of taking future language classes:

For each major they have specific courses you need to take. I have this paper that lists out each semester what they want you to take. . . and if I don't take these classes at this time, I'm not going to graduate. . . I definitely wish it was more flexible. I don't know a whole lot about other classes and opportunities that I could take. (Zach)

For me like every semester is like mapped out what I should take. So there's not that much flexibility. So that kinda sucks. (Kelly)

I'm not a hundred percent sure where I would [fit more language classes]. I mean if I had like open electives, I would definitely consider taking another language class just because I do find it interesting. (Lisa)

I mean I can understand when you have to take so many classes, you know to get to your major, your minor, whatever, and so I can see why students wouldn't necessarily feel like they could [continue taking language classes]. (Amy)

Each of these excerpts reflects the challenge of fitting language study in among several other course requirements. Zach and Kelly's responses in particular point to

negative opinions about a lack of flexibility, reflecting the selective prioritization of flexibility observed in the MCL website description of language study. This framing of language as one of several temporary areas of study aligns with how the GEP and MCL policy descriptions explicitly position language as a requirement and as something to be completed as early as possible in students' college careers.

3.2.2 Language Learners

The main ways students positioned themselves as language learners during their interviews were as capable or incapable of learning language and as having different expectations for their language learning experience than their instructors or courses. An emergent theme in discussing why students might not want to continue studying language was the idea of difficulty students face, illustrated in the excerpts below:

It's hard. It's not that I'm not willing to put the work in or anything. Sometimes I just feel like I put in 5 years of Spanish and I only know this much, you know what I mean? It's like how long will it take? How much will it take for me to be bilingual? Like it's going to be forever. I don't know, maybe I just don't have it in me. (Amy)

It could be challenging for some kids because it is learning a whole new language and you're just not used to that. So I feel like some kids might be challenged in that way and not want to be challenged and just kind of want to give up, like, oh it's hard, whatever, I just have to get through my two semesters and that's it. (Haley)

In addition to describing the difficulty with language study and the amount of time it may take, Amy considers herself perhaps incapable of language learning at all. Given that the GEP language requirement states two semesters as an adequate amount of time without specifying a designated outcome in terms of language development, it is no wonder Amy might feel like she is not making progress. Haley's positioning of students as having to overcome or withstand a challenge they may not desire reflects the GEP and MCL policy documents' framing of language study as something that happens to students rather than something students do. Bridget's response (below) contrasts with Amy and Haley in that she describes herself as capable of learning Spanish:

Going in I didn't really have any expectations because I was like, this is just a GEP, I have to take it, so I'm just like take it and be done. But I guess after starting the class and thinking more about it I was like, oh, this seems like something I could actually do. So it made me think more about it and I made more goals to try and meet. . . not just like be there, do the class, and then be done, but like try a get a little bit more out of it. (Bridget)

Bridget's comment about the class being "just a GEP" reflect how policy documents frame language study as a requirement with no apparent purpose or rationale. However, in light of her description of how her perspective shifted, it is worth considering how articulating the process or outcomes of language more transparently might help support students' investment in language learning.

Another way students positioned themselves as language learners was as having different expectations relative to their instructor and course:

My friend had an oral exam and her professor ripped her apart and she came back crying and was like “he literally didn’t give me one compliment, he didn’t say I did good in one aspect” . . . Some people treat it as like Spanish should be our first language, but it’s not. (Beth)

[In this new class] I’m being graded on the little details. . . but I think it’s more important when you focus on trying. . . of course getting it completely correct is important, but it’s frustrating in this class because [my professor] is so focused on the little details that sometimes I feel like I missed the entire point when I’m like, I’m there, it’s just I might make two little mistakes, you know? This class has kind of reaffirmed that I’m more interested in the cross-cultural communication side of things rather than the like being perfect at Spanish side of things. (Morgan)

Beth’s description of her friend suggests an unmet desire for positive feedback and encouragement from an instructor as well as Beth’s own implied view that being expected to learn Spanish so well it becomes like a first language is unrealistic. Morgan’s response reflects a similar difference in priorities (accuracy versus “trying”). As mentioned earlier, the labels of “non-native” and “target language” within the GEP policy documents reflect a monoglossic orientation to language that views the goal of language learning to be what is described as native-like competence. This could be what Beth is challenging when she says Spanish is not her first language. In Morgan’s case, her feeling that cross-cultural communication was not prioritized in her new Spanish class aligns with what is visibly prioritized in GEP policy documents. That is, although the GEP language requirement is in theory connected to developing students’ awareness of cultural diversity, this connection may not be realized in practice among stakeholders like students and instructors.

3.2.3 Language Learning

In terms of the language learning process, students’ responses seemed to indicate an opinion that language learning requires more than just two semesters of classroom instruction. In terms of time, students discussed both the limitations of two semesters of study and the possibility of prolonged exposure to language classes:

If I got to a point where I could for the most part be able to have conversations and understand people in Spanish, you know. . . that I think would be cool. But at the same time it’s not going to be like I’m taking two classes and then I’ll easily be able to talk in Spanish. It should take a lot more time than just two classes, you know, even like talking outside of the classroom. (Zach)

I think that if I was like, I don’t want to say forced, but like if I was forced to maybe take another semester, and if I saw that I can do it, I mean like at a higher level, then maybe I would have kept going with it. You know what I mean? Like maybe I would have been like, okay I can do this. I’ve done three semesters in college and like I’ve done well with this so I can keep going. So I think that the structure maybe can be improved upon but I understand why they have it that way. (Amy)

While Zach’s response explicitly refers to time needed for language development, both Zach and Amy seem to think that had they been required to take more than two classes, they may have continued studying Spanish. In light of this, it is worth

considering how a language requirement longer than two semesters might work toward promoting longer-term student investment in language learning. As for the limitations of classroom instruction, Beth and Morgan's comments below reflect a similar misalignment between what they as students want to learn and what their language classes have prioritized:

I would love to speak Spanish. . . but I don't know if I would go back to class. . . in class I feel like you don't really learn how to communicate. You learn about like "this building is this," but you don't really talk about you. It's structured, and it needs to be more just whatever, "hola, what's up". (Beth)

I think you can only learn so much inside of a classroom, and I think to a certain extent it kind of gets repetitive. . . reading this, writing this, speaking this, but I want to see it, I want to experience it. . . I'm starting to kind of redirect how I want to go about learning the rest of it. (Morgan)

Beth's comment about not actually learning to communicate reflects the GEP policy document's framing of language as a score or grade, with no discussion of the process of language learning or specification of an expected language-related outcome. As for Morgan, her unmet desire for "seeing" and "experiencing" language reflect the MCL website's description of two different types of learning experiences available for language majors and minors and for students taking GEP language classes.

3.2.4 Language Requirement

Emergent themes from students' discussion of the language requirement itself included some awareness of and skepticism toward the rationale behind the language requirement, and views of the language requirement as both a formality and a necessity. When asked what they thought was the rationale behind the GEP language requirement, most students described something similar to the GEP learning outcomes outlined above:

I think the purpose of it would be just to become like more of a well-rounded student. And open yourself to another person's culture. (Kelly)

I think the purpose is just like so that students maybe do step out of their comfort zone a little bit and that they can learn something that will be applicable, even though they don't think it might be at the time. (Tom)

Part of me is hoping that that's not their idea to reach this idea of diversity because I think diversity is so much bigger than just putting someone in a language class to get through for two semesters. But I wouldn't be surprised if that was their goal with that. (Morgan)

Despite the lack of transparency and visibility in how the GEP language requirement is mapped onto the specific learning outcomes, students' responses here suggest some familiarity with the GEP learning outcomes, including engaging students in exploratory, liberal arts educational tradition and increasing their awareness of cultural diversity. Morgan's response in particular signals a stance of skepticism toward whether two semesters of language study can actually achieve stated goals of

promoting cultural awareness, reflecting the different set of expectations for language majors and non-majors illustrated on the MCL website.

Similar to this skepticism, many students described the language requirement as a formality that they or their peers would not do if it were not required:

Freshman year I probably wouldn't have taken Spanish if it wasn't a requirement. . . I think the majority of students take a language because they have to, not because they want to. (Kelly)

I feel like especially at schools where you're required to take a language class, I feel like kids just kind of take it and are like oh it's a requirement that once I'm done with it I don't have any more interest in it. (Haley)

A lot of people get annoyed by taking a language because it's just a requirement, it's not really something I want to do. They might think I already did this in high school, why do I have to do it again? (Bridget)

Kelly's response positions the language requirement as something students would perhaps not choose to do or look forward to. Considering how the GEP description of the language requirement does not include a stated goal, outcome or purpose for students engaged in language study, this might be one reason why students could approach the language requirement this way. Haley and Bridget's responses each point to the short duration of the language requirement. Haley's framing of the language requirement aligns with the MCL website's suggestion to complete the two-semester sequence and perhaps stop taking language courses. Bridget's framing reflects students' potential views that two semesters of study, whether during college or before college, is enough to achieve whatever outcome is possible (whatever that may be), or to simply check language study off on a list. This also aligns with the GEP policy description's framing of language study in that there is no specified outcome and that it is positioned as a requirement students need to satisfy.

Despite these views of the language requirement as a formality that may not be prioritized, several students articulated opinions of the language requirement as helpful for student learning:

I think [the requirement] is good . . . You can't force kids to be into it, you can't force kids to understand how important it is or how useful it will be for them, but you can definitely force them to take a class, which might help. (Alex)

Obviously at a liberal arts college, yes, that's part of being well-rounded and taking different classes and exploring different majors. . . I also think taking two required classes is good, not just one. . . You learn it the first time, and you get to apply it the second time, and that's where you figure out, I like that or I don't like that. (Lisa)

At the beginning of the year before taking Spanish I probably would have said like, you know, I really don't know why LAU is making us do this. It's pointless. But now that I've had that experience, I really think you know, I can see why they want us to do that and I think it's very valuable, and I think it's something all colleges should do. (Tom)

Each of these examples points to the possibility of students coming to a realization through language study, whether "understanding" how it can shape their learning and developing, "figuring out" whether they like it, or "seeing why" the university includes language study in its curriculum in the first place. While this realization may

not be guaranteed, the reflections here position required language study as a possible first step. These responses raise the question of what a more transparent language policy might look like, including normalizing and prioritizing language study as well as explicitly articulating the goals and purposes of language study to students.

4 Conclusion and Implications

This study sought to uncover what students' ideas are about their university's language requirement and where these ideas might come from, especially in relation to how the language policy at their university is articulated. In general, the LAU language requirement is framed as part of a diverse curriculum with broad learning outcomes. Close examination of policy descriptions, however, point to a lack of prioritization of language study for most students in meeting the GEP learning outcomes. In addition, student reflections suggest a view of language study as one of several curricular requirements to check off of a list and unlikely to result in actual language development. Considering how language policy is articulated by the university and perceived by students, it is worth considering how language policy articulation might be re-envisioned to position curricular offerings in a way that supports student investment in world language study. In response to data presented in this chapter, the following action items are offered for faculty tasked with language curriculum development and policy articulation:

1. **Consider how policy texts, including website descriptions of placement testing procedures, curricular offerings, and mission statements send messages to students.** These public-facing texts may shape students' ideas about language and the value of language learning. If world language study is framed as a requirement to "get out of the way" with no apparent reason or purpose behind it besides getting a grade, students may internalize these ideas and stop studying language as soon as possible. Deliberate framing of language as connected to intercultural citizenship, students as autonomous learners, language learning as a developmental process, and language courses as opportunities for exploration may help students think differently about world language study.
2. **Articulate linguistic goals/purposes of world language study to students.** With no specified language learning outcome in public-facing policy texts, students in this study described feelings of incompetence and seemed to rely on classroom experiences to infer the expectations for their language development. Deliberately framing these expectations in terms of developing plurilingual repertoires might help students see themselves as competent language users and feel confident about continuing their study of world languages.
3. **Articulate broader goals/purposes of world language study to students.** Similar to the above point, with no specified learning outcome related to broader liberal arts goals, students in this study either seemed unfamiliar with the university's rationale behind world language study or considered larger learning

goals unrealistic based on their classroom experiences. Explicitly highlighting the larger purposes of world language study, such as developing intercultural citizenship and appreciation for human diversity, might help students move beyond viewing world language study as a formality and instead invest in a promising learning experience.

4. **Share testimonials from former students about the value of world language study.** Student ideas about the value of language learning are informed by the messages they receive and their learning experiences. As student reflections here illustrate, these ideas may change even after taking world language courses. Inviting students who have completed initial language courses to share their experience and ideas with students who are beginning world language study may be a way to help promote student investment in learning world languages by highlighting positive aspects and countering ideas of world language study as a mere requirement and formality.

A reframing of language study to focus on more than just language and position language learning as an opportunity rather than a requirement may result in greater uptake among students. A promising example of this reframing is Wassell and Glynn's (2022) edited volume that invites teachers to rethink the purposes and possibilities for world language study, including prioritizing intercultural citizenship as an explicit goal and adopting a plurilingual, asset-based approach to language development. The idea that world language study is a formality and an option not to be taken seriously is highlighted by Lanvers et al. (2021) as a key factor leading to the "crisis" of language learning in anglophone contexts. Lanvers et al.'s (2021) volume offers a timely overview of problems and solutions related to this crisis, pointing to the importance of both individual and institutional efforts to explicitly counter this monolingual mindset in order to support and sustain world language study.

Considering how university policy documents reduce language study to a two-semester course sequence without specifying a clear outcome for students, it is no surprise that many students feel like two semesters is not enough time to meet the expectations they may have developed and decide to stop taking language courses after satisfying the requirement. Student reflections examined here reveal the complexity inherent to required language study: despite the risk of viewing language study as a formality, requiring students to take language courses also offers exposure to a potentially significant learning experience. Instead of deprioritizing language study, universities would do well to reframe (and enact) language policy in a way that emphasizes to students the promise and possibility available to them.

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Leveraging Student Surveys to Promote Recruitment and Retention



LeAnne L. Spino

Abstract Recruitment and retention surveys are a time- and cost-effective strategy to help combat falling enrollments in language courses. This short chapter explores how various language programs at the University of Rhode Island have implemented surveys to recruit (1) students who do not study a language into language courses and, (2) current language students into the language major/minor. It also focuses on how surveys can be utilized to prevent attrition and retain language students over time. The chapter ends with practical considerations for how to implement these types of surveys and also includes examples of survey questions that can be adapted to the needs of other institutions.

Keywords Surveys · Recruitment · Retention · Enrollments

1 Introduction

Students are often an overlooked stakeholder in language program assessment (McKay & Davis, 2018). Given the documented decrease in enrollment numbers in languages other than English in the United States at the post-secondary level (Looney & Lusin, 2019), language programs would be wise to listen to their students and respond accordingly. Collecting and analyzing student voices is possible through a variety of different methods, such as individual interviews, focus groups, and surveys. This piece will focus on the latter, as it is a time- and cost-effective way to gather student information and voices.

When implemented properly, surveys can be an effective tool to recruit students into language courses/minors/majors and retain them across time. The Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures at the University of Rhode Island (URI) has over 600 language majors across eight languages and offers many rigorous interdisciplinary programs that pair a language major with another degree,

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such as Engineering, Business, International Studies, etc. (e.g., see Grandin & Berka, 2014 for information about one of these programs). We began to implement recruitment and retention surveys in various language programs around the time the language requirement was eliminated. Below I detail how to use surveys as recruitment and retention tools, as well as practical considerations for survey implementation. Three types of surveys will be discussed: (1) surveys to recruit students into language classes, (2) surveys to recruit language students into the language major/minor and, (3) surveys to retain language students over time. Sample questions for each of these survey types are presented in Appendix 1.

2 Surveys as Recruitment Tools

Surveys can be used to recruit students first into language courses and then into a language major or minor. To draw students into the language classroom, our faculty visit strategic high-enrollment classes outside of our department that dovetail with our interdisciplinary programs (e.g., Economics). We provide a quick pitch about our department, discuss our interdisciplinary programs, and then ask students to complete a 1-min survey which asks them if they are interested in studying a language, and if so, which one. Students interested in studying a language provide their name and email, and one of our faculty members follows up with them either via a mass email or personalized mail merge to discuss course offerings. We strategically promote all of our languages simultaneously to reduce workload for our colleagues.

We also conduct a survey in many of our language classrooms to recruit for the language major and/or minor. For example, we ask (1) whether the student is already a language major or minor and (2) how interested they are in majoring/minoring in the language. We cross-check our records to ensure that students who believe they are a language major have actually declared the major (sometimes they have not), and then reach out to students individually that have expressed a high interest in majoring/minoring. It is most effective to implement this survey throughout an entire language program so that the interest level of every student studying the language can be collected. Given that our language majors are often dual majors, the surveys are useful in collecting information about students' other major(s), so that course and program opportunities can be created accordingly. We have also used the surveys to start recruiting students even before they come to URI. Since our school is a state school, with many students hailing from the same secondary school districts, we also sometimes ask where students completed their high school studies to purposefully forge relationships with these districts.

It is important to recognize that surveys are useful tools not just for collecting information, but also potentially for advertising it. For some of our language programs, a language major requires only 12 more credits (four classes) than a minor.

When language minors become aware of this, they are much more likely to major. For this reason, we use the surveys to advertise the difference between the language minor and major coursework. We then ask language minors if this knowledge makes them more likely to major in a language and follow up with them accordingly. The surveys can also be used to advertise information about our incentive credit program,¹ so that students learn through the survey if they have already made more progress towards a major or minor than perhaps they had thought. This same spirit of advertising through surveys can be used to convey whatever information you believe may make your students more likely to major or minor in the language(s) you offer.

3 Surveys as Retention Tools

In addition to serving as recruitment tools, surveys can also be powerful retention tools. For example, surveys are useful for collecting student opinions about what is functioning well in the program and what can be improved, thereby allowing student voices to drive curricular and programmatic changes. Another way to retain students is to ensure that they are placed properly in their language courses, so that the course is not too easy or difficult for them. Most language programs at URI do not currently implement placement tests, so some programs use prior language learning experience to assist in the placement of students. When implemented at the beginning of the semester, these surveys can collect information about students' previous language study to help ensure proper placement. Surveys implemented at the end of the semester can also inquire as to whether students plan on continuing to study the language next semester and the reasons for their decision. Analyzing these responses can help programs understand the causes for retention and attrition and provide them with the necessary knowledge to combat the latter.²

4 Practical Considerations

It is important to keep many practical considerations in mind during the planning, programming, and execution of a survey. In terms of planning, the survey creator(s) should have clear goals so that survey questions can then be strategically formulated to reach them. In terms of programming, there are myriad user-friendly survey tools. Many universities provide Qualtrics or Google Forms access for faculty, but a simple

¹The incentive credit program incentivizes students to commence their language studies at an appropriate level by offering students who have completed 3 or 4 years of language study in high school three additional language credits if they successfully complete a language course that is appropriate to their level.

²For some potential reasons for (dis)continuing language study after the introductory level, see Iula (2021).

Google search will provide other options as well. It is highly advisable to use survey logic, which can change the questions that students view based on their responses. Survey logic helps to shorten the survey as much as possible and to ask students only relevant questions (e.g., ensuring that a question about why students decided to major in a language is not directed to non-language majors). The survey creator(s) should also think critically about whether to make the survey anonymous: anonymity is preferable for obtaining honest evaluations of the program but collecting student names and contact information is imperative for other survey uses, such as recruitment. Above all, surveys should be kept simple and succinct, as surveys that are too long are more prone to attrition. Once the survey is programmed, it can be disseminated to students via a link or QR code. Administering the survey during a few minutes of class time is likely the most effective way to have a high response rate. Through these surveys, a relatively small investment of time can yield much information critical to student recruitment and retention, and therefore provide more students with the beneficial experience of learning another language.

Appendix 1

Below are various sample survey questions that can be modified according to survey goals and institutional context.

General Information Questions

- What is your first name?
[open-ended response]
- What is your last name?
[open-ended response]
- What is your university email?
[open-ended response]
- What year are you?
 - () first year
 - () second year
 - () third year
 - () fourth year
 - () fifth year
 - () other (please specify)_____

Recruiting Students Into Language Classes

- Are you currently enrolled in a language course at our university?
 - yes
 - no
- Are you interested in studying one or more languages at our university?
 - yes
 - no
- Which language(s) are you interested in studying?
[List available languages below]
- We offer many Signature International Programs that feature language courses specific to many disciplines, internships with a foreign company and/or study abroad opportunities. If you are interested in one of our Signature International Programs, please check the box below to receive more information about it via email.
 - International Studies and Diplomacy
 - International Business Program
 - International Computer Science Program
 - International Engineering Program
 - International Pharmaceutical Sciences Program
 - Textiles, Fashion, Merchandising and Design
 - Chinese Flagship Program

Recruiting Language Students Into Major/Minor

- Are you currently a language MAJOR?
 - yes
 - no
- Are you currently a language MINOR?
 - yes
 - no
- How interested are you in declaring a [insert language] MAJOR in the future on a scale of 1 (very uninterested) to 5 (very interested)?
- How interested are you in declaring a [insert language] MINOR in the future on a scale of 1 (very uninterested) to 5 (very interested)?
- What is/are your major(s)?
[open-ended response]
- To MINOR in [insert language], you need to complete SIX (6) courses in the language at the [insert class] level and above.
To MAJOR in [insert language], you need to complete TEN (10) courses in the language at the [insert class] level and above.

Were you aware before today the difference between a [insert language] minor and major is only FOUR (4) courses?

yes

no

- Does the fact that the [insert language] MAJOR is only FOUR (4) more courses than the MINOR make it more likely that you will MAJOR instead of MINOR in [insert language]?

yes

no

Retaining Language Students

- In what language courses are you currently enrolled?
[can provide list or open-ended]
- How many years did you study the language in HIGH SCHOOL?
 Did not study the language in high school
 1 year
 2 years
 3 years
 4 years
- Do you speak [insert language] at home with your family?
 yes
 no
- Briefly describe how comfortable you are speaking [insert language] with your family at home.
[open-ended response]
- What motivated you to continue taking [insert language] this year? (check all that apply)
 My own personal/professional goals
 Positive experience in language course
 My instructor encouraged me
 I need it for a dual degree
 I really enjoy studying the language
 Other (please specify) _____
- Are you a [insert language] major?
 yes
 no
- Why did you decide to major in [insert language]?
[open-ended response]
- Do you have any suggestions for improving your experience as a [insert language] major? Feel free to comment on anything: types of courses offered, outside experience to practice [insert language], etc.
[open-ended response]

- Why are you NOT currently a [insert language] major? (check all that apply)
 - I plan on becoming a language major soon
 - I would like to major, but I do not believe I can finish the coursework in time
 - I would rather minor
 - My parents have discouraged me from majoring
 - My advisor has discouraged me from majoring
 - I do not believe the language pairs well with my other major (please write your major) _____

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Portuguese Language Program Evaluation



Bruna Sommer-Farias and Ana M. Carvalho

Abstract This short chapter describes the implementation and results of an ongoing Portuguese program evaluation project at the University of Arizona (Sommer-Farias et al., 2020) following a utilization-focused approach (Norris, 2016) and previous evaluation projects in Portuguese language programs in the U.S. (Milleret, 2016; Milleret & Silveira, 2010). Longitudinal mapping of enrollment trends and student satisfaction were analyzed based on (1) institutional student analytics, and (2) pre-, mid-, end-of-semester, and exit questionnaires (Ecke & Ganz, 2015). Results informed student learning outcome adaptation, curriculum redesign, and recruitment and retention strategies planning, thus ensuring program accountability and vitality in face of ongoing oscillation of foreign language enrollment rates (Goldberg et al., 2015). Pedagogical application of results included the creation of online courses, including Portuguese for specific purposes, course scheduling accommodation, task design geared towards linguistic backgrounds, and student learning outcome and curriculum redesign. On the departmental accountability level, keeping track of students' satisfaction rates showed an impact on continuous investment in a less commonly taught language (LCTL) within a larger language department. This project can serve as a model to strengthen enrollment and program sustainability of other LCTL programs.

Keywords Portuguese · Program evaluation · Curriculum renovation · Recruitment

This short chapter describes the program evaluation project developed in the Portuguese Language program at the University of Arizona since 2016 (Sommer-Farias et al., 2020). To situate this project, enrollment in Portuguese classes across U.S. institutions summed up to over 12,000 students according to the Modern

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Language Association (MLA) report in 2013 (Looney & Lusin, 2019), an important increase since the beginning of enrollment record reports. The University of Arizona mirrored the national trend in the same period with 644 students enrolled in Portuguese in the 2012–13 academic year compared to 108 when the program started in 1998 (Sommer-Farias et al., 2020). Constant recruitment and internal departmental policies, such as the requirement that Spanish majors take at least two Portuguese courses, appeared to have contributed to relatively stable enrollments. Nonetheless, a steady decrease was recorded not only at the University of Arizona, but across universities and foreign languages in the U.S. after that period. The MLA report registered a decrease in Portuguese enrollments of 20.8% between 2013 and 2016, which also happened at the University of Arizona and other institutions, even in locations with a higher presence of Portuguese-speaking immigrants (i.e., Massachusetts, Florida, Georgia, and California).

It is in this landscape that the evaluation of the Portuguese program at the University of Arizona was initiated in 2016. The project consists of longitudinal mapping of enrollment trends and student satisfaction analyzed using (1) institutional student analytics, and (2) pre-, mid-, end-of-semester, and exit questionnaires. This evaluation design was adapted from Ecke and Ganz (2015) and took into account previous evaluation projects in Portuguese language programs in the U.S. (Milleret, 2012, 2016; Milleret & Silveira, 2010). The complete evaluation plan was shared elsewhere (Sommer-Farias et al., 2020), so this short chapter reports on how such data highlighted the program's strengths and informed needs following a utilization-focused approach (Norris, 2016). For a less commonly taught language (LCTL), following a data-driven plan is even more invaluable to inform recruitment and retention strategies as means to ensure program accountability and vitality.

Surveys completed between 2016–2020 revealed that Spanish heritage speakers composed more than half of the Portuguese student population in the program. Also, Portuguese students tended to major in health, translation, and teaching oriented careers, and were mostly interested in developing speaking skills. These results, among others, have informed three major areas: (1) student learning outcome (SLO) adaptation and curriculum redesign, (2) targeted recruitment strategies, and (3) departmental accountability.

In terms of pedagogical applications, curriculum and instruction delivery were more explicitly geared towards students' linguistic profiles and career interests. Student learning outcomes were revised for each course, which are now not only aligned with the ACTFL standards but also progressively structured by themes and discourse domains from Celpe-Bras, the Brazilian Portuguese proficiency test (Sommer-Farias et al., 2022). In addition, more literacy-oriented activities were added to the Portuguese for Spanish speakers' course to cater to heritage speakers, who tend to rely more on implicit knowledge.

In terms of targeted recruitment strategies, Portuguese for health and business purposes were created in addition to courses in online and hybrid modalities to

address two profiles revealed by survey answers: (1) online and hybrid courses would cater to students with scheduling conflicts, and (2) Portuguese for specific purposes would make Portuguese language classes more attractive to students double-majoring in a language and health or business careers. The creation of a “bring a friend day” also worked as a recruitment strategy based on students reporting enrolling in Portuguese influenced by friends in Portuguese classes. On that day, teachers plan interactive activities with guests. Previous strategies such as visiting Spanish language classes promoting Portuguese language classes were maintained.

The third area informed by evaluation results was departmental accountability. Analytics showed that there was a balanced portion of majors and non-majors in Spanish enrolled in Portuguese classes, indicating program health since enrollment was not relying solely on Spanish majors. However, keeping track of and sharing student satisfaction rates about instructors, materials, and linguistic development perception with stakeholders has proven crucial to avoid suspension of the requirement that Spanish majors need to enroll in two Portuguese courses, which could jeopardize program size and enrollment. For this reason, we stress the importance of keeping track of students’ satisfaction rates to argue for continuous investment in LCTLs within larger language departments.

Changes to the program such as the alignment of student learning outcomes and the creation of online and hybrid courses in response to students’ needs proved to be key in times of crisis as it resulted in a smoother transition to fully online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. As in other LCTL programs, teacher rotation and heavy workloads are frequent issues, but the well-aligned curriculum with clear objectives and materials for teachers strengthened the program as they provided a clear pathway for both new and established teachers while maintaining the program’s goals and standards (Norris, 2016).

The evaluation project has been iteratively revised to account for changes in students’ and teachers’ needs. Some of the challenges to be addressed are survey fatigue and the optimization of survey completion time in class. The response rate in online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic decreased and a new round of analysis aims to investigate the change in students’ motivation, proficiency level perceptions, and needs, thus ensuring that questions remain relevant and context-specific (Norris, 2016). Conducting focus groups is an alternative to gathering more individualized data. For the future we would like to implement an exit proficiency test, either ACTFL’s Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) or Celpe-Bras, to obtain a more precise assessment of the student learning outcomes thus drawing a clearer picture of students’ proficiency achievements. Finally, the continuous discussion of results with teachers has proven invaluable to create a culture of evaluation. Although LCTL teachers’ contracts tend to be unstable and joining an ongoing evaluation project may be time consuming, constant sharing of results in internal meetings and conference presentations and publications facilitates continuous engagement and commitment of the personnel involved to continuously recruit and maintain a solid program.

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Part III
Solutions to Thrive: Planned
and Imagined Initiatives

Uniting On All Levels



Jane Sokolosky

Abstract Languages can better weave themselves into the fabric of the institution and experience a recognizable increase in the visibility of languages across campus by taking steps to foster a united community of language learners and faculty who work with other faculty and students across disciplines as well as with various administrative offices. This chapter outlines measures that were successfully taken to highlight and expand languages across campus with the goal that students could identify as being part of a vibrant language community in the same way that they identify as being from disciplines such as STEM, the social sciences, or humanities. These initiatives created space for students to come together to learn, to create community, and to share their common interest, appreciation and curiosity of other cultures and languages. The ideas outlined in this chapter were carried out by a language center but can also be spearheaded by individual language programs such that languages as a whole become more visible and assume an expanded footprint on campus.

Keywords Language programming · Enrollments · Community building

1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on ways to increase the footprint of languages across campus and how to bring the relevance of language learning to the center of university discussions. By taking an approach that allows for excellence among distinct language programs while at the same time fostering a united community of language learners, the campus community will experience a perceived increase in the presence of languages across campus that can lead to an actual strengthening of language programs. The chapter describes actual initiatives and steps taken at a language center at a mid-sized university and suggests that the implementation of a

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three-pronged approach between students, faculty, and administrators can ensure true and measurable growth and promote thriving language programs.

Whether an institution houses individual languages in separate departments or all within one department or center, creating community and connections among different languages, different faculty, and different units on campus is key to thriving and not just surviving. Compared to the more highly enrolled majors in the STEM fields, languages tend to have a low profile across campus yet are still incredibly meaningful to faculty, undergraduates and graduate students who are part of the language community. By working together, silos that may exist between disciplines, languages, and administration can be broken down leaving room for languages to expand across campus and become more visible. By uniting at all levels – faculty, students, and administrators – languages can claim space and become a larger part of the fabric of the campus.

Creating thriving language programs requires an enhanced footprint of languages on campus. In order to achieve this goal to make languages a more visible part of the university, language programs must focus on (1) creating identity, (2) adjacent programming, and (3) community building. Achieving this requires continuous outreach to students, faculty, and administration. By uniting on all levels, desired gains can be achieved – higher recognition, cohesiveness and support among units, increased enrollments, and better post-graduation outcomes related to learning languages.

2 Expanding the Footprint of Languages Through Identity

Identity building and adherence to a group is an affirming act. Students should feel a part of languages in the same way that they feel a part of other units on campus such as science, engineering, computer science, or athletics. Taken alone or in an individual language class, there may not be many fellow students learning and majoring in specific languages, but when all students in all language classes are counted together, they create a unit, an identity, a significant number of students. By increasing the visibility of languages on campus, students will be identified as students who “do languages.” Students learning languages will be a visible part of the campus community and with this student support, languages will have a solid foundation to become a dynamic presence on campus led by students and faculty.

Instructors who teach and students who enroll in language courses are quite aware of the presence of languages on campus. Other constituents, however, may not know where to find language opportunities on campus. The first step to making languages visible focuses on the branding of languages. At our language center, we started off with our own logo. The communications office created a university-approved logo and provided the logo in various file formats (jpeg, png, PDF, vertical and horizontal), features that have been extremely helpful when adding the logo to websites, journals, posters, flyers, PowerPoints, swag, and other promotional materials for any new initiatives. A sandwich board with removable options for changing posters is

often used to point people in the direction of the language hubs or events on campus. Addresses and names of language departments became instantly searchable after we added them to Google Maps; anyone looking at the map sees where languages are located on campus. Faculty offices, exterior doors, and windows facing toward the public that display their language affiliation can also draw attention to the discipline. Graphic design applications have made it easy and rewarding to design eye-catching visuals to assist in this branding. The initial investment of time and money for signage is worthwhile to position languages in everyone's sight and on everyone's radar.

The next step in creating a visible identity for languages starts by assessing the local campus. What are students from other departments and clubs wearing? Is there a sweatshirt from computer science? A t-shirt from engineering? Is there another way that students boast their affiliation? Stickers? Annual events? We started out small with only a few t-shirts to give as prizes and now have several items, but stickers tend to be the most cost-effective, and they are very popular. As support from your university increases, students can be tasked with designing promotional materials for languages. It may be helpful for faculty advisors to set parameters about style and design so that students create something that aligns with the faculty vision for the department. Making the designing of all posters, swag, and outward-facing marketing materials into a team effort has shown to build community among student leaders. Students enjoy being creative together, sharing ideas and praising their fellow students' final product.

Undergraduates can also play an important role in promoting identity by working with faculty to ensure frequent and appropriate posts to social media. By making trusted undergraduates responsible for social media posts, they are able to broadcast events to a wider local community. Students will know which of the many social media platforms undergraduates use at your institution. Faculty meanwhile can give direction and advice about the posts by setting up a schedule that corresponds with themes that are meaningful, helpful, and perhaps even playful. Faculty, for example, can help to ensure that information about scholarship and study abroad deadlines are posted and not forgotten at times of the year when undergraduates are overscheduled. Additionally, in the spirit of expanding the footprint, faculty can offer some assistance by letting students know which other relevant departments and units on campus should be tagged so that languages are supporting other languages on campus and making connections to entities on campus where language learning is important to the discipline or mission.

Local and student-run media outlets also serve as good sources for free advertising that promotes identity. By accepting any requests for interviews from the student newspaper, you will expand the visibility of languages across campus. Although people may shy away from these interviews, it is a good way to reach a different audience, including the administration, and all who read the latest student news.

3 Expanding the Footprint of Languages Through Adjacent Programming

3.1 Events

Campus-wide events help increase the footprint of languages on campus if planned with the intent of reaching a wide audience. Carefully planning a variety of events that target the diverse and numerous audiences for whom languages are relevant is key. We have found that convening numerous and various types of events – university-wide events, faculty events, graduate student events, and undergraduate events – brings together a wider group of campus members and helps to target specific audiences for whom languages are (1) relevant to their discipline, (2) adjacent to the discipline, or (3) of general interest. Including those adjacent members of the community is important when one considers the trickle-down effect. If these community members are academic advisors to undergraduate students and are involved in university committees, any interaction they have with the languages expands their knowledge and maybe even appreciation of how languages impact undergraduate education. Events that are held at centrally located venues, at times convenient to a large majority of the institution, and that involve an overarching theme that relates to all languages and affiliated disciplines serve to unite the campus around a common interest: languages.

When considering an invited guest speaker, care should be taken to make the speaker someone who spans disciplines yet believes at their core in the importance of languages and language learning. This would not only help to secure funding from numerous sources, but also help to convene a larger audience and can be even more affordable when hosted as a virtual talk. Shortly before the pandemic, we were fortunate to host a larger event on translation that kicked off a campus-wide effort to support languages. Such a broadly themed conference allowed room to support, strengthen, and include non-tenure-track and tenure-track faculty and graduate students in discussions and programming. Panels included multiple languages as well as theorists and practitioners in order to bring fields together to explore their similarities and challenges. Departments coordinate discipline-specific events but cross-disciplinarity among languages and adjacent units such as creative writing or international affairs can be fostered in order to infuse the school with languages on multiple levels. Indeed, making the effort to reach out to adjacent fields is central to expanding the footprint.

3.2 Campus Partners

In addition to conferences and talks, planning events with other campus partners weaves languages even more into the fabric of the university. The career services office can often help faculty to understand how their database works or how best to

search and connect with alumni on external platforms such as LinkedIn. In addition, they can also be an excellent partner for a career fair oriented to international opportunities. As a bonus, these units often have a budget and are eager to bring alumni back to campus. The admissions office can be one more partner in support of languages if you provide them with a short text about studying languages to include in their tours and brochures. Additionally, the advising office and all undergraduate advisors should have quick access to answers about language study. Ensuring that information regarding language placement exams is included alongside orientation material for other placement exams, such as those for science and math, may serve to remind students to add a language course to their schedule.

This outreach to adjacent units, staff, and administrators needs to be accompanied by information regarding the reasons for learning languages. When language faculty share the “why” of language learning, with advisors, deans, career services and admission staff, they will be able to use these arguments and examples in an informed way with any advisees and students. Providing this guidance to non-language faculty and advisors who work with students who are already proficient in a language or who want to start a new language, helps them explain to students where this language study can lead them and will in turn benefit language enrollments. The 2019 ACTFL publication *Teaching Intercultural Citizenship Across the Curriculum. The Role of Language Education* (Wagner et al., 2019) offers excellent arguments for promoting the study of languages.

And finally, sharing your successes with the administration brings visibility to languages. Your program may be small and not have the flashy high-gloss annual report of other units on campus, but taking the time to write down what has been done and sharing that outside of the language bubble makes administrators aware of what you do and draws attention to initiatives at all levels, once again making languages a visible part of the fabric of the university.

4 Expanding the Footprint of Languages by Building Community

4.1 Orientation

Newly enrolled, incoming students are bombarded with information from the university, and language programs must make sure they are part of this mix, both in terms of providing information going out to students directly as well as informing anyone who advises undergraduates. Catching students’ attention before they get involved and overbooked with other activities is essential. Institutions with language requirements may not have a problem getting students enrolled in language classes, but the twist is to get students *excited* about language learning and fulfilling that requirement. Events focusing on language learning need to be part of first-year orientation. Orientation organizers, once approached, will most likely be pleased

to offer incoming students more information and will be able to give languages a spot in the orientation schedule.

One event that is received very well by students at our university is a student-led panel where students talk about how their language classes are an important part of their studies, how knowing a language helps them to secure internships and work, how they make close friends from different parts of the university and from different class years in language classes, and how the language professor becomes that one person who can write the best recommendation letter ever. The panel should be curated to include students who study a variety of languages and at different levels, who have study abroad or internship experience to share, and whose majors vary greatly. Language faculty are great resources for providing a list of names of students who could potentially participate. If there should be too many volunteers, fellow language faculty can give advice on which students would be enthusiastic and engaging public speakers. With an excellent panel, you can record the speakers and use it for advertising on websites and social media. The student language panels we coordinated with this peer-to-peer interaction have proven more successful than those that had originally included administrators. In order to accommodate a long list of students who want to participate in such a panel as well as to keep languages front and center on the university events calendar, we run these student panels at the beginning of every semester.

Incoming students are often still in a test-taking mindset influenced by high school. They may want to place into the highest-level course possible or wonder about the impact of AP or IB scores. In order to take advantage of this mindset to the benefit of language classes, departments need to make it easy for students to find information about language placement tests and to take the placement tests. Including placement information as a news item on the language department website, working with the orientation committee to make it visible on the orientation website, announcing them on public communication channels, and hanging up posters with a QR code that links to details about placements tests are all ways to reach a new group of students who have just arrived on campus.

4.2 Increased Language Offerings

Increasing the language offerings on our campus required cooperation with the administration and adjacent departments and supported institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. We argued that when a university considers itself a global university, the language offerings should cover regions across the globe. Our first request for a new language was met with success and led to our first hire for a lecturer to teach Yoruba, the first African language to be taught as a regular course offering at our university. We reached out to the Africana Studies department for their input on which language would best complement their faculty research projects. Faculty at the Watson Institute for International Affairs who specialize in African economies, politics, and the diaspora were also consulted. Making these

connections at the start of the process has resulted in continued contact with these adjacent units on campus. Student interest, on the other hand, was the driving motivator to bring Vietnamese language offerings to campus. Heritage learners involved in a student group researched current courses to find those for which knowledge of Vietnamese would be beneficial, sought out alumni who could offer appropriate internships, found faculty and student support, reached out to the East Asian Studies department as well as the language center for support and then petitioned the administration. After 2 years, approval was granted for a new hire. Faculty interest has also driven expansion into Indigenous languages. To gain support for a new language, the overarching argument is its relevance to current fields of research at the university. It is once again helpful to reach out to adjacent units beyond language departments such as to faculty in religious studies, area studies, political science, and linguistics to find support for additional language offerings. As with all less-highly enrolled languages, partnering with other institutions to share courses can lead to mutual collaborations and expand language offerings even further. This type of cooperation also brings languages into the broader campus discourse because more adjacent units are involved. Administrators must approve of the MOU, media services and instructional technologists are involved in the technology, graduate students can serve as teaching assistants and the media can report on innovative online education. The footprint of languages truly expands on campus with such a collaborative project.

4.3 Access

Language panels and easy access to placement tests help incoming students to gain easier access to language classes. There are other considerations to be made in order to limit impediments for students enrolling in your classes. Thoughtfully scheduling classes is a first step. The registrar and scheduling office may be able to provide a list of overall enrollment numbers for each class hour held on campus. Once that list is made available, language faculty should avoid scheduling smaller classes at highly enrolled times. Being aware of when highly enrolled first year lecture courses take place can help avoid conflicts for incoming students. If, for example, a mandatory section of a popular first-year course only meets on Tuesday/Thursday at 1 pm, the language class should be scheduled at a different time. Textbook costs for a course that is not required can be an additional barrier for students without textbook scholarships. Instructors should consider carefully what they require of students for an elective course and seek out open educational resources and other cost-saving alternatives.

4.4 Student Employment

Students and student workers are key to a thriving language community. They drive the ideas for activities that undergraduates will enjoy, design advertising campaigns to catch their attention, know which prizes students would want to win, which days and hours of the week are better for hosting events, and have loads of fellow students and friends to invite to events. Students with appropriate language skills and training should have the opportunity to use their knowledge and expertise of languages and be paid or recognized for this. If your school can afford to pay the students, having a job relating to their language skills shows the application of language study. Administrators can often be persuaded of the benefits of student jobs that tie into academic endeavors, after all, there are most likely student jobs as teaching assistants or section leaders for computer science, economics, and math courses. If there are no funds for wages, students should be given titles and responsibilities so that they can add these to their resume. Both forms of acknowledgement are valuable. From year to year, students covet these jobs. They eagerly await the job announcements that are posted widely and bring attention to the value of language learning.

4.5 Maintaining the Community

Fostering a united community of language learners happens by bringing students together on a regular basis over the course of their 4 years of college. Weekly coffee or tea hours or any gatherings where students get together with other students and faculty are an excellent first step to creating community at the departmental level or among learners of one language. To give students that larger connection to other language learners, hosting weekly gatherings that bring together multiple languages shows students, and also the community, how substantial the language community is. At our university, we started what we called weekly Open Hours for undergraduates a few years ago. This peer-to-peer facilitated environment gives students access to even more opportunities to speak and practice the languages they are learning. Language faculty were initially concerned that students might be doing homework for each other, that facilitators were not trained to teach, or that students may attend the weekly hour instead of enrolling in a language class. To assuage any concerns, new facilitator guidelines clearly state that no homework help is allowed, but rather that facilitators are there to share parts of the target culture – news, videos, vocabulary, trends – with fellow students and to give fellow students the opportunity to talk among peers about a variety of topics. This program now runs like a well-oiled machine. The Open Hours differ from traditional tutoring hours embedded within a course but have the benefits of being facilitated by peers who are relatable, resourceful, and cultural ambassadors. (Gonglewski & Baker, 2021) Our undergraduate student workers, fondly known as language ambassadors, coordinate language open hours, organize facilitator sign-ups and special theme nights, place and procure

food orders, and arrange all advertising. Our language center hosts training for facilitators and provides funding for food. This hour-long event does not replace enrollment in a language class; we see students in our language classes attend other language tables, become facilitators in their native language and bring friends along. This event has become so popular that we are almost running out of space. Weekly about 50–60 students choose to spend time enjoying this event. It is extremely rewarding to witness this energy and enthusiasm among the undergraduates as they jump from one table to the next, practicing different languages at each and meeting new friends and making language learning a visible and important part of their college life.

Through the efforts of language ambassadors and faculty, the number of programmatic events relating to languages has grown exponentially for undergraduates. What started out small has grown and is expanding. Peer-to-peer learning and the celebrating and sharing of talents works to foster the sense of community and builds a core group of language learners. For example, students turned a traditional trivia event into a World Trivia Night and went even a step further by inviting the Dean of the College to be the MC of the event. Already by the third year, registration was closed after just a few days when the room capacity was reached. The first time we held this event, we had no budget. However, by reaching out to the office for international students that often has students who enjoy our same events, we were happy to coordinate the logistical part of the event with our sweat equity (advertising, questions, answer sheets, facilities, etc.) while they paid for the refreshments and prizes. Working with this adjacent group helped to fund this event initially and now it is part of our own budget. Our Open Mic Night hosted before COVID was quite popular when held in a centrally located small venue that serves as a coffee shop during the day. Last year, the undergraduates were insistent on bringing the event to the center of campus and holding it outside. They took charge of recruiting student artists to participate, while our staff worked on securing a sound system. We opted to purchase a reasonably priced sound system with two Bluetooth microphones and a speaker. This is an excellent investment and we have made it available for any language department to borrow in order to assist them in their language-specific poetry nights or presentations. Other events include regular student-lead panels about internships, study abroad, and community service opportunities where students discuss how these experiences required or improved their languages skills. With information from the participants, as well as sound bites and short videos from the presentations, the student workers curated two websites for students to access at any time: one on jobs and internships and the other on community service opportunities. Having these curated repositories of information are excellent resources for all students to peruse at their leisure and for sharing with advisors or other language faculty so that they have examples of successful placements to share with advisees and students. There are several undergraduate publications on campus, and even several housed in specific language departments, yet none dedicated to a variety of languages. Once again, the language ambassadors took charge and produced the student-run magazine using Google Sites to present the multimedia contributions and so that future editions of the magazine can be run off the same platform. The

students also lobbied for and were awarded funding to organize a reveal party for the publication. Student contributors read aloud their pieces in the original language and the poem, story, text, drawing, and/or translation was projected on the screen. Multiple languages were represented, and the importance of languages and language learning emanated throughout the event.

4.6 Recognizing Student Effort

To create a strong, viable and long-lasting language community students and advisors must understand the value, objectives, and importance of language learning and be able to communicate this to other students, faculty, and future employers. Undergraduates at our institution (that does not offer minors in any subject) now have the opportunity to pursue a certificate in intercultural competence that has a significant language component. This tangible notation on the transcript with the additional listing on a resume is compelling for undergraduates who want to have concrete credentials showing their commitment to languages, especially when they are not majoring in a language. The certificate outlines a pathway for students that ties together the study of languages, an exploration into intercultural competence, and an experiential learning component (internship, work, or study abroad). With general trends leaning towards declining enrollments in some languages (MLA Language Enrollment Database, 2016) or in the number of students majoring in languages, but also because students desire this type of credentialing, a certificate is an outward sign of experience with languages that is valued not only for students, but by outside constituents as well. Students who choose to major in a language number fewer than those who enroll in language classes but giving students who devote several semesters to language study on campus, recognition for their efforts can motivate students. The MLA report on *Data on Second Majors in Language and Literature, 2001–13* (MLA Office of Research, 2015) found that languages as second majors have grown in popularity. Adding a certificate component will not only help students to have concrete recognition of their efforts but departments too can use this data to showcase performance and interest in the language similar to an interest in majors or minors.

5 Logistics of Expanding the Footprint of Languages

At our university, we are fortunate that the administration recognizes how our events impact a large cross-section of students. The programming described here started when the administration recruited a new faculty director and added one full-time administrative staff person. Schools interested in expanding the footprint of languages, can organize student workers to handle the student-to-student programming described here and implement changes at a less frequent rate and gradually. The

more involved programming and the increase in the types of programming over time allowed us to lobby successfully for more staff at our center. We added three additional faculty members to the center with responsibilities for graduate students, undergraduates, and technology, respectively. These faculty members also teach in their own language department but have a reduced teaching load. We were awarded a one-year post-doctoral fellow and now have graduate student proctorships that offer PhD candidates in the modern languages additional academic experiences. Language departments were individually strong, but now languages as an entity are supported, strong, and thriving.

The inevitable question as to how this impacts enrollment is still hard to answer. In the last 4 years since the initiative to increase the footprint of languages on campus started, we had 2 years battling COVID. Despite this changed way of learning languages via Zoom, enrollments have remained steady, but the number of languages we offer has grown. For our metrics, we are most concerned with and therefore measure the overall number of students enrolled in language classes and not the increases or declines found in particular language programs. The drop seen nationally has not caught up with us in our overall numbers and this is encouraging news.

6 Conclusion

Creating a community of language learners is a never-ending process. We track the undergraduate students who attend these various events, and it is very rewarding to see that we draw students from a wide variety of disciplines. This helps to increase the footprint of languages on campus among the undergraduates but also among the administrators whom we invite to participate, who we see as we host events in the center of campus and among all faculty who are encouraged to come out and see their students outside of class.

Involving students is key for all solutions that will expand the footprint of languages. Tying in undergraduates with the planning and execution of events is critical to the success of any event. Undergraduates excited about languages will eagerly become involved and will reach out to their contacts when they advertise events and will often invite their own non-language friends. Spreading the word takes place organically among undergraduates and cannot be underestimated; students are indeed influenced by peer mentoring and advising.

Change in the culture and the expectations that can revitalize and maintain the vitality of language programs requires dedicated individuals who work towards a common goal, bring their specific expertise to the table, and aim to strengthen the image of languages as a whole to the benefit of all languages. Languages working together and reaching out to other units makes the discipline strong and visible. In cultural studies, we say that we distinguish ourselves through our differences, but we unite through our commonalities. A three-pronged approach that focuses on creating a strong identity for languages, on working with adjacent units on campus, and on

community building will expand the footprint of languages across campus and will go a long way to revitalizing language programs.

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It Takes a Village: A Planned Initiative Toward Language Program Revitalization



Rebecca S. Borden and Daniel M. Anderson

Abstract Like many institutions of Higher Education in the U.S., enrollments in language programs at the University of Oklahoma have experienced a significant decline in recent years. The root causes contributing to its current state are complex, and may stem from a range of issues including, program shortages in K-12 language programs in the state (Palmer, 2017), lack of adequate professional development of instructional staff (Borden, 2022), and low salaries overall compared to recommendations suggested by the Modern Language Association (2020a, b). The authors of the current short chapter propose a planned interdisciplinary and collaborative initiative to boost both recruitment and retention in enrollment by utilizing the framework of the university's new strategic plan to guide the work (University of Oklahoma, 2020). Specifically, the authors will address how this initiative integrates three of its five pillars; (1) preparing students for a life of success, meaning, service, and positive impact, (2) becoming a place of belonging and emotional growth for all, and (3) enriching and positively impacting Oklahoma, the nation, and the world through research and creative activity. Targeted strategies couched in each of the pillars are described in detail and include implications for language programs in institutions of Higher Education nationwide.

Keywords Language program vitality · Revitalization · Interdepartmental collaboration

1 Introduction

Over the past 20 years, language programs in U.S. institutions of higher education have seen a steady decline in enrollment (Draper & Hicks, 2002; Flaherty, 2018), yet the reasons for this decline are complex. First, while not all universities require high-school language coursework as a requirement for admission, only 11.5% of 1000

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universities surveyed in a 2020 report on core requirements had any world language (WL) requirement at all (Pidluzny et al., 2020). In addition, majors in the STEM fields (e.g., engineering) contain hyper-specialized degree tracks that may prohibit students from initial experiences in WL study all together (LeBouf, 2019). Finally, despite a growing trend in proficiency-oriented language programs nationally, faculty expertise in second language acquisition, linguistics, and pedagogy, as well as access to quality professional development in language education for adjunct and graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) is lacking (Borden, 2022; VanPatten, 2015). Thus, the authors present a short chapter on a planned initiative to revitalize both recruitment and retention of student enrollment. This collaboration between an Assistant Professor of World Languages Education in the Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education and a doctoral student, who currently serves as the First-Year Spanish Language Coordinator and Instructor in the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics, is one of the initial steps in envisioning this work. It is worth mentioning that this joint effort stemmed from a roundtable initiated by the College of Education to foster discussion about the state of languages in Oklahoma, in which faculty and department administrators encourage and support program revitalization. The authors have conceptualized this opportunity within the framework of their institution's recently developed university-wide strategic plan and orient specific strategies that align with three of its five pillars that best align with these efforts and include: preparing students for a life of success, meaning, service, and positive impact; becoming a place of belonging and emotional growth for all; and enriching and positively impacting Oklahoma, the nation, and the world through research and creative activity.

2 Pillar I: Preparing Students for a Life of Success, Meaning, and Positive Impact

As many language programs aim for students to achieve linguistic, communicative, cultural, and critical competence, there are relatively few studies that report on their overall effectiveness (e.g., Goertler et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2014). Through the lens of pillar one, we propose that building the capacity for students to lead successful and meaningful lives that positively impact the world around them must begin with clear program goals that include metrics to measure their effectiveness. The first step toward this end operates from a student-centered perspective that gives students the opportunity to take part in deciding what material they learn and how they learn it. Opening a dialogue with students through surveys and interviews that considers student perspectives will be included alongside faculty input to reimagine curriculum, instruction, and assessments, and consider their learning goals and any potential barriers (major requirements, cost of course materials, etc.). Currently, the Modern Languages Department is in the process of updating our surveys and will distribute them to a larger number of language students. We believe this process will

enhance a richer, more meaningful connection to WL study and its impact on life and career outside the classroom.

Taking students' feedback into account, the next phase of redefining program goals would require a thorough evaluation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. We envision this process to be collaborative and interdepartmental to bolster its effectiveness. For example, faculty in the college of education could provide expertise and support in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development alongside language section coordinators and faculty whose expertise parallels this work in language, linguistics, and literature. Establishing a method to assess the effectiveness of these changes might include proficiency testing aligned with widely accepted protocols such as the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview or Avant Assessment's STAMP to measure proficiency across the skill areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

In conjunction with efforts to articulate program goals and outcomes, professional learning opportunities to engage with experts around implementation of new or different approaches must be prioritized for new and existing faculty in order to operationalize the revitalized program. As GTAs in particular are often pushed directly into teaching with little or no experience, we plan to seek funding that would gradually increase their teaching responsibilities, similar to an internship semester, so that their initial experiences in the classroom would be heavily scaffolded with support and mentorship during the first semester.

Additionally, we plan to increase student and instructional faculty engagement to include service-learning opportunities in collaboration with the College of Education to interact with local communities (schools, support programs, etc.) to magnify the presence of languages and cultures in the state. For example, language students and heritage speakers will enroll in innovative courses that promote language learning with work in local schools to provide support for emergent bilinguals and deliver language programming to elementary programs. On the faculty end, GTAs and adjunct faculty will shift what are currently vague service duties toward well-defined mentorship and language outreach under liaison with the College of Education to support efforts to better connect with local communities statewide.

3 Pillar 2: Becoming a Place of Belonging for and Emotional Growth for All

To address the second pillar, becoming a place of belonging for and emotional growth for all, one strategy will be to strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts to ensure everyone is valued, understood, and feels connected. To that end, we advocate for increased intra- and inter-departmental discourse, and support DEI initiatives by faculty. Through discourse, the program will increase support for faculty to make stronger connections with each other and collaborate. This may include subsidizing members from various sections to meet outside of the university

and participate in conferences and other social events. Correspondingly, this will help sections update their policies and better engage with the students in and outside of class.

Along a similar vein, we will organize inter-departmental events to discuss initiatives, share information, and build partnerships. To support this initiative, the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics has created a liaison team to the College of Education to help facilitate cooperation between our two units, including the training of undergraduate and graduate students to teach world languages, working on current and potential joint undergraduate and graduate programs, proficiency testing, and involvement with our state-level language association. Together, the departments will also continue to co-host this language association's conference on the university campus. To date, they have made this a reality for the first time, and it was one of the association's most attended events in recent years, reaching max capacity for the plenary session. Given the association's strong connections with K-12 educators, this collaboration will help pave the way for better recruitment, collaborative service-learning programs, and other initiatives.

Additionally, we will continue to expand a recently launched Community of Practice (CoP) program, which facilitates collaboration among faculty, increases student engagement with the target language and culture, and promotes multicultural in-person experiences. With this initiative, faculty and GTAs create their own proposals and work together to organize events such as film screenings and cultural presentations that specifically target DEI themes. To date, we have held five film screenings and workshops, respectively, showcasing Hispanic culture. The presentations include culinary and dance workshops, cultural talks related to DEI themes, strategies to become effective language learners, and professional benefits of speaking a second language.

Furthermore, we seek to improve systems that support DEI initiatives including the implementation of a GTA mentorship program in which the mentors' efforts count towards fulfilling part of their teaching requirement. As many GTAs come from diverse backgrounds, this will facilitate their transition into the program and improve their sense of belonging to the university. Taken together, these efforts toward DEI initiatives can be reported on annual evaluations and taken into consideration for promotions and raises.

4 Pillar 3: Enriching and Positively Impacting Oklahoma, the Nation, and the World Through Research and Creative Activity

Reflecting back to the aforementioned pillars, we imagine several ways in which this planned initiative will enrich and positively impact our institution and beyond through research and creative activity. First, faculty could add to existing lines of inquiry and service work across the disciplines of language, literature, and education

to investigate, advocate for, and evaluate the effectiveness of a reimagined language program. Given that language education faculty in the college of education and language coordinators, faculty, and departmental administration in the department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics have shown growing interest in collaborative research projects that are loosely based on language advocacy and agency, it is clear that intradepartmental and interdisciplinary collaborative efforts have the potential to solve critical challenges related to language program vitality facing Oklahoma.

In addition, several measures could be included in creative research projects to evaluate linguistic and communicative competence through the use of the ACTFL OPI, STAMP tests, or other measures of proficiency. In the same way, cultural and critical competence could be examined through classroom observations and data collected through course surveys and interviews that may provide a full scope of information that can be used to inform programmatic decisions that reach far beyond the university to the broader field of language education. To further creative activity in this pillar, interdisciplinary collaboration with education faculty would engage with the findings from the research and evaluation of the program to develop training and support to address areas of continued improvement. What's exciting is that some of this work is currently underway as a result of recent communication between the College of Education and the department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics. Underpinning all of the aforementioned research possibilities is a platform for advocacy around language program revitalization, and we see this as a fundamental aspect to promote ongoing growth.

5 Conclusion

We understand that it is critical to advocate for language programs to improve student enrollment and retention. It is clear that our planned initiative requires sustained collaboration and shared responsibility among interdisciplinary fields, and that our programmatic initiatives and lines of inquiry are ambitious. However, we are committed to this ongoing work and recognize the responsibility of seeing it through to enhance WL program vitality in the U.S.

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Professional Content-Based Courses for Novice Language Learning



Joseph Fees

Abstract Most language programs at colleges and universities across the United States have their greatest impact through the general education degree components of beginning and intermediate language study. The prerequisites for professional language courses generally require a few years of previous study and/or several courses in the language. The current curriculum structure can present a barrier to accessible and large-scale language study for professional purposes. One solution is to offer content-based courses for professional communication at the beginning language level. Some suggested courses, with Spanish as an example, include Medical Spanish, Police Spanish, Business Spanish, Media Spanish, and Spanish for Social Work. Other languages, such as French, German, and Chinese, can offer similarly themed courses. Students can enroll in these courses with no or little previous language study. Departments can examine the highly enrolled majors to develop new special course topics, so they can maximize the number of new students and grow enrollment. This chapter outlines the recommended steps to design new courses and illustrates how Delaware State University has implemented a beginning Medical Spanish course.

Keywords Lower-division · Medical Spanish · Enrollment · Curriculum · Content-based courses

1 Introduction

Frequently, university language programs have their greatest outreach and most class sections through beginning and intermediate language courses as components of general education programs. Lower-division language courses, particularly at the novice level, largely follow a standardized structure with each unit focused on broad vocabulary themes, grammar acquisition, and fundamental cultural elements. In

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conventional beginning language classrooms, students learn basic introductory phrases, followed by vocabulary around specific themes such as daily routines, describing oneself, and family while learning present tense verbs and other elementary grammar structures. However, students often lack any professional language skills or marked proficiency after completing these courses, disconnecting student learning from how language study benefits them professionally. Programs commonly offer content-based courses—literature, culture, and the professions—such as medical and business language courses, as upper-division classes. The prerequisites for these courses often require several semesters of prior language study and this curriculum hierarchy presents a barrier to accessible and large-scale language study for specialized purposes at the college level.

To reverse the downward trend of language study in higher education, language departments must promote their courses through the skills and competitive advantages they provide. To market language study as essential and vital to the broader university community, programs must highlight the link between language learning, course requirements, and learning objectives with the required career competencies students will need. Because most students do not have space in their curriculum plans to take numerous language courses and graduate on time, the question is: How can language programs heighten their impact through general education requirements?

2 In Favor of Content-Based Courses

One answer to the current language study conundrum is to offer content-based courses for professional communication at the beginning language level, as a supplement to generic 101 or 102 language courses. Some suggested courses for Spanish, as an example, include Medical Spanish, Spanish for Law Enforcement, Business Spanish, Media Spanish, Spanish for Social Work, among others. Other languages, such as French, German, and Chinese, can offer similarly themed courses. Students enroll in these courses with minimal or no language prerequisites in the first or second semester of language study. Rather than starting a traditional first or second semester language course, these contextualized, real world, professional-based content classes can immediately provide the groundwork for basic communication in the students' chosen specialty that they can continue to develop through further study. Instructors may design content-based language courses so that students meet the prerequisites to take upper-division courses if they decide to pursue a minor or major in the language. Programs can offer these courses either standalone or as a sequence of special topic courses. Moreover, language programs can expand these concentrations to three or four courses for a certificate, such as a Certificate in Medical Spanish, offering an additional professional credential for students.

There are some strategies departments should follow to restructure and supplement beginning language curricula. First, language departments should examine the

most popular majors on campus to develop new language courses to reach more potential students, expand language enrollment, and ensure full classes. Highly enrolled majors should be a priority for course topics, as they will provide enough majors to promote strong class matriculation for one or two course sections. For example, Medical Spanish is a viable option for colleges with high enrollments of Biology and health-related majors. Other students outside of these disciplines may enroll in generic 101 or 102 language courses the department already teaches. Depending on the size of the department and course sections offered, departments can implement content courses on a limited or large scale. For smaller programs, it would be best to focus on one new language course for the most enrolled major or concentration area. In order to make the course creation less daunting, established courses at other institutions with available syllabi and ample textbook options, such as Medical Spanish or Spanish for Law Enforcement, would be an ideal start as instructors can acquire these materials through an online search. These resources will reduce time required for and aid in the development process. Even if the language faculty member is not an expert in the content, these pre-established materials and experience with language teaching will support them to design new courses. Second, language faculty should organize meetings with the identified majors' departments to discuss new language courses, how these courses can benefit students, and fit easily into programs' course of study and the general education program. Faculty want their students to gain a competitive edge and cross-department allies will advocate for enrollment by their students. Third, language departments should select faculty to develop these new topic courses and potentially collaborate with content-specialized faculty to co-design the courses. There may be resistance to this suggestion, as many programs use adjunct/part-time instructors or graduate students to teach lower-level courses and this may be considered adding undue burden to these instructors. Addressing the bifurcation of many language programs, both in terms of course work and labor, is beyond the scope of this short chapter, but those implementing such new programs need to make sure to properly compensate for additional labor. Any incentive, including recognition for promotion and tenure, a professional stipend, or course release for course development, would not only add motivation for faculty, but would serve to recognize the significant time investment in this new venture. If resources allow, courses could be co-taught by the both the language teacher and the content expert. When the course is finalized and scheduled, departments should advertise to faculty in the disciplinary topic, advisors, and potential students through flyers and e-mails to ensure strong enrollment.

To illustrate how to conduct one of these courses, for beginning Medical Spanish, instructors can embed the novice elements of Spanish grammar within the context of health-related settings. Departments can offer these courses as special topics or themes within the original course number, such as *Spanish 101 and 102: Special Topics: Medical Spanish*. The content focuses on successful communication in Spanish with clients in the medical field, with an emphasis on speaking, pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, and dialogue practice. Students can explore thematic cultural elements, including views on health, perceptions of medicine, and comparisons of various countries' health care systems. Instructors teach grammar and

vocabulary within the courses through the larger context of the specialized themes and as practical communication skills that students need in their field. Using English as a second language (ESL)'s Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model, faculty can identify and structure both content and language-associated objectives in the course and learning materials (Kareva & Echevarría, 2013). In the eight components of this model, instructors start with lesson preparation, then structure learning around building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interactions, practice and application, lesson delivery, and finally, review and evaluation.

3 Example in Practice

Delaware State University implemented a beginning Medical Spanish course in spring 2020. The Department of Languages and Literatures began preparation 1 year in advance of the course offering. First, the department researched all majors at the university and determined highly enrolled programs that would benefit from content-based lower-division Spanish courses. With a large student population of Kinesiology, Biology, Psychology, and Nursing majors, Medical Spanish was a natural fit for piloting the first content-based course. The instructor researched beginning Medical Spanish texts and existing courses at other institutions to put together the framework for the course with a course syllabus and course shell centered around the established student learning outcomes (see Appendix A). The faculty evaluated potential textbooks and selected McGraw-Hill Education's *Complete Medical Spanish: Practical Medical Spanish for Quick and Confident Communication* (Ríos & Torres, 2015) because of the content quality and low cost. The courses mirrored the student learning outcomes of a traditional Spanish 101 course with the overall minimum achievement of Novice Mid proficiency level for speaking, listening, reading, and writing. However, the course focused thematically, in terms of vocabulary and culture, on health-related settings. Students practiced introductory vocabulary and then studied thematic topics of anatomy, illnesses, symptoms, and medical terminology. The course content focused heavily on spoken and written communication with situational dialogue practice for various scenarios as well as the skills for collecting personal information for sample medical forms and documentation. The course also included engaging videos and games for vocabulary practice. In the culminating assignment, a written reflection, students evaluated their progress and challenges in Spanish during the semester and created a plan to continue improving their Spanish skills, both formally and informally, in the future. Student engagement has been high in the Medical Spanish course and student evaluations have reflected the benefits of the course as well as the appreciation students have for the direct career skill alignment. Based on class assessments, there has been a high achievement of language proficiency outcomes with notable progress in speaking. Furthermore, the Medical Spanish section has full enrollment, mainly with Biology, Nursing, and Kinesiology majors. Understandably, the

pandemic has slowed the progression of new language course creation, but one faculty member has developed Spanish for Law Enforcement as a current course offering for Sociology and Criminal Justice majors.

Naturally, there were a few challenges to implementing and teaching the Medical Spanish course. Administratively, the language department needed to advertise the course addition and its benefits to advisors, staff, and faculty as well as potential students after the formal course approval process through the university hierarchy. Frequent communication and outreach is necessary for any new course addition. Flyers, e-mails to potential students, as well as correspondence with faculty from the health professions was essential in securing full enrollment. Any new course, unsurprisingly, will have more preparation time. Fewer class preps for the instructor in that particular semester ameliorated the extra planning time required for the new course. In class, the biggest challenge has been the varying Spanish proficiencies of students. There are a few strategies to address this issue. One, encourage students with higher proficiency levels to test out of lower-division courses and, two, when this is not possible, employ adaptive learning strategies to encourage students to work through more challenging dialogues and activities through targeted group work and pairings. Students should feel comfortable speaking and working actively in the class and instructors must establish this dynamic from the first week of the course.

4 Conclusion

There are significant benefits to a content-based approach from beginning language study. Content-based language courses through general education can amplify language study and recruit new students to language study as potential minors or majors. With faculty and university approval, these classes will count for general education or major course requirements without adding additional credit hours for graduation, just like Spanish 101, if the university has a language requirement or an Arts/Humanities component. In other words, a Medical Spanish 101 course could fulfill the same degree requirements as a traditional Spanish 101 course. Departments in outside disciplines will be amenable to this collaboration if the competitive and specific skill set the students will acquire is promoted as a benefit. Additionally, students can include these courses on résumés for job or graduate school applications. Most importantly, learners will engage more by connecting the courses with their interests and real-world skill development, rather than just completing a disjointed degree requirement, for their particular major. Research has demonstrated this association leads to better student motivation and achievement of learning outcomes (Lantolf & Zhang, 2017). Students will see the context of how every phrase, question or vocabulary word matters in each particular situation, therefore connecting language study to their prospective occupations. For all other majors, the general language courses that already exist at the beginning level may be taken.

Content-based beginning language classes can advance language departments by bridging language study to promote upper-division language courses, minors,

majors, service learning, and study abroad. Enhanced cross department and multidisciplinary collaborations will also heighten the visibility of languages on campus. Language educators know the intrinsic value of foreign language study. Students expand their cultural perspectives; become better communicators, critical thinkers, and world citizens in an increasingly globalized society and marketplace. These professional-based courses create an initial interest for students to continue to the next level of language study at the upper-division level, including content focused on literature and culture. One way to advocate for these vital skills is to commence the learning of professional language skills from the first year of language study. Students will still study culture and expand their horizons through their professional content area. They can make connections to languages and their careers; see the practical use and necessity of language study, thus advancing professional language learning from day one.

Appendix A

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will assimilate and integrate Spanish medical vocabulary and expressions related to greetings, anatomy, doctor visits and examinations, diet, family, symptoms, medical advice, and empathy.
2. Students will practice and master basic Spanish grammar for use in medical settings including present and past tense verbs, pronouns, reflexive verbs, and prepositions into the incorporation of elementary sentence structures.
3. Students will develop their four language skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking in Spanish related to the health professions:
 - a. Students will construct elementary medical-setting conversations of five minutes or fewer with generally accurate pronunciation in Spanish.
 - b. Students will write medical dialogues of complete sentences and short paragraphs of fifty words or fewer in Spanish.
 - c. Students will read elementary Spanish texts related to health and medicine of three paragraphs or fewer and will utilize active reading strategies.
 - d. Students will grasp Spanish conversations of one to two minutes related to medical settings and terminology.
4. Students will acquire a basic appreciation of Hispanic culture and language as well as cultural competencies for working with Hispanic clients in the medical field.

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Community-Engagement as an Innovative Way to Revitalize Language Programs



Sandie Blaise

Abstract Community-based programs provide innovative ways for students to develop language and cultural skills while making a social impact. This contribution will discuss a new course to be offered at Princeton University in spring 2023, which aims to revitalize the French language program by enhancing student learning in real-world contexts and emphasizing the relevance of language skills through meaningful work. This chapter will briefly define community-based language learning and its impact on student learning and motivation, describe the course’s content, assessment, and the students’ expected learning outcomes. In “Migration, Diversity, Diaspora: Francophone Community-Engagement,” students will engage in civic service, interact with native or heritage speakers, and critically reflect in French on issues of diversity, equity, and social justice. By the end of the course, they will have gained factual knowledge about patterns of migration in the francophone world, will have a better understanding of the challenges of resettlement and the complexities of real-life situations of multilingualism. Through collaboration with community partners, they will also have opportunities to grow as critical cosmopolitan citizens, develop their problem-solving skills and intercultural competence, and use French as a tool for social change.

Keywords Community engagement · French · Critical pedagogy · Cosmopolitanism · Social justice

1 Community-Engagement as an Innovative Way to Revitalize Language Programs

After a delayed start due to the pandemic, the French Language Program at Princeton University will offer its first course engaging students of French in community outreach in spring 2023. This project responds to a need to revitalize language

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programs by enhancing student learning in real-world contexts and emphasizing the relevance of language skills through meaningful work. By promoting civic service, interaction with native or heritage speakers, and critical reflection in the target language on issues of diversity, equity, and social justice, community-based programs provide new ways for students to develop language and cultural skills while making a social impact. At Princeton University, “Migration, Diversity, Diaspora: Francophone Community-Engagement” will address a gap in the curriculum and offer an opportunity for students to use French as a tool for change in local communities. After briefly defining community-based language learning and its impact on student learning and motivation, I will describe the course, assessment, and expected learning outcomes.

Coined by Clifford and Reisinger (2019), community-based language learning (CBLL) stems from community-based learning (CBL), “an umbrella term that provides models of how to engage in curricular and co-curricular experiences with local communities” (p.6). Considered a high-impact educational practice by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, CBL “increase[s] the odds that students will invest time and effort; participate in active challenging experiences; experience diversity; interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters; receive more frequent feedback; and discover the relevance of their learning through real-world experiences” (Jacoby, 2015, p.11). The learning goals of civic engagement are multifold: collaborating with local communities “transform[s] worldviews, highlight[s] social issues, co-create[s] knowledge, and foster[s] authentic relationships based on connection” (Clifford & Reisinger, 2019, p.6). However, while English is the main language in CBL, CBLL takes place in the target language, at least in part, between students and heritage or native speakers. This distinction creates specific challenges, but it also allows students to harness language learning with social impact and, much like in CBL, students show increased motivation. Indeed, research has shown that language students involved in community-based learning are more motivated and more positive toward the target language (Clifford & Reisinger, 2019, p.30). By engaging students in meaningful work that positively impacts their views on the language learning process, CBLL provides a unique opportunity to revitalize language programs.

The creation of “Migration, Diversity, Diaspora: Francophone Community-Engagement” follows a broader trend to connect students with local communities. At Princeton University, courses integrating a community-engagement learning component already exist in other language departments, but it will be the first of its kind to be offered in French. Organized in collaboration with the Program for Community-Engaged Scholarship at Princeton University, the course will provide students opportunities to use French as a tool to better understand the complexities of social issues, acquire intercultural and professional competences, and build ethical and sustainable partnerships with local organizations working with French speakers, such as the French Heritage Language Program, the Princeton YWCA, and Refugee Assistance Partners of New Jersey.

One of the goals of the course is to enable students to grow as reflective, socially responsible, and critical individuals. As such, it aligns itself within critical

pedagogies (see Dasli & Diaz, 2018) and aims to develop students' intercultural competence (Byram & Zarate, 1994; Byram, 1997; Risager, 2007; Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, 2013) by dismantling essentialist views of culture and reflecting on diversity and transnational identities. To better understand some of the challenges faced by members of local French-speaking communities, students will learn about global displacement of French-speaking populations, and more particularly diasporas in the New York/New Jersey area. They will explore contemporary issues including resettlement, transnationalism, multilingualism, and language maintenance. They will examine linguistic ideologies and discrimination to question the interconnectedness of language, identity, and power. Students will also engage with recordings, images, and magazine covers, to analyze the various representations of migrants in public discourse and dismantle stereotypes and othering practices. Additional materials will include articles, videos, movies, documentaries, and graphic novels. Set within critical pedagogies, the course aims to train students to become "critical cosmopolitan citizens" (Osler & Starkey, 2015) able to appreciate difference, engage with cultural Others (Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, 2013), move between discourse communities across languages and cultures (Byram, 1997), and reflect on issues of diversity and inequities to envision a fairer and more democratic world (Brookfield, 2005, p.27).

Student learning will be evaluated through formative, summative, and multi-modal assessments targeting the three modes of communication (interpersonal, presentational, and interpretive). As an example of formative assessment, they will keep a journal of their reflections on the materials studied in class and their experience and interaction with members of the local communities. To guide student critical thinking, the instructor will provide written prompts following Ash & Clayton's DEAL (Describe, Examine, Articulate Learning) model (Ash & Clayton, 2009, pp.39–40). Thanks to this journal, both students and instructors will be able to see how students' vision and understanding of migration, identity, cultural norms evolve over the course of the semester. Students will also give presentations on francophone diasporas in the United States and the NJ/NY region, which will inform their contribution to a blog designed to share relevant information and resources gathered throughout the semester for future students of the course and community partners.

In their seminal book on CBLL, Clifford and Reisinger raise the importance of "soliciting and including community partners' input" and "mov[ing] the CBLL experience from a charity model that services the organization and its clients to a more engaged partnership that trains students to work for social change" (2019, p.37). In some instances, this may involve using English as the main language to carry out projects that match the organization's needs. Following this model, we created assignments that aligned with community partners' input and expectations. More particularly, the final project challenges the charity model and trains students to become change makers: they will interview community members, identify successful programs and current needs, and prepare a proposal for future community-engagement services that they will present to community partners. To prepare this field work and proposal, we will introduce students to methodological and ethical

aspects of qualitative research and data collection. While students may not develop language skills through this project as most of the interviewing process and presentation will take place in English, it will still enable them to “develop intercultural competence and deepen knowledge about the community” (2019, p.37). It will also allow them to actively participate in the foundations of the community-engagement program and acquire highly transferable skills while serving the needs of the local organizations. Future projects could also include oral history, and the translation of health brochures into French.

By the end of the course, students will have gained factual knowledge about the francophone world and its patterns of migration. They will have conducted individual and group projects according to the needs identified and discussed with the community partners, developing their problem-solving skills, leadership abilities and intercultural competence. They will have a better understanding of the social, cultural, and linguistic challenges of resettlement and will have acquired valuable insights into the complexities of real-life situations of multilingualism and migration. They will have had opportunities to reflect on issues of diversity, inclusion, and social justice, and to grow as critical cosmopolitan citizens. Finally, we hope that they will see French in a new light and, as a result, will renew their interest in the language while using their linguistic and cultural knowledge as a tool for change to continue working towards a more inclusive world.

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Part IV
Solutions to Thrive: Adjustments
to Curriculum/Tried Initiatives

Expanding Access Through Online Asynchronous Language Courses



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Abstract Since 2019 the German program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has been developing and implementing fully online, asynchronous elementary German-language courses. This contribution highlights the guiding principles behind this ongoing project, namely the prioritization of accessibility for our students as well as the fostering of a collaborative support structure for instructors. To date, our asynchronous courses have significantly increased our enrollments and attracted new groups of students (those with full-time jobs and/or caregiving responsibilities). Challenges remain, however, such as the uneven development of language skills like pronunciation across in-person and online sections and the increased workload for instructors well beyond the initial design phase. Our contribution will help language instructors, programs, and administrators who are considering the introduction of partially or fully asynchronous offerings at their institutions.

Keywords Asynchronous online learning · Curriculum revision · Second language acquisition

Declining enrollments, alongside changes in the composition of instructional staff and rising textbook costs, prompted the German program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) to reform its curriculum. Besides revising upper-division course content, titles and sequencing, as well as changing major and minor requirements, we also radically overhauled our elementary language curriculum. Most notably, we have been developing and adding fully online, asynchronous elementary German-language courses to existing in-person offerings since 2019. In this short chapter, we outline the history of our ongoing project, explain its guiding principles, and reflect on remaining challenges.

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UWM is a large public urban R1 research university with a student population of around 23,000 on its Milwaukee campus. 38% of undergraduates are first-generation college students, 33% are students of color, and more than 80% are Wisconsin residents. While most courses at UWM are taught in person, a significant number are offered in an online modality (more than 850 annually), and the university sees itself as a “longtime leader in online education” (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, n.d.). Although all students, including those pursuing degrees online, must complete at least two semesters in a language other than English, there are few options to meet this university-wide requirement asynchronously online. The German program saw this situation as an opportunity to grow its community of learners.

Before adding our first asynchronous section in spring 2020, a team of three faculty members, later expanded to the four co-authors, came together to head the development process. We met for more than a year reviewing our elementary curriculum, working to secure funding to support our initiative, networking, and availing ourselves of training opportunities.

During the review process, we made the decision to switch to a new elementary textbook, as it aligned more closely with our program’s pedagogical objectives (multiliteracies approach, greater interdisciplinarity, better thematic overlap with later courses), ethos (independently published at a lower cost for students, supported by a community of fellow university teachers), and included native integration with our LMS, Canvas. Adopting a new textbook also meant that our new asynchronous sections would be designed in parallel with our in-person sections, ensuring consistency in learning objectives and methodologies.

We knew from the start that the initial development of these courses would be time- and labor intensive, essentially impossible without fair compensation and other support. Therefore, our next goal was to secure funding, which we received from UWM’s Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. The funds were helpfully staggered across two academic years, enabling an incremental rollout of the new courses. We also received approval to reduce enrollment capacity during the first semester an asynchronous course was offered. Last but not least, an instructional technologist (Kathy Pinkowsky) was available to help us map out the course in our LMS and implement our pedagogical objectives. All this support provided the necessary space and resources for design, troubleshooting, and improvements.

Designing these four courses as a team allowed us to implement a consistent set of organizing principles and activities to help students focus their energy on learning and using German instead of grappling with variations in instructions, technology, and pedagogical practices. Major considerations were adherence to a uniform set of instructional design principles, a unified aesthetic, and coherent organization of content across all four asynchronous courses. Many of our strategies came from Universal Design, a set of principles that supports a wide range of learning styles and needs (Burgstahler, 2015; Tobin & Behling, 2018). First, we created numerous low-stakes, scaffolded tasks for each textbook chapter. We numbered individual activities in the order that students should complete them and then grouped these into weekly learning modules. Second, in order to model good time management and communicate expectations, we included the estimated time to completion for each

task. Third, we created a set of banners for use across all four courses to visually orient the student and distinguish between activities. Each graphic features a unique icon and indicates the task type in bold lettering, such as *Hausaufgaben* (homework), *Diskussion* (discussion), and *Sprechen Sie!* (speaking).

As of fall 2021, all four courses of elementary German have been offered both in person and asynchronously online at UWM. Because these curricular changes are still relatively new, the long-term impact on enrollment and skills development is unknown. Nevertheless, we can offer a few preliminary observations regarding some successes and challenges our program has experienced.

To start, we have grown our program's overall enrollment and expanded access to new student populations. Our asynchronous courses have significantly increased enrollment at the elementary level without negatively impacting enrollment in face-to-face sections. Between 2012–2019 we had only ever offered three in-person sections of first-semester German, whereas in fall 2022, we are offering four sections (two asynchronous, two in person). Given declining enrollment numbers in German and at our institution more broadly, the three in-person sections were in danger of being consolidated down to two, but now our four first-semester sections are more equally and robustly enrolled overall. Second, we have found that the average online student is not one who would otherwise have taken a German language course. They tend to live at some distance from the Milwaukee campus or need the extra flexibility provided by asynchronous delivery (e.g., they are pursuing a degree fully online, work part- or full-time, or have family or other care responsibilities). In addition, several students from local high schools have taken advantage of our asynchronous offerings either because their school does not offer German or does not offer it at their level. Finally, we have anecdotal evidence of individual students from our online elementary courses being well-prepared for intermediate courses at UWM and other institutions.

Despite these successes, a number of hurdles remain. Developing interpersonal communication skills among learners and fostering their language use in school and global communities, as articulated in the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (ACTFL, n.d.), count among the most pressing challenges for the asynchronous course environment. For students, such courses can initially feel relatively solitary as they do not automatically afford the same opportunity for meaningful speaking practice in pairs and small groups, centerpieces of in-person language instruction. In response, we employ online alternatives that facilitate peer-to-peer interaction and foster a sense of community among disparately located learners. Students in our online courses engage with each other in multimedia discussion forums on Canvas, through collaborative web-based applications, and during two instructor-led videoconferencing sessions, to name a few examples.

We have also observed an uneven development of pronunciation skills among online versus in-person students, a corollary to the challenge of creating rich context for spoken communication. As a result, we have revised courses to include more oral input from instructors and have required students to produce more recordings of themselves—from simple repetition of vocabulary lists to open-ended oral projects.

While such efforts address instructional challenges, they also increase the amount of grading and affect the type of feedback required. Simply put, since online students submit more work than their in-person counterparts, instructors must be especially selective and strategic when providing personalized comments. Because these cannot be given immediately, as in a classroom, students must also return to previously submitted work to review feedback. Some students initially do not see value in this back-and-forth routine, but we underscore its purpose by making revision and resubmission central to the learning process across the four-course sequence.

These and other challenges highlight the long-term nature of the design, development, and ongoing revision of asynchronous online language courses. So, while our work continues, this process has given us confidence in our ability to face a changing academic landscape and to better address the needs of diverse student populations. We believe all this will allow our program to improve student success, promote the study of German, and attract and retain students in the years to come.

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A Multilanguage Seminar for the Twenty-First Century: Rethinking Self-Instruction for the Least Commonly Taught Languages



Katrina Daly Thompson and Adeola Agoke

Abstract No university can offer every world language, and few departments can offer every language spoken in the regions on which they focus. How can we train those students who need a language we cannot offer, whether because of limited funding, lack of enrollment, or the unavailability of a qualified instructor? In this chapter we describe a set of courses offered at the University of Wisconsin-Madison that were designed to address these issues. In *Theories and Methods of Learning a Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL)* and the *Multilanguage Seminar*, students learn how to teach themselves a LCTL and get university credit for doing so. We describe the structure of these courses and how they differ from other self-instructional language programs, provide enrollment data, give examples of student learning plans and assessment plans as well as student feedback on the courses, offer advice to those who might want to create such a program, and close with a discussion of potential concerns.

Keywords Self-instruction · Learner autonomy · Lifelong learning

1 Introduction

No university can offer every world language, and few departments can offer every language spoken in the regions on which they focus. How can we train those students who need a language we cannot offer, whether because of limited funding, lack of enrollment, or the unavailability of a qualified instructor? At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, one of the authors of this chapter (Thompson) was tasked with creating a pair of courses that would meet this challenge for our African languages program, while the other (Agoke) currently facilitates the two courses.

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While Africa is estimated to have more than 2000 named languages (Grimes, 1996; Heine & Nurse, 2000), the Department of African Cultural Studies (formerly African Languages and Literature) has historically offered four to five languages every year in standard classroom formats. Yet, across the university, we have many graduate students who need other African languages in order to conduct doctoral fieldwork. To meet this need, Thompson created two courses that students take in tandem: Theories and Methods of Learning a Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL) and the Multilanguage Seminar. In the 2-credit theories and methods course, offered each fall, students are assigned readings in second language acquisition about methods of teaching and learning. They are also exposed to fundamental knowledge about self-instructional learning, situations in which language learning does not involve the direct control of a teacher (Dickinson, 1987). Through the understanding of self-instructional learning, students learn how to plan appropriate language learning goals, write a performance-based individual study plan (ISP), find or develop learning materials, work with expert speakers of the target language as conversation partners or mentors, and assess their progress. In the 4-credit Multilanguage Seminar, offered every semester, students get credit for their time on independent learning and share support and encouragement with other students working on different languages. Students use their ISPs to structure their learning, which is usually spread across acquiring the four skills—speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Some students also pay attention to cultural understanding. In this course, students combine self-study with additional practice through audio recording of monologues and, if possible, practice with language mentors. Students use an online, open-source textbook (Pressbooks) to document their learning activities while also providing materials for upcoming learners. This platform gives the students a sense of accountability and some work to look back on for review. Many take the Multilanguage Seminar repeatedly as they advance to higher proficiency levels.

Initially offered in-person, the program has since become an asynchronous online one. It is now also offered in the summer to graduate students of other world languages, with the two academic-year courses combined into one intensive 8-week course. Taken mostly by graduate students, the program is Title VI Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowship eligible during the academic year for learners of African languages and in the summer for South Asian languages as well. Most of the students who have enrolled have been FLAS fellowship recipients.

While the title “the Multilanguage Seminar” is taken from an article by Terry Marshall (1987) that students read in the methods course, it departs significantly from the program Marshall proposes, from the so-called “NASILP model” publicized by the National Association of Self-Instructional Language Programs, and from other models, which in our view do not actually encourage self-instruction or self-assessment. Marshall’s program assumes a nearby community of native speakers with whom learners can interact in-situ. The NASILP program offers undergraduate classroom instruction with trained “tutors” who teach in the classroom and assign a textbook, but with a reduced number of contact hours and external testers hired to conduct assessments. Some scholars also consider distance learning,

in which learners use materials such as “audiotapes, videos, textbook, study guides, [and] workbooks” that are replicas of the classroom version of a language program (White, 1999, p. 444) or “independent learning projects undertaken by students in a conventional classroom” (Bown, 2009, p. 641) as varieties of self-instruction. In contrast, our methods course and Multilanguage Seminar require students to set their own goals, find their own materials, and to work independently. Rather than working with a textbook assigned by an instructor, replicating traditional classroom instruction through distance learning, or doing independent learning projects in classroom settings, students learn how to find their own materials both in our library’s extensive collection and elsewhere. For languages that are not codified officially and do not have textbooks, students have found creative solutions, including asking conversation partners to fact check their learning and appropriate use of the language and using online materials. While we strongly encourage learners to find and work with a conversation partner, the responsibility to decide what and how they will learn remains with the learner, not the language partner. Some learners do involve their conversation partners in their final assessments, but they design the assessments themselves, keeping their own learning goals in mind.

2 Enrollment Data

Thompson spent the academic year 2013–14 and the summer of 2014 developing the first iteration of both courses and offered them for the first time in fall 2014. In fall 2021, Agoke began offering a combined intensive version in the summer. Table 1 shows the number of students who took the two classes each semester and the languages they studied. (Since enrollments are counted per semester and most students take the Multilanguage Seminar at least twice, some individuals are counted more than once.)

As Table 1 indicates, enrollment had reached 154 by the end of Summer 2022, with approximately 50 individual students taking part at least once, and most of those multiple times as they have progressed to higher proficiency levels. Some of those students enrolled via the Big Ten Academic Alliance CourseShare program, taking part from other universities, including the University of Minnesota and the Ohio State University, increasing enrollment at UW-Madison and enrollment opportunities at other Big Ten institutions.

Table 2 lists the languages and levels students have studied through these courses to date.

As Table 2 demonstrates, without hiring any additional staff, we have been able to offer 21 additional languages beyond those we offered previously, plus a fourth year of three languages we do offer. Most of these would not have otherwise been offered. Considering the multiple levels students have studied in some of them, if these languages had been offered in traditional classroom settings, we would have needed to offer at least 27 different courses, most of them for just a single student per semester, clearly an untenable plan.

Table 1 Enrollment in the methods course and multilanguage seminar

Semester	Enrollment in methods course	Enrollment in Multilanguage Seminar	Enrollment in combined intensive summer course	Total enrollment
Fall 2014	4	4		8
Spring 2015		3		3
Fall 2015	4	6		10
Spring 2016		5		5
Fall 2016	3	5		8
Spring 2017		5		5
Summer 2017		1		1
Fall 2017	8	9		17
Spring 2018		6		6
Fall 2018	6	8		14
Spring 2019		8		8
Fall 2019	6	8		14
Spring 2020		8		8
Fall 2020	5	8		13
Spring 2021		5		5
Summer 2021			8	8
Fall 2021	6	8		14
Spring 2022		6		6
Summer 2022			1	1
Total enrollment	42	103	9	154

3 Sample Semester Plan

In each semester of the Multilanguage Seminar, students create an ISP, which they revise once after feedback from the instructor and their classmates and a second time mid-semester after assessing their progress. We discuss here an example ISP for one semester created by a FLAS-funded graduate student in educational anthropology who was studying Liberian English.

The student was motivated to learn Liberian English because he wanted to conduct “extensive ethnographic research” in Liberia, including both formal and informal interviews with teachers, students, community elders, parents, and so on, as well as to handle his everyday needs while in the field. In addition to learning speaking and listening skills and growing his vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, he recognized the need to learn cultural appropriate ways of doing interviews. While a typical classroom-taught language might address all skills, creating an ISP allowed the student to focus on listening comprehension and transcription as his primary goals during his first semester of study. He initially listed the following goals:

Table 2 Languages and levels offered to date

Levels	Languages
Beginning (first year)	Arabic Basaa Kpelle Liberian English Luganda Luo Kinyarwanda Maa Madingo/Malinke Nkarimoyong Setswana Sierra Leonean Krio Somali Vietnamese Xhosa Zulu
Intermediate (second year)	Bahasa Melayu Fulfude Hmong Kinyarwanda Lingala Luganda Malagasy
Advanced (third year)	Kinyarwanda Luganda Rukiga
Fourth year or beyond	Arabic Swahili Yoruba

1. Gain the ability to ask questions and transcribe and translate conversations/interviews.
2. Improve my knowledge (history and politics) of Liberian English and Liberia in general.
3. Gain confidence in my ability to learn and use another language.
4. Seek out language methods that work best for me and allow me to engage in lifelong language learning.
5. Find and post resources that could be useful for Liberian English Learners

And planned to use the following activities to achieve his goals:

- Weekly meetings with language tutor (at agreed upon time and length).
- Daily vocabulary (flashcard) practice (15–30 min)
- Bi-weekly posts of blog (journaling difficulties, successes, questions/concerns, etc.)
- Watch 3–4 clips and/or broadcasts a week (transcribe and translate during later dates).
- Set new goals and adjust learning plan every 3–4 meetings/weeks.

However, after receiving feedback from the instructor, the following week he divided his goals into long- and short-term ones, and also modified them in line with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) can-do statements (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2017).

Long Term Goals:

1. Gain the ability to ask questions and transcribe and translate conversations/ interviews.
2. Improve my knowledge (history and politics) of Liberian English and Liberia in general.
3. Gain confidence in my ability to learn and use another language.
4. Seek out language methods that work best for me and allow me to engage in lifelong language learning.

Short Term Goals:

1. **Interpersonal Communication:** Be able to communicate and exchange information about familiar topics using phrases and simple sentences. Be able to handle short social interactions in everyday situations by asking and answering questions (*ACTFL-Novice High Level*)
2. **Interpretive Listening:** Be able to understand the main idea in short, simple messages and presentations on familiar topics. Be able to understand the main idea of simple conversations that I overhear. (*ACTFL- Intermediate Low*)
3. **Speaking:** Be able to present basic information on familiar topics using language I have practiced using phrases and simple sentences (*ACTFL-Novice High*)
4. **Resources:** Gather and present resources that will help Liberian English learners understand and study the language.
5. **History/Context of Language:** Be able to discuss and provide an in-depth analysis of the history and development of Liberian English.

The student's planned activities remained the same, but he changed "tutor" to "mentor" after the instructor explained the difference between working with a tutor and planning one's own learning.

In addition, he indicated his proficiency goal as "Novice High-Intermediate Low." This may have been overly ambitious but given the close relationship between Liberian English and American English and the fact that students in the Multilanguage Seminar often make faster progress than students in more traditional language classes, the instructor did not discourage him. He also added a list of subject matter vocabulary on which he intended to focus: "Greetings/small talk, Schooling/Education, Community and Development, [and] State/Politics/Governance." Creating his own learning goals allowed him to focus his vocabulary acquisition much more than a typical language class would enable.

In addition to creating goals, the student wrote a weekly plan that listed an overall objective for each week as well as specific learning activities in which he planned to engage. For example, for Week 2, his objective was "confirm [a] language tutor/mentor, research [the] history of Liberian English, [and] begin basic study of [the]

language” while the activities he planned to undertake included finalizing his meeting with a conversation partner, researching the history of Liberian English, working through a Peace Corps manual for the language (Singler, 1981), and watching 2–3 YouTube videos that used the language. Finally, his ISP included a list of resources he planned to use (BBC News Pidgin, n.d.; Liberian English, n.d.; Brook, 1973; Sheppard, 2012; Singler, 1981).

4 Assessment

Near the end of the semester, students are required to create a self-assessment tool that they will use to determine their proficiency across all the skills listed in their ISP. After receiving feedback from the instructor and classmates, they revise the tool, and then put it to use. As mentioned above, we have found that many students in these courses achieve higher proficiency levels than one would expect in a traditional instructed language course. For example, Norris and Pfeiffer (2003) indicate that many colleges and universities expect students to achieve Intermediate Low proficiency after 2 years of study of category 4 languages and Intermediate Mid for category 1 languages. In comparison, two students who began at Novice level in Lingala and Hmong (both category 3 languages) both assessed themselves as reaching Intermediate-Mid by the end of one summer in the Summer Intensive Multilanguage Seminar; and a student who taught themselves Tunisian Arabic (a category 4 language) began at Novice level, and after four semesters assessed themselves as Advanced Low (though we believe Intermediate High would be more accurate).

Here we discuss the example of a self-assessment created by a learner of intermediate-level (second-year) Kinyarwanda. In her ISP, this student’s goal was “the ability to handle most work requirements and conversations on topics of particular interest,” including “the ability to express facts, give instructions, describe, report, and talk about current, past, and future activities.” In addition, she wanted to acquire “vocabulary equal to that of an intermediate speaker” and increased “understanding of idioms, euphemisms, and proverbs exclusive to speakers of Kinyarwanda and advanced understanding of language practices and cultural expectations surrounding [discussion of the] genocide,” the topic of her doctoral research. Her overall goal for the semester was to be able to communicate with speakers of the target language without the expectation that they accommodate her.

To measure her progress toward these goals, she created a plan to assess her speaking and listening, reading and writing, and cultural knowledge. For logistical reasons, she was unsure if the language mentor with whom she had been working on Skype would be available, so she created different plans for each component, a preferred one that would involve her mentor, and a back-up plan she could do on her own. For example, to assess speaking and listening with her language mentor, she planned the following:

I will engage in at least a fifteen-minute-long discussion with him via Skype exclusively in the target language. The topic of this conversation will be the progress of my language study (using present, past, and future verb tenses), as well as my desired travel plans to Rwanda this summer. My language partner and I will assess this conversation, based on the goals stated in my Individualized Study Plan, as well as the constructed rubric.

But in the event her language partner was unavailable, she wrote, “I will record myself discussing the same topics I would have with him, and I will critically evaluate my performance, based on the goals stated in my Individualized Study Plan, as well as the constructed rubric.”

In addition, the student planned to use the “Self-Evaluation Questionnaire,” from Maria Fernandez-Toro’s book *Training Learners for Self-Instruction* (1999, p. 95) to assess whether or not she had attained her semester goals. While one might expect learners to assess themselves too generously, we found that their self-assessments were generally quite modest. For example, this particular student used both conversation and a presentation to assess her goal of participating in conversations on work requirements and topics of interest and indicated that she had “only partly achieved” her goal. She used an oral quiz with her language partner using idioms to assess her goal of understanding of idioms, euphemisms, and proverbs exclusive to Kinyarwanda speakers, finding that she had “mostly achieved” her goal. Finally, she produced a vocabulary list, read a difficult Kinyarwanda text, and translated it into English to assess her goal of acquiring a vocabulary equal to that of an advanced speaker, finding that she had “fully achieved” this goal.

5 Student Experiences

From the first iteration of the course in fall 2014, students have been required to share with one another their ISPs, assessment plans, materials they create for future learners, and their weekly journal entries about their progress, struggles, and questions. They then give each other feedback on these and receive feedback from the instructor (initially Thompson and later two other instructors, including now Agoke). Early on, students used a Facebook group, blogs, and Google sites for much of this material. Later we moved on to using Slack for intra-course communication among students and Pressbooks for the material they created for future learners (University of Wisconsin-Madison Students in African 671, n.d.) and we are currently moving to Teams. On top of end-of-semester course evaluations, student comments in these various formats over the last 7 years have created an extensive collection of qualitative data on their experiences in the courses. We are currently analyzing this data as we author a book on self-instructional LCTL learning. Here we present two representative examples of student comments.

A graduate student who had already taken our Advanced Swahili course enrolled in the program to continue studying Swahili at a higher level than we offer in a traditional format. At the end of the year, she wrote,

The satisfaction I have gotten from my study routine has led me to do a lot of reflection on my Swahili learning this week. Now that we're nearing the end of the semester, I am wondering how this program will continue past the academic year, and I think I may have unwittingly reached the goal of becoming a "lifelong learner." I say this because I have been reflecting on what has perhaps been the biggest success of this program so far for me: that I have [been] able to find ways to routinize studying Swahili in my day-to-day life. By integrating Swahili into my normal web surfing, social media, and news reading habits, I am feeling pretty confident that I will be able to continue this program in some form moving forward.

Another student took the course for 2 years, working on Beginning and Intermediate Luganda, meeting weekly with a language partner in Uganda over Skype, and with plans to travel there the following summer to continue working with him in person while also doing preliminary fieldwork for her dissertation. About halfway through her fourth semester, she wrote,

After reflecting upon both meetings [with the language partner], it felt great to see how far I have come and also good to get a sense of what I need and want to work on this summer in Kampala. It has been so wonderful having S. as both my language partner and [future] instructor, as I have been able to be active in the design of my upcoming summer course, and I can seamlessly continue my language study. I have shared many of the lessons I have learned about language learning in general from our seminar with S., and he has begun incorporating some of those strategies in his teaching. It is nice that we both can learn something from this experience.

An important component of the methods course is a digital story that learners create to reflect on their learning experiences in the class. Using the digital story (created as a PowerPoint or on a Google Site), students narrate their learning experience and the progress they have made in their language learning over the course of the semester. One student who learned Tunisian Arabic chronicled their language learning progress at the end of one semester thus:

For the Tunisian Arabic dialect, I know absolutely nothing and even with my knowledge of Modern Standard Arabic, I cannot understand what anyone says in Tunisian. But since Tunisian shares lexical roots and grammatical constructs with MSA I certainly have a head start. Each week, I make [a] lesson plan in [a] google doc. My mentor and I work through it collaboratively, with an emphasis on conversation practice with new vocabs and themes. Over the course of the semester, I have developed a very consistent anki practice [using the Anki flashcard app]. Each day I spend 1–2 hours practicing vocabulary used in TCA [Tunisian Colloquial Arabic], and I practice translating into and out of TCA. I even learned how to program in anki language. I am bad at computers so this is a big deal for me. Over the course of the semester, my ISP has evolved to include much more. And surprisingly some of my goals have become more ambitious. By November, towards the end of fall semester, I would like to have 500 words learned and when I begin spring semester I plan to start with a base of 800 words. Now that I am almost done with the semester, I am really pleased with my progress and I am excited to see my skills in TCA grow.

Another student constructed their progress in learning Mandingo as embedded in the power of reflection. Citing Wenden's (1998) work on metacognition, as including metacognitive knowledge and articulation of what has come to awareness, the student summarized their progress thus:

At first I was overwhelmed with the amount of work put towards activities like Individualized Study Plan (ISP), the daily journals, the Pressbook updates and SLA slack discussions . . . , but when I think about it, it is equally, if not more important, to analyze *how* and *why* you think a certain way. . . . After each lesson, I conduct[ed] multi-sided evaluation: first, what did my mentor think about the lesson, and second, what did I think about it? What can be changed and improved for next time? What content do I cover from here? Now that I have a system for evaluating my own learning, I can be much more efficient and engaged as I design future activities.

These excerpts from student comments exemplify their learning experiences and show they are actively involved in the process of self-instructional learning. Through the learning process, they can identify their metacognitive strategies, explore technology to enhance their learning, and by the end of the semester, identify the remarkable progress they have made. Our self-instructional LCTL model has not only created enrollment (and FLAS funding) opportunities for learners who would otherwise not be able to study the languages or levels they need to conduct research, but also helped students strengthen skills that they will use to continue language study in the future.

6 Advice for Creating a Multilanguage Seminar

To create a similar course elsewhere would require (a relatively small amount of) funding, a semester or summer of preparatory work, access to online platforms that foster interaction, the support of university administration, and (for Title VI-funded area studies programs) clear communication with one's assigned Department of Education program officer.

The course developer and instructor should be an experienced language instructor with a doctorate in second language acquisition or related field. Since they will function as a language acquisition expert and not a language-specific expert, it is not essential that they speak a relevant regional language, though it does help with student buy-in. They will need a course release or summer salary while creating the course.

While the courses can be offered in-person or online, if taught online it is important that the instructor find online platforms that foster interaction and community building among the learners. In addition to Canvas, UW-Madison's current Learning Management System (LMS), we have had success with both Slack and Voice Thread and are currently exploring Microsoft Teams. It is useful if interaction among students and the instructor comments remain accessible for future iterations of the course so that new learners can learn not only from their concurrent classmates but also those who have taken the course in previous years.

Administrative support is needed to get the two courses and the instructor's course load approved. At UW-Madison, we needed to justify why the Multilanguage

Seminar is worth 4 credits each semester in relation to student work load (the answer is that students are expected to spend 12 h per week on their individualized language study), and why we count the three courses (both courses in fall; and the seminar alone in spring) as just two of the instructor's assigned courses, since (unlike the methods course), the seminar requires no preparation on the part of the instructor and limited grading.

Since it is not always possible for students to find a willing conversation partner for their chosen LCTL, especially for some African languages with small numbers of native speakers, the courses help students engage in self-instruction with or without a conversation partner. In the methods course, for example, students learn both how to work with a conversation partner and how to make the best of their language learning if they do not have one. Since the course is designed to facilitate lifelong learning, this is a practical concern: even learners who *do* find a conversation partner while enrolled in the course may not always have one. Because the course does not *require* students to work with a conversation partner and we did not initially have funding to pay such partners, part of the methods course also includes discussion of appropriate compensation for them. Some students have paid their partners using some of their FLAS stipends; others have bartered English conversational practice for LCTL practice; some partners have refused compensation altogether as they developed friendships with students. However, in recent years our African Studies Program has been able to use some of its Title VI funding to offer students small grants they can use to pay their language partners.

7 Conclusion: Addressing Potential Concerns

Our main concern has been ensuring that students who enroll in this set of courses, especially those who receive FLAS funding to do so, are highly motivated, experienced language learners (of any second language), and understand what self-instruction will entail.

Some will wonder how we can ensure that students are actually learning their chosen LCTL or measure how much they are learning. FLAS-recipients do receive pre- and post-FLAS assessments based on the ACTFL can-do statements (ACTFL, 2017). More importantly, however, by taking a radical view of what self-instruction entails, in a sense we are deliberately eschewing external evaluation: rather than requiring students to measure up to external standards, we require them to set their own goals and measure their own progress toward them. Because they need these languages to do their research, if they do not put in enough time or effort, it is the students themselves who will meet the natural consequences in the field. That said, students' own reports—as we saw above—indicate they learn a great deal, can meet their fieldwork goals, and take on identities of “lifelong learners.”

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Leveraging Language for Specific Purposes as a Motivating Factor for World Language Study



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Abstract The United States (US) Military Academy at West Point is a 4-year, undergraduate institution generally recognized for its strong engineering programs. Upon graduation, students (cadets) are commissioned as officers in the US Army and expected to serve throughout the globe during their career. To attract world language majors and to better prepare our cadets for the myriad military engagements they are likely to encounter overseas, the Department of Foreign Languages (DFL) emphasizes Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) as a foundation for language and cultural development. The DFL accomplishes this effort by embedding military-related LSP content within classroom instruction, extra and co-curricular language programs, and immersion opportunities. This chapter discusses how the DFL leverages LSP to remain a vital part of our cadets' 4-year educational experience. We also provide examples of LSP opportunities at the academy, both in and outside of the classroom, that are learner-centered and career-oriented. Lastly, we offer recommendations on how other world language departments can integrate aspects of LSP within their own programs to attract and motivate students.

Keywords Language for specific purposes · World language learning · Motivation · Language pedagogy

1 Introduction

A major concern for world language (WL) programs is how to stand out and remain vital, especially if couched within an academic organization typically recognized for a completely different field of study. This is true at the United States (US) Military Academy at West Point, a 4-year undergraduate institution whose mission is to educate and train its students (cadets) to become future officers in the US Army. Historically speaking, West Point was founded in 1802 to train men in the scientific

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fields of ordnance, artillery, and engineering (Forman, 1952). The academy's reputation as an engineering school remains today due to, in large part, its mandatory, STEM-based curriculum and engineering programs. As an alternative to a STEM-focused degree, cadets are also provided the opportunity to either major or double major in the eight WLs taught at the academy (i.e., Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish). To remain central to the overall curriculum at West Point and attract cadets into the WL program, the Department of Foreign Languages (DFL) has emphasized Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) as a cornerstone for language and cultural development. Since many cadets will likely serve in overseas assignments after graduation, the DFL hosts a variety of LSP courses, programs, and opportunities to prepare students for future, work-related interactions with foreign militaries and civilian populations.

The integration of LSP content at West Point (e.g., course curricula, club activities, immersion opportunities, etc.) works well to motivate cadets for WL study and functions as a catalyst for language vitality in the DFL. It is important to note, however, that our academy's unique educational and developmental model, as well as post-graduation focus, may better facilitate the use of a (military-specific) LSP approach over a cadet's 4-year matriculation than that of typical civilian institutions. Since all cadets who graduate and commission from West Point are assured a job in the military, regardless of their chosen academic concentration, it is fitting for the DFL to promote WL study and opportunities that enrich professional development. While LSP content is commonly perceived as facilitating career-oriented pursuits (see Trace et al., 2015), other niche applications are gaining traction in academia. Social justice and political activism, for instance, are areas in which LSP modules could supplement parts of a broader WL program (Ruggiero, 2022). Expanding the idea of LSP to address current global issues may help WL programs to develop important and topical activities in the target language to engage students and promote language program vitality.

We believe that embedding LSP instruction within WL curricula is necessary and accomplishes two goals: (1) motivate students to learn WLs, and (2) make WL study an important part of a student's academic and post-academic career. This chapter discusses how the DFL at West Point leverages LSP education across different WLs to attract cadets into our program. We also provide examples of LSP instruction in the classroom, as well as LSP opportunities in real-world settings (e.g., club activities, study abroad, military training, etc.), that are often learner-centered and prepare cadets for their future careers. Lastly, we offer recommendations on how other WL departments can integrate aspects of LSP within their own programs to attract and retain students.

2 Literature Review

LSP courses and content promote language learning for targeted uses (Trace et al., 2015). According to Trace and colleagues, students who have a specific or immediate need for WL after graduation may require specialized language training beyond

generalized knowledge or a specific proficiency level. This is especially true for individuals pursuing career fields where narrowly-focused WL contexts may dominate, such as medicine, business, or technology. Beyond job-focused applications, LSP courses may also assist students with navigating a variety of social issues present in a globalized society. These include, for example, natural disasters, civil unrest, and the recent Covid-19 pandemic (see Ruggiero, 2022). As Ruggiero explained, it is essential that WL “foster and facilitate effective communication within specific contexts” (2) to meet the needs of both students and employers.

To date, LSP literature that focuses on military contexts or applications is limited. That said, related studies have highlighted the importance of military-related, LSP study as strategically significant and imperative for national security. For instance, Orna-Montesinos (2013) found that, in a survey of 413 Spanish Army officers, 89.5% reported English proficiency as an important component for their military profession. The officers felt better prepared to participate in combined military operations and viewed LSP knowledge as helpful for career advancement. Similar research has confirmed the value of specialized WL instruction for military contexts, from training air traffic controllers (Park, 2020) to translating military texts (Kočote & Smirnova, 2016). US service academies have also recognized the utility of infusing such LSP topics into their WL programs. In their study at the US Air Force Academy, Derby et al. (2017) integrated military leadership content into four different WL courses (i.e., French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish). The training scenarios focused on settings that Air Force officers would likely encounter while working abroad. From their results, the researchers concluded that merging LSP content into all levels of WL instruction would prove useful to cadets. The DFL at West Point often embeds military-specific LSP instruction into many of its WL courses. Sack et al. (2021) detailed how the Portuguese and Spanish sections at the academy utilize a phased approach, introducing basic LSP content in the beginner courses and later expanding military contexts into advanced WL courses and immersion programs. The goal, they concluded, is to better develop cadets both linguistically and culturally as they prepare for potential overseas engagements while serving in the US Army.

One aspect of LSP research that is of continued interest is its potential (and perhaps, positive) effect on WL motivation. During a semester-long undergraduate Spanish course that integrated LSP elements into digital projects, Kuder (2021) recorded overall positive feedback from the experience. Students observed Spanish usage in a variety of professional settings (e.g., law, medicine, and education) and found the assignment both motivating and applicable for future employment. Kuder concluded that WL departments should consider utilizing LSP coursework to strengthen enrollments, especially in upper-level or content courses. In a case study of two cadets studying Portuguese at a US service academy, Miller and Crowther (2020) found that one cadet developed and exhibited high levels of instrumental motivation, valuing WL application for military career opportunities and rank advancement. In the study, the researchers recommended that educators include LSP content, such as specialized vocabulary and task-based scenarios, within a variety of WL curricula to potentially enhance L2 motivation and help

students shape their ideal L2 selves (see Dörnyei, 2009). In accordance, the DFL at West Point views LSP as a prime motivator for cadets that incorporates their desire for career preparation and success into WL study for general proficiency.

3 Institutional Overview

The US Military Academy at West Point is both a 4-year undergraduate institution, and a premier commissioning source for the US Army. The focus on math, science, and engineering is ubiquitous. Regardless of academic concentration, cadets must take 12 required STEM courses, including a three-course engineering sequence (e.g., environmental, cyber, nuclear, etc.) (see Koleci et al., 2021). As such, all cadets earn a Bachelor of Science upon graduation, even if they major in the humanities. Graduates leave the academy as second lieutenants and are required to serve in the active-duty military for a minimum of 5 years. The standard length for a full career in the Army is 20 years. Throughout an officer's tenure in the military, the likelihood of working or deploying abroad is high. Interacting with members of foreign militaries during such assignments is also common. US officers may work alongside or assist their foreign counterparts in a variety of ways, including training exercises, humanitarian missions, and combined combat operations. Officers may also elect to enter certain career paths that often directly interface with foreign militaries. The Military Intelligence Corps, Special Forces, Civil Affairs, and the Foreign Area Officer Branch are career fields that often require a high WL proficiency, both in general and military-specific contexts, as well as cultural and regional expertise.

To prepare cadets for certain potential career paths and/or military engagements abroad, West Point stresses WL learning and cultural competency as integral components of the 4-year academy experience. The DFL assumes the primary role in this endeavor, with a stated mission to “develop, through education in the languages, cultures, and regions of the world, commissioned leaders of character so that each is able to thrive in complex international security environments and is prepared to serve around the globe throughout a career of service to the nation.” (“Foreign Languages,” n.d.). The department facilitates its mission by offering multiple WL touchpoints throughout a cadet's matriculation. Many of these extend into military-focused LSP settings. Examples include:

- administrating the academy's mandatory two-semester WL core course requirement for all cadets, including those who place beyond the beginner level
- offering WL majors and minors content courses, such as WL through media, literature, and civilization, as well as a specialized course offered in each language, LX476, weaving foreign military-focused content with WL application
- overseeing the academy's semester-long study abroad program, which sends cadets to a variety of civilian and military academic institutions around the globe
- facilitating short-term spring and summer immersion opportunities to significant cultural and historical sites throughout the world

- involving cadets in escorting and hosting foreign dignitaries, cadets, and other military visitors at West Point

All the activities listed above, to varying degrees, promote both WL proficiency and military-related LSP development. We believe that the integration of LSP elements within WL learning opportunities positions cadets for greater success as future Army officers and bolsters WL motivation. In this regard, language programs are vital when they focus on the needs of the student and promote real-world applicability (in this case, job related) in the target language and culture. The following sections of this chapter detail how LSP is explicitly infused into the DFL’s curricula and how the department utilizes LSP opportunities to attract cadets as WL majors and minors. We then offer explicit and concrete suggestions for how other WL institutions can utilize LSP to address the needs of their students.

4 LSP Through Curricula

LSP modules and other related content are interwoven throughout the WL curricula in the DFL, regardless of what level a cadet begins or how far they progress. Course directors often acknowledge their students’ needs for WL applicability post-graduation and infuse content toward these goals, wherever possible, into parts of the broader curricula. Therefore, cadets taking WLs at West Point gain invaluable experience with LSP-specific vocabulary and military-related tasks. We believe that these efforts help attract cadets to our program, facilitate motivation, and enhance their future military service. This section describes how various courses integrate military-specific vocabulary, task-based scenarios, and cultural examples to complement WL study at West Point.

In the DFL, there are three courses where a military component is specifically identified as a course objective. The two-course, intermediate-level sequence offered in each language, states the following: “Students should expect to successfully use military-related vocabulary and terms in the target language and/or recognize the role(s) of the military in target language-speaking countries.” Intermediate WL courses meet this objective in a variety of ways. For example, cadets in French acquire vocabulary focusing on military rank and military equipment used in the French Army and discuss how the French military currently trains and operates in a tactical environment. Cadets in Spanish study similar military vocabulary and learn more about the armed forces of Spanish-speaking countries through articles, promotional videos, and guest speakers. Many students who take WL courses at the DFL reach the intermediate level and are therefore exposed to LSP-focused vocabulary and content, which they will likely hear and use in future interactions with foreign militaries.

The DFL also offers an advanced-level, LSP-specific military course (i.e., LX476: Language through Military Speaking and Reading) in all eight languages. With an emphasis on oral and reading proficiency, cadets study the mission, role,

and organization of foreign armies, compare and contrast the US military with foreign counterparts, and practice scenarios likely to be encountered while working abroad. Most cadets who take this course have previously completed the intermediate-level WL courses. Again, language sections accomplish the LX476 course objectives in various ways. For example, the Spanish course includes a module where cadets put their skills directly into practice at the West Point Simulation Center. Here, students engage with augmented reality to conduct a variety of military tasks in the target language, such as listening and responding to commands during a simulated terrain assessment and at a practice weapons range. The incorporation of military content into a task-based learning scenario energizes the cadets as they experience and navigate realistic Army training opportunities in Spanish. Cadets in Portuguese become familiar with military terminology by using maps and terrain models to evaluate Brazilian Army exercises throughout different regions of the country. Cadets also analyze, in Portuguese, Brazilian participation in United Nation missions around the globe to better understand how the country's armed forces operate.

The DFL's focus on integrating LSP-focused content into the curriculum is not, however, restricted to courses with explicit LSP learning objectives. Many languages choose to incorporate LSP content into the beginner level courses through the addition of military vocabulary and military scenarios. While not required at this level, faculty recognize the value of introducing military content to cadets early on to demonstrate practical uses in the target language. Beyond simply providing vocabulary lists, instructors creatively integrate military contexts into different learning scenarios. For example, all cadets learn how to report attendance in a military format when calling the class to attention each day in the target language, a routine they complete in English for all other courses. Cadets learn about geography in the context of regional military command groups. They practice speaking by adopting the role of an officer from the target language country in imagined dialogues. When studying clothing vocabulary, they discuss parts of a military uniform. They also plan trips to areas where military bases are located, in addition to other well-known cities of the region. These informal ways of incorporating LSP-related content from the very first moments of language learning are integral to encouraging WL motivation by focusing on practical language use.

Besides LX476, LSP content is also integrated at the advanced level in various other courses. Civilization, culture, literature, and media courses often place special emphasis on topics that relate to the militaries of other cultures by examining and discussing civil-military relations, historical events directly involving the military, and texts and films that tie into the military experience. For example, cadets studying Persian media frequently discuss the presence and influence of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Force in Iranian society. Cadets studying eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German literature read Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's play, *Minna von Barnhelm*, and discuss changing views of honor in military culture across time. Cadets studying twentieth- and twenty-first-century Russian literature read and discuss *Secondhand Time* by Svetlana Alexievich, a collection of firsthand accounts

from soldiers during the Soviet-Afghan war, in the context of civil-military relations in the Soviet Union.

Finally, the senior capstone course provides students with the opportunity to conduct in-depth research into a military-related topic. While military themes were not always required in the past, the DFL realized that cadets are more motivated when they personally select and focus on topics that are directly applicable to their future Army careers. To that end, the DFL encourages cadets to develop projects related to national and global defense strategies or those focused on the military of the countries and regions they study. Of specific interest here, cadets often work with strategic partners to assist with research and to provide additional perspectives. Representatives of these partners often attend the final project presentations and provide valuable feedback to our students. Cadets' work on the capstone project demonstrates the culmination of their WL and cultural studies while at West Point.

5 LSP Through Extracurricular and Co-curricular Opportunities

In addition to LSP content in the classroom, extracurricular and co-curricular activities create opportunities for students to expand their LSP experience. These activities can take many forms. For example, student-led club events provide engagement opportunities with the target language and culture. Guest speakers and local professionals can discuss LSP applications post-graduation and assist with language instruction. Along with WL faculty, these guest speakers and professionals can share their real-world experiences with students, as well as showcase the benefits of language study. This section details how such approaches are realized in the DFL.

West Point maintains a bevy of opportunities that further encourage cadets to utilize their WLS in military-specific contexts. For instance, each WL program has a corresponding Language Forum, which is a club run by cadets with DFL faculty member assistance. The eight language forums host a wide variety of excursions and events to promote WL use and cultural exposure. Language Forum activities often address content broadly related to the military or military history. For example, the Persian Forum recently conducted a film series on the Iran-Iraq War and included a screening of a documentary series on the Islamic Revolution in Iran that concluded with an interview with the director. Many forums also invite guest speakers who have a military background or are West Point alumni to illustrate to cadets how WL knowledge has impacted their careers and lives after graduation.

West Point is also fortunate to host several liaison and exchange officers from foreign militaries to further expose cadets to different languages and cultures. To strengthen ties between West Point and the Bundeswehr (German military), Germany has fielded a senior officer to the academy since 1964 to serve as a German Liaison Officer. This officer provides linguistic and cultural expertise, helps organize further exchanges, and often teaches the LX476 course in German. The academy

also hosts exchange officers from Brazil, Mexico, Spain, Chile, and others. Still more diverse is the list of countries that send cadets on exchange to West Point, either for a semester or for a full 4 years. These cadets live in the barracks with their American counterparts, participate in army training, and often take academic courses. The aforementioned Language Forums welcome these exchange cadets to participate in their events. The French Forum, for example, runs a language table in the cadet dining hall with exchange students from the Saint-Cyr Military Academy in France. Similarly, the Portuguese Forum has afternoon speaking sessions for cadets with students from the Brazilian Military Academy. While the focus during these sessions is not explicitly on military vocabulary or themes, often cadets discuss the similarities between their respective armies and academies. Regularly present at the department's social events, the exchange officers and cadets play a significant role in establishing a presence for their countries of origin at West Point.

Cadets on exchange from foreign military academies also participate in extracurricular activities and cadet life with our WL students. For example, students studying Portuguese are typically paired by DFL faculty to be roommates with exchange cadets from Brazil. In this way, students are able to become better acquainted outside of the formal framework of department activities. Similarly, when cadets from foreign academies come to West Point each spring for the Sandhurst Military Skills Competition, which draws teams from military academies across the world, our WL students are selected to escort and host the visiting cadets, who may not have strong English proficiency. At Sandhurst, American and foreign cadets develop camaraderie based on their shared knowledge and interest in military skills and academy life that they can discuss in the target language.

A final opportunity for cultural exchange involves frequent visits from government and military officials to West Point, often during lectures, meals, and question-and-answer sessions with cadets. Each of our eight WL programs are very active on this front. Individuals who have visited the German program in recent years, for example, include the Vice Chancellor of Germany, German Ambassador to the United States, the German Minister of Defense, and Generals from the Austrian and German Armed Forces. The Spanish program has hosted the Consul General from Panama and the ambassadors from Spain and Chile. These opportunities enable cadets to practice speaking and listening in a formal register and learn about the political and cultural nuances of the visitor's country. Moreover, these visits make visible at the institutional level the importance of studying world language and culture within an LSP framework.

An important facet of the West Point model is to actively advertise and promote LSP content to students as a cornerstone for WL study. Language departments should highlight pertinent examples of LSP utilization within their programs to recruit students for WL study or concentration. This process can occur both inside and outside the classroom. At West Point, the DFL acquaints all incoming freshmen on the eight WLs that we teach. This presentation occurs to help students make informed decisions on which WL to study for their two-semester requirement. During the in-person briefing (Maggin et al., Chapter "[The Language Placement Brief: Showcasing Language Learning Opportunities](#)"), the language programs

showcase how WLs will support, and often strengthen, their upcoming military careers. The discussion of LSP opportunities is thus made explicit to the students from the very beginning. This message is then reinforced to cadets throughout their mandatory WL study to recruit them as WL majors and minors. Cadets are encouraged to inquire about LSP opportunities with their WL instructors, many of whom are active-duty Army officers with extensive WL work experience. Instructors may even positively affect students' motivation and help shape their ideal L2 selves (see Dörnyei, 2009) by emphasizing how WL utilization for specific purposes is essential to succeed and thrive post-graduation.

6 LSP Through Immersion Opportunities Abroad

Language programs seeking to incorporate LSP content into their learners' linguistic and cultural development need to reach not only beyond the curriculum, but also beyond their own locations and home institutions. Exposing learners to their target cultures and languages in study and internship opportunities abroad provides an experiential depth often unavailable at home. In structuring this content abroad, programs should consider the specific affordances of international opportunities for the learning of LSP content. In short, the careful selection of programs as well as deliberate preparation and frequent reflection will best embed immersion opportunities within the wider LSP curriculum. This section provides detail on the DFL's approach to opportunities abroad.

At West Point, there are many immersion opportunities for cadets to supplement their language and culture instruction. These fully-funded opportunities consist of week-long spring break trips, 3-week-long summer programs, and semester abroad opportunities, all of which occur in a country or region where the target language is a prevalent or dominant spoken language. To start, small and selective groups of cadets participate in spring break immersion trips led by department faculty to one or two major cities in the target language region. These trips allow cadets to experience historical sites, museums, cultural performances, and local cuisines. Cadets also often visit their counterparts at a military academy. For example, when the Russian and Persian programs brought cadets to Uzbekistan, they met and interacted with cadets at the Academy of the Armed Forces in Tashkent. Other week-long trips have an overt military theme, such as the longstanding program sending cadets learning Russian to the Almaty Defense Institute for immersion with the Kazakh military. While at the institute, American cadets are introduced to Kazakh military culture and perform a variety of military tasks in the target language. Finally, other immersion trips provide advanced speakers opportunities to conduct research for their senior capstone course. For example, in 2020, three majors researching Russian misinformation in Ukraine traveled to Kyiv to interview local journalists to learn how these campaigns influenced the conflict in the Donbas.

Cadets have further opportunity to use their WL during 3-week-long summer immersion trips. These programs target a variety of competencies related to cadets'

LSP study at West Point, from language and cultural immersion to familiarity with the operations of foreign military organizations or, often, both. Unlike the spring immersion programs, many of these summer programs count for credit toward the major or minor. Some academy-run programs highlight military history or current conflicts alongside a broader cultural immersion. For instance, a summer program in Ukraine offered until 2020 involved language classes that included lectures on military history in Russian and excursions to the Pervomaysk Missile Base, the Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War, and the National Museum of Military History.

Other summer programs that cadets participate in are administered directly by foreign military partners and institutions. While expectations of honor and decorum, as well as a range of rules from West Point still apply, cadets are allowed a degree of independence to manage their own schedules, activities, and behaviors. This distinction appeals to our students and faculty on a number of levels, especially in allowing cadets to better understand how discipline and character development occurs in foreign militaries and in the international civilian sphere. The overall immersion experience is invaluable to cadets' educational and professional growth. For example, one program sends French students to Rochefort, France, for an intensive summer language immersion course with the French Gendarmerie. There they also train alongside a range of Francophone military units. Similarly, German students are sent to Germany in small groups and are integrated into Bundeswehr (German military) units. Finally, cadets learning Spanish attend a language program at the Spanish Army's language school, where they have the opportunity to learn from native speakers and tour military facilities. While participating in these programs, cadets are encouraged to speak as much as possible in the target language to maximize WL development.

The final opportunity for immersion includes semester-long, study abroad programs at foreign military academies. In these programs, our cadets are integrated with military cadets and officers from the host nation for several months. They take courses, often in the target language, and engage in a variety of other field training and internship programs. Cadets studying French have an opportunity to attend the Saint-Cyr Military Academy in Brittany in northwestern France. At Saint-Cyr, there are often opportunities to participate in military training, such as the airborne (parachute) jump school. The German program sends cadets to one of three military academic institutions in Germany and Austria; that is, the University of the Bundeswehr in Munich, Helmut Schmidt University of the Bundeswehr in Hamburg, and the Theresianische Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt near Vienna. In each of these programs, cadets live in dorms or barracks alongside German, Austrian, and international students, cadets, and officers. Beyond their academic and supplemental German courses, cadets in Austria receive regular military training, while those in Germany normally spend 3 weeks at the Officer School of the German Army in Dresden and several weeks interning at a company, Würth, in a village in the country's southwest. Cadets studying Portuguese can spend a semester at the Brazilian Military Academy, where military drills and training opportunities (e.g., jungle warfare school) in the target language occur on a weekly basis. Finally, some

cadets from across the various languages also complete a remote writing course in the target language with a West Point professor to explore their language, culture, military, and character development while abroad.

Upon return home, all cadets complete a set of reintegrative tasks including presentations for the respective language faculties detailing their experiences abroad and language testing. Such an approach to summative assessment following abroad experiences allows students to reflect not only on what they learned but also on how it serves their future personal and professional development and goals.

7 Conclusion

WL programs are vital when they can accomplish two key goals: (1) meet the needs of their students' post-graduation WL pursuits and (2) involve students in the selection and shaping of activities that facilitate future WL applicability. The DFL at West Point fulfills these objectives by interspersing military-focused LSP content and opportunities throughout a cadet's 4-year matriculation. These activities occur both inside and outside of the classroom and help to make cadets' WL study relevant to their future Army careers. Whenever possible, course directors and other faculty members solicit input from cadets to keep WL content fresh and amenable to the changing dynamics of WL use in a military context. Although the DFL at West Point is in a unique position to easily capitalize on LSP content, other WL programs may also benefit from utilizing and/or modifying our model. Examples include:

- adding LSP modules, specialized vocabulary training, and task-based scenarios to WL courses. Supplemental content can fit into courses for general proficiency at a variety of levels, from beginner to advanced. The material can be selected based on student input.
- assigning projects that enable interaction with graduate students, community leaders, or local professionals in the target language
- inviting guest lecturers to discuss the value of WL use in professional or other specialized settings. This can occur at any course level and may even function to motivate beginner WL students to extend their study into more advanced courses.
- pursuing WL club trips or activities with an LSP focus
- tailoring study abroad or other immersion programs to include LSP-related courses, events, or internships. Program directors can work directly with students to meet their specific WL goals.
- placing WL learners into vocational courses or apprenticeships with an LSP focus. This idea may be especially appropriate at the high school or community college level.

WL departments may find success by marrying aspects of the West Point LSP model to their own programs. As previously noted, the addition of LSP instruction and opportunities has been shown to foster positive outcomes by enhancing learner interest in WL study and cultural development (Kuder, 2021; Miller & Crowther,

2020; Ruggiero, 2022). Ultimately, we believe that weaving LSP into WL curricula is important and may help to promote language vitality, motivate WL students, increase program enrollments, and better prepare students for a more globalized workforce.

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Contributing Factors and Achievable Solutions to the World Language Enrollment Downturn: A Midwestern Case Study



Elizabeth Langley

Abstract This chapter offers a case study of a mid-size regional comprehensive institution in the Midwest (Fort Hays State University). It highlights structural, programmatic, and cultural challenges to language study in an institution of its type and describes how the program was redesigned to face these challenges and increase enrollment. In addition to the redevelopment of a primary concentration within the program with an eye toward career readiness and community-based learning, online course offerings were augmented. The chapter also articulates the steps taken and challenges faced by the department to achieve these changes, which have ultimately led to significant increases in enrollment. This chapter further supplies planned recruiting strategies and suggestions for possible modifications to the program to improve student outcomes.

Keywords Spanish program · Redesign · Enrollment · Spanish for specific purposes

1 Program Challenges

Fort Hays State University is a public, regional, comprehensive university in Western Kansas. Based on fall 2021 numbers, it serves around 14,000 students with coursework available on campus, online, and through international partners (Kansas Board of Regents, 2022, p. 36). With declining populations in Western Kansas, the majority of these students are online.

The Modern Languages program at Fort Hays State University has faced a number of barriers to success with structural, programmatic, and cultural challenges to language study in an institution of this type. The school lacks, for example, an institutional language requirement across programs, and the language requirement for a Bachelor of Arts is only 10 h (two beginning-level courses). Additionally, many programs that were formerly Bachelor of Arts only have pursued Bachelor of

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Science options to avoid the language requirement. Certainly, programs may have programmatic reasons, such as increasing their own student credit hours, for pursuing these changes, but they point to a wider devaluing of language courses and the Bachelor of Arts by faculty and program leaders from multiple disciplines. Student interest and advisor influence are also not to be excluded as factors when a BA or BS option is available in a department/program.

As to program review, one of the primary tenets for evaluation at our institution has been the number of first majors within the program. This is a challenge as many undergraduate language majors are second majors who choose to supplement a primary program of study with linguistic skills. Prior to the program redesign, the lowest number of first majors (based on a review of major numbers from 2000 to the present) was 5 in 2017, which is down from a high of 27 in 2001. However, it should be noted that the numbers from 2001 likely include German and French majors, which were included under the Modern Languages heading at the time. Only Spanish has continued to be a major option following the discontinuation of the French major in the early 2000s and the elimination of the German major following program review in 2014.

Faculty retention and retention of chairs or related disciplinary leaders are other challenges the Modern Languages program has faced. The relatively isolated campus, limited faculty diversity, the small number of people with whom to share service responsibilities, and the enrollment challenges the program has faced have led to frequent faculty and chair (or equivalent) departures. Additionally, despite the interest in international partnerships, the ethos at the school is largely monolingual.

2 Program Redesign and Results

The previous version of the Spanish major included a teaching concentration and a non-teaching concentration with the main difference revolving around the inclusion of secondary education and teaching methods coursework. Both options featured literature and culture courses as the primary coursework at the advanced level. Program review and declining enrollments suggested that program improvements were needed to demonstrate applicability beyond teaching and career readiness in order to attract students. Challenges to redeveloping the program included the time involved to develop new courses and implement a modified program, including the series of approvals needed for those changes, faculty area of expertise and comfort with curriculum outside of their own training or experience, and concerns about subject area knowledge upon program completion. Developing the new program, therefore, required considerable research into program offerings and industry needs and discussion about course feasibility and teachability. The popularity of experiential learning at FHSU, a growing need for bilingual services in Western Kansas, along with the expectation that students would put their applied language skills to practice led to an emphasis on community engagement in the development of the new program.

With these factors in mind, the department developed a Spanish for Specific Purposes concentration to replace the non-teaching option of the previous major. It consists of four track options: Translating and Interpreting, Medical Spanish, Business Spanish, and Hispanic Studies. For each of the three applied Spanish tracks (Translation, Medical, and Business), a three-course sequence was implemented with two initial courses and a culminating practicum course where students could put into practice what they had learned in the first two courses by working in a bilingual capacity for a non-profit organization, on-campus office, or another workplace. The Hispanic Studies option allowed those students interested in the previous iteration of the program, which was largely focused on literature and cultural studies, to still be able to pursue an analogous track. The flexibility of the Hispanic Studies track permits students to mix and match courses from different tracks as well. In addition to offering the new Spanish for Specific Purposes concentration both on campus and online, steps were taken to begin offering the teaching concentration online (while continuing it on campus) as well.

As far as challenges are concerned, faculty sought and continue to seek professional development opportunities in Spanish for specific purposes to continuously improve their classes and the program. Those faculty less suited to teaching in this arena teach basic language and skills-based courses instead. Course development was staggered to gradually implement new courses from the different tracks to serve new majors. Expectations about area knowledge have slowly evolved to a more student-centered approach based on building proficiency around career goals and interests rather than specific literary or cultural knowledge.

Initial implementation of courses from the revised major occurred in fall 2017 with the program fully in place by the fall of 2019. First major numbers began climbing with 15 in 2018 and 56 by 2021. In addition to improved first major numbers, the number of second majors has been rising on campus as well. Student credit hours have also remained constant or increased slightly during the pandemic where the university and most programs in the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences saw declines.

Future plans involve continued professional development for faculty to keep courses current as well as responding to assessment results through applicable course revision. Additionally, the program has been involved in recruiting efforts on campus and online and intends to expand those efforts to include reaching out to high school Spanish teachers in order to present program opportunities to their students via Zoom. Because of FHSU's history as a normal school that continues to attract future educators, plans are also underway to develop a certificate in Spanish for Educators. Although many challenges remain both structurally and culturally, FHSU has dedicated significant committee work toward improving diversity, equity, and inclusion on campus, and there is hope that this will slowly change the linguistic culture in the school. The program review process within the Kansas Board of Regents is itself under review, so expectations for program enrollment may increase. Although the future is not certain, for now, things are looking up for Modern Languages.

Acknowledgements Dr. Chris Mohn served as Associate Professor and Chair in the Department of Modern Languages at FHSU and oversaw the development and implementation of this program change. Her vision and dedication were pivotal to righting the course of the program and have gained purchase in the enrollment increases of recent years. In short, the program owes much of its success to her efforts.

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A Revamped Major: Reimagining the Role of Languages at a Business University



Christian Rubio

Abstract In a data driven environment, where class enrollments may be the only fact used to determine whether a course runs, language departments can potentially face the need to justify their existence. Therefore, it is imperative that departments take initiative to review and adjust their curricula. This is exactly what this chapter details: The complete overhaul of a language major made by the Modern Languages Department at Bentley University, a business focused institution. It provides key aspects of the conversion of the Hispanic Studies major into the new Language, Culture, and Business major with a specialization in all the languages taught by the department. After a brief introduction of Bentley, this chapter outlines not only the process that the Department underwent, but also a closer look at the previous major. This description highlights errors made when designing the Hispanic Studies major, such as the lack of continuity between language and content courses. Following this analysis, it gives a closer look at decisions made by the faculty from the name of the major, to course selection, and even future hires.

Keywords Language programs · Curriculum overhaul · Language studies

1 Introduction

Humanities are often treated as sacrificial lambs in times of austerity. This is especially true when budget cuts take place on the heels of an economic crisis (Foderaro, 2010). It is therefore imperative to design strategies that better position university departments to face the challenges ahead.

One way for language departments to be proactive is by building curricula that address the needs of their students while meeting the goals of their institutions. In other words, “what makes sense on your campus?” Colleen Flaherty quotes in her article about recruitment in the humanities (2021, para. 12). This chapter shows how

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a traditional language and culture major was reconfigured into a more practical and suitable program for a business institution. While illustrating how this redesigned major came to fruition, we will also detail some missteps that languages departments make when designing majors, which are also underlined in an MLA report (2007) whose findings remain relevant today (Brown & Thompson, 2018).

2 Institutional Context

Bentley University's mission is to change "the world with a transformative business education, integrated with arts and sciences, that inspires and prepares ethical leaders who will confront the challenges of today and shape the opportunities of tomorrow." In 2021, *U.S. News & World Report* rated Bentley #1 in a ranking of the best regional universities of the northern U.S. More recently, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce ranked Bentley at #8 among all such institutions for a long-term return on investment. Given this reputation, it is no surprise that almost 95% of its graduates typically choose a business discipline as their major, even though there are several arts and sciences (A&S) majors available, including one in Hispanic Studies (HS).

Launched in 2012, the HS major was designed to attract liberal arts students to a business university. Though the program was meant to be interdisciplinary, in practice it had little scope to flourish. Bentley's core curriculum has a high number of prescribed business courses that every student must take regardless of their major.¹ This leaves room for only eight courses to fulfill most programs of study. These constraints forced the Spanish faculty to be creative when selecting the required courses. In addition to the major, the Modern Languages (ML) Department offers minors in Chinese, French, Italian, and Spanish, as well as Spanish for Business. Despite not being a general education requirement, ML minors have been popular among the students.

3 An Attempt to Build a Multidisciplinary Major

With the aim of appealing to liberal arts students and gaining support from the wider faculty,² the ML department decided to require two courses from the other A&S departments. The condition was that they had to be related to the Hispanic world. For

¹When the HS major was launched, Bentley had 47 credits of General Education and 27 credits of General Business. In 2021, the faculty approved a new curriculum, to be launched in 2022, that offers greater flexibility but still requires a large number of business courses for all majors.

²The faculty at Bentley has complete autonomy over its curriculum, which means that any changes, from new courses to new majors, must be approved by at least the Faculty Senate. Therefore, it was critical to gain full support from all A&S departments.

the remaining courses, the Spanish faculty mapped out a curriculum based on the research of its professors at that time. As a result, classes mostly focused on Latin American Cultural Studies and Caribbean Literature, while Peninsular Contemporary Literature and Culture became part of the HS curriculum.

As we began selecting required courses, it was decided that intermediate-level courses would be required, followed by additional classes that would lead on to the advanced courses. In other words, we needed to offer a natural bridge between the language and the content-area courses. To that end, two new courses were created, one focused on writing and the second on translation. The remaining Spanish courses were electives that could be chosen from any of the advanced level courses (normally 300 or 400 classes). In addition, all HS majors needed to complete an “Applied Learning Experience.” This requirement may involve a student spending time abroad in a Spanish-speaking country, for example, or attaining an internship in which they can practice their Spanish language skills.

Despite these best efforts to build a multidisciplinary curriculum, the HS major still resembled those offered by most institutions. Additionally, a gap persisted between the language and content courses. This is a misstep that many language departments make, as highlighted by the MLA and further explained by VanPatten (2015). Coupled with its inability to offer a double major because of Bentley’s rules, HS became unattractive for our students, with only five people graduating from the program in 7 years. Unfortunately, the success of a program is often directly measured according to the number of students majoring in a discipline, especially in tuition-dependent institutions. With this reality in mind and given the demand of our students, the ML faculty decided to rebrand Hispanic Studies in 2019.

4 The Revamp: Lessons Learned

With most students majoring in business, it is no coincidence that all Language for Business (a sub-field of Language for Specific Purposes) courses are popular among our students. This was an important factor in leading the department to refocus the program on Language for Business courses. The next step was to research various equivalent programs offered throughout the U.S., bearing in mind that our major still needed to be aligned to Bentley’s mission and meet the demands of its students. To that end, we focused on a curriculum that was practical and would prepare the students for the business world. We determined that the major should be called Language, Culture, and Business (LCB), with a specialization in the languages we teach.

The next important phase was the selection of courses. We not only took into consideration class enrollment, but we also drew lessons from the HS curriculum. More specifically, when selecting courses, we did not just focus on faculty research, instead, we emphasized the linking courses and selected those that had critical components such as writing, oral communication, translation, and cultures. This time, we included courses offered by business departments that had an international

component. Compared with the old HS, these classes would enable our students to connect their language courses with more traditional business content. We retained the Applied Learning Experience, a requirement that was highly praised by our former students. In addition, with the goal of narrowing the gap between language and content courses, we decided that our next hire would be someone who specialized in Applied Linguistics.

5 Conclusion

The LCB, officially introduced in 2020, immediately attracted three students who chose it as their major. Equally importantly, when Bentley was going through its undergraduate core curriculum overhaul, the LCB was used as an example of a truly interdisciplinary major, which is exactly what students had been demanding.

A further 10 first year students selected LCB as their primary major in their college application in spring 2022. Though fairly new, we can now state confidently that LCB will surpass the HS major as a program that better fits Bentley. In summary, we can conclude that when designing language programs, it is crucial to understand your campus by highlighting the strengths of the faculty, performing a realistic analysis of course offerings, and meeting the demands of the students.

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Staying Afloat: Attracting Hebrew Language Students with Collaboration and the Use of Content Based Instruction



Adi Raz

Abstract Instigating change in established language programs is a difficult task. This chapter discusses the changes that occurred in the Hebrew language program at the University of Michigan from an instructor centered classroom to a student-focused flipped classroom approach. The article focuses on the changes that were made and their implementation with a discussion on the challenges of how instructor buy-in was achieved. After a pedagogical and methodological overhaul of the program transpired, there was an increase of 33% in student registration. Students expressed greater satisfaction with Hebrew classes and their language proficiency increased. A summary of changes and methodologies with instructor push-back and buy-in is discussed and reviewed in detail.

Keywords Flipped classroom · Content-based instruction · Student-centered classroom

The Hebrew program at the University of Michigan has a long and prosperous history. At its height, during the 1960s and 1970s, the program enrolled more than 250 students. As time passed, American students showed less interest in Israel and the Hebrew language for various reasons, such as regional politics; the number of students enrolled in the program dwindled. A broader trend that started around the beginning of the millennium resulted in fewer and fewer students learning world languages and enrollment declined across all languages, but especially the less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) (Looney & Lusin, 2019).

Students at the University of Michigan are able to choose from among 50 different languages. Some are spoken languages, and some are extinct languages such as Akkadian and Latin. The competition is fierce, and each program has to fight for enrollment. The largest language program is Spanish with nearly 2000 students enrolled. Most of the LCTLs have suffered a drop in students enrolled during the past few years due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic; at the University of

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Michigan, we saw that students prefer not to study a foreign language remotely. Therefore, the fight to attract students is difficult and requires programs to use progressive methodologies, the latest software technologies, and interesting content that is relevant to students' lives.

In 2016, I was hired as the director of the Modern Hebrew language program, in the Department for Near Eastern Studies at the University of Michigan. The program had stalled for a number of years, and not much had changed about the instructional approach. Traditionally, Modern.

Hebrew language classes in the United States have lacked structure and measurable progress, or a clear sense of purpose (Morahg, 2000). Additionally, many Hebrew classes have focused on decoding without understanding (Shohamy, 1999). My goal, and the department's, was to update the pedagogies used to better reflect contemporary teaching best practices and to bring the Modern Hebrew language program to the twenty-first century. However, there were many challenges that required attention in order to enact those changes.

1 Issues Encountered

1.1 An Outdated Textbook

At the time, the Modern Hebrew language program had been built around a textbook that focused on grammatical concepts, form, and verb conjugation. Students were rarely taught to apply these concepts in spoken language. Vocabulary was introduced in a specific context, but students struggled to transfer new words into different situations. The program's thirty-year-old textbook was outdated and riddled with stereotypes, archaic texts, and outdated pictures. Reading comprehension passages presented a nostalgic Israeli ideal that was relevant to the 1960s, such as the kibbutz, but not the reality of 2016, when only 3% of the Israeli population lived in such settlements. Students reported in their course reviews that they did not feel that the focus of their classes related to their lives or the lives of their peers in Israel. As a result, there was a disconnect between reality and what was offered in class. It also did not help that the primary textbook was intended for learners of Hebrew as a second language who were residing in Israel and focused on places they might encounter while touring the country. To the average American student who may have never visited Israel, the content felt disjointed; students showed little interest in places they had never visited nor heard of.

1.2 Non-communicative Approach

Instructors often hewed closely to the textbook, treating it as a manual, methodically working through every single page. The teaching lacked flexibility; the focus of the course was to complete the textbook. Students were engrossed in completing

countless worksheets, learning verb charts by heart, and doing fill-in-the-blank exercises. Feedback from students showed that Hebrew classes were “just not fun,” and were a requirement that needed to be fulfilled towards their degree. Often, worksheets were recycled from year to year and no relevant content about students’ lives or current world events were applied.

In classes, students were asked to recite phrases and repeat sentences as a chorus spoken by the instructor, as was done many years ago when the audio-lingual method was popular. Thus, Hebrew learners heard mostly their instructors’ voices and were not exposed to different voices and accents of other native speakers.

The textbook was focused on learning vocabulary words that were taught out of context. Students were given word lists to learn by heart, but they were not proficient in knowing how to apply them in different situations or how to apply them in their written work.

In terms of writing, students were asked to write in specific patterns given by the teacher, rather than using their own voice, critical thinking, or imagination in order to build their own stories and narratives. Students were discouraged and felt stifled because they were not able to creatively express their abilities as they were in other college classes.

1.3 The “Sage on the Stage” Phenomenon

Many of the activities in the classroom relied on the teacher being the “sage on the stage”. The instructor stood at the front of the classroom and did most of the speaking. Instructors used class time to teach new materials, apply grammatical concepts through the use of worksheets, which were often evaluated by the instructor during class time. Class time could have been better availed if these activities were done by the students in their own time. By relying on these more traditional methods, the instructors created a class environment that revolved around them rather than the students. Instructors refused to consider or apply new teaching techniques and methodologies, claiming that there was no need to make any changes to their “tried and true” methods.

1.4 Resistance to Professional Development

Although the University of Michigan has a thriving Language Resource Center that offers great professional development opportunities, technological assistance, and support for language instructors, none of the Hebrew instructors were willing to participate in any of these workshops, seminars, or lectures. When asked why they did not take advantage of these opportunities, their response was that the workshops did not apply to the Hebrew language, they already knew what was being presented, or they did not have the time to invest in these presentations. By skipping these professional development opportunities, instructors also lost the chance to meet

instructors from other language programs and create a community of practitioners which would form a support system for them.

1.5 Everyone for Themselves

The instructors were stuck in their own bubbles. Each instructor came to teach his or her own classes, but the instructors rarely collaborated with one another, or with other language professionals in different departments. Instructors did not share materials or ideas with their peers or discuss what they were doing in the classroom. There was a distinct lack of trust among peers that created an environment in which colleagues were hesitated to share information for fear of being criticized during program meetings. Instructors chose to remain silent and not cooperate during program meetings, which made change slow and difficult. The mood was openly hostile, as evidenced by some instructors' efforts to unite together to resist the imminent changes the department was about to implement.

2 Making Changes

2.1 New Methodologies Versus Traditional Instruction

As new instructors, trained in updated methodologies of foreign language instruction, were hired, a distinct resistance formed. Two camps were created: the old versus the new. Novice instructors came to the program with fewer years of teaching experience but updated methods in second language acquisition education, knowledge of new technologies, and the will to be vectors of change. They were open to trying new methods of teaching and were well versed in current research. The new hires were motivated to prove themselves and adapt to the needs of the Hebrew program. Veteran instructors came with many years of teaching, but had largely not updated their teaching approach in many years. Both sides stood their ground, which caused confusion, tension, and a lack of communication between the senior instructors and the novice instructors. The absence of cooperation was detrimental to the program, which in turn impacted the program's students who moved from one instructor to the next each semester. There was no program cohesion and no real outlined curriculum. A student was taught a particular Hebrew song during the first semester, and again that same song the next semester with another instructor. Teachers did not communicate with one another to discuss their instructional goals, and a lot of time was wasted within the classes as a result. The program was in need of cohesion, and thus one of the first orders of business was to write and implement overarching goals for the entire Hebrew program and apply them across courses and instructors. The bigger challenge was to get everyone on board with these changes, and to have them commit to actually applying them in their courses.

2.2 Empowering Instructors with Training

In order to invigorate the Modern Hebrew language program at the University of Michigan, extensive steps were taken. My goal (and that of the Middle Eastern Studies department) was, on the one hand, to preserve existing personnel, but ensure proper mentoring and support to enable them to update their teaching practices to include better content, engaging activities that promote students' voices, and new technology. Hopefully, they would be open to and even embrace the new modifications to the curriculum and instruction methodologies. On the other hand, it was important to empower new instructors to bring innovative ideas, techniques, and technologies to the program and hopefully these new methods would also invigorate the instructors who had been part of the program for many years.

All instructors were encouraged to participate in workshops, seminars, and lectures to update their teaching methods and styles. Instructors were asked to attend a modified Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) workshop with an ACTFL (American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages) trainer who is also a renowned Hebrew researcher and a native speaker of Hebrew. They were able to relate all the material taught in the seminar specifically to the Hebrew language classroom. Understanding how to assess proficiency of spoken language, learning the universal guidelines of ACTFL, and understanding what instructors need to focus on in the classroom, allowed the Hebrew instructors to comprehend how to read the ACTFL rubrics and apply the standards of effective language instruction.

2.3 Flipping the Classroom

The “flipped classroom” approach was adopted into all of the Hebrew courses, and instructors were educated on how this method of teaching works. In many cases it was hard work to convince the instructors that students could be challenged, and would be able to introduce themselves to materials at home on their own. The goal was to strategically use class time to activate materials students first saw at home, and to focus primarily on activities that students could not achieve alone at home, such as conversing in Hebrew with their classmates. Using the flipped classroom approach, students would spend 5 h a week in the classroom, but were also expected to invest another 8 h every week at home learning new vocabulary, introducing themselves to grammatical constructs, doing grammar exercises, reading, and listening to comprehension exercises. By focusing class time on activating the skills students were introduced to at home, we were able to more than double students' exposure to the Hebrew language, and thereby achieve a higher proficiency level in a short period of time, an achievement also noted by Basal (2015).

In order to maximize students' work at home, the following technological applications were incorporated into the curriculum:

OCILL (Online Component of Intensive Language Learning) – an automated drill system that allows students to work on homework exercises at home and receive immediate feedback. This was created for “Right to Left” languages, which are not well supported with the usual learning management systems such as Canvas or Blackboard. With the use of OCILL, there was no need to have students work on worksheet drills during class time, thereby allowing more time for discussions, debates, role-play, and group work.

“Yours Truly” listening comprehension curriculum – Despite a strong focus on bringing authentic materials into the Hebrew language classroom, this program was selected because of its relevance to students; the curriculum discusses problems and issues college students face, such as love, friendships, their studies, and other relationships with friends, family, and professors. The issues discussed are timeless yet relevant even more than a decade after they were written.

2.4 Empowering Students with Content-Based Instruction

A novel approach to language instruction was introduced to the program. The program shifted away from teaching uninteresting stand-alone materials, such as grammatical exercises, drills, and reading short texts that were unrelated to one another. Instead, a content-based instruction (CBI) approach was taken by focusing on an inquiry-driven content-based instruction method (Camarata, 2016). The beginner and intermediate level courses were redesigned to revolve around themes that related to one another using television shows, informational videos, short movies, graphic novels, and television commercials. The advanced courses were redesigned to be based on revolving, high-interest themes, such as medical ethics, start-up nation, Israel’s foreign policy, and others. The courses revolve entirely around these themes and use news articles and videos, television shows, and podcasts. The idea was to introduce students to different apps, methods of instruction, and authentic materials that would expose learners to different registers of Hebrew language.

2.5 Current and Relevant Online Israeli Culture

Apps like TikTok and Instagram are extremely popular among university students in Israel and the United States. Therefore, the Hebrew program is now attentive to these interests and TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp are now part of the curriculum. Students are asked to search social media when they are learning about thematic topics. Hebrew discussion groups are formed on WhatsApp. Students are encouraged to respond to tweets on topics they are following on Twitter, and create their own Instagram posts.

Another central part of current culture is the Israeli news cycle, so the Hebrew program exposes students to Israeli news pieces starting as early as the first semester of language learning. Students are also asked to comment in the discussion section of articles and new pieces on Israeli media. Often they may respond to other Israeli native speakers online, and have a back and forth conversation in the comment section as they might do when responding to an article in English. After the initial fright of posting their opinion in Hebrew for all to see, students have commented on how much they have enjoyed their interaction with Israelis online.

Online social-media apps are also a great way to create project based learning for the language classroom. Often after watching, discussing, and criticizing TikTok videos, students are asked to create their own short video and post it on the App for the world to see. These videos are then presented in class and are a way for students to show their language skills in a creative manner. This is a way for instructors to move from traditional modes of assessment to a more creative, functional, and fun way for students to show what they can do.

2.6 Adjusting Curricula Based on Student Interests

As mentioned previously, the Hebrew program has also made adjustments based on student interest. Upper-level topics courses were developed on themes in which students had expressed interest. While the program cannot completely bend to every student whim, a good example of adjusting the curricula to meet students where they are was the reading curriculum. Student feedback taught us that most are not avid readers in English, and have a hard time committing the time or energy to read a novel, meaning the previous approach of working through textbook short stories was not effective. Therefore, we decided to focus the reading curriculum on graphic novels (Öz & Efecioglu, 2015). Starting in the second semester, students read a graphic novel in all our courses. Graphic novels are a gateway to literacy and are a way to reach reluctant readers (Weiner, 2010). Outside of the scaffolding benefits that graphics provide, such as contextual clues for understanding (Meuer, 2018), students see and learn spoken vernacular. Students often do not have a window into the inner depths of people's thoughts in real life, and these novels allow them to see how native speakers would interact in real life situations.

2.7 Use of Authentic Materials

In the past, the use of authentic materials was limited to songs or newspaper articles. The expense of materials and the shipping time limited the materials instructors could access, making it hard to keep up with current Israeli culture. In this day and age, access to authentic materials is easy, and accessible to all through YouTube.

Most Israeli television networks upload a variety of their programming onto their YouTube channels, and most of these videos are available to anyone worldwide. In addition, podcasts in Hebrew are widely available through Israeli media outlets and provide valuable listening practice for students on a wide variety of topics.

A joint online catalog of materials was created for all the Hebrew instructors so they would be able to access relevant links. Instructors were encouraged to create questions and activities for the videos and to share them with their peers. The idea was to allow everyone access to all of the authentic materials and to work together as a team and not as individuals. While not all instructors relate to each and every video, having a reservoir of different clips allows them to choose the one they feel comfortable engaging with. The goal was to create a feeling of collaboration in the program that would hopefully lead to future teamwork and partnerships among the instructors. This also allowed us to streamline activities and videos and to create transparency of what each instructor is teaching in their classroom thereby not duplicating materials taught at different levels to the same students.

3 Challenges in Implementation

Implementation of change was complex and needed to be done slowly. Some of the instructors felt that there was no need to conduct any changes because students were enrolling in the program. However, enrollment occurred because Hebrew is a heritage language to many of our students and they registered because of previous background in the language. The Hebrew program at the University of Michigan is one of the largest in the United States. The department felt that cohesiveness was lacking, and creating a smoother transition from different courses and instructors was needed. By hiring a new program director, it was the hope of the department to create change, cohesiveness and to update the program's pedagogy, use of technology, and language teaching effectiveness.

One of the first orders of business was creating a team. The instructors were used to working alone and not cooperating with one another. Program meetings were held on a weekly basis and basic rules of communication were implemented. The instructors needed to be reminded how to talk to each other and to learn to trust each other. Focus on defining the program's goals and outcomes were part of weekly discussions in the hopes of creating collective guidelines together to allow instructors to feel they are part of the process. It was a steep learning curve and periodic reminders on rules of conduct were needed in order to maintain respectful interactions. The department was very supportive of these changes and hired a consultant who met separately with each of the instructors, and later with the program as a whole to discuss how to implement the changes that were needed. Having an outsider reframe the discussion and narrative was extremely helpful for mutual understanding and dialogue.

During weekly program meetings, instructors were asked to share activities or technology that they used in the classroom, that were successful, or they were proud of. By observing others and sharing activities, instructors were willing to take more

chances and try new pedagogy and methodology in their language classes. However, the instructors with a more traditional approach were hesitant and only willing to try new methodologies if they were given ready-made materials and instructions on how to run activities. For example, as part of a thematic art unit, a scavenger hunt using the App “Goose Chase” was created and instructors were given access to use it. Everyone was willing to adapt this activity into their lesson plan, and students praised the activity with feedback such as “this was fun”, “I loved working in teams and competing against other students”.

A shift was done in assessment practices. While there are still some traditional forms of evaluations like tests and quizzes, more focus has been placed on project-based learning. Student creativity was encouraged and semester long projects and portfolios were implemented. Some instructors were hesitant to make the change and claimed that abandoning testing would create more opportunities for plagiarism and cheating. These claims were counteracted with a scaffolded project design that required students to hand in their work at different stages of the project to show their progress and thought process. Modalities such as videos, comic strips, presentations, or written essays were used for these projects to meet the preferences and needs of different learners in the classroom. Students commented that they “learned much more doing a project than learning for an exam”. While students were not graded on their artistic talents, they were able to showcase their creative abilities, and were excited to work on these projects. This in turn caused the instructors to be proud of their students’ achievements, and they were often willing to showcase their students’ work during program meetings and on the department website for all to see. Instructors were suddenly willing to share in the program meetings what they were doing in class and discuss how to replicate the projects they were assigning to their students.

Using authentic materials was encouraged. Television shows, news pieces, newspaper articles, graphic novels, weather reports, podcasts, and movies were prioritized over adapted materials. However, using live internet links requires constant monitoring of Israeli television networks, newspapers, and social media. The goal is to stay current with Israeli culture and trends. Not everyone is willing to invest the time and energy needed to do so. Therefore, I have taken this upon myself to do so. The other problem encountered with live links is that they may disappear. Copyright laws prevent downloading materials without expressed permission. Several attempts were made to contact the three major networks and news outlets to grant permission to download. These requests have not been answered. Therefore, loss of live links are sometimes part of the process, but this is an opportunity to update and use current materials and with that remain relevant and in tune with what is going on in the world.

Lastly, having a supportive university and department environment is crucial to growing a language program. Funding by the department for a human resources consultant, funding to invite guest lecturers, workshops, technological support from the university Language Resource Center (LRC), and a dedicated Judaic studies librarian available to assist in accessing authentic materials is integral to having a successful program. The LRC also supports workshops and is open to suggestions for guest speakers from different language programs across campus.

4 Outcomes

Change did not occur overnight. This was a long process that took several years. During this time trust was built, teamwork prevailed, and the program changed. Getting the trust of the senior instructors was not an easy task; at first, focusing on working with the new instructors was the easiest approach to achieving goals. As time went on, some of the senior instructors left, while others were eager to cooperate and adapted to the vision of the new program. They were willing to attend some professional development opportunities, and modernize their instruction and lesson plans; it was a long process that required a lot of mentoring, patience, and attention.

By the second year many aspects of the program were remodeled, and enrollment was up 33%. As word spread, students were more interested in the program. Students' postings on social media such as the university sub-Reddit group, showed that they were pleased with the changes that were occurring in the Hebrew courses. Posts such as "Hebrew at UofM is kinda great", made the long and difficult road of revamping a program worth the hard work and the many months it took to start seeing changes.

Updating and changing teaching pedagogies is not an easy task, but doing so expanded the Hebrew program and created a professional teaching and learning environment both for instructors and students.

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Innovative Strategies for Stabilizing Enrollment in Korean as a Foreign Language (KFL) Education



Young-mee Yu Cho and Hee Chung Chun

Abstract Korean Foreign Language (KFL) education in the U.S. reached a turning point in the mid-1980s, spurred by the rising international visibility of two Koreas and demographic changes happening on college campuses. Until the “Korean Wave” reached North America in the early twenty-first century KFL classes comprised of overwhelmingly heritage students. The past decade has seen a complete shift in student demographics, characterized by superdiversity of the student population. This chapter documents how KFL programs in higher institutions achieved a strong institutional presence by stabilizing enrollment through unprecedented demographic changes over the past three decades. Effective strategies include creating degree programs that attract existing and new learner populations (e.g., Korean major and minor), securing faculty positions and qualified teaching staffs (e.g., an in-house teacher-training program), enlarging community involvement (e.g., better articulation between secondary and tertiary education, translation programs, heritage learner certification), and reconfiguring the curriculum and adopting innovative pedagogical approaches to accommodate diverse students (e.g., implementing online courses/placement tests and flipped learning, developing general Korean culture courses). We conclude by demonstrating how enrollment stabilization has resulted in qualitative enhancement, overall flexibility of the curriculum beyond mere numbers, and strategic expansion into hitherto uncharted territories.

Keywords KFL · Enrollment stabilization · Degree programs · Student demographics

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1 Introduction

Korean Foreign Language (KFL) education in the U.S. was initiated in the 1940s by a handful of military contractors in the Cold War environment and then stagnated for four decades, limited to a handful of small programs in Hawaii and the two coasts. The turning point arrived in the mid-1980s, spurred by (1) the rising international visibility of two Koreas and (2) demographic changes happening on college campuses. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished the National Origins Formula, enforced since the 1920s, and began the trend of a massive influx of Korean immigrants, resulting in an increasing population of Korean American students during the 1980s.¹ In the 1980s and 1990s learners in KFL classes were overwhelmingly heritage students, until the “Korean Wave” reached North America in the early twenty-first century (Cho et al., 2021a).

The twenty-first century has seen another complete shift in learner demographics, characterized by an increasing number of multilingual learners from multicultural backgrounds in the classroom, often referred to as “superdiversity” (Vertovec, 2007). Cho et al. (2021a) examine the developmental paths of Korean programs at four large state universities. Each institution has a unique KFL program history of 10–25 years, with its own geographic, demographic, and academic characteristics. Local challenges and practical solutions for these challenges are identified as follows: Georgia State University (GSU)’s starting a new program through community engagement, University of Minnesota (UMN)’s reconfiguring the curriculum with rapidly changing demographics, University of Toronto’s fine-tuning the curriculum for program expansion, and Rutgers’ strengthening the program by stabilizing enrollment.

This chapter is a further elaboration on the case of Rutgers in order to demonstrate how KFL programs in North American higher institutions can achieve a strong institutional presence by stabilizing enrollment through an unprecedented demographic change over two decades. In particular, we illustrate four strategies successfully employed by Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. These effective strategies are [1] creating degree programs that attract existing and new learner population, [2] securing faculty positions and qualified teaching staff, [3] enlarging community engagement, and [4] reconfiguring the curriculum and adopting innovative pedagogical approaches to accommodate diverse students. We conclude by demonstrating how enrollment stabilization has resulted in the qualitative enhancement and overall flexibility of the curriculum beyond mere numbers.

¹According to Gibson and Jung (2006), the numbers of Korean immigrants in the U.S. are as follows: 11,171 (1960), 38,711 (1970), 289,885 (1980), 568,397 (1990), 864,125 (2000). The census data shows new numbers: 1,071,527 (2010) and 1,048,588 (2020) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

2 Innovative Strategies for Stabilizing Enrollment

Thanks to the remarkable quantitative growth of KFL learners over the past two decades, the Korean language is currently ranked as the 11th most popularly taught world language in the U.S. Between 1998 and 2016, Fall enrollments of the Korean language increased from 4479 to 13,936, an increase of over 3 times. In addition, the latest estimate shows a 31% increase between 2016 and 2021 (Lusin, this volume). Despite its expansion, the Korean language is still classified as one of the Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs), in contrast to the “Big Three” (Spanish, French, and German) that are most frequently offered in secondary education, but its prominence among the LCTLs is partially due to the designation of one of the “languages critical to national security” by the National Security Education Program (NSEP), along with languages like Arabic, Persian, Hindi, Mandarin, and Russian.

Out of 7.5 million Koreans residing outside of the Korean peninsula, 2.5 million Koreans (34% of the entire Korean diaspora) live in North America. Among Asian Americans in the U.S., Koreans are the fifth largest group, after Chinese, South Asian Indian, Filipino, and Vietnamese (Pew Research Center, 2021).²

2.1 *Creating Degree Programs*

What is significant is that not only the number of tertiary institutions in North America offering Korean courses has increased over the past 20 years but many of these KFL programs have grown into full-fledged programs. According to the homepage of the American Association of Teachers of Korean (aatk.org), 87 out of 106 colleges/universities that offer Korean language offer three or more years of Korean language courses.³ In addition, about half of the schools also offer Korean studies content courses such as Korean culture, cinema, literature, and linguistics. More encouraging is the fact that 71 programs (67%) out of 106 institutions, offer a Korean major, Korean minor, or language certificate programs. Establishment of degree and certificate programs is possible only when a fully articulated KFL curriculum is developed, often with four or more levels of language instruction and multiple faculty positions in language and culture. A few KFL programs that include a graduate component (M.A. or Ph.D.) produce the next generation of Korean teachers.

How creating degree programs contributes to stabilizing enrollment can be seen from a case study from Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. As a leading research university founded in 1766, it accommodates more than 70,000 students and 8700 faculty members. About 81% of the student body are residents of

²The six largest groups are Chinese (24%), Indian (21%), Filipino (19%), Vietnamese (10%), Korean (9%), and Japanese (7%).

³This figure includes 12 Canadian colleges/universities.

New Jersey and the rest comes from all other U.S. states and 125 countries, which makes Rutgers one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse campuses in both the nation and among the 14 schools in the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA), a half-century-long collaboration among mostly midwestern research universities (www.btaa.org).

The Department of Asian Languages and Cultures is now the home of three programs in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, and offers a well-developed sequence of language programs. The Korean minor requires four Korean language courses above the 100-level and two courses in Korean language/culture and has contributed to a gradual increase in enrollment. The minor in Korean was established in the early 2000s when the Korean program instituted a stable four-level Korean language curriculum, augmented by a handful of Korean studies content courses. However, a real change occurred with the implementation of the Korean major in Fall 2018. Until then, the only major programs in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures were Major in Chinese and Major in Asian Studies (with focus on Chinese, Japanese, and Korean). The impetus to establish Major in Korean and Major in Japanese on par with Major in Chinese mainly came from the two factors: increased enrollments in Korean and Japanese courses and pursuit for equity in the department resources in the three languages. Thanks to the establishment of Korean Major, the program was able to hire two more faculty members (one tenure-track and the other in a non-tenure track position). The program regularly had a very high enrollment in Elementary Korean courses but there was a steep attrition rate at the intermediate and advanced levels as there was no major to maintain continuing student interest. The enrollment statistics over the past 9 years attested to the growth: from 293 students per year in the AY 2013–14 to 767 in the AY 2021–22 (see Fig. 1).

The Korean major is a logical extension of the Korean minor in that it has a language training component, a culture component, and a common experience for East Asian majors, with 36 credits distributed as follows: six courses in Korean

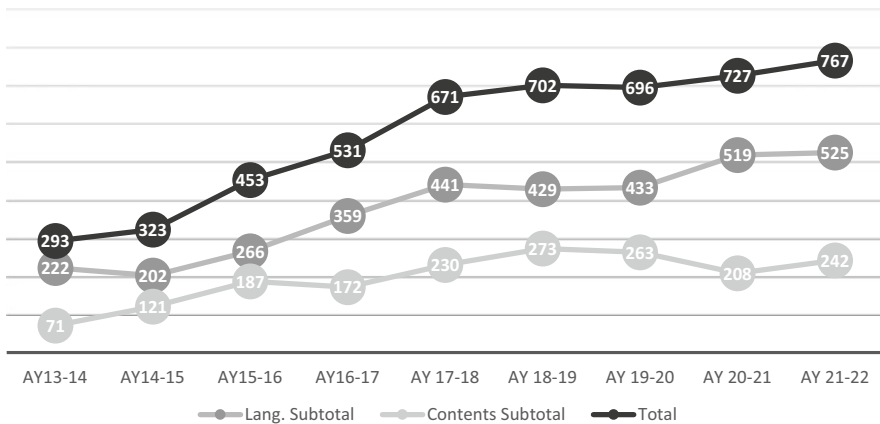


Fig. 1 Enrollments in Korean studies courses at Rutgers

language above the 100-level, four courses in Korean culture, one course on East Asian Civilization, and the capstone seminar.

The implementation of the Korean major was preceded by a strategic expansion of the Korean course offerings. In close cooperation with the Korean American community in the state of New Jersey, the department offered the first KFL course in Fall 1992 and began to expand course offerings thanks to great enthusiasm and wide publicity of the university and the local community. As of Fall 2022, the program has three tenure-track positions in Korean Studies and two non-tenure-track teaching professors along with 6–9 part-time lecturers (PTLs), a remarkable growth since the first tenure-track position was created in 1996. When the department resources were allocated appropriately to the Korean program, the enrollment doubled and Korean language students outnumbered those of Chinese in 2018 and Japanese in 2022. Similarly, Korean content courses (e.g., Korean culture, literature, cinema, history, and linguistics courses taught in English) comprise a relatively small portion of the entire program's enrollment, but enrollment in those courses has also doubled during the last 8 years of program expansion (from 121 to 242 between 2014 and 2022).

The degree programs in the Korean language have helped develop a clear linguistic identity among students that is based on the regional commonalities and shared features of language, culture, and history in East Asia. Rutgers is the only educational institution in New Jersey with Chinese, Japanese, and Korean undergraduate major programs, thus positioning Asian languages and cultures to serve the highly diverse demographics of the state. The individual majors in each of the three East Asian languages distinguish the program from most institutions with an Asian Studies program with the focus on Korean embedded in their major programs. When the establishment of degree program is not readily available, a certification program could contribute to program expansion and function as a bridge in creating major and minor programs in the future. Several KFL programs also offer a certification program to attract a sustained interest and secure steady enrollment. Certification programs could be utilized to reach out to a student population that is not served well within standard major/minor degree programs.

In addition to the Korean minor and major, the Rutgers Korean Program set to reach out to a segment of the student population that has not been as well served as learners with no prior Korean language background. Despite the demographics data on the Korean-speaking population in New Jersey and Rutgers student demographics (Korean and Korean American students comprising 9% (around 3000 students) of the entire Rutgers student body according to 2010 data), currently heritage students make up only 19% of enrollments in lower-level Korean language courses (even with two courses specifically designed for heritage learners: K103, K203: Korean Reading and Writing for Heritage Students) and 29% of upper-level courses. The 2021 AATK School Survey Project conducted by Cho et al. (2021b), represented in the AATK homepage, and a recent publication (Cho et al., 2021b) demonstrate that this trend is not only limited to the Rutgers Korean program. To adequately address Korean heritage language (KHL) education in collegiate KFL education, we needed to develop strategies to meet local community needs and national priorities by training heritage students to achieve Advanced/Superior

Levels, as Korean is one of the Critical Languages designated by the US Federal Government. At Rutgers, two certificate programs have been developed in the past 4 years specifically to address under-served students, students with a prior background in the Korean language, namely The Certificate of Academic Korean for Heritage Speakers Program (AKHS) and The Korean–English Translation/Interpreting Certification Program (KETI). The latter is discussed in the section, “Enlarging Community Involvement.”

The AKHS will be launched in Fall 2023, which is limited to Korean heritage speakers through placement testing and/or interviews. It intends to build on their home experience to develop Korean proficiency through academic training. The target audience is heritage learners with a wide spectrum of linguistic/cultural competence, ranging from students who have completed K103 and 203 (beginning and intermediate fast-track courses specifically designed for heritage students) to those who are fluent in listening and speaking but wish to develop their professional oral registers and literacy skills. These skills can be effectively applied to future employment in connection with the students’ own majors or professional fields such as Business, Health, Journalism, Law, Social Work, or the Language Industries.

The AKHS certificate requires nine credits of upper-level language courses “at the appropriate placement level,” which will motivate students to aim for high proficiency and critical understanding of Korean language. In addition, it aims to educate students to reach a certain level of critical understanding of Korean language and society, as well as to delve into their ethnic and linguistic identities through the required capstone course, *Topics in Korean Language and Linguistics*. As a separate track specifically designed for students outside of the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, AKHS reaches out to students across diverse schools within the university such as Business, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, Social Work, Pharmacy, and others. In sum, these highly specialized certificate programs will help increase and sustain overall student enrollment by attracting a population of students outside of the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures and having them commit themselves to a goal that they find relevant for their individual academic and/or personal pursuits.

2.2 *Securing Teaching Staff*

Despite the absence of a university-wide language requirement for graduation, Korean courses have grown to be one of the most popular language courses in the past decade. As shown in Fig. 1, almost two-thirds of the program’s entire enrollment is from KFL enrollments. Although its robust growth has positively contributed to the recent faculty expansion, it posed unexpected challenges in running the program. There was enough student demand for KFL courses, especially in the lower levels. However, the lack of qualified instructors prevented us from creating multiple sections of the beginning and intermediate level courses, and it was not easy to achieve the overall curriculum coherence by creating and streamlining advanced

courses. Before Fall 2020, only two full-time faculty members were assigned for teaching and administering the language program, where multiple sections had to be coordinated and hundreds of placement tests had to be administered annually. As a result, the program heavily relies on PTLs to offer an additional five to eight courses per semester. To run a fully functioning four-level KFL program, six to nine PTLs were hired each semester. Since the university does not provide visa support for PTLs, the pool of experienced and capable instructors was even more limited. Therefore, Korean instructors are hired from the local Korean American community and their training is up to the KFL faculty in the program.

The lack of qualified teaching staff contributed to the severe attrition rate from Fall to Spring semester. It was most severe in the elementary level: as much as 40% of students dropped out after the first semester. This was partly due to the large class size, which prevented instructors from paying proper attention to students’ learning and progress. The severe decrease in enrollment from elementary to intermediate levels had a very negative impact on upper-level enrollment in subsequent years, a concern for Korean degree programs that require advanced level courses. A solution came from a rather unexpected opportunity. In 2008 the Korean program was given an opportunity for in-house KFL teacher training with the New Jersey K–12 Korean Teacher Certification Program initiated. In coordination with the World Language Institute at the Language Center and the Graduate School of Education, the Korean Program has facilitated ten of the eleven Korean teachers in New Jersey to obtain their certification (see Chun & Cho, 2018 for detailed information). The training consists of a system of KFL pedagogy instruction, hands-on training such as practicum of shadowing full-time instructors, class observation, student tutoring, demo teaching, and teaching portfolio development. While most candidates landed a teaching position in a middle or high school in New Jersey, some remained at Rutgers after certification to teach multiple sections of lower-level language courses. By tapping into the pool of teacher candidates who have had the first-hand experience of teaching at Rutgers, the program was able to reap the benefit of well-coordinated in-house teacher training. Now the program offers multiple sections of elementary and intermediate level courses and was able to reduce the class size to 16–20 students per class, as shown by Table 1.

With more qualified instructors, the program aimed for more flexible course offerings. First, it launched an accelerated track for heritage students, which made it possible to accommodate heritage students’ needs and facilitate their learning based on their existing linguistic and cultural resources. The establishment of the heritage track has led to the development of AKHS, discussed in 2.1. The accelerated track allows students to complete the 2-year curriculum in 1 year, reaching the

Table 1 Rutgers Korean language courses: Elementary Korean sections and class size

	AY 2013–2014	AY 2021–2022
Number of sections	2	12
Average class size (number of students)	28	19
Number of instructors	1 TT, 1 NTT	1 NTT, 4PTLs

advanced level sooner than non-heritage students, which also contributes to stabilizing upper-level enrollment. Secondly, summer online courses were added in 2016, with two benefits: (1) the early adoption of online format reaching out beyond the Rutgers community for student recruitment and (2) the opportunity for summer students to move up to the next level during the regular semester. Lastly, it started to offer an interlaid schedule for lower-level courses. Breaking from the age-old tradition of scheduling the first semester of the elementary and intermediate sequence only in the Fall semester, both the first and the second half of each sequence were offered in both semesters. The new schedule allowed flexibility in students' scheduling and resulted in attracting a new population of students who are not able to start their learning in the Fall due to other obligations. This cross-scheduling was especially beneficial in boosting the Spring enrollment, hard-hit by severe attrition. Some KFL programs have also designed a slow track for elementary courses where the curriculum for one semester is covered over two semesters. The slow track provides students, especially seniors, with an opportunity to include Korean learning in their academic map before graduation. As demonstrated in these innovations, the increase in the enrollment cannot be sustained without securing qualified staff. In sum, training teaching staff resulted in multiple benefits, including (1) the availability of teachers to conduct multiple sections with smaller class sizes, (2) addressing the needs of special students, thus bringing in a new population of students, (3) adding flexibility to the program with faster and slower track courses and interlaying of courses, and (4) creating courses that link language with content (such as *Exploring Seoul Through Films*, *Korean Business Culture*, *Revisiting Gender, Class and "Alienness" in Korean Culture*, and *East Asian Contribution to World Cuisine*).

2.3 *Enlarging Community Involvement*

KFL education is now established as an independent area within the large context of world language (WL) education. By the mid-1990s, WL education had matured enough to call for national standards that would transcend local practices and articulate a common set of goals and guidelines across all WL education in North America. The Standards for Korean Language Learning (Korean National Standards Task Force, 2012), a collaborative result between the AATK and K-12 Korean teachers, finally placed Korean as a Second Language (KSL) in the proper context of WL education.

While it is agreed by all WL educators that the five Cs (*Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities*) in National Standards should be equally integrated into any WL curriculum, the last three have not been explored as extensively as the first two. In particular, *Communities* gets minimal attention in the classroom as its goals transcend the physical confines of the classroom and are hard to implement in day-to-day instruction. Hence it is often called "the lost C" (Cutshall, 2012). However, if we accepted the *Communities* goals as developing the

learner's ability to "communicate and interact with cultural competence in order to participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world" (Korean Standards, p. 549), KFL educators could readily work towards (1) the use of the Korean language to interact in the local community and the globalized world, and (2) encouraging students to reflect on their progress in using the language for enjoyment, enrichment, and advancement. *Korean Standards* was applied in KFL curricula in the tertiary education with "College Korean Curriculum Inspired by National Standards for Korean" (Cho, 2015).

In today's world where social networking services and online resources enable crossing geographical and political boundaries, *Communities* is no longer narrowly defined as the local Korean American community and the home country Korea but as many possibilities, reaching beyond the classroom, the entire university, local communities, global Korean-speaking communities, both physical and virtual in learners' pursuits of mutual interests and common goals. Virtual and physical communities offer truly interactive opportunities and student-initiated modes of learning.

At this critical juncture of human civilization, the importance of community engagement cannot be emphasized enough in WL education. It is even more so in state universities where the student population is largely drawn from the state. For Rutgers, the foremost community engagement comes from educating heritage learners from the local populations, K-12 teacher training, and implementing a translation/interpreting program. As mentioned in the section on "Securing Teaching Staff," K-12 expansion of KFL education is positively affecting the university program. A KFL teacher certificate program has multiple benefits as it produces qualified teachers not only for the community but also for the university itself at this time of great KFL expansion. It also secures a better transition between secondary and tertiary settings. When KFL education is expanding in secondary schools, spurred by the increasing popularity of Korean pop culture among high school students, it is extremely important to improve K-16 articulation through a better communication between high schools and universities. An advanced or superior level of Korean proficiency is expected for academic purposes (e.g., advance to graduate schools) and career purposes in business and industry. However, 4 years of Korean language training in college is not usually sufficient, and the exposure to the Korean language, either as a heritage language or a world language early in the education system, is beneficial in today's world.

Unprecedented growth in KFL over the last two decades has allowed us to explore areas of emerging needs beyond the immediate needs for Korean for a general academic purpose. The demand for Korean translation/interpreting has steadily increased in California, New York, New Jersey, and Georgia. In particular, New Jersey is the state with the fourth-largest Korean population in the U.S. (U.S. Census, 2021). Bergen County in north Jersey has the highest concentration of Korean residents per capita and Palisade Park, a city in Bergen County, is the most heavily Korean municipality in the U.S. (Pérez-Peña, 2010). In order to meet the needs of the community within a globalizing intercultural framework and to provide bilingual students with opportunities for systematic learning, it was only natural to

develop certificate programs that have the potential of transforming language learning into a meaningful, lived experience in personal and public spheres.

To guide motivated students towards a clear practical goal, the Korean-English Translation-Interpreting Certificate Program (KETI) was launched in AY 2020–21. Despite the size of the Korean population in the New Jersey area, there exists almost no programs that professionally train translators and/or interpreters to serve in courts, hospitals, schools, and service agencies. There are no undergraduate academic programs in Korean–English translation/interpreting in North America. The KETI program focuses on providing bilingual students with opportunities for the systematic learning and a deeper understanding of the translation process and ethics and places the acquisition of practical skills to address local problems within a globalizing intercultural framework. It also allows students to realize that the language that they are investing time and effort to learn, not only exists in the textbook but also is part of real life in their immediate surroundings. By offering training in community translation/interpreting, the program seeks to engage students in performance-based projects that try to match the communication needs of service users with multi-dimensional skills of a translator/interpreter and constant practice in “real life” situations with evolving authentic materials (Kiraly, 2022). The KETI curriculum design has benefitted from the core insights of *backward design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). It starts by “determining acceptable evidence” of learning through assessment and builds up “learning events” based on definable goals throughout the entire span of KETI courses (*Practical Translation, Literature and Film Translation, Media Translation, Interpreting, and Internship*). The two goals of the KETI program are (1) promoting global competence and (2) improvement in overall language proficiency and translation ability.

In Spring 2022, there are 20 candidates in the KETI program, who are investing time and effort to learn not only exists in the textbook, but also is part of real life in their immediate surroundings. They learn to address local problems through the acquisition of practical skills. In addition, KETI has attracted nonmatriculated students (professionals in education and law) from the local community, which not only contributes to enrollment stabilization, but also to creating opportunities for meaningful engagement with community issues through collaborative group projects within class. Rutgers, as a flagship state university, is well-positioned to provide an invaluable educational format for lifelong learning for communities beyond campus.

2.4 *Reconfiguring the Curriculum Along Innovative Pedagogical Approaches*

In the era of superdiversity characterized by a spectrum of multilingual learners from multicultural backgrounds in the classroom (Vertovec, 2007), it is imperative to shift from a structuralist view of WL learning and envision opportunities for interdisciplinary experiences in the curriculum beyond the traditional language classroom. We

can no longer assume a monolithic group of KFL learners whose WL learning experience is limited to the classroom. Moreover, the internet constantly influences today's learners in all aspects of social, cultural, and political life.

National Standards was a cultural product of the structuralist language policies of the 1990s and the 2000s, but the more critical poststructuralist era brought about completely different approaches to language teaching, represented by second language identities (Block, 2007), symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2006, 2009), multiliteracies (The New London Group, 1996; Paesani & Allen, 2012), translanguaging (Garcia & Wei, 2013), and raciolinguistics (Flores & Rosa, 2015). These new, more flexible frameworks reconceptualize WL education as fostering dynamic critical thinking skills and deeper comprehension of the text and the world, a new direction, away from the traditional emphasis of Communicative Language Teaching on the learner's step-by-step development towards the predefined goal of communicative competency. These new theories focus on privileging fluid and uniquely individualistic language practices of multilingual speakers, forcing KFL educators to transcend the goal of incremental language development and adopt multilingual tools by developing an innovative Korean for Specific Purposes (KSP) curriculum in a college setting.

Here we discuss two pedagogical approaches recently adopted by the Rutgers Korean Program. First is reconfiguring the lower-level curriculum based on flipped learning. In hindsight, adopting flipped learning in the AY 2018–2019 was an excellent preparation for pandemic pedagogy. Flipped learning creates the individual learning space, and “the group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter” (Flipped Learning Network, 2014).

Flipped learning is adopted to address weaknesses in the traditional lecture-based classroom, where the instructors repurpose class time by creating online lectures and online vocabulary quizzes. Students are guided to utilize the individual learning space for self-paced lectures and self-evaluation while the instructors develop interactive practices and encourage creative engagement in class. Students are expected to reach Intermediate Low in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines by the end of the second year with 224 limited contact hours; in a typical traditional class over 40% of class time is spent on grammar explanations and vocabulary practice. In order to enhance Korean instruction, vocabulary learning is flipped by creating online learning materials available to Rutgers students. This project required digitalization in two parts: (1) converting the existing vocabulary lectures of each chapter (32 chapters in total) into a video/audio format and (2) converting the existing in-class paper/pencil vocabulary quizzes into an online format. For enhanced vocabulary acquisition, we offload a lecture part of the class, which has been automatically considered an obligatory component of language teaching, to the self-paced online format. For enhanced classroom activities, a series of tasks for each chapter were developed so that a more interactive, group-oriented, collaborative, and meaning-making classroom environment could be created.

The second pedagogical approach regards enhancing the advanced level curriculum. The Korean major, which was instituted in Fall 2018, requires students to demonstrate oral, reading, and writing proficiencies in the language and develop

critical skills in analyzing and interpreting literary, historical, and cultural texts. For the Korean major, a much higher level of proficiency and literacy is required than that for the existing Korean minor. The program is now focusing on optimizing students' learning processes by leading them to become active learners and providing them with a more flexible learning environment.

Contrary to lower-level growth, expanding upper-level courses required strategies that target two very specific populations: advanced-level heritage students who wish to take their first formal Korean course, and non-heritage students who are eager to take Korean courses beyond their Korean major/minor requirements. To better serve and retain these two separate groups, it was important to develop and offer a wide variety of Korean courses beyond the standard ladder courses that will motivate students to progress in the language and promote the acquisition of cultural and specific knowledge (e.g., Business Korean, Readings in Korean Literature, Translation, and Interpreting).

In order to devise more effective learning strategies and ultimately to help students achieve required proficiency within three to four years of study, the advanced level curriculum requires more individualized and differentiated instruction. Through two phases of developing Open Educational Resource (OER) textbooks since 2017, the program has completed a spiral sequence of multimodal units in five modules, thereby addressing the lack of relevant teaching materials in 300- and 400-level KFL courses as well as for the KETI program. Problems with adopting the above materials as required textbooks in our courses are manifold: (1) they are costly, even in cases where paperback editions are available, (2) many of the topics covered are neither relevant nor comprehensive enough (no practical translation such as medical, legal, or business translation, no coverage of multimodality other than written texts), (3) a few exercises in the books, when they are provided, are too restricted to be of much educational value for students (e.g., exercises of highly technical materials and outdated newspaper articles).

The KETI textbook is based on the modular curriculum design for Korean for Specific Purposes (KSP). The KSP curriculum is designed for intermediate-high to advanced students who have finished at least 2 years of "Korean for general academic purpose" courses at the Rutgers Korean Program. In order to fully incorporate the students' professional goals, needs and personal interests that were identified from a student focus group survey conducted in 2018, we are proposing the following five modules in Table 2. These modules also apply to advanced KFL courses other than translation courses.

The textbook focuses on building a series of open-ended and student-centered course materials that allow timely updating as current events evolve, a definite advantage of the OER format over traditional paper-based published textbooks. Moreover, the modular design accommodates flexibility in selecting topics and materials that are of particular interest and relevance in each semester. Although flexibility is given with the freedom to choose from diverse genres and different textual modes, a sequence of texts in each module is intentionally designed to provide a coherent system with the goal of building linguistic and cultural proficiency and critical literacy. We also incorporate student translation projects from

Table 2 KSP modules & subtopics

KSP Modules	Subtopics
1. Business	Corporate world, finance, advertisement
2. Arts/entertainment	Literature, music, art, entertainment business
3. Government/law	International relations (S. and N. Korea), human rights, court services, public announcements
4. Science	Medical language, public health, Media coverage of science
5. Language/culture	Education, Korean culture, translation studies

each semester as reference materials and for hands-on comparison and analysis purposes.

The program has been offering *Korean Practical Translation* since 2015 and *Korean Literature and Film Translation* and *Korean Media Translation* since 2016 and has accumulated a series of multimodal texts of various genres that are coded for target audiences, purposes, and circumstances. For the two new courses, *Korean Interpreting* and *Korean Interpreting/Translation Internship* offered for the first time in Spring 2021, it was imperative to compile authentic materials, both instructor-initiated and student-generated. The scope of the OER textbook is not limited to a collection of texts. There is a set of in-class activities for translation analyses, self-selected assignments, and reflection essay topics. Through the hands-on activities facilitated by the OER textbook, students develop skills in grammar, idioms, and conventions of both source and target languages, while learning about cultural and linguistic differences between Korean and English. Rather than requiring students to purchase reference books, the whole class works on compiling a glossary, using Computer-Assisted Translation tools, including Google Translate, Omega T, and Papago, which are freely available online. One of the goals of KETI is for students to learn to cooperate and work together with other translators through group work, coediting, critiquing, and discussion, again using freely available online resources. Also utilized are those tools that are already embedded in Canvas (such basic tools as FILE, DISCUSSION, and MEDIA GALLERY and more advanced tools like “hypothes.is”).

Pedagogical innovations such as Flipped Learning and OER textbooks contribute to enhancing the overall cohesion of the Korean curriculum by bridging the firm divide between language and content, still a norm in most WL programs. Against the common view of KFL courses as a “service” program for Korean Studies, building our own OER with primary materials helps transcend the language-content divide and implement the five Cs (Communication, Culture, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities) of the *National Standards in Korean Language Education* (Cho, 2015). Such a model also contributes to guiding other advanced-level courses such as *Business Korean* and *Readings in Korean Literature* towards the multiliteracies framework in the future.

Adopting innovative pedagogies beyond the standards-based approach includes translanguaging, flipped learning, and flexible teaching materials in a multiliteracies framework mentioned above. Such innovations have shown to improve students’

understanding of Korea and their Korean language skills, as well as critical thinking and global competence by encouraging students' fluid and unique linguistic and cultural resources in the KFL program, leading to enrollment increase.

3 Conclusion

In the past decade, strategies and plans to increase enrollment have resulted in the quantitative growth and the attending quantitative enhancement of KFL programs across North America. Increased enrollment brought about the ultimate stability of the program in many KFL programs. At Rutgers, the two-fold increase of student enrollment has resulted in the increase of full-time Korean studies faculty from three to five. In the past 5 years alone, the university has instituted the following, all with student enrollment in mind⁴: the decision to add a Korean major, bringing it on par with Chinese and Japanese in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures; securing qualified KFL teachers; developing certification programs based on stronger community engagement; and adopting novel approaches to teaching. The Rutgers case clearly illustrates that enrollment stabilization is closely tied to qualitative enhancement by offering coherence and flexibility in the curriculum and tapping into the areas of students' greatest needs.

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⁴As of Feb. 2022, there are 52 Korean minors (cf. 85 Japanese and 50 Chinese minors) and 15 Korean majors (cf. 16 Japanese and 20 Chinese minors).

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Trial, Error, and Success: Recruitment and Retention Initiatives in a Small German Program



Kristin Lange and Scott Windham

Abstract Declining language enrollments at US institutions of higher education (Looney & Lusin, 2019; Wylie, 2018) led the German faculty at Elon University to conduct two internal studies. The first study investigated learner motivation. Students were surveyed about reasons for continuing—or not continuing—their study of German. Students who did not plan to continue named the following: lack of perceived career relevance; full course loads, i.e. German was an interest but not a priority; or scheduling conflicts. In the second study, the faculty examined 5 years of enrollment data, finding that while 100-level enrollment declined (recruitment was weak), 200-level enrollment was stable and 300-level enrollment rose (retention was strong). We attribute the strong retention to initiatives emerging from the learner-motivation study. These initiatives focus on community, curriculum, and career. In this chapter, we outline these initiatives, their planning, and their implementation, and describe future initiatives to recruit students into beginning German. The goal of our chapter is to offer innovative but manageable initiatives that can be readily implemented by one or two faculty members. These initiatives require minimal resources and administrative support but can significantly enhance program vitality.

Keywords Retention · Recruitment · Small programs · Community

1 The German Program at Elon University

Elon University is a private, mid-size, liberal arts teaching university whose mission includes “preparing students to be global citizens and informed leaders motivated by concern for the common good.” German has always been considered part of that mission and has been offered since at least the 1940s, though staffing and course

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offerings have fluctuated over the decades. After a full-time, tenure-track hire in 2002, German enrollments and course offerings grew, as did Germany-focused courses in such disciplines as History and Philosophy. The minor in German Studies, with core courses in German and electives in associated disciplines, was added to the curriculum in 2005. Today, the German program is housed in the Department of World Languages and Cultures, which offers eight languages with Spanish and French drawing the most students. German features two full-time lines (the authors of this chapter), a part-time colleague with a primary appointment in English, a set curriculum, and regular course offerings for beginning, intermediate, and advanced learners. There are typically 40 to 60 German Studies minors at any given time.¹ The majority of our minors and many non-minors study abroad in semester, year-long, or summer programs in Heidelberg with American Junior Year or Berlin with CIEE. Approximately 25 students per year study in one of these programs. The German faculty also collaborates with Elon's School of Business to enroll students in the Dual Degree Business Program, in which students spend 2 years at Elon and 2 years at ES Business School in Reutlingen—recently ranked the top business school in Germany—to earn two undergraduate business degrees and a 6-month paid internship. Students can also travel to Germany during our January term, for instance with travel-embedded courses on classical composers, German media, or World War II.

One word to describe Elon's German program is *robust*. The curriculum and course offerings are robust, enrollments are robust, course sections are rarely cancelled due to under-enrollment or instructor vacancy, the program graduates roughly the same number of German Studies minors every year, and the advanced course² has enrolled each semester for the last 10 years. Institutional support for German at Elon is likewise robust: The dean, provost, and colleagues across campus supported the curricular expansion of the last 20 years, along with collaborative initiatives with departments (History, Philosophy) and schools and programs (School of Business, Global Education Center, general education). The university's language requirement can also be considered robust, as students either take two beginning courses or achieve a high score on the placement exam.

Regardless, the authors of this chapter felt a pressing need to learn more about students in the program and to understand their motivation to enroll—or not enroll—in subsequent courses. This investigation did not stem from a fear of program closure

¹The German Program at Elon has no catalog major; students have the option to design their own program of study via Elon's individualized major option. We graduated three German majors via this route, with two more on the way.

²We currently offer six advanced (300-level) courses, i.e. courses for students who have taken four semesters of German or the equivalent. Courses at this level either take a historical approach and familiarize students with trends and events that have shaped today's Germany (for example: Germany Between Empire and Nazism); or they take a thematic approach and discuss fundamental concepts that have shaped Germany and Germans for centuries (for example: *Heimat* – Where do we belong).

or from administrative pressure. Rather, we often found ourselves puzzled by individual students' decisions *not* to enroll in the next level, *not* to declare the minor, or to leave the program altogether. These students were academically successful in German courses and enjoyed the teaching styles, coursework, and sense of belonging in the German program. In addition, we were aware of closures at the high school and collegiate level (Johnson, 2019; Berner, 2015) as well as the looming demographic cliff (Boeckenstedt, 2022). These factors led us to the first of two recruitment and retention studies that we will describe in this chapter.

2 Learner Motivation Study

Together with colleagues from the Department of World Languages and Cultures, and supported by the university's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, Windham developed and piloted a questionnaire targeting learner motivation to begin, continue, or abandon language study. The survey was distributed online to all students enrolled in German courses from 2014 to 2017 ($n = 334$), at the end of each semester, typically scheduling class time to fill out the survey. The theoretical framework for the study was based on Ambrose et al. (2010) and the language-specific motivation studies by Mills et al. (2007), Kozaki and Ross (2011), Falout (2012), MacIntyre and Blackie (2012), Ushioda and Dörnyei (2012), and Oakes (2013). Concepts that emerged across these studies included the perceived relevance or value of language study; students' expectations for success; and a positive, learning-focused environment.

The central research questions for the learner motivation study³ were fairly simple:

1. Why are students motivated to enroll in German courses at Elon in the first place?
2. Why do students decide to stop taking German courses?
3. What are students' motivations to continue with German courses?

Question 1 targets student recruitment, that is, processes that language program faculty often have little control over or need intensive resources and stakeholder buy-in to influence. Questions 2 and 3 target student retention, i.e. how to retain students who have already made the decision to take at least one course.

Three sample questions from the survey provide the gist. One question targets students' reasons for enrolling in German to begin with. It asks "How important were these reasons for enrolling in the course you're currently in?" and provides a

³Scott Windham initiated this study in 2014, together with colleagues in Chinese, French, Italian, Latin, and Spanish in the Department of World Languages and Cultures. The data and discussion in this chapter exclusively focus on the survey results from students enrolled in German courses.

list of 18 options. Students were allowed to select multiple options. The top five: language proficiency; cultural proficiency; to render travel in Germany more enjoyable; to fulfill the university's graduation requirement; and positive prior experience. Career reasons and study abroad preparation were also ranked highly, but were noticeably less important than these top five reasons. The least important: credits for the student's major or the German Studies minor; graduate school preparation; family or heritage. These responses can be interpreted to mean that students perceived value in German study and had experienced a positive learning environment in previous German courses. The results tell us that future recruitment strategies should focus on awakening students' interest in what they will learn and the enjoyment they can derive from studying German. In addition, recruitment strategies should point out the career and academic benefits of studying German, on the assumption that pragmatic, career-focused students (for example, those in the schools of business or communications) will be swayed by that message.

Another question targets students' reasons for continuing German. It asks "How important were these reasons for enrolling in German next semester?" and provides the same options listed above. Top reasons for continuing: language proficiency; cultural proficiency; positive experience in the current course; preparation for travel or study abroad; credits for the German Studies minor. Career reasons are more prominent than in the previous question. Major requirements and family or heritage reasons remain unimportant. As with the previous question, these results can be interpreted to mean that students perceived value in German study and had experienced a positive learning environment. The results likewise suggest that retainment messaging should be similar to recruitment messaging. Notably, the bulk of students (60%) indicated that they intended to continue with German beyond the following semester, a finding that supports our observation about strong retention.

Another question targets students' reasons for discontinuing German. It asks "What are your reasons for *not* enrolling in German next semester?" and provides a list of 11 options, plus a blank space for other reasons. As with the previous question, students were allowed to select multiple options. By far the dominant reason, listed by 61% of students, was a full schedule, suggesting that German is an interest but not a priority for students who decide not to continue. The next most important reason: "German does not fit my major and/or career goals" (46%), suggesting that when push comes to shove, students take courses they must have rather than courses they "merely" want. The third most-cited reason was scheduling conflicts, in which German met at the same days and times as a higher-priority course that students needed for their major, minor, or graduation requirements. Together, these results suggest two conclusions. First, as other authors in this volume have found, reducing registration barriers can be an effective way to increase enrollments. Strategies include multiple sections of each course and consulting students as to preferred days and times. Second is addressing perceived value via pragmatic, career-focused messaging. Reasons *not* considered relevant by students

discontinuing German: fears about workload, difficulty, or a potentially negative experience. That these reasons were only rarely listed suggests that the German faculty had done a good job creating a positive, learning-focused environment.

3 Community, Curriculum, and Career

The authors used the results from the learner motivation study to guide initiatives for recruitment and retention from 2017 onwards. As the results indicate, students' main reasons for discontinuing German were scheduling conflicts, full course loads, or a perceived lack of relevance to students' academic or career aspirations. Recruitment and retention initiatives therefore centered on *curriculum* and *career*. A third theme guiding the initiatives was *community*. Although the learner motivation study did not address this theme, students and alumni had praised the welcoming community in which they found purpose, friendship, and prestigious national and international opportunities. Initiatives that incorporate two or all three themes have proved the most successful.

Initiatives have been small scale and implemented without additional budget, new hires, course releases, or other institutional resources. The small scale meant that initiatives could be piloted, then quickly adapted based on student feedback. For this reason, we believe the initiatives are replicable but allow for adaptations shaped around individual programs' contexts.

3.1 Curriculum

When aiming to attract and retain students, programs often turn first to curriculum (Kalliney, 2018). The same is true of the German program at Elon University, where the faculty is integrating multiliteracies approaches (Paesani et al., 2015) and moving to a text-based curriculum that emphasizes the functional and meaning-making potential of grammar. Like other colleagues in the Department of World Languages and Cultures, the German faculty is has also implemented alternative grading models (e.g., Kohn & Blum, 2020) into most courses.

While curricular changes allow strides in program quality and professional development, they are not necessarily geared towards student recruitment and retention.⁴ The learner motivation study clearly identified scheduling conflicts as a central factor. This was a clear indicator that we do not need a lengthy curriculum overhaul, which is “[a]t best, [. . .] a major distraction; at worst, it can hide or

⁴Of course, program quality has an effect on student retention. It rarely draws any new students to a program though, neither does it address the issue of scheduling conflicts that our students had identified.

exacerbate a problem and delay a solution (Kalliney, 2018, n.p.). Rather than changing courses, we needed to make the existing curriculum accessible for a greater number of students.

We started work at the 300 (advanced) level, which features seven courses with one course offered per semester. To avoid course cancellations, at least 8 students need to enroll each semester. We start by simply polling students in the current 300-level course whether they plan to enroll the subsequent semester, giving us an early indicator of possible under-enrollment. We also list scheduling options, letting students communicate scheduling conflicts early on. The instructor who is scheduled to teach the upcoming course also gives a brief presentation, timed before the advising and registration period.

In order to reach students who are not enrolled in the current 300-level offering, the faculty sends a short email to each eligible student, containing a brief description of the course and an indication of German and general studies requirements it fulfills. The email is sent to students who placed at the 300 level but have not taken a course, students who have met the prerequisite but have taken a pause in their German study, and students in programs abroad. These emails do not always result in student responses, but frequently enough, students either indicate that they will enroll or identify enrollment obstacles, which permits a deeper conversation. For example, a few students have taken 300-level courses for half credit to avoid credit overload and the associated fees. These students were granted specific absences and completed fewer assignments, an arrangement kept students in the program without creating more work for us.

We also increased the number of 300-level courses. As recently as 2017, the curriculum featured only four 300-level courses, so that students were out of options after four semesters. Three new courses were added, so that the 300-level curriculum now consists of four courses addressing specific time periods (the era between the two World Wars, the post-1945 rebuilding era, the communist era in East Germany, and twenty-first century Germany) and three addressing transhistorical themes (the *Heimat* concept, Germany's media landscape,⁵ the horror genre in German fiction).

Another solution to scheduling conflicts was a conscious cross-listing with other requirements. For example, all German courses count towards what's known as the Civilization requirement in our institution's general education curriculum, and all 300-level German courses count towards the general education requirement to study advanced courses outside the student's major. Likewise, three of seven 300-level German courses count towards Elon's general education requirement to take a literature course—a requirement that befits a liberal arts institution.

Double-majoring and -minoring are popular among students but were also cause for scheduling conflicts; therefore, we worked with departments across campus to

⁵Two additional 300-level courses are currently developed, one about Germans in America, the second about Minority Voices in the German-speaking world. If approved, our program would then be able to offer 8 advanced level courses, and students could take advanced-level German courses for four consecutive years without having to repeat a course.

slot German courses into majors and minors in Art History, International and Global Studies, International Business, and Peace and Conflict Studies—all of which are explicitly interdisciplinary. This slotting meant that students could fulfill major or minor requirements by enrolling in advanced German, keeping them in our program and allowing them to stay on track in their degree requirements.

Yet another innovation was combined courses. Prior to the learner motivation study, students' enrollment options were limited by the German program's course sequencing: German 101 and 201 were taught only in fall, and German 102 and 202 only in spring, meaning that incoming first-year and transfer students who placed into German 102 or 202 had to wait a semester to take German, and students who enrolled in German one semester but faced a schedule conflict the following semester had to wait a full year and a half to take the next course in sequence. Waiting often meant these students did not enroll at all.

In order to address these sequencing problems, the faculty began teaching German 101–102 together and German 201–202 together, i.e. two course levels in one room. The cultural content for each level is the same, in order to permit cross-level discussions and collaborations; the instructed grammar is cross-level compatible; and the expectations are higher for the students in the higher course level.

To make this one-room schoolhouse clear, let's take the fall German 201–202 combined course. Its theme is “typically German,” with units on beer gardens, the remembrance of state crimes, the popular TV show *Tatort*, German city structure, and other ostensibly typical features of German society. Each unit consists of a selection of readings and videos—students choose among four or five and report to each other on the first day of the unit—vocabulary and grammar instruction, pre-writing tasks, discussion, a quiz, and an essay. The readings and videos are level-specific, meaning that students in German 202 work with slightly lengthier and more difficult readings and videos than students in German 201. Grammar is likewise level-specific but cross-level compatible: While students in German 201 are studying standard past-tense formation, for instance, students in German 202 are studying the distinction between standard past tense and its more formal cousin (known as the simple past). Students interact across course levels during class discussion.

While 200-level enrollments have been such that the faculty can offer only one 200-level section per semester, 100-level enrollments have been strong enough to offer two 100-level combined sections in fall and spring, at different times of day. Offering *separate* sections of German 101 and German 102 would exacerbate the scheduling problems mentioned in the motivation study. Offering two sections of the combined course provides further enrollment flexibility by giving students the choice between two time slots.

Roughly simultaneously with the combined courses, the faculty began teaching German in our university's intensive 4-week January term. We offer German 101, German 102, and a business-themed spinoff of German 101, likewise taught as a combined course. The business version of German 101 has attracted a small

number of business majors every winter, the vast majority of whom stay in the program and complete the minor in German Studies.

The result is that students can enroll in German 101 and 102 in fall, winter, or spring and continue in any semester. For instance, a recent student began German in fall of their first year, continued to German 102 in winter and German 201 in spring, then enrolled in German 202 in fall of sophomore year and the 300-level course that spring. Another student began German in winter of their first year, skipped spring, enrolled in German 102 in fall and 201 in spring of their sophomore year, and German 202 in fall of their junior year.

3.2 *Career*

As mentioned above, the top reasons given by students for discontinuing German were pragmatic: Although they enjoyed German, they did not consider it relevant to their academic or career goals. In order to address the perceived lack of relevance, the German faculty and other colleagues in World Languages and Cultures collaborated with the university's career center on a workshop, led by career center staff and held during class. The workshop uses survey data to demonstrate that employers value language abilities and cultural competency; helps students develop ways to talk about their language and cultural abilities in cover letters and interviews; and highlights general and major-specific job and internship opportunities requiring language and cultural skills.

Relevance is also addressed via the learning goals adopted by the Department of World Languages and Cultures: language proficiency, intercultural competence, and critical thinking. These overarching objectives shape courses at every level and in each language. Together, they help students—and the administration, for that matter—understand that language courses are not simply about grammar and vocabulary. Instead, students hone skills that are relevant in a multitude of careers.

These well-crafted learning goals must be pointed out to students. Students also need help articulating to future employers what they learn in language courses. For these reasons, the German faculty regularly draws connections between learning goals, assignments, and real-world application, taking time in class to investigate the purpose of assignments and what students will learn by completing them. We also include larger assignments that require students to explore the relevance of German to their other fields of study. For example, in the second-semester course, we ask students to identify an aspect of German daily life relevant to their own interests, research the topic using German sources, and give a short presentation. Students have identified topics such as E-sports in Germany, public school education about the Holocaust, or the wire card scandal. It is effective when instructors point out connections between German and students' other interests, but even more effective when students discover those connections themselves.

In addition, we have developed two small-scale initiatives to address relevance. First is a short letter sent to students' home addresses⁶ and campus mailboxes, congratulating them on their good work and listing opportunities and advantages of the minor. Second is formal and informal meetings. Formal meetings take the form of a mid-semester check. One function of these 15-min individual meetings is feedback on learning and progress; another function is to know our students better including their plans and career aspirations. Informal meetings involve coffee with small groups of students. Ideally, these meetings should take place before course registration for the upcoming semester.

3.3 *Community*

Although the learner motivation study did not identify community as a priority, current and former students consider it a strength. Ours is a small program with two full-time faculty members and fewer than 200 students per year. We have reframed this small size as an asset: Each student can find their own individual home in the German program (Tang, 2019), get to know peers, and learn from and with one another.

Building this supportive learning community requires early communication. As soon as we have access to placement scores for incoming students, we contact them regarding course options and describe the welcoming community in the German program. We also contact students who took the placement test in previous years but haven't enrolled in German. We also contact current and returning students, including those studying abroad, and at the beginning of each semester, all students enrolled in a German course receive a welcome message that expresses our excitement and points out upcoming academic and extracurricular highlights. Here is a recent example of the text of that welcome message:

Liebe Studierende,

You are receiving this email because you are enrolled in a German course with either Dr. Windham or Dr. Lange this semester. Welcome (back) to German Studies @ Elon! -Herzlich Willkommen (zurück) zur Germanistik an Elon! We are looking forward to learning with and from you this semester and beyond.

Being part of German Studies opens many doors, but one of the greatest things about our program is the sense of community. You will get a chance to meet each other soon! For now, here are a few semester highlights:

- Eisb(r)echer with the German Club, Ice Cream Social, August 31, 4 pm.
- A bilingual book club. You can read the book in German, English or both. More info soon.

⁶We check with our university office if any of the students have a FERPA hold on their home addresses.

- National German Week, October 3–9.
- A class session together with another German course.
- Winter Wonderland, a holiday bazaar where you will get a glimpse of a German winter market.

Make sure you also connect with us on social media so you don't miss out on any of these opportunities:

German Studies on [Instagram](#)

German Studies on [Facebook](#)

German Studies on [Twitter](#)

Again, a warm welcome to our program—Herzlich Willkommen! We are looking forward to being part of your journey at Elon.

Viele Grüße und bis bald,
Dr. Lange und Dr. Windham

In addition to opportunities for students to meet the faculty and other German students, we also ensure that students take advantage of these initiatives. For example, both full-time faculty members regularly visit one another's courses for engaging 5-min segments on topics relating to our expertise or experiences. These visits allow us to meet all students in the program and allow students to meet both instructors. We also use these visits to promote upcoming courses.

Last but not least are combined class sessions, usually on the day after fall or spring break, in which classes that meet during the same time slot meet together in one room. The topics rotate between study abroad and post-college opportunities. In the study abroad-focused session, students learn about options and video conference with students currently abroad or program directors. Similarly, in the post-college-focused session, students identify ways in which German relates to their future plans. We point out scholarship, grants, internships, and other opportunities that previous students have pursued, and we invite recent alumni to speak. One goal of these combined sessions is that students realize opportunities created by their study of German. Another is that students see the faculty members interacting and teaching together. A third is that students realize which, and how many, other students are involved in German, allowing connections with peers. As one student put it in a survey response:

I really liked [the session]; it is wonderful to have a chance to speak with someone in another class auf Deutsch. I think that the structure is perfect [and] the short guiding questions are more than enough to start a meaningful dialogue within the groups. To be totally honest, I have waited since last fall to do another one of these sessions. Honestly a highlight of my language semesters.

Students in our 100- and 200-level courses get one additional opportunity to work together in the final unit of the semester: Germany, What's up? (Deutschland, was geht?). Students together choose the topic from a list of current affairs in the German-speaking countries. In the most recent 3 years, students respectively selected environmentalism, poverty, and the Black experience in Germany. Students

in four course levels work on the same topic, with different, level-appropriate texts and learning objectives. At the end of the unit, we organize a combined session in which students from different course levels discuss the topic together. This initiative grants students ownership of the curriculum and consequently more buy-in, and it provides the opportunity to experience moments of success working with students from different levels. Finally, it is a further opportunity for students to meet others in the German program, supporting the sense of community that we aim for.

4 Enrollment Data 2017–2022

We spent the summer of 2021 evaluating our recruitment and retention work of the last 5 years. Our goals for the summer retreat were manifold. First, we wanted to synthesize the recruitment and retention initiatives that we had previously planned, piloted, revised, or abandoned. Second, we wanted to analyze systematically the enrollment data from 2017 onwards, to get a clearer picture whether our efforts had had an effect on course and program enrollments, identify gaps, and determine new initiatives.

We worked with the registrar to gather enrollment numbers in all German courses beginning with fall 2017, which coincided with the first results from the learner motivation study—denoting a systematic approach to recruitment and retention. Figure 1 shows total enrollment per academic year:

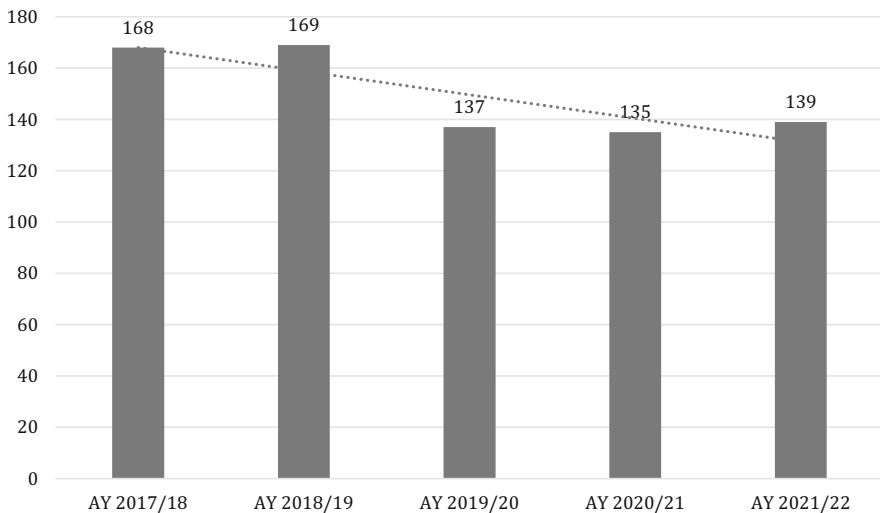


Fig. 1 Total enrollment in German program, 2017–2022

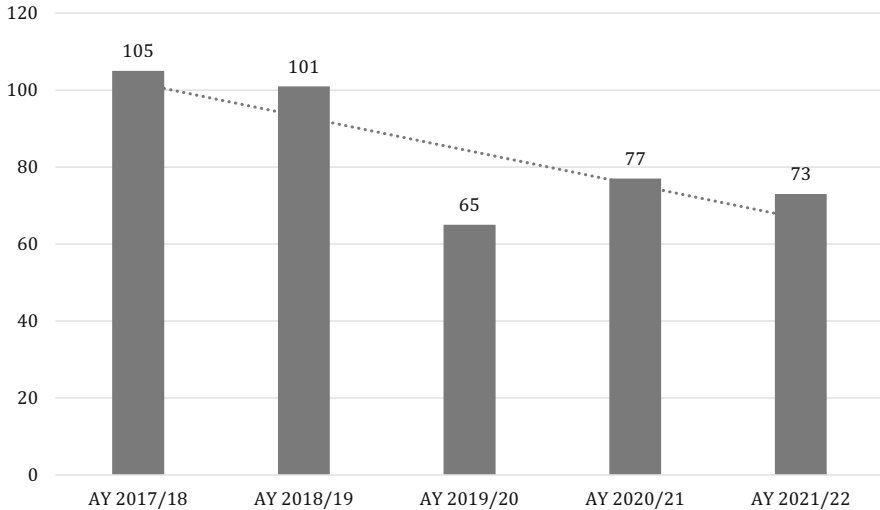


Fig. 2 Enrollment in 100-level, 2017–2022

As indicated by the negative trend line, we lost roughly 30 students in 5 years.⁷ Initially, these numbers were disappointing, especially considering our work in recruitment and retention and the steady overall undergraduate enrollment at our institution. To get a better idea where we lost students despite our recruitment and retention initiatives, we examined enrollment at various course levels. The charts below show the enrollment development at the 100, 200, and 300 levels (Figs. 2, 3 and 4).

Filtering the data by course level allows a more nuanced analysis of enrollment. The negative trend was apparent only at the 100 level: in other words, we lost students in our first and second semester courses. Quite the opposite was true at the 200 level (stable) and 300 level (strong positive development), with the result that there are roughly as many students in the 300 level as in the 200 level.

This analysis allows for several interpretations. First, let us establish that over half of students who enroll in the 100 level are incoming first-year students with little or no prior experience in German. Further consideration of the data and our initiatives led to the conclusion that recruitment at the 100 level is weak—none of our initiatives reaches incoming first-year students before they register for fall courses. Yet 200-level enrollments are stable and 300-level enrollments are growing. We see three possible explanations: (1) Some students enter German at the 200 or 300 level directly from high school, where they were encouraged to continue German in college. (2) Recruitment strategies at the 200 and 300 level have been successful,

⁷If we look at enrollment data from 10 years ago, we do see a positive enrollment and a positive trend line. Still, we decided to only include the years 2017–2022 here, as that was the time period when we actively and consciously worked on recruitment and retention.

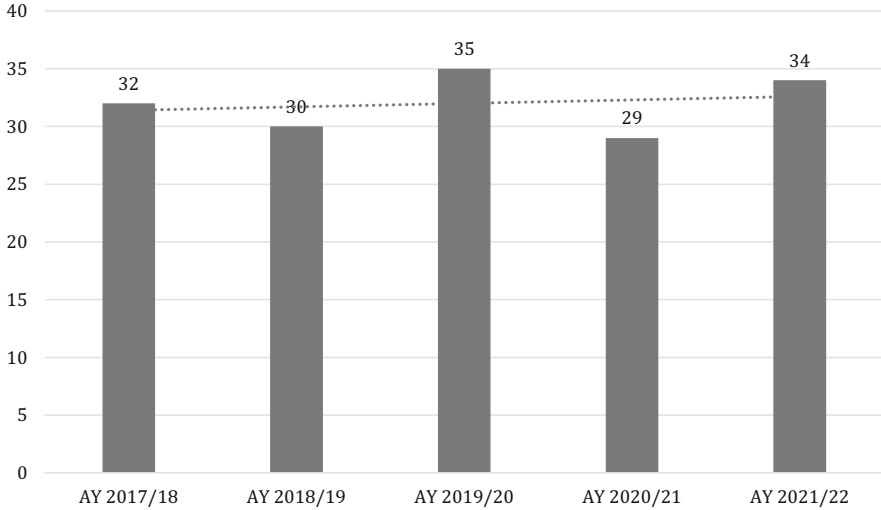


Fig. 3 Enrollment in 200-level, 2017–2022

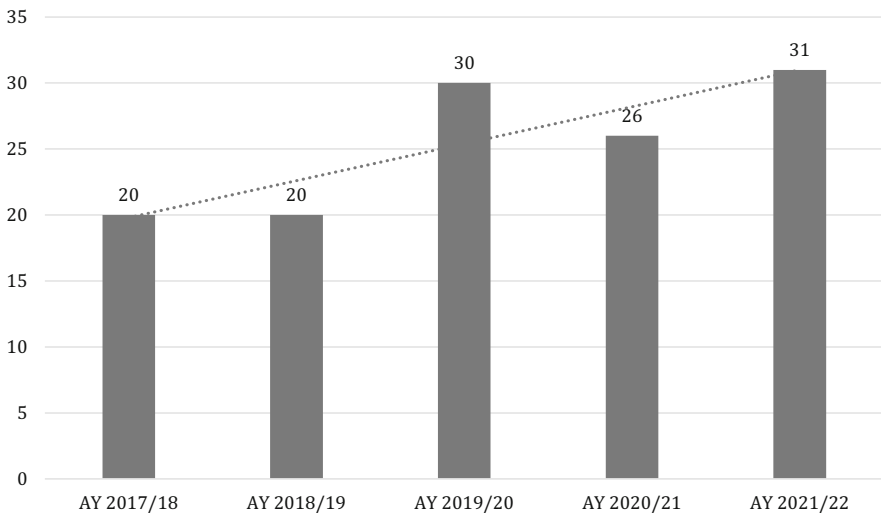


Fig. 4 Enrollment in 300-level, 2017–2022

particularly compared to the 100 level. (3) Retention strategies have convinced students to stay in the German program. The overall implication is that 100-level recruitment has been weak, but other recruitment and retention initiatives have been strong.

5 Where Do We Go from Here

The analysis and interpretation of enrollment data allows a better evaluation of where to invest time and effort in recruitment and retention. Since retention is strong, we plan to continue investing in the curriculum, career, and community initiatives described above, including regular evaluation and adjustments. For example, we are examining ways in which students new to the program can be connected to students in advanced courses, such as through a buddy system that would permit new students to experience the sense of community early on and find peer support and mentorship. Another impending initiative is to ask 300-level students to teach 100- and 200-level courses for one session, so that beginning and intermediate students can hear from advanced students why they made the choice to stay in the program. As with other initiatives, timing is crucial, as we want these exchanges to take place before course registration for the following semester.

A major task in the next few years is to recruit into 100-level courses. Ideally, incoming first-year students and rising sophomores will enroll in these courses, as they still have time to enroll in multiple German courses and the minor. Our successful retention strategies suggest that once students take a course in our program, they are likely to take more. The task therefore is to recruit students who have not taken German. There are two pools to draw from: (1) students who had limited high school German and place into the 100 level, and (2) students who had previous instruction in a different world language and are looking to learn an additional language in college. (Our institution requires all applicants to have taken 2 years of high school language, so a potential third pool—students with no prior language instruction—is vanishingly small.)

The Department of World Languages and Cultures, in which German is housed, administers the language placement exam and provides the language faculty the placement data, which allows us to contact the group of students from pool 1. We write these students individually, advise them on course options, and point out opportunities and the sense of community. The timeline is such that we receive placement information only a few weeks before the start of the semester, once students have likely made their course selections. We are currently in conversation with Admissions, Advising, and the director of language assessment to identify ways to reach incoming students earlier. We then make use of placement data throughout the year, tracking who has and has not enrolled in German. A few weeks before spring registration, we contact those students who took the German placement test but have not yet taken German courses.

We also plan to work more closely with Admissions to reach students interested in German. Events for interested and admitted students are good recruiting grounds. We have found it surprisingly effective to wear a German-themed identifier such as a pin, t-shirt, or (during COVID) a face mask during these events. We also plan to ask Admissions to help us contact incoming students who had German in high school well in advance of the placement test, and to send promotional material to teachers in high school German programs whose students often enroll at our institution.

Admissions has data on states and high schools whose students highly enroll at our institution, and our department's administrative staff can help identify which of these have German programs and who runs them.

Working with Admissions is a larger-scale initiative with multiple stakeholders, meaning that it's important to include the entire Department of World Languages and Cultures—not only to demonstrate to Admissions that there is department-wide support, but also so that all language programs can benefit. Recent examples are a postcard that highlights language opportunities, which we hope can be added to the welcome package admitted students receive; short presentations to Admissions staff on highlights and recent developments in the department; and collaboration on the content of Admissions tours.

6 Recommendations for Program Development

With assistance from the registrar, we collect overall and course-level enrollment data every semester. Not only is this an advantage should the administration ever ask for enrollment data, it also permits a deeper understanding of our program and its strengths, as well as more nuanced interpretations of recent changes. Other filters relevant for local programs might be course meeting times, textbook vs. authentic texts, course topic, or fulfillment of general studies requirements. These filters can help identify more accurately where programs are growing or shrinking, leading to focused recruitment and retention initiatives.

Although quantitative data was informative, we also found it helpful to gather qualitative data from students, be it formally via surveys and focus groups or informally via individual meetings. For example, when introducing the combined sessions on study abroad and career, we sought student feedback to help us improve the sessions and target them to students' needs. Similarly, before developing new 300-level courses, we asked students which course topics might interest them. We received wonderful suggestions, and although we haven't realized all of them, we now have a repertoire of course ideas for the future.

These programmatic initiatives were made possible because we have prioritized weekly meetings. In these meetings, we discuss pedagogy, research initiatives, students' success and struggles, and the administration of our program, including recruitment and retention. Regular meetings allow us to develop ideas together, pilot them in one or two courses, and decide in unison on next steps.

Again, small program size doesn't have to be limiting. Take note and connect with programs that have similar learning goals, interests, or contexts. Oftentimes, these programs face similar problems in recruitment and retention and perhaps have developed initiatives that can be emulated. For example, we were inspired by the Classics program at our institution to pilot the combined courses (101 and 102 together; 201 and 202 together), by the Italian program to write a letter to top-performing students, and by our colleagues in French to offer combined class sessions on study abroad.

Finally, while the faculty is the strongest advocate for any language program, it's important that others be advocates too. Program presence and identity—making your program visible to others—requires many hands. The German Club is almost entirely student-run; we support them as faculty advisors. When weather allows, the club holds events outside in a visible spot so that passers-by take notice. Our active social media accounts contain student-created content, as students know the target group much better than we. Together with our department, and in order to support recruitment into all language programs, we have also recently designed a simple yard sign to be placed in front of our building, easily visible by students—and parents—on Admissions tours. These initiatives require few resources but are effective in increasing program visibility.

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Centers of Change: Forming Administrative Structures to Support Language Study



G. Cory Duclos and Yukari Hirata

Abstract This chapter considers language centers' capacity to provide administrative leadership at colleges and universities in the United States. Our discussion outlines how the remodeling of the W.M. Keck Center for Language Study at Colgate University included the formation of new administrative structures that more effectively advocated for increased focus on the role language study plays in the overall academic curriculum. Language programs in our institution benefited from redefining the position of the language center director and forming a new Language Council, a body with representatives from all languages taught on campus that meets to discuss matters that are commonly shared across multiple programs. This new leadership structure has successfully advocated for an increased language requirement as part of a larger core curriculum revision, created new avenues to inform first-year students about language offerings, and improved the ways in which faculty outside of the languages advise students about language study. This chapter also lays out ongoing efforts to effectively implement the newly approved language requirement to ensure that student enrollment is more equitably distributed among programs while changing institutional perceptions so that students, faculty, and administrators value language study as an integral part of the institutional core curriculum.

Keywords Language centers · Language programs · Language requirements · University curriculum

Although many universities urge students to have an international, global mindset, language programs across the country often find themselves struggling with enrollment numbers. Administrative structures often pigeonhole language programs as “service departments,” considering their purely utilitarian value that can, at best, complement what students learn in other departments. At the same time, language faculty often find themselves, like their colleagues across campus, burnt out by struggling to meet the demands of teaching and research loads (Malesic, 2021),

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leaving less time and energy to meet the increased need to advocate for the vitality of their programs. The university Language Center (LC) can serve in this capacity as leaders in effecting administrative and cultural changes that can bolster student enrollment in language courses and define the narrative surrounding the value of the academic discipline.

The majority of the literature surrounding contemporary LCs¹ has focused on the transformation of the physical spaces and its pedagogical ramifications (Kronenberg, 2017; Lavolette & Simon, 2018; and Lavolette & Kraemer, 2021). In this chapter, we add to this discussion by explaining some of the ways that Colgate University's W. M. Keck Center for Language Study has also used the LC as a resource for administrative leadership. Through the LC, language faculty have effectively led efforts to improve administrative structures and transform the overall university curriculum to put greater emphasis on the need for language study. We will use our case to explore how the LC can change how students, colleagues, and administrators view the role of languages within the university's educational mission.

The first section of this chapter will begin by describing the ways in which the LC has developed in the past decade by redefining the role of the center director, by inspiring the formation of a Language Council, and by creating a space for engaging in the work necessary to properly advocate for the language programs. The second section will lay out what fruits these changes have borne using the center's close tie with administrators and colleagues in other disciplines. The third section will focus on one of the LC's biggest accomplishments for ensuring that language study becomes an integral part of our entire university curriculum. The fourth section will introduce our ongoing effort to successfully implement the university's curricular revision. Finally, the last section will share the principles that guided all of these successful changes—the principles that advocate that language study accomplishes some of the important educational goals of the university.

Colgate is a small liberal arts institution located in central New York with around 2800 primarily undergraduate students. Although the lessons we have learned may be most relevant to similar institutions, we hope that our endeavors can inspire anyone interested in making language programs more relevant within higher education.

1 Reimagining a Language Laboratory and Its Director

This history of a language facility at Colgate mirrors the national trends dating back to the post-WWII boom in language labs in the U.S. The desire to expand language education accompanied the increased interest in international relations and

¹We use here the term "Language Center" as a broad signifier for the various types of spaces used to support the teaching of languages on college and university campuses. Our definition concurs with that of Lavolette and Kraemer (2017).

globalized expansion of US interests.² The language lab followed trends in teaching methodologies over the next few decades. In 2012, plans were developed to remodel the lab-style resource center. This remodeling was driven by four important motivations. The first was to update the infrastructure for the constantly changing technology, both hardware and software, according to current theories and principles. The second one was to develop an innovative use of space according to an increased value of face-to-face human interactions and conversation practice that are more enjoyable and meaningful for language learners. The third one, related to the second, was to highlight roles of language interns from their respective countries in order to form a balanced function between technology and direct human interactions. Prior to 2012, offices of our language interns, who are native speakers of the languages we teach, were scattered and pushed into corners of buildings wherever space was available. We wanted to centralize their offices as part of the LC because we wanted them to play a central role in advocating language study as a visible and invigorating part of our everyday life.

Finally, as one of the central points of the present chapter, the fourth motivation was to envision a new, expanded role and function of the director who would orchestrate the pedagogical, technological, and administrative function of the center. We envisioned the center director to also be a faculty member who teaches language, literature, or culture courses, and who could connect directly with the administration of the university. Prior to this center change, we had a traditional technological manager who played a purely assistive role for instructors. Our goal was to remove the artificial division and the power dynamic between the professors and the staff members who took care of hardware and software, assisting professors in a one-directional way. The previous center director was a non-faculty staff member, and this position primarily focused on technological support. In this capacity, the director was not involved in faculty discussions regarding teaching or any curricular matters. In order for the new director to function most comprehensively, they would need to be in the communication loop that all faculty members are in, and to understand the joys and challenges of teaching first-hand so as to exchange ideas with other faculty members in and out of the language programs.

As Sangeetha Gopalakrishnan has described her work at Wayne State University, this newly defined role would need to take on leadership responsibilities beyond the managerial aspects of LC direction: “Merely being a good manager of daily operations of the FLTC, I realized, is inadequate to bring about the kind of change that I want, and the institution needs” (Gopalakrishnan et al., 2013).³ As the role of the LC director at Colgate took shape, we pushed forward in creating this role to include regular collaboration and communication with other administrators and faculty.

² At one point, Colgate’s president had even proposed renovating an old library to create the nation’s largest language laboratory. These plans were scrapped in favor of building a performing arts center (Smith, 2019).

³ For more on directors’ leadership roles, see Gonglewski et al. (2005); Angell et al. (2007); Lidelle and Garrett (2004); and Kronenberg (2013).

Making these connections has created new avenues for advocating for the importance of language study.

Across the US there is a pressing need for a constant defense of language study. This can be a tricky subject for some language faculty, who may, perhaps correctly, find it degrading to have to justify a field of study that was part of the foundational elements of the humanist education upon which universities are modeled. This reluctance to engage in the conversation, however, allows for outside narratives to dominate the conversation about the value of language education in the modern curriculum. LC directors occupy a unique space within a university's structure that allows them to serve as an outspoken and unashamed advocate for language study (Lidelle & Garrett, 2004). In contrast to other administrators, they have a complete understanding of how languages benefit students. They also have more freedom to engage with other administrative offices and sympathetic colleagues to provide a more accurate argument about why languages matter.

Baumann (2021) has discussed how these directors can be an invaluable asset in the technical aspects of university administration. As she explains, the LC director at the University of Chicago was able to institute more pedagogically sound assessment practices through collaboration with "the College dean's office, College Programming..., the Curriculum Committee, registrar's office, and College advisers" (p. 97). Lidelle and Garrett (2004) have also outlined some of the ways that LC directors can take on leadership responsibilities; in addition to having access to other campus resources and departments, the directors exercise a sort of independent objectivity with regard to advocating for the various language programs, stating that because they are not "in individual departments, as teachers are, they can serve also as advocates and spokespersons for the language teaching enterprise generally, insisting on its importance in any truly international curriculum" (p. 37). At Colgate, we have seen similar benefits in collaboration efforts led by our LC director. We have expanded our ability to communicate with potential and incoming students before they register for courses and during first-year orientation. Working with Career Services and our Provost's office we have identified ways to increase internal funding for intensive summer language study. We have also found ways in which our Registrar can provide better data to understand how to increase student language enrollment.

As a small institution with a robust shared faculty governance structure, it has also been critical that our center director connect with faculty outside of the languages. Many of our colleagues may only understand the utilitarian value of language study, which may feed into the "service department" stereotype. A LC director can formalize efforts to help colleagues appreciate the more intrinsic value of our discipline. We have used a weekly colloquium series to invite multilingual colleagues who teach outside of the languages to discuss how they approach teaching based on translated texts. In a yearly retreat focused on our core curriculum, we have held workshops focused on language study and advising students about languages. In the near future, we will collaborate with our Center for Learning Teaching and Research to participate in their pedagogy workshop series about how to integrate languages across the curriculum.

The national focus on STEM in past years ignores the importance of language study. Nevertheless, many allies exist within each department that have personally engaged with language study and understand its value within their fields and as a way of understanding the world. The approach to finding these allies need not be viewed as a debasing plea to pity our discipline. Rather, these advocacy efforts should assume that our colleagues want to support our efforts but may not be fully equipped to articulate to their students or their departmental colleagues why Google Translate and Rosetta Stone can never replace the work done in language departments. LC director positions should be structured to allow for this type of cross-disciplinary outreach to raise awareness across campus. LC directors should find the obvious and unlikely allies who will support the cause of our language programs.

In the next two sections, we describe how this new role of the LC director led to substantial changes in terms of the creation of a new Language Council and the university-wide change of a Core Curriculum.

2 The Language Council and Language Advocacy

At Colgate, our efforts to promote language study have mostly come through an inter-departmental collaboration through what we call our Language Council. This council was a formalization and expansion of an ad-hoc committee that developed plans for the language laboratory remodel. While some institutions of our size may house languages within a single department, our 11 languages are spread across four academic departments (Classics, East Asian Languages and Literature, German, and Romance Languages and Literature) and three areas studies programs (Middle Eastern Studies, Jewish Studies, and Russian and Eurasian Studies). This separation has given individual departments and programs certain latitude in their operations but has also splintered their voices. The formation of the Language Council has provided a forum for collaboration and an avenue for a more unified approach to university-wide considerations of languages' role within the curriculum.

The Language Council's charge is to oversee the matters that are of common interest to all of the existing programs but do not pertain to any individual language program.⁴ The Language Council does not have any authority to dictate decisions for any department or program; it functions by consensus of language faculty to communicate their perspectives and expertise to other colleagues on campus. The Language Council also includes three members of the upper administration (two Division Directors and one Associate Provost) as ex-officio members. Their presence at all meetings gives the Language Council a direct line of communication to our administrators who guide our initiatives through the proper channels.

⁴The full mission and charge can be found at <https://www.colgate.edu/about/offices-centers-institutes/provost-and-dean-faculty/faculty-governance/language-council>

The Language Council also serves as the steering committee for the LC, whose director serves as one of the co-chairs with another member of the faculty.

The model of this council can be useful for any institution which does not have a centralized language department. One important element is that this body fosters a sense of collaboration among departments, which is especially important for language programs that reside within larger area studies programs (which in many universities is often the case for less-commonly taught languages). The council allows language experts to find common areas of concern that can be addressed to the administration, including the collection and analysis of data from the offices of the registrar and institutional research. The group also builds camaraderie in the minds of individual language faculty members and nurtures a shared mentality that we can accomplish something bigger than smaller individual language programs could, while enjoying their unique autonomy within each program.

The type of collaboration allows language faculty to have a more direct oversight of language-related programs that reside outside of their departments. Previous to the formation of the Language Council, Colgate had instituted a Foreign Languages Across the Curriculum (FLAC) program. Through FLAC, any course in any department can include an add-on component that utilizes a non-English language as a means of delving deeper into the subject. Students can learn more about a course through exposure to a new language or, when proficiency is more advanced, read texts in their original language rather than rely on translated material.⁵ This program was created in collaboration with some language faculty but administered by an Associate Dean.

The formation of the Language Council created a space for proposals to the FLAC program to be more carefully vetted and to be better aligned with national trends in this field. As such, we have recently revised the program and renamed it Cultures and Languages Across the Curriculum (CLAC). We have joined the Cultures and Languages Across the Curriculum Consortium and our LC director works with colleagues in the Central New York Humanities Corridor in a CLAC Working Group to promote the program regionally. Our Language Council is also working with the Associate Dean's office to advertise the program more robustly and seek to increase incentives to recruit faculty from more disciplines to include CLAC courses. We are confident that every department can benefit from students who use languages to interact with a field of study in new and meaningful ways.

Similarly, the Language Council was able to create the Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTL) Program. Although (or because) we are a small liberal arts institution in a rural location, our students are encouraged to have an international mindset. As language educators, we know that students cannot fully understand the parts of the world they want to study without understanding at least some elements of the languages spoken there. Nevertheless, with a local population of only 3000, it is nearly impossible to find qualified instructors for the wide range of languages our

⁵For more on CLAC programs, see Plough (2016) and Zhou et al. (2021).

students want to study. And our small undergraduate student population means that the interest may be unique to as few as one or two students in any given semester.

The Language Council has been able to develop means to meet students' needs through our LCTL program, which would not have been possible for any one department or program in the past. During a short period, the Language Council was able to oversee a shared course initiative with partner schools in the New York Six consortium. This program used video conferencing technology to share courses in Hindi, Korean, and Portuguese. Without the Language Council, decisions about these courses (including their relative course credit value) would have been overseen entirely by the office of the registrar. The Language Council vetted syllabi from partner institutions and ensured that technological support was in place for the LC to properly facilitate these shared courses.⁶ The LCTL program allows students with an academic need to independently study languages following the framework of the National Association for Self-Instructional Language Practice (NASILP). The Language Council evaluates students' needs and motivation to ensure they are able to meet the challenges of a self-instructional course. The director of the LC reports regularly on the progress of the program so that the Language Council can monitor its ongoing effectiveness and value for students.

The Language Council has proven to be an effective body for advocating for the needs of language programs and articulating the role they play within the educational missions of the university. Administration now can look to a single body for answers that do not pertain to a single language department or program. The Language Council co-Chairs provide context regarding language study in other faculty committees' meetings. And each representative can report back to their colleagues to foster communication and collaboration amongst all languages. As a result, our soon to be implemented core curriculum will now include a focus on language study that was absent from previous iterations.

3 Changing the University Curriculum

One of the most common tools for maintaining the vitality of language programs and establishing their place within a university's curriculum has been the implementation of a language requirement. By mandating that students complete a specified number of courses or attain a particular level of proficiency, programs feel assured that they will have solid enrollment numbers each semester. As anyone who has studied the matter knows, this country has largely failed to combat the trend toward an increasingly monolingual and monocultural educational system. (For more on this, see the report prepared by the American Academy of Arts & Sciences' Commission on

⁶While shared courses through this program are not currently taking place, the administrative structure remains intact and we have hopes of using this in the future to better meet our students' interests in new languages we do not already teach.

Language Learning *America's Languages: Investing in Language Education for the twenty-first Century*, 2017) Few language professionals would argue against the idea that a college degree should include a requirement that each student leave speaking at least two languages. Nevertheless, the implementation of a language requirement can be complicated, especially at smaller institutions with limited staffing resources.

In the absence of a unified consensus among language faculty, Colgate retained a language requirement that many believe may be worse than no requirement at all. For the last two decades, Colgate students could meet the requirement by either completing three semesters of language study at the university level or by having previously passed 3 years of high school language without any testing or evaluation of the high school program. In 2016, the LC evaluated the proficiency of incoming students and compared those scores to students who completed three semesters of study on campus. To no one's surprise, over 80% of the students who had placed out of the language requirement with only 3 years of high school study scored lower on the proficiency test than the average score of the students who completed our courses. By accepting high school seat time without evaluating proficiency, the requirement effectively demeaned the perceived value of our teaching. Furthermore, very few students arrived at Colgate without having already met the three-year requirement. Typically, these students came from schools that did not have language offerings, compounding the inequity of limited access to language programs with an unequal increase in graduation requirements.

Every 10 years, Colgate reviews its Liberal Arts Core Curriculum, which includes the consideration of the language requirement. In previous years, language faculty did not have any consensus about how best to address the language requirement; internal discussion was largely held within individual departments and programs. When the matters were brought up within the larger faculty governance structure, no unified voice emerged to instigate meaningful changes to the requirement. For this most recent core revision, our language faculty found themselves in a very different situation due to the earlier establishment of the Language Council and the unified efforts of the newly restructured LC.

As the revision process began, the Language Council held its own discussion of how a new requirement for language study would impact each department and program. Although language faculty across the country would like to see higher enrollments, there are valid opposing arguments about the best way to meet that objective. A strict language requirement of any kind does bring in students, but some fear that enrollment may only increase for the languages that students believe to be easier to study. A hardline mandate may foster negative student attitudes, which can be felt very acutely in language classrooms which rely on open communicative in-class participation. It would be worth asking if instituting such a requirement really does achieve the ultimate goal of language education.

Furthermore, pushing students toward elementary language courses may further the perception that languages are service departments. Allowing students to use proficiency tests to prove that they have already acquired a particular set of linguistic capabilities further implies that our discipline has as its end a purely utilitarian purpose. University colleagues and administrators outside of the languages may

not understand that a communicative approach to language study means more than teaching students how to order food at a local ethnic restaurant or to haggle over the price of souvenirs on vacation. Within our discipline we understand that even elementary language study involves a deeper reflection about how we interact with people from different backgrounds. Students often comment that they learn a different culture through learning a language even at an elementary level. By suggesting that students can simply show that they have attained a skill through a placement exam, we do a disservice to the complexities of our field.

As we discussed these matters internally, it became clear that a language requirement also creates several staffing concerns. If students are required to take a language, they will want to have options about which language they study. As a smaller institution, we do not have the capacity to increase the number of courses offered at an elementary level without either increasing our staffing or decreasing the number of upper-division courses offered within a department. In many languages, advanced courses have fewer students. There exists a valid fear that administrators will justify pushing faculty to teach more lower-division courses to meet student demand. Yet this cannibalization of teaching capacity only weakens a department because those upper-division courses serve majors and minors. As the variety of offerings of advanced courses is reduced, fewer students will be able to enroll in the classes they need to complete a major or minor. Many of our majors are also double majors who work diligently to schedule time for language study. If fewer advanced courses are offered, it will be more difficult for these students and once again languages will likely lose out to another discipline. And for some of our smaller programs, losing even a handful of students can threaten the viability of the department.

By first discussing these fears internally, our Language Council was able to outline our concerns to the curriculum revision committee. In a report we detailed the rationale for prioritizing language study within our curriculum and ways peer institutions approach the issue. We explained the value of students studying languages in the university contexts and how our current equivalency with high school coursework did not meet our own educational aims. Most importantly, we advocated for a more comprehensive understanding of our discipline and its value in giving students a multicultural perspective through a multilingual approach to the world.

Our communication with the revision committee resulted in a significant proposal. The committee suggested that the new curriculum include language study as one of five liberal arts practices requirements. To meet this requirement, students have to take at least one language course, at any level, regardless of any prior language knowledge. Once again, our Language Council provided a venue for language faculty to discuss the pros and cons of this proposal and provide a response to the revision committee. For example, shortcomings included that a minimum level of language requirement would be insufficient to ensure that students would gain significant functional proficiency. Furthermore, it still had the potential to cause the same issues related to staffing and course capacity of any other requirement.

As the proposal moved toward ratification by our faculty, the Language Council, led by the LC, played an important role in gathering language faculty to

communicate their concerns. In both informal hallway chats and organized meetings, language faculty were able to come to a consensus about the value of this requirement and the feasibility of its implementation. While there was no room to request a more rigorous requirement, our faculty were able to propose small adjustments that we believe will position us to make this requirement successful in terms of increasing the long-term vitality of our language programs and improving our students' education through language study.

4 Preparing to Implement a New Language Requirement

Looking forward, our biggest concerns regarding the new language requirement will be to ensure that it is an integral part of the overall curriculum and that student enrollment is somewhat evenly distributed across all of our languages. We want to avoid the situation in which language study is siloed off from and set aside by students and advisors as nothing more than a checkbox to complete. To facilitate this transition, we are currently laying the groundwork for several initiatives that we hope will improve our students' academic experience, increase enrollment in all language programs, and foster a greater understanding of the importance of language study with our faculty colleagues. This work includes digital and in-person outreach to current and incoming students, collaboration with faculty across campus, and gathering and collecting data to understand the impact of the new requirement. Again, we will use the Language Council and the LC as the body to communicate with the university-wide Committee implementing the new Liberal Arts Core Practices. One faculty member and an administrator being members of both groups should help realize close communication.

Outreach 1: Developing a new website to reach all students

As students, with their parents and academic advisors, try to navigate this new requirement, they will undoubtedly look to information on the university website. While each language program currently has a presence on the website, we do not have a single page dedicated to all languages. Our internet messaging is primarily geared toward students who are already motivated to seek out the page of the language they are interested in studying. This has the potential with the new language requirement of pushing students to simply continue in whichever language they studied in high school, leaving them to overlook other options they may have considered if given more information about our course offerings.

During the 2022–2023 school year, our LC worked with the communications team to put together a new site that consolidates the information that students will need to choose a language to study. We plan to see our communications staff around language classrooms and events gathering photo assets and video content for our website to reflect our dynamic and diverse activities. This page is not simply a copy of the information already present on individual department websites. Instead, it helps students see how each language offering connects to potential scholarly or

professional goals. In this way, we hope that students will be able to more easily educate themselves about how beginning language study early will open new doors for them in terms of their academic interests, off-campus study options, and professional ambitions.

Outreach 2: Connecting with Students Earlier

Far too often, we have found that students will put off language study until their second or third years. It is not surprising that these students, once they come to the inevitable realization that studying a language is a transformative and rewarding experience, find they are running out of time to fully develop their linguistic competencies. For this reason, we understand that our messaging about language study must be as proactive as possible to find students as early as possible. Our Language Council has long fought to maintain a space within the first-year student orientation program. Additionally, we hope our new website and additional content included in messaging for incoming students will reach them before they arrive on campus. We have even been working with our admissions team to help them understand how to talk about language study and the language requirement. After meeting with admissions staff, we can already report that tour guides are more accurately describing the work we do in our language departments.⁷ We have asked admissions to frame language study in terms of opportunities instead of requirements. This early outreach, we hope, will shape the way that students come predisposed to study languages.

Outreach 3: Connecting with Academic Advising

Our students' views of language study are also shaped by their academic advisors. At Colgate, each student is assigned to a first-semester seminar taught by a faculty member who becomes their first advisor. Once students declare a major, they choose an advisor from the faculty of that department. As part of implementing the new curriculum, we are trying to find ways to reach out to our faculty colleagues to facilitate their advising about language study. In addition to our website, we will put together a printed handout that will be delivered each new year with information about the institutional language requirement, departmental language requirements (for those that vary from the institutional requirement), and methods for helping students choose the language that best suits their academic interests and career goals. We are also seeking to engage in deeper conversations with our colleagues about the role language study plays within a liberal arts education and encourage a culture that looks beyond the utilitarian value of any discipline.

Outreach 4: Sharing Students' Language Information with Academic Advisors

One important tool that we are developing is a required language background form that all incoming students must complete before enrolling in courses. The idea for this survey came from a similar approach used by our Department of Romance

⁷This is based on anecdotal eavesdropping as tours pass by the LC.

Languages and Literatures and a talk given by Bridget Yaden at the 2022 CLTL Symposium. The information students provide is part of their academic records made visible to advisors and language faculty. Some sample information we gather is:

- A selection languages the student would like to study
- Languages studied in a classroom setting, number of courses taken, grades received, and which textbook was used
- Languages spoken but not studied formally in school
- Student interest in particular areas of the world or off-campus study experiences
- An option to be contacted by a member of a language department for further information
- Where applicable, results from language placement exams including writing samples

We hope that with this information, advisors will be better equipped to encourage students to explore languages they may not have otherwise considered studying. By thinking more deeply about which language they choose, we also believe students can approach this requirement with a better understanding of its importance within their total educational experience at Colgate.

Outreach 5: Connecting with the Registrar's Office

One of the most important measures that will show that we are succeeding in implementing this new language requirement will be increased enrollment distributed across each program and every level. The requirement has the potential to set us back in our goals if our first-semester courses in particular languages are overwhelmed with students seeking to meet the bare minimum requirement while other programs continue to struggle to find students. Our Language Council will be working with the Registrar over the first years of implementation to receive and analyze data about course enrollment to ensure that we are achieving our aims. We want to obtain data regarding which courses students are choosing to use to complete their requirement, in which semester of study they choose to meet the requirement, at which level they begin their university study, and how often students continue to take courses beyond the requirement. This data can provide a vision of the effectiveness of the requirement for our students, our programs, and the university and what we may need to adjust or change, including requests for increased staffing.

5 Looking Beyond Proficiency

In 1956, Charles Choquette, a language professor at Colgate, put together a report on the role of languages in the humanities. In this report, he asserted to his administrative and faculty colleagues that languages were not afforded the role they deserved in the curriculum:

During all the centuries of language teaching in America faculties have not done an adequate job of relating language with the whole of the humanities; if they had they would have long ago given language a more noble place than that of a mere hurdle to be surmounted, a position unrelated to the rest of the curriculum in any real sense. The present arrangement of confining the business of language study to the Freshman year, to get it over with and to forget it promptly, with no flesh and blood relationship to the culture and literature of a foreign people, is obviously not the answer.

This statement could have easily been written by any of our language faculty members today. Across the country, language educators and advocates fight against a tide of monolingualism. The globalizing dominance of English as the standard language of business, increased reliance on and reliability of automated translation technology, and dangerous political trends toward xenophobic nationalism are all working against us. Language study is increasingly considered as a nice, but unnecessary skill. If this continues, there is a real threat that the academic study of languages will become less accessible outside of elite institutions. We argue that this trend is in large part caused by an incomplete understanding of the genuine benefits of language learning. Potential students, their parents, and those who fund higher education want to know how studying a language will have tangible benefits for students. Even well-meaning advocates may describe such benefits in purely utilitarian terms that do not fully explain the value of our profession.

At Colgate, we are once again facing the potential for a situation in which students' language study is confined to a single semester. No matter how successful our efforts are, some students will still choose to limit their language study to only the one required course. If others continue to perceive complete fluency as the only way to benefit from language study, then those students have gained little of anything. Proficiency-based arguments for the only value of language study do not adequately reflect the broader intellectual growth of the students observed in our language curricula. Furthermore, the proficiency-based arguments fail to reflect the full range of courses offered in our departments and undesirably contribute to the artificial divide between language and literary studies.

As we approach the institution of a new requirement at Colgate, we are looking to increase awareness of the true value of language study among our students and colleagues in terms of its role in providing a unique perspective about the world and other cultures. One of the educational goals at Colgate is for students to "see themselves honestly and critically within a global and historical perspective: recognize that their beliefs, identities, interests, and values are in part a reflection of their background, education, and life experiences." By studying a language and thus another culture, students inevitably learn that what they once believed as the default of the world is actually a reflection of their own culture, which is often made aware only after learning about another culture. Language study, even at the most basic level, requires students to reimagine what they know about the fundamentals of communication. It forces them to think outside of their own linguistic context and understand the ways in which culture and language are intimately connected. In this sense, a first-semester language class plays a similar role as a senior-seminar literature course does, because each of them "helps students learn to communicate in many different ways."

VanPatten (2015) has argued that most language programs in this country are not run by language experts, because they are primarily staffed by literary scholars. He suggests that such language departments are failing because their faculty focus primarily on literature and culture and not on linguistic studies. Putting aside the fact that such an argument unnecessarily pits professional colleagues against each other, Van Patten fails to recognize the linguistic benefits students gain by studying literature and culture. While literature courses may not always have an explicitly linguistic component (though they often certainly do), they increase student proficiency by asking them to think abstractly about unfamiliar topics. In these courses, students must assimilate new information, understand new cultural contexts, and theorize about the meaning of literary texts. They must develop and defend arguments both orally and in writing. In these ways, the academic study of literature and culture provides an ideal classroom setting to push students toward ACTFL's advanced and superior proficiency levels.

In order to effectively advocate for language programs as an academic discipline, and not simply as skill-based service departments, we must convince our colleagues and administrators of the full, complex value of our field. The Liberal Arts Core Curriculum as a signature of the educational mission of the university is the perfect context to do this. We must be able to articulate the inherent value of our most basic language course, the most advanced literature and culture courses, and everything else we teach. Other non-language scholars may, in good faith, want to promote language study to their students and advisees, but with a limited context of the field this effort may fall short of the ideal. These people will understand that in their own area of study there is a similar disconnect between its commonly-perceived utilitarian value and their more nuanced understanding of how it shapes our approach to understanding the world. LCs can and should find or create venues for inter-departmental collaboration and a more informed description of the deeper value of the study of language, literature, and culture.

6 Conclusion

Through the reconceptualization of our LC and its leadership capacity on campus, we have begun to see the ways that language programs can become a more integral part of an academic curriculum. LCs play a pivotal role in guiding the narrative about the importance of language study relative to other disciplines taught on campus. In order to achieve this goal, the duties of a LC director should include the freedom to work across administrative and disciplinary boundaries to find new avenues for increasing student enrollments and advocating for increased resources for all languages. At Colgate, we have found that using the LC as an academic hub for collaboration across campus has given all of us a larger voice on campus. While many questions remain as to the ultimate result of these efforts, we are optimistic that we have already made our programs stronger and more visible on campus in ways that will benefit our entire educational community.

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Language as a Bridge to Other Disciplines



Deborah S. Reisinger

Abstract The Cultures and Language Across the Curriculum (CLAC) program at Duke University positions language use throughout the university by offering courses taught in languages other than English (LOTE) in schools such as global health, public policy, and environmental sciences. These course offerings invite students to use their knowledge and study of another language within their chosen discipline, internationalizing their studies of courses otherwise approached through English-only perspectives. Their relatively low-stakes approach to grading (satisfactory/unsatisfactory) and 1/2 credit structure make the courses appealing to pre-professional students who have more constricted schedules. As such, these courses do not compete with courses offered in the language departments, but rather complement their offerings. While not envisioned as a strategy to combat declining language enrollments, CLAC has contributed to language's visibility across campus, infusing regional and international perspectives into a growing number of disciplines.

Keywords CLAC · L2 proficiency · Interdisciplinarity

1 Introduction

For the myriad reasons detailed in this volume, language departments across the United States are experiencing declining enrollments. To counter this trend, departments often implement strategies they hope will bolster their majors – and protect their programs from being shuttered. Some develop engaging cultural activities that will appeal to students, while others develop elaborate marketing campaigns to prove that majoring in a language will help secure a well-paid job. Most of these ideas fall short of meeting their goals, arguably because the strategies themselves are poorly aligned with desired outcomes. A cheese tasting event or a movie night in the

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L2 is fun, but it does not reflect the satisfaction of gaining proficiency, nor the deep cultural knowledge gained when one reaches the advanced level. Similarly, while proficiency in another language will lead to a slightly higher salary (Liwinski, 2019), a language major will almost never rival the starting pay of a STEM or social sciences major (McGurran, 2022). These tactics do not resonate with most students, nor with their parents, because they do not reflect the reality of the language major's experience.

World language departments might rethink their tactics by considering the larger goal of language and cultural proficiency. Instead of trying to prove their worth by defending the utility of the discipline, departments might instead implement an approach that allows students to discover this through their own experiences. The Cultures and Languages Across the Curriculum (CLAC) program offers one way to do so, by providing students with a way to connect their language proficiency to their studies of other disciplines and areas of academic interest.

2 Institutional Context

Duke University piloted a CLAC program ten years ago. Today, it has positioned courses in languages other than English (LOTE) throughout the university. Undergraduate and graduate students can take language tutorials in 12 different languages in disciplines as diverse as Music, Environmental Studies, Markets and Management, History, Global Health, and Public Policy.

Duke maintains a rigorous language requirement that requires all students to take courses in a LOTE, whether they are language learners or native speakers. All undergraduates (except those in Engineering) must complete up to three semesters of a second language – either three courses in a single language or one advanced level course, whichever is attained first. Those who enroll with advanced proficiency in an L2 cannot test out of the language requirement but must enroll in an advanced course: a student with an AP 5 takes a 300-level course, and a native speaker can either enroll in an advanced course in their native language or begin the study of a new language. These policies are undeniably effective in introducing students to the rich, interdisciplinary courses offered in our language programs and departments. Examples in the Romance Studies department include undergraduate courses that are cross-listed with African and African American Studies (Black literature in translation), Art History (Public Art: Monuments and Murals), Asian Studies (France-Asia Cultural Transfers and Translations), Dance (Versailles and the Arts), Ethics (Global Displacement), Global Health (Flaubert's Brain), History (Race and Power), Marketing (Working in French), Linguistics (Spanish in the US), Music (Music, History, and Politics in Contemporary Africa), and Visual Arts (Mafia at the Movies). While a few of these courses are in English with weekly preceptorials in the L2, most are taught in the L2.

Despite these broad offerings that typically garner solid enrollments, Duke has a small number of language majors (1%), most of whom are second majors; the

most common majors on campus are Computer Science, Economics, Public Policy, Biology, and Nursing. With a large number of students enrolled in pre-professional programs – primarily pre-health – it can be difficult to convince students that they have enough time to take additional courses in a world language. Some are concerned about their grade point average. Others do not see the utility of adding a second language to their course of study.

Duke's CLAC program was not envisioned as a strategy to reverse declining enrollments, nor was it developed to invigorate our language programs, most of which are well-enrolled and offer interdisciplinary coursework. The goals were instead the following:

- to provide ways for students with proficiency in a second or third language to deepen their academic experiences
- to encourage the internationalization of disciplines that often rely on English-only research and perspectives
- to connect faculty across disciplines in unique, bilateral learning communities that upend traditional academic hierarchies based on tenure

These objectives reflect the CLAC Consortium's Vision statement that "institutions of higher education will value all languages as a means to access, generate, and disseminate knowledge" (CLAC Consortium, [n.d.](#)).

3 Structuring the Program

There are over 30 CLAC programs in the United States, each with its own unique structure that reflects its institutional culture and student body. The parameters below were designed to reflect that, while also adhering to the CLAC Consortium's mission:

- To address the scheduling issues students have shared, CLAC courses are designed as half-credit "tutorials" that would not take the place of another course that a student might need for their major.
- To ensure that "all students will have multiple opportunities to meaningfully use languages they know or are learning," CLAC tutorials are almost always positioned in departments and schools outside of the arts and humanities. Tutorials are then cross-listed with the relevant language program. This structure thus ensures collaboration among faculty and administrators in the paired departments, whereby increasing the visibility of language faculty who are often siloed.
- To address the concerns of pre-professional students who were concerned about their transcripts, tutorials were created as pass/fail. Knowing that grades are a barrier to the risk-taking that is inherent in language acquisition, the program uses an un-grading model that focuses on formative feedback and reflection.
- To secure coherent, long-term partnerships, the program builds on areas of shared interest. With many students interested in diplomacy and policy, we created

public policy courses in multiple languages, including Russian and Chinese. Where there were numerous faculty working abroad in sustainability-related fields, CLAC courses were developed in French, Spanish, German, Chinese, and Malagasy. Where there was disciplinary synergy, we developed courses accordingly: Italian and Music, Spanish and Soccer, French and International Relations, Arabic and Global Health, and so on.

4 Conclusion

Duke's CLAC program was designed to position world languages across the university, to make them visible – and therefore viable – to students, faculty, and administrators, and to facilitate and highlight their inclusion and advantage in a multitude of disciplines. Without a doubt, CLAC has increased the presence of world languages on our campus; no longer contained to one building, languages are literally heard across the institution. This may seem symbolic, but for a student population that is increasingly international, CLAC demonstrates that speaking a second (or third) language is valued academically. Future research might examine how CLAC can be a viable pathway to promote diversity and inclusion efforts for international students and heritage speakers.

The impact of the CLAC program is also notable in a number of tangible ways. In addition to supporting multilingual spaces across campus, CLAC creates foundational bridges between faculty in different disciplines, resulting in alliances across schools and programs that have led to important grants and 6 interdisciplinary research projects. CLAC also offers professional development, as well as replenishment. Many language instructors on university campuses function in relative microcosms; they teach similar courses each year, have little connection with faculty outside their departments, and participate only narrowly in university governance. Over time, this can breed staleness or a sense of alienation, but ultimately, it is a loss to the institution, which does not benefit from their expertise. For such faculty, CLAC offers an opportunity to apply their expertise to a new area and to develop a sense of belonging by creating synergies with peers across campus. Our research has found that this involvement and earned visibility improves instructor morale (Reisinger, 2018). We have also found that faculty in paired disciplines gained important pedagogical skills; some learned how to scaffold assignments, while others developed rubrics for the first time. These partnerships are key to flattening hierarchies, and for developing a culture of inclusion within institutions where the sharing of knowledge is valued.

The benefits of collaboration are experienced by students as well, as CLAC supports research and action in multiple languages. In our global health courses, for instance, CLAC students have translated archival research from English-language courses and interpreted for visitors at research poster sessions in Global Health and Environmental Studies. These examples underscore the ways that collaborations between faculty and among students can benefit larger structures.

CLAC also encourages and facilitates the pursuit of advanced language study, even after students have completed their requirement. The 1/2 credit structure of our CLAC courses makes it easy for a student to add language to a schedule that is packed with major requirements. CLAC courses can also serve as “placeholders” to help maintain language proficiency before a student has enough space in their schedule to take another full-credit course. The 1/2 credit structure also allows faculty a way to gauge student interest in other fields and content areas. CLAC courses can serve as pilots to experiment with new material before developing full credit courses; in Romance Studies, CLAC courses later became full-credit offerings in immigration studies and global health. Finally, while more research is needed on this topic, data from our 4-year pilot revealed that less than 50% of students enrolled in CLAC courses plan to major or minor in a second language (Reisinger, 2018). This data indicates that CLAC may be reaching a different population of students on campus, and also that it may be advantageous to target CLAC courses to students in their first years on campus.

While it is difficult to directly correlate CLAC programming with language program enrollments, as there are many factors that influence a student’s course selection process, we have anecdotal evidence that second and third year CLAC students return to language departments in subsequent semesters; many of these students explained wanting to continue using their knowledge of another language and culture, while others noted a need for more formal language study to gain advanced proficiency. At the writing of this article, we are working with our office of assessment to track student enrollment in CLAC courses, language departments, and study away and community engaged experiences. We hope that the knowledge of these organic trajectories will help us understand how to advise students better, while also supporting language programs across our campus.

In all of these ways, CLAC functions as a complement to language department offerings, and as a gateway to further language study. CLAC courses encourage students to consider new connections and perspectives and to embrace disciplinary perspectives that are not mono-lingual, which is our ultimate goal.

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Language Programs at Rochester Institute of Technology: A Successful Recent Initiative (2018-Present)



Sara Armengot

Abstract RIT offers undergraduate immersions and minors in 10 languages including Arabic, ASL, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. The university has no language requirement or graduate programs in spoken languages; students are encouraged to study abroad with no foreign language preparation. Recent changes in enrollment patterns and consideration of RIT's strengths led the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures to develop a new option for students: a Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Modern Language and Culture. This is a 4-year undergraduate degree that incorporates foreign language, intercultural understanding, and career preparation. The degree program pairs language and culture with a professional, scientific, or other field to enable students to internationalize their education through sustained engagement with language and culture. The degree is available in four tracks: Chinese, French, Japanese, and Spanish. Japanese is the most popular and highly enrolled. Students complete a professional or technical core as well as specialized courses in their language track. These courses include language for professional use and language for science and technology. International experience is a key component of the degree and students have benefited greatly from the international travel, virtual exchanges, internships, and other innovative hybrid opportunities currently available.

Keywords Language and culture · Undergraduate degree · STEM · Career-orientation · Internationalization

1 The Setting: Language & Culture at a STEM-Focused Institution

Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) is a private university located in New York State with over 14,000 undergraduate and 3000 graduate students. It is home to the National Technical Institute of the Deaf (NTID) with about 100 deaf and hard of

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hearing students. RIT also has international campuses in Croatia, Dubai, Kosovo, and China. Partnerships and agreements with many other universities enable students to study abroad while the Office of Career Services and Co-op assists students in the process of identifying internships, co-op opportunities, and job placements.

Language programs at RIT have long been part of the general education opportunities provided to undergraduate students, as documented in the *Language enrollment database* (Modern Language Association, 2022). Currently, the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures offers courses in 10 languages: American Sign Language (ASL), Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. Students may elect to complete a sequence of 3 language and culture courses as part of their general education graduation requirement or take an additional 2 courses to complete a 5-course minor in Arabic, ASL and Deaf Cultural Studies, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Latino/a & Latin American Studies, and Language Science. NTID curricular offerings include a bachelor's degree in American Sign Language-English Interpretation as well as additional courses in ASL and Deaf Cultural Studies, interpretation and translation, linguistics, and international sign languages.

2 The Challenge: Responding to Institutional Change

In 2013, the university moved from a quarter-based academic calendar to a semester-based calendar. Faculty converted courses from 10 to 15 weeks and the general education requirements were updated. With the shift from quarters to semesters and an updated general education framework, the overall number of courses students take as part of their undergraduate degrees decreased. At the same time, options available to students to fulfill their general education requirements increased. Fewer incoming students started taking language courses in their first and second years. This led to a higher percentage of third, fourth, and fifth year students taking beginning and intermediate language courses. This resulted in a decreased percentage of students having time to reach advanced levels before graduating from their undergraduate programs. In this new environment, the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures faced the challenge of how to attract students earlier in their studies in order to sustain and expand opportunities for students at upper levels of language and culture at the undergraduate level.

3 Surviving to Thriving: An Applied Approach

The faculty of Modern Languages and Cultures surveyed students to determine if they would be interested in adding a double major in a language, if the option were available. The results were resoundingly positive. RIT excels at career-oriented

education while traditional foreign language degree programs in the U.S. have not historically been heavily career-oriented. Therefore, with the goal of building on institutional strengths while responding to student demand, the faculty proposed a unified B.S. degree in Applied Modern Language and Culture with tracks in specific languages and cultures. This degree enables graduates to apply their knowledge of language and culture effectively in their chosen career or field of further study (<https://www.rit.edu/study/applied-modern-language-and-culture-bs>).

A challenge in the curriculum development process was that not all language and culture faculty were well versed in teaching language and culture for specific purposes, particularly in STEM fields. This was overcome through the 2014–2016 Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language (UISFL) U.S. Department of Education funded project, “Integration of language and technology: Double major with Applied Language and Culture,” directed by Hiroko Yamashita (with \$189,508.00 funded by the Department of Education and cost share of \$189,508.00 funded by Rochester Institute of Technology). The grant enabled language and culture faculty to work directly with faculty in Computer Science, Business, and Engineering on developing specialized interdisciplinary courses in language and culture for STEM and business (Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language Program, 2022).

Another early challenge was overcoming the low expectations for prospective student demand for such a degree by enrollment management based on PSAT and other instruments used to document student interest in college degree programs. The success of the AMLC program shows that interest in innovative new degree programs is not always adequately predicted by the available instruments used to document high school students’ interest in traditional degree programs. Our experience shows that faculty can play a role in educating admissions and enrollment management in better understanding potential student demand for new degree programs.

In fall 2018, RIT’s Department of Modern Languages and Cultures began offering the Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Modern Language and Culture (AMLC). This is a 4-year undergraduate degree that incorporates foreign language, intercultural understanding, and career preparation. The degree program pairs language and culture with a professional, scientific, or other field to enable students to internationalize their education through sustained engagement with language and culture. The degree is currently available in four tracks: Chinese, French, Japanese, and Spanish. Every student completes a professional or technical core of five related semester-long classes as well as specialized courses in their language track. These include 8 language-specific courses in language for professional use and language for science and technology developed with the support of the 2014–2016 UISFL grant. These courses, one in language for the professions and one in language for science and technology in each of the four tracks, are now a critical curricular component of the degree program. They are also popular with students minoring in Chinese, French, Japanese, and Spanish as they provide new opportunities for

students with advanced language proficiency to continue enriching their language and culture education for specific purposes.

International experience, whether through study abroad, work abroad or internships, is a key component of the degree. RIT Global, RIT College of Liberal Arts, U.S. Department of Education, the director of the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages, as well as faculty in multiple fields lent their support to the creation of the program. In fact, through the 2014–2016 UISFL grant, language and culture faculty traveled with RIT’s director of Career Services and Co-op, Maria Richart, to multiple countries to establish productive work abroad and internship connections for students in the AMLC degree program. RIT’s Study Abroad and Career Services and Co-op Offices continue to provide critical assistance in identifying and developing international opportunities for Applied Modern Language and Culture students.

Our next step is the development of an interdisciplinary language and culture course on international entrepreneurship with a student travel component, in collaboration with faculty in RIT’s Saunders College of Business. We envision that this new course will be an early experiential opportunity in the first half of the degree program for students to think creatively about how to combine their language and culture studies with entrepreneurial thinking. As a result, students may leverage their language proficiency either in creating new businesses or in doing things differently in their future workplace. This project, including piloting the course with student travel to Asia, Europe, and Latin America, is supported by a 2022–2024 UISFL project, Interdisciplinary Entrepreneurship Curriculum for Applied Modern Language and Culture, directed by Sara Armengot (\$179,742.00 total anticipated support over the 2-year project duration from the Department of Education with cost share of \$179,745.00 funded by Rochester Institute of Technology).

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

Current students have benefited greatly from the international travel and virtual exchanges, internships, and other educational opportunities available to them through RIT Global and Study Abroad and RIT Co-op and Career Services. As the program continues to grow, we look forward to establishing additional connections and collaborations with universities and organizations to further support our students. May 2022 marked the graduation of the first cohort of degree students who joined the program as first-year students when it opened in 2018. Japanese is the most popular and highly enrolled track. Examples of areas where AMLC graduates have selected to work include Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, SONY, M&T Bank, Mindex Technologies, Research Square Company, University of Rochester Center for Health and Technology, and non-profit organizations.

For those interested in implementing similar projects, the following recommendations may prove useful when preparing to propose a new or substantially renewed degree program.

1. Gather data via survey of students on the number and percent of current students who would sign up for your proposed program if it were an option.
2. Identify the areas where student demand, faculty strengths, and institutional priorities align.
3. Meet with your leadership team, admissions, and enrollment management (or equivalent at your institution) to share the survey data, your conclusions about areas of potential program development, and ask for their feedback about your plan to propose a new program or reinvent an existing program.
4. Use institutional feedback to gauge where support may or may not exist. If support is uncertain, consider outreach activities to build support.
5. Apply for relevant internal and external funding to develop new curriculum as needed.
6. Pilot new or revised curriculum and make necessary adjustments.
7. Explore opportunities for external support including letters from alumni, professional associations, and industry.
8. Consider relevant grants, sponsors, and the MLA Academic Program Services program consultancy service (<https://www.maps.mla.org/Resources/Consultancy-Service>)

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Part V
Solutions to Thrive: Recruitment

The Seal of Biliteracy as a Recruitment Opportunity



Janet Eckerson and Christopher Jacobs

Abstract This short chapter describes the pilot of a recruitment initiative by the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Nebraska – Kearney. The authors hypothesized that the new educational policy initiative around state Seals of Biliteracy (awards to high school graduates who attain proficiency in two languages) would present an opportunity to increase enrollment in post-secondary language programs. Beginning Spring 2021, the Department began offering the proctored Avant STAMP4s language proficiency assessment to high school students and admitted applicants, often in conjunction with an admission presentation, tour, or event. The STAMP4s results are then used both for placement in language courses and to apply for the Seal of Biliteracy awarded by the Nebraska Department of Education. Participating students learned how they can earn credit for their language skills through retroactive credit policies that make language majors and minors more achievable. The chapter reports the number of students who participated Spring 2021-Summer 2022 and how many subsequently enrolled in language courses and/or declared majors or minors.

Keywords Recruitment of secondary students · Seal of Biliteracy · Heritage language learners · Language placement

1 Introduction

The Seal of Biliteracy (SoBL) is an educational policy initiative that recognizes high school graduates who attain proficiency in more than one language with a formal award. It originated in California and is now awarded (as of this writing) in 49 states, including Nebraska (Seal of Biliteracy, 2022). Though policies vary by state, to obtain a state SoBL a student must demonstrate proficiency in two languages, usually by earning a specific score on a language proficiency examination, such as

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a STAMP, AAPL, AP, or IB test. Typically, high school students access proficiency examinations for languages other than English (LOTEs) through their high school or school district. Proficiency thresholds for the award depend on state policy and range from Intermediate Low to Advanced Mid on the ACTFL scale (for a comparison of state's implementation efforts, see Davin & Heineke, 2017). Post-secondary language departments can use the SoBL to determine course placement, and we hypothesize that they can also use it to incentivize language study.

At the same time, several studies of the implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy have noted that, in practice, English dominant students studying commonly taught languages in well-resourced suburban schools have advantages in access and earn the SoBL more frequently (e.g., Heineke et al., 2018; Subtirelu et al., 2019; de Galbert & Woogen, 2021). Subtirelu et al. (2019) summarized, "in general, students who speak English natively are granted a path to earning the Seal through their world languages curriculum that requires clearing fewer bureaucratic hurdles and that expects a lower level of second language development than the path offered to students, especially nonnative English speakers, who might wish to use their proficiency in a home or heritage language to demonstrate their biliteracy" (p. 381). Thus, in the design of this recruitment initiative, we also envisioned a role our university could play in creating greater equity and access to proficiency examinations and information about the Seal of Biliteracy in our region, especially for rural students and the growing number of heritage speakers of Spanish.

2 Context and Design of the Recruitment Initiative

The University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK) is a regional public university with just under 4500 undergraduate students, located in rural central Nebraska, about 3 h from Omaha and 5 h from Denver and Kansas City. Over 90% of UNK students come from Nebraska and surrounding states, primarily from rural communities (UNK Factbook, 2021). The Spanish-speaking population is growing in the region, and so is their share of enrollment on campus (Zhang & Wiener, 2020; UNK Factbook, 2021). In the fall of 2020, the UNK Department of Modern Languages adopted a placement and retroactive credit policy for SoBL recipients modeled on an existing AP/IB placement model. The Nebraska Department of Education awards two levels of the SoBL: Gold and Silver. At UNK, Silver SoBL awardees are placed into an intermediate-level conversation, culture, and composition class for any of the four languages taught (French German, Japanese, or Spanish); Gold SoBL awardees place into their choice of several upper intermediate courses. After passing their initial course with at least a B-, students can apply for up to nine retroactive credits for skipped third, fourth, or fifth semester courses, satisfying general education requirements and putting them well on the way to earning a 24-credit minor or 36-credit major. For this reason, we hypothesize that a SoBL would make a language major or minor more accessible and appealing.

The rural K-12 school districts in the region are less likely to offer advanced language study, such as AP or IB language courses, or sequences for heritage learners, than their urban or suburban counterparts (Nebraska Department of Education, 2022), meaning commercial language proficiency tests are an important avenue for earning a SoBL for students in our area. However, purchasing access to tests, lab and equipment set-up and/or proctoring for these tests might deter teachers and school officials from administering them. We proposed using our campus language computer lab to provide language proficiency tests. In the Spring of 2021, we were awarded funds from the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences to pilot a recruitment initiative in partnership with the Office of Admissions, in which groups of area high school students visit campus to take the STAMP4s assessment in conjunction with an admission presentation, tour or other recruitment event. We were able to purchase licenses for the STAMP4s from Avant Assessment with a volume discount. Participating students paid a fee to cover the cost of the assessment (\$20), but we did not charge for the proctor, and Admissions offered students free lunch in the cafeteria. We began to send email invitations announcing the initiative first to high school world language and English language learner (ELL) teachers within a 2-h drive of our campus. We also blanket-emailed incoming freshmen with information about the SoBL, the retroactive credit policy and opportunities to take a language test on campus. Alongside faculty, our department tutor, graduate teaching assistant, and a student research assistant aided in organizing the visits and proctoring the examination.

3 Preliminary Results

The initiative is in its infancy, but 90 high school students and recent high school graduates from 12 high schools took the STAMP4s SoBL-qualifying exam on UNK's campus between Spring 2021 and Summer 2022. Five groups, ranging from 6 to 40 students, visited campus for a day-long test, lunch, and tour package. Nearly all took their test in Spanish, except for one test in Somali Maxa and one in Arabic. Twenty of the 90 students were second language learners and 70 were heritage learners of the language they tested. Of the 90, 68 (75.56%) were high school seniors who could theoretically enroll for the next school year. Among these seniors, 23 (33.82%) eventually matriculated at UNK, and 20 of the 23 that matriculated (86.96%) were heritage speakers of Spanish. Nearly all (97.14%) matriculated participants scored well enough on the STAMP4s test to earn an SoBL award and to start in at least an intermediate course, while 10 (43.48%), all heritage speakers, were able to begin their UNK language studies in an upper intermediate level course.

Twelve of the 23 (56.52%) students who enrolled at UNK registered for at least one language class during the 2022–2023 academic year. Though early in their academic careers, at the time of writing, two students had declared a Spanish Translation and Interpretation major, six, a Spanish minor, and one, a French

minor. Thus, eight of the 12 (66.67%) students who enrolled in a language class, chose a program of study involving language study. These results suggest that the recruitment initiative is succeeding in helping area students to earn the Nebraska SoBL, but also encouraging these students to enroll in language courses and choose language majors and minors when they arrive on campus. However, it is currently difficult to assess the long-term impact of the SoBL on enrollment, majors, and minors with only three semesters' worth of data. Even if this initiative does not draw large numbers of language students, this type of creative thinking shows administration the power of languages and can help draw historically underrepresented populations to campus.

4 Conclusions and Next Steps

Alongside these preliminary results, the enthusiastic response from visiting students and their teachers, and the continuing commitment from partners in the Office of Admissions, were sufficient encouragement to continue and expand the efforts during the 2022–2023 academic year, if not beyond. All the schools who brought students to campus for the proficiency tests and admissions visits indicated they intended to participate again. Going forward, we will continue to track participants' academic trajectories and monitor language enrollments, majors, and minors. We are also engaged in a larger research project, involving a statewide survey and interviews, to shed further light on the role that earning an SoBL might play in students' decisions to pursue undergraduate language study.

As a tool for outreach and engagement, the initiative was overwhelmingly successful. It generated positive news coverage for the Department of Modern Languages on campus and in the community (see Ellyson, 2022) and created connections with language teachers in the region. Also, the large number of heritage speakers of Spanish from rural schools who participated represent a population who may not have had a clear path to demonstrating eligibility for the Nebraska SoBL through high school coursework. Thus, the initiative succeeded in broadening access to the award in our region.

The absence of non-Spanish learners among the participants thus far is unfortunate. Spanish is by far the most common language in local high schools, but French, German, and Japanese programs are also present in the state. Our initial attempts to invite teachers and students of other languages have not yet succeeded. At the same time, there are many speakers of heritage languages not taught in local schools—such as Vietnamese, Somali, and Arabic—who could potentially participate in language testing for the SoBL. Going forward, we will explore additional strategies to broaden the invitation to take the STAMP4s test on campus through outreach to school administrators, teacher organizations, and school counselors. The long-term impact of states' SoBL awards on undergraduate language study remains an open question, but data are promising.

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The Language Placement Brief: Showcasing Language Learning Opportunities



Sherry A. Maggin, John C. Baskerville, John D. Benjamin,
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Abstract This short chapter will discuss a language orientation event and how it contributes to highlighting various languages, informing students of their language choices, and supporting our language programs. In the summer prior to their first semester, United States Military Academy students participate in a “Language Brief,” in which the Department of Foreign Languages introduces them to the eight languages from which they will choose their required two-semester world language sequence. A critical aspect of the brief is introducing students to the relevance and importance of all eight languages, with the goal that this knowledge will motivate them to consider less commonly taught languages and not simply fall back on what they feel is familiar or comfortable. The brief includes an introduction to the language programs by the department head, as well as the opportunity for students to speak to faculty from a variety of languages and to complete a language preference form. Creating an opportunity for language faculty to contextualize the languages and answer students’ questions has been critical in driving enrollment in all languages, especially less commonly taught languages, such as Persian and Portuguese.

Keywords Language orientation · Language program direction · Language selection

Language programs remain vital when they focus on people and communities. Because the language used by a diversity of speakers constitutes the material in our courses, discourse itself—how information is communicated and by whom—is central to our role in the academy. This content includes values, identities, and strategies for interacting with and entering the world; these are the foundations for who we are and how we live our lives. Learners benefit most from language instruction when teachers communicate this mission effectively from the beginning

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and closely embed it within the curriculum (Driskill et al., 2019). Given the importance of this knowledge, early and even first impressions of language departments must be carefully crafted to communicate these affordances of language instruction to learners. Further, demonstrating this linguistic and cultural awareness through instructors' own behaviors, identities, and personalities leads to greater success and interest for learners (Rassei, 2014). Initial engagement with learners by a diverse, dynamic, and empathetic group of educators thus best introduces this inclusive pedagogy, already broadening students' understanding of the utility of language instruction and learning from the very beginning. This short chapter discusses an annual language orientation event for incoming students conducted during the summer prior to the first semester of instruction at the United States Military Academy (USMA) and details how this venue allows us, the faculty of the Department of Foreign Languages (DFL), to introduce ourselves, our languages, and our pedagogical approaches to future students. We show how such an early and deliberately considered introduction of the diverse languages taught and the benefits of learners' language choices support both learning goals and language departments' strength and longevity.

In the summer prior to their first semester, USMA students participate in a 3-h orientation, during which the DFL introduces them to its eight languages: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. From these, they will choose which language to study for their required two-semester world language sequence. In addition to discussing individual languages, we also use this orientation to reframe language study and its relevance. We help the students understand that language and culture study is much more than simply learning a particular code with which one can perform tasks, it also involves developing curiosity about and empathy for cultural differences and becoming more confident and effective communicators in any environment as well. As they continue with language study, they will be able to use their learning and experience to provide valuable perspective on complex issues from their region of study and discuss these in a sophisticated manner with diverse interlocutors.

Beyond the initial consideration of language study in general, we also work to break down anxiety about learning languages likely to be less familiar to students or those perceived as more challenging or difficult. This process starts by introducing students to the places around the world where each of our languages is spoken, along with available immersion opportunities. Here, we help reorient language choice away from a selection that favors the familiar or what is perceived to be easy to a selection based on where the learner would like to begin their journey of language and culture exploration at the USMA. We explicitly ask: "which part of the world do you find fascinating?" The opportunity to hear instructors' personal experiences is a key element in this endeavor.

The orientation begins with an introduction by the department head that encourages students to think more broadly about language, challenging them to move beyond the familiar and take advantage of a unique opportunity to chart their own academic course or explore an area of the world they find intriguing. Students then have 60 min to meet faculty and current students from several languages of their

choosing and hear about what these language programs offer in terms of courses and co- and extra-curricular opportunities. During these sessions, faculty point out to students, for example, the prevalence of Spanish and other languages in their daily lives. Students may learn where Persian is spoken or discover that French is also spoken in Africa and that Portuguese and Spanish are spoken in Asia. Alumni of language programs abroad often speak at these sessions, providing insight gained from their experiences within the cultural milieu of a given language. Finally, students complete a language preference survey, in which they rank their top three choices for their language requirement. Additionally, for students who already speak one of the eight languages, the survey provides an opportunity to share how long and in what context they have already used it, which will be assessed by faculty later for placement purposes.

The DFL language orientation event is integral to our program's vitality. It has impacted our students' ability to make informed and potentially more confident choices about language study at the USMA. The engagement and interaction with prospective students afforded by this event is a key element in preparing them to take an active role in their language study. Creating an opportunity for language faculty to contextualize the languages and answer students' questions has been critical, in our experience, in supporting enrollment in all languages, especially less commonly taught languages.

The DFL is fortunate to have an opportunity to gather new students and faculty together at one place and time to introduce the language programs. If an orientation specifically dedicated to language is not possible, this content can also be incorporated into events like a majors fair, department open house, or study abroad fair. Regardless of venue, institutions looking to use this approach in full or in part should incorporate the following recommendations in adapting this event to their own programs.

One of the most important resources in this language orientation is the faculty involved. The event should include as much faculty representation as makes sense for an individual language program, including faculty from across academic ranks and course levels. The event should include a representative from each available language as well as faculty who are invested in student engagement and eager to share more with prospective students about the language and culture as well as the potential for learning and using the language both now and in the future. Moreover, the opportunity to hear from language faculty, some of whom will likely teach these very same students, is an effective way to engage potential language learners. In addition to robust faculty involvement, we also strongly recommend prioritizing a live, engaging, and interactive environment for this event, when possible, especially if this mirrors the way you teach language. Nevertheless, if a live event is not possible, either in-person or online, a pre-recorded video presentation also provides an opportunity to connect with potential language students.

Regardless of how departments conduct the event, it lays a foundation for more engaged and successful language learners through early investment in helping students understand the broader relevance and value of language study. Dynamic and engaged faculty members – with diverse experiences and perspectives – offer

students a glimpse of the rich array of linguistic and cultural knowledge that awaits them, while helping them connect language study to their environment and interests in meaningful ways. These may include associating language study with their goals for education and future employment or with the institution's mission or character. In our experience, this deliberate, early cultivation of engaged learners who feel empowered to take an active role in their language study plays a significant role in enhancing language program vitality.

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Internationalize Your Major: Embracing the Supportive Role of Language Study



Laura C. Edwards and Juliet Lynd

Abstract This chapter highlights what began as an inter-departmental initiative that is now university-wide called Internationalize Your Major (IYM). The goal of IYM is to encourage students to add world language study (and study abroad, if possible) to their university studies via personalized four-year plans of study. These visual guides help to counter the myth that students do not have time for an interdisciplinary focus in college and show that they can still graduate in 4 years. This short chapter outlines the steps we have taken, the successes and obstacles we have encountered, and our plans for the future. Results have been positive, but especially in Nursing and Education, and through increased collaboration with the Office of International Engagement’s study abroad programs.

Keywords Internationalization · World-language recruitment · Advising · Language and the professions · “Internationalize Your Major”

1 Background

For years, the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at Illinois State University has made the case to administration that it is important to count second majors when evaluating the Department’s contributions to the university, given that many of our incoming students do not declare a language major when they apply; instead, they discover the major once they are taking a language class or studying abroad. In 2018, colleagues in our Department began using these arguments as a recruitment tool: language study can benefit nearly any field; the demand for bilingual professionals crosses all sectors of the economy—internationally and in the US. Thus began our “Internationalize Your Major” (IYM) initiative: add a major or minor in a language and/or study abroad to any other major. This short chapter

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outlines the steps we have taken, the successes and obstacles we have encountered, and our plans for the future.

In 2018, James Pancrazio and Laura Edwards received an internal grant from ISU's Office of International Studies and Programs to "internationalize the curriculum" by creating sample four-year plans of study to show students how easily they could combine a language major/minor/study abroad with other majors. Depending on the student's first major, this may involve taking general education credit in the target language abroad to keep them on track to graduate in 4 years; it may also include showing students how to double major or minor without going abroad. The grant provided stipends for our Academic Advisor (Edwards) to work with major advisors across campus to create these sample plans of study. We offered this collaboration to every Department on campus, and initially received responses from Communication, History, Nursing, Politics and Government, Sociology and Anthropology, and Study Abroad. We worked with ISU's graphic design studio to develop new recruitment materials and with the Academic Technologies unit to advertise IYM on the main ISU webpage for students interested in Global Learning (ISU Internationalize Your Major <https://illinoisstate.edu/academics/internationalize/>), which inspired other programs (International Business and Communication Sciences and Disorders) to get involved. Our Academic Advisor has continued to work with advisors across campus as students have expressed interest and our bank of sample plans of study now includes, as of November 2022, 20 Departments, each with multiple programs and combinations with different languages, i.e. Chemistry includes Chemistry/Spanish and Biochemistry/French double majors (ISU Languages, Literatures, and Cultures' Internationalize Your Major <https://lan.illinoisstate.edu/academics/internationalize/>).

We also promote IYM beyond the website. For one semester, we participated in Honors Program recruitment events to showcase international opportunities at ISU. Our sessions were well attended by students and parents and we always had questions afterward, though we were not invited back the following year, for reasons we have yet to learn. We also organized a panel of faculty and students discussing the value of language study across the disciplines; it attracted only a few ISU students, but an area high school teacher who had seen the announcement on social media brought a French class to attend. As will be detailed in the next section, our initiative is proving to be a promising antidote to the nationwide decline in language enrollments.

2 Evidence of Success

The catchphrase Internationalize Your Major is clearly an attractive marketing tool: Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Diane Zosky championed it in university contexts, advisors in other units have created their own internationalized plans of study, colleagues from other universities have inquired about the initiative, and *Forbes* magazine highlighted it as a reason to choose ISU in 2019. It is evident

that the idea of *adding* language study—rather than competing with other programs—is appealing to students and colleagues alike. The one-page sample plan shows students how they can add language study, study abroad, and still graduate in 4 years, easing the worries of parents and students concerned about adding time toward graduation. Once they see that they can do it, they usually do.

We began to promote IYM before the Covid pandemic, which shuttered our other major recruitment source, study abroad; thus, the enrollment data we have may not reflect IYM's full potential. However, to give one example of a clear success, the number of Nursing majors who added a language minor or a second major has increased 64% since Fall 2017. We have gained far more minors than majors, but a Nursing major who studies abroad for one semester is very likely to complete a second major in a language.¹ In 2017–18, there were 25 Nursing majors with a language minor; in Spring 2022 this increased to 41 Nursing majors: 5 double majors and 36 minors. Nursing by and large attracts students interested in Spanish, though we have had the occasional student pursuing French or Latin. The return of study abroad is likely to increase double majors.

Another significant source of IYM students is Education. In our department, students can major in World Languages Teacher Education, but teacher education students in other areas (English, History, Math, Special Education, and Elementary Education, including Bilingual-Bicultural Ed) are interested in expanding the content they are qualified to teach, and we are seeing growing numbers adding a French/German/Spanish endorsement to their certificate. We also note increases in demand for bilingual speech pathologists and bilingual counselors, and our IYM program shows students in Communication Sciences and Disorders and Psychology how they can add language study to their majors.

Related to study abroad, we are actively recruiting and promoting the value of knowing the language of the place where you travel. Our new faculty-led summer program to Italy (started in 2022) requires only one semester of Italian to participate and includes a course focused on Italian for service encounters; almost 90% of participants have added an Italian Studies minor, a promising result of just one program.

3 Next Steps

Our initial efforts cast a broad net: language has a supporting role to play in nearly any field of study. As we move forward, we are paying attention to the data to see which programs are the most responsive and show most promise for growth. This data prompts our advisor to reach out to students in these programs to learn more

¹Out of five Nursing majors studying in Spain in spring 2023, three are currently double majors (Nursing and Spanish) and 2 are currently Spanish minors.

about their motivations, and she incorporates this into conversations with other advisors about how to promote language study.

We also intend to nurture increased interest in internships. French and Spanish majors have volunteered at a local Community Health Care Clinic, where they build their language and medical skills tending to patients from local immigrant communities. To foster this partnership, we have added a minor elective Spanish for the Health Professions class. Another area of focus for internships is the judicial system. A recent IYM student triple majored in Legal Studies, Criminal Justice, and Francophone Studies, and completed an internship at the County Courthouse, interpreting in French. Other stakeholders include the local police department and the Immigration Project, both of which have reached out to collaborate with our students. We will also increase promotion of international internship and volunteer opportunities through our affiliated study abroad programs, we provide prospective study abroad participants with IYM plans of study, and we are considering developing one-credit language classes for faculty-led study abroad programs in other departments—an idea we piloted pre-Covid. Our university is launching a new College of Engineering, and we hope to promote language study for engineers, with emphasis on the high-demand languages, especially German and Japanese.

Finally, we have started a targeted program for high school language students to generate interest in pursuing language study in college. We invite them to campus, show them a language class, introduce them to faculty and language clubs, and talk to them about the credit they bring and the opportunities that open when they Internationalize their Major. With this initiative, we hope to shift the discourse on the importance and the possibilities of language study at every level.

Part VI
Solutions to Thrive: Credentials

Changing the Narrative Around Language Study



Rebecca J. Ulland

Abstract As language programs are under scrutiny at all levels of education, this chapter addresses how one regional university is using a two-pronged approach to counter declining enrollments. By engaging with the key features of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and using it as a framework for program creation, the author describes how to engage university stakeholders in an effort to change the narrative around language study. Additionally, considering how the 4IR will impact work and education, the author details how to leverage language study as an important component of a new Workplace Intercultural Competency Certificate program. The steps outlined in this chapter can be used as a roadmap for other universities to propose similar programs.

Keywords Certificate · Competency · Intercultural · Language · Workplace

Few institutions are immune to declining enrollments in language courses and programs; my institution, Northern Michigan University, is no exception. Despite the University's official academic mission that states that students "will possess the skills and attitudes to succeed in a fast-paced, constantly evolving, multi-cultural world" and Core Values that use the words "international" and "global," the benefits of language study and intercultural competence are misunderstood and often undervalued. Incoming students who want to pursue further language study are often dissuaded from doing so by general academic advisers who register students into blocks of classes that feature large general education courses, composition courses, and one course related to a student's major. Once students pass out of general advising, they are advised within the department of their first major by an embedded adviser. Since many language students add a language major as a second major, we are disadvantaged because we are frequently left out of the advising loop and therefore cannot advocate for continued language study. Additionally, since the assumed outcome of language study is proficiency, if not fluency, many students and

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advisers assume that language study is not desirable or that language proficiency is not attainable and besides, “everyone speaks English” wherever they might want to go.

As department head, I am using a two-pronged approach to counter this institutional context. First, I am working to change the narrative around language study, and second, I proposed a new Workplace Intercultural Competency Certificate program.

Changing the narrative around language study is a constant process. Many colleagues think that majoring in a language is about language fluency, usually speaking proficiency, and students’ desire to study or live abroad. While our major language graduates generally achieve Advanced Low or Intermediate High proficiency, the ability to converse in a language other than English is not the only benefit of language study. Therefore, in conversations, reports, and orientation sessions, I choose to highlight the advantages of language study that are not fluency based. I believe it is important to remind students, even those students who do not need convincing to continue language study, that they are improving their problem-solving capabilities, critical and creative thinking skills, verbal abilities, as well as their capacity to empathize with others and see various points of view, among other skills. This is the information that students need to understand in order to continue in our language programs—both to convince their advisers in their first major and to convince parents who do not think language classes are necessary.

In conjunction with changing the narrative around language learning, I developed the Workplace Intercultural Competency Certificate, inspired by a program at South Dakota State University, and by the work of Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum. Schwab popularized the term Fourth Industrial Revolution, or 4IR, in a 2015 article published in *Foreign Affairs* and later shared on the World Economic Forum website. Here Schwab says that 4IR “is characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres.” Unlike the First Industrial Revolution (mechanized production with water and steam power), the Second Industrial Revolution (mass production with electric power), and the Third Industrial Revolution (automated production with electronics and information technology), the transformations of 4IR are distinct in their velocity, scope, and systems impact. (Schwab, 2016). Many leaders in higher education, business, industry, government, and non-government organizations have weighed in on how education will need to change to embrace the changes inherent in 4IR. Several scholars (Marr, 2019; Penprase, 2018) recommend a pivot toward more life-long learning opportunities that provide minimum-credit, discrete certificate programs to busy professionals looking to fill a skills gap, enhance their employment possibilities, and to alleviate career stagnation. This is where the Workplace Intercultural Competency Certificate fills a gap.

The Workplace Intercultural Competency Certificate is a distinctive program targeted at professionals (not traditionally enrolled students) who wish to expand their intercultural competency, leadership, and management skills in the workplace

but who did not take extensive post-secondary courses in these areas. Specifically, we are envisioning an early- to mid-career professional who has risen through the management ranks of their company or institution, has supervisory and management responsibilities of diverse employees, and finds that they need new skillsets to effectively communicate and supervise their employees. These employees might be immigrants from, or citizens of, other countries, or might have different cultural and historical contexts and experiences than the manager. In particular, I believe that this program will benefit education, management, and hospitality industry professionals. This Certificate can be an important educational component for professionals in these industries who are looking to enhance their management, communication, and intercultural competency skills. In particular, Northern Michigan University is well-suited to provide this opportunity because our institution serves a wide geographical area and a variety of populations. This Certificate is specifically designed so that students gain a foundation in understanding intercultural differences and how to communicate and adjust management styles to account for cultural distinctions in only four courses.

Students enrolled in the Workplace Intercultural Competency Certificate study a language in order to gain the benefits of language study (which includes language and intercultural competency components) and to understand the challenges of second-language acquisition. Additionally, students take intercultural communication and management courses so that they can apply their skills in a variety of career settings that will benefit their work life for years to come.

Specifically, the learning outcomes of this four-course certificate aimed at working professionals are the following:

- **Acquire basic, intermediate, or advanced skills in a language** (depending on language sequence). The study of languages, even at the introductory level, contributes to awareness and recognition of different cultural perspectives, customs, and practices, including concepts of intercultural competence. Both language and culture learning will help professionals relate better to cultural differences among employees and help them bridge differences that will create a more productive and efficient work environment. Language and culture study will improve abilities to interact, cooperate, and collaborate with non-native English speakers and with people from varied cultural backgrounds.
- **Recognize and acquire intercultural communication skills in order to work and thrive in a culturally diverse workforce.** The Workplace Intercultural Competency Certificate includes an elective course in intercultural communication so that education, management, and hospitality professionals recognize and learn to communicate with employees who use diverse communication styles. By combining language and communication studies, students will develop their skills and knowledge of intercultural competencies, expand their empathy, and gain insight into various cultures. An intercultural communication course will provide the theoretical tools for students to evaluate different cultural frames and sharpen their intercultural communication skills.

- **Acquire management skills appropriate to a culturally diverse work force.** The Certificate program includes a management course so that students can expand and hone their management expertise in their specific field. Since this Certificate program is targeted at mid-career professionals, this could either be a course that will enhance their management abilities or it could be a brand new course if a student who is in a managerial position never took management courses. In either case, Northern Michigan University offers specific management courses designed for education, management, and hospitality industry professionals.

To complete the language course requirement, students can take beginning language classes in Chinese, French, German, Russian or Spanish. Intermediate and advanced classes are offered in French, German, and Spanish. The Communications Department offers Intercultural and Global Communications courses. Our Hospitality Management program offers Leadership of Hospitality Personnel, the School of Business offers Organizational Behavior and Management and International Business, and the School of Education, Leadership, and Public Service offers Leadership in Diverse Workplaces.

However, given that our target audience is working professionals, I needed to be sure that the certificate could be completed wholly through online courses, evening courses or a combination of course offerings during the traditional school year and during the summer. Working with the departments and schools listed above, I was able to verify an online pathway to completion of this certificate and clarified the course rotation of all courses so that some can be completed during the summer. More difficult, however, was figuring out how to achieve an online path to completion of the language course requirement. As indicated, we offer five beginning languages and three intermediate and advanced languages. However, the full-time language faculty do not teach their courses online. Therefore, even though this certificate program grew from a desire to increase language enrollments, I needed to convince my own department faculty of the need for online beginning language classes. After working with faculty, studying textbook resources, and developing materials, we now offer Beginning Spanish 1 and 2 in an online format. While not ideal because we can only offer these two courses online, these beginning Spanish language classes provide professionals with better cultural understanding and empathy for individuals who are not native English speakers or who are from a different cultural background than the professional seeking to hone their intercultural competency skills.

I recommend developing a similar program at regional universities that are in an area with a growing population of non-native speakers of English or with new immigrants who have different cultural backgrounds than the dominant population. The first thing to do is to develop a basic framework of an idea and then seek out good market data. My university uses the Gray Associates market report to assess the viability of new programs. While this report can be useful, it is difficult to assess the market demand for interdisciplinary programs. Still, given the nature of the certificate program, the Gray report analysis demonstrated market demand which justified

further development of the proposal. Once I established market viability, I spoke to many campus stakeholders to gain their support. As noted previously, I worked with several departments and schools in order to develop this program. To begin with, I verified course availability, rotation, and delivery mode. Then, I worked with faculty, department heads, deans, and the Provost in order to garner their support and promotion of the new program.

While writing the program proposal, getting the industry analysis data, and canvassing campus members for support was time-consuming, the program proposal was ultimately approved by the Academic Senate (after several rounds of back-and-forth questions and answers) and the Board of Trustees. Once the proposal was officially approved in the spring, I spent the summer months working with colleagues in our Global Campus and Alumni Affairs offices in order to begin promotion of the new program. (The Global Campus is NMU's division that houses online programs and helps facilitate program creation, promotion, and registration of online programs.) The Global Campus office promoted the program through their various channels. The Alumni Affairs office featured the program in several email blasts as well as the biweekly alumni e-newsletter. The official University magazine and the local newspaper have also featured the program. Additionally, I have met with admissions counselors and advisers so that they understand the program and can promote it. Even though the program was approved only recently, we have already received inquiries regarding the program.

While several factors contribute to enrollment in language programs, I hope that by changing the narrative around the benefits of language study and creating a new program that includes language study as an integral component, we can begin to counter the decline in our classes. So far, the future is looking up—language class enrollments have increased over last year, key stakeholders throughout the university are more knowledgeable about the benefits of language learning, and interest in the Workplace Intercultural Competency program is growing.

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Retaining Students with Shared Courses and Meaningful Credentials



Lauren Rosen, Kaishan Kong, and Hongying Xu

Abstract The UW System Collaborative Language Program (CLP), is focusing on diversifying offerings and increasing retention so students reach meaningful levels of proficiency. This endeavor is complicated by the need for more time in languages such as Chinese and the lack of sufficient time in students' schedules. The CLP will address these difficulties in two ways. First, all students will be tested with the AVANT STAMP 4S assessment. This assessment provides a proficiency rating in all four skills. All students will receive badges acknowledging the level reached, potentially the Global Seal of Bilingualism, and encouragement to continue their studies to level up to higher badges. Second, we plan to offer a longer sequence by sharing upper-level Chinese courses. The new co-developed courses will be shared across institutions. The development will follow a flipped lesson blended learning model that requires fewer synchronous meetings. This will decrease stress on students' schedules so they can include advanced-level language courses alongside commitments to major degree programs. Through sharing instructional resources across campuses, we will provide a larger array of upper-level language courses, keep students for a longer sequence, and provide all students with a micro-credential that specifies what they can do in the language.

Keywords Micro-credential · Digital badging · Course sharing · Proficiency · Blended learning

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1 Introduction

For over two decades, institutions have successfully shared language courses to diversify opportunities for students. This growing need results from severe budget cuts, lack of full-time equivalents (FTEs), and students needing to complete major degree requirements quickly, with little room for electives such as languages. The University of Wisconsin (UW) System Collaborative Language Program (CLP) focuses on student retention for longer sequences to achieve meaningful levels of proficiency in the target language. This endeavor is complicated by the need for more time in languages such as Mandarin and insufficient time in students' schedules to continue language study.

The CLP is addressing these difficulties in two ways. First, a longer sequence of Mandarin courses is being developed. The first two 300-level courses include *Business Chinese* and *Technology and Sustainability in China*. These co-developed courses, shared across two or more University of Wisconsin System institutions, increase the current four-semester novice sequence into a six-semester intermediate sequence. Course sharing allows instructors to teach their specialty and provides students access to options offered on multiple campuses. Also, these shared courses follow a flipped model, decreasing required synchronous meetings, thereby allowing more flexibility for taking language courses alongside major degree requirements.

Business Chinese enhances students' communicative skills in a professional context and promotes understanding of business culture in contemporary China. *Technology and Sustainability in China* integrates current topics to improve students' language proficiency and cultural understanding. Class delivery will be interactive and students are encouraged to draw on disciplinary knowledge, professional interest, and personal experiences in all activities. Expected outcomes are intermediate-low to intermediate-mid proficiency described in American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines (2012) upon completion.

Second, all language students will be tested with the AVANT STAMP 4S assessment. This provides an official proficiency rating based on the ACTFL scale. Students will receive badges acknowledging the levels reached in reading, listening, writing, and speaking, as well as leveling up information for each skill, identifying recommendations for increasing proficiency. Additionally, advising on the Global Seal of Bilingualism, an internationally recognized free credential, will be provided. Those reaching intermediate-mid or higher will automatically be awarded the Global Seal.

2 Instructional Approach

To address students' challenges of insufficient time, these courses will adopt a flipped model offering flexible learning opportunities. To ensure an effective flipped model, both Mandarin instructors will intentionally and thoughtfully determine the following: What essential concepts will be studied independently? Which formative

assessments check for conceptual understanding? What scaffolding is needed to support students? What are best practices in synchronous proficiency-oriented learning?

Despite distinct themes, both Mandarin courses are dedicated to integrating students' disciplinary knowledge and preparing their intercultural communicative competence in professional settings. A flipped model encourages diversifying learning content and pace by providing multiple means of learning during asynchronous sessions. With an array of learning resources, such as media, interactive activities, concept checks, self-progress checklists, and discussion prompts, students learn at their own pace, in their own way, thus differentiating and personalizing their experiences. Students can rewatch/reread to learn challenging content or skip certain learning by correctly answering check-point questions. They may also record or prepare digital content to apply language in future scaffolded activities. Instructors use asynchronous student-created content to prompt interpretive and interpersonal activities during synchronous sessions. A flipped model empowers students' ownership of learning and fosters integrative motivation. Students discover that without actively learning prior to synchronous meetings, they cannot apply language knowledge. Thus, students are compelled to be responsible, organized, goal-oriented active learners.

Furthermore, the flipped model overcomes logistical barriers of time zones and scheduling conflicts. With 50% of content delivered asynchronously, it is easier to integrate exchanges with native speaker experts from anywhere. This can be achieved with a combination of expert video lectures followed by online Q&A. By employing a 50–50 model, students meet synchronously less often than traditional language courses, a better fit for students' tight schedules, possibly helping recruitment and retention efforts.

3 Assessment: ePortfolios and Avant STAMP 4S

In place of unit tests, students will upload artifacts to ePortfolios as evidence demonstrating achievement towards learning and course outcomes. All outcomes provide the freedom to connect content to personal interests and majors. For language learners, ePortfolios provide a platform to demonstrate language performance while potentially reducing learner anxiety, compared to high stakes testing. For each outcome, two artifacts and a reflective paragraph will be submitted. Through reflecting on learning and self-evaluating performance against outcomes and rubrics, students develop learner autonomy, an essential life-long learner skill.

ePortfolios also serve as concrete shareable resources that motivate further study. ePortfolios are cited as a tool that, in addition to measuring student performance, helps students develop skills including research, communication, collaboration, reflection, and a sense of learner autonomy (Yang et al., 2016). It is believed that using ePortfolio evidence for future self-promotion encourages both recruitment and retention efforts. The reflection that goes with each piece of evidence helps students

articulate the skills developed. ePortfolios may serve as supporting documents in job and graduate school applications. Moreover, with permission, ePortfolios can be showcased on a program website to entice potential students with the value these courses add. The Chinese Certificate at UW-La Crosse uses ePortfolios as an exit assessment tool. Students who have completed ePortfolios highly recommend this approach be included for future certificate-seeking students.

The STAMP assessment serves as the final course assessment. This exam provides scores in both productive and receptive skills. During the assessment students complete a series of listening questions that adapt based on learner responses to identify the appropriate proficiency level. Students are then presented with speaking tasks at a similar and higher proficiency level to their listening score. A similar adaptive portion matches the reading and writing prompts to the students demonstrated ability. The final score identifies proficiency levels for all four skills and level up recommendations informing students how to improve each skill. Students will receive a digital badge identifying the level earned in each skill from Novice-Mid through Advanced. In addition, students receiving a score of 5 or higher in all skills will receive the Global Seal aligned to their composite score. Once students realize their proximity to the next level of achievement and earning the Global Seal, it has been proven with other CLP languages that students often choose to continue their learning sequence. Students' ePortfolio and STAMP results provide quantitative and qualitative feedback on their language proficiency, which further encourages the continuation of language study.

In sum, sharing courses provides a longer sequence and greater variety of course options, while allowing instructors to teach to their specialty with less repetition across institutions. Flipped learning frees students' schedules to continue language study and, like ePortfolios, supports growth in several life skills. Languages are a skill. Counting the number of majors and minors to determine program viability does not calculate its worth. In our multi-cultural world, language proficiency and cultural understanding are essential in the support of all disciplines. Through the use of ePortfolios, digital badging, and the Global Seal of Biliteracy, students receive free meaningful credentials that encourage advancing to the next proficiency level while supporting career endeavors by providing the language that allows them to articulate the extent of their skills.

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The Language Certificate: Encouraging Foreign Language Proficiency for All University Students



Troy L. Cox, Matthew P. Wilcox, and Ray T. Clifford

Abstract Majoring (or minoring) in a foreign language has long been the standard way for students to have their proficiency recognized by the university. This restriction can dis-incentivize students with higher-level language skills (e.g., missionaries, heritage learners, etc.) who wish to major in other degree programs from taking upper division language classes. This chapter will explore one university's experience in encouraging lifelong language development through the adoption of a Language Certificate program.

Keywords Language certificate · Language instruction · Culture · Proficiency · Program

1 Rationale

At the university, informal advanced language learners abound. Some are heritage learners. Others pick it up through friends. Some learn through volunteer service such as missionary work or the Peace Corps. Some have lived abroad with their families. While these students may love the language they speak and the people and culture they know, many see little purpose to study a language more formally. Why should they? They can visit with friends, travel, and take care of basic needs.

The limits of my language are the limits of my world. —Ludwig Wittgenstein

If we want students to overcome the limits of their world, we need to help them see the benefits of continuing education through language study. While multi-lingual job prospects could be one practical application of language skills, a higher, more noble, and perhaps lasting reason would be to better understand and empathize with those that speak a different language.

The difficulty in academia arises in the systems of acknowledging learning that are based solely on seat time. Traditionally, majoring (or minoring) in a language has

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been the standard way for students to have their proficiency recognized by the university. This restriction can dis-incentivize students with higher-level language skills (e.g., missionaries, heritage learners, etc.) who wish to major in other degree programs from taking language classes. While some schools allow students to test out of lower-level language classes and perhaps even get graded credit, that does not guarantee students will enroll in upper-level classes. In order to thrive, language programs need sufficient enrollments across lower and upper division courses to build a community of practice among learners and instructors.

Unfortunately, students can be awarded degrees in many language programs with minimal competency (i.e. ability below the Advanced floor of language proficiency, as described in the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Language's proficiency guidelines (Swender, 2003)). This general failure to reach minimal competency could be due to many reasons. For instance, while language classes are taught in the target language, literature and culture classes may be cross-listed with other degree programs and taught in English. For classes exclusively taught in the target language, some could argue that grades provide evidence of competency. However, course grades are often more indicative of (1) showing up, (2) being compliant, (3) thoroughly completing all the assigned work and/or (4) passing multiple-choice tests rather than real-world speaking or writing ability. Students with poor language ability might still earn high grades due to different grading philosophies of their teachers or the programs that they enroll in. So how should competency be measured?

There is no shame in being self-educated.

Being self-certified is another matter. —Hugh Nibley

Competency should be based on external standards that can ideally be externally rated and validated. While we value students who are proactive and take initiative to learn on their own, there can be a mismatch between their perceived and actual ability that can be exacerbated when the stakes get high. Yet, self-reflection does not come naturally. In general, language learners who fail to sustain performance at the Advanced level, tend to initially overestimate their ability (Wilcox & Cox, 2022). As they increase their proficiency, they realize that there is a lot more to learning a language than they thought there would be; at which point they might more realistically estimate or even underestimate their ability. If we want a university education to produce polymaths, our goal should be to develop students who are self-reflective, agentive learners. Indeed, autodidacts who deliberately use the resources at their disposal including teachers and classmates to help them in their pursuit of education will be much more successful through life than students passively waiting to be told everything they should do. This self-awareness can best be addressed through both internal and external standards-based, criterion-referenced, performance assessments. These assessments should require the students to speak and write, allow the learners to think about how they performed, and then receive ratings that are based on the posted standards.

Writing good tests is difficult. Rating performance can be even more difficult. Programs can also have a mismatch between the scores of the tests they create and the

actual ability of their language students. We have already noted how grades can vary among instructors and their philosophies, but additionally rating performance itself can be difficult. When instructors are familiar and sympathetic towards a student they know, they might be hesitant to award poor ratings. Conversely, students towards whom they are unsympathetic may receive poor ratings even if the performance is higher. Since it is natural to compare students to each other, instructors might unwarrantedly think their best student is at the highest proficiency level of a standardized scale. Furthermore, when there are external pressures such as accreditation teams to show how their program adds value to the students enrolled, there are incentives for programs to show higher proficiency gains than are warranted. Thus, while for low-stakes purposes, self-reflective and other program-level assessments may be adequate, they are insufficient for certifying language ability. These inherent weaknesses can be addressed by having an outside entity certify what students can or cannot do based on validated criterion-referenced instruments.

While assessing students with externally administered exams can verify competency, it still may not entice students to enroll in language classes. There is an opportunity cost in both time and money to minoring or double-majoring in a language when that is a secondary interest to their primary field of study. This can be exacerbated when students are unable to see how their language study can practically benefit them.

So how does one increase language enrollments in classes while still allowing outside exams to certify proficiency? This chapter will explore Brigham Young University's (BYU) experience in encouraging lifelong language development through the creation of a Language Certificate program.

2 Language Certificate Requirements

At BYU, the Language Certificate is awarded to students who demonstrate Advanced or higher proficiency without needing to major or minor in the target language. Students earn a Language Certificate by completing three courses and taking two external assessments of their language proficiency. The courses are determined by each language department, but the principal determination on which courses can be used is based on exposing students to three fundamentals of advanced language study:

1. Language,
2. Civilization/Culture, and
3. Literature.

Students have their language proficiency externally validated through taking assessments of their oral (OPI/OPIc) and written proficiency (WPT). These students are tested not on what they know about a language or its literature, but rather on how they can use the language for real-world communicative functions. Each of these requirements will be discussed in turn below.

2.1 *Language*

Students often equate language study with grammar study, and while those rules and conventions are certainly covered in most formal study, the rules are in and of themselves insufficient for language mastery. However, informal learners often intuit rules without understanding why, when, and how to use them.

As an example, a story is told of a child who moved away from home and asks her mother for her grandmother's recipe to prepare roast. So, the mother sends the recipe.

*Get the roast.
Cut off the ends and season it.
Place it in the pan...*

The daughter follows the instructions precisely and makes it with huge success. It enters her repertoire of passed down recipes. Years pass and the daughter wonders how cutting the ends of the roast improves the flavor. So, she calls her mom who promptly responds, "I don't know. That's how my mom did it."

So, then the girl calls her grandmother.

"Why do you need to cut off the ends of the roast in your recipe?"

"My roasting pan was too small for a full-size roast, so I had to cut the ends off for it to fit."

Too often, informal language learners find themselves figuratively cutting the ends off their roasts without knowing the reasons why. The language we use changes depending on whom we are talking with, and these street learners might be unaware of the implications that come with the language choices they make. The street slang that may help them build rapport with peers their own age may act as a barrier when trying to move into professional settings in which a prestige dialect serves as the standard for the upwardly mobile. The language class serves the role of demystifying some of the language patterns and practices that might be observed but are not understood. In addition, most language classes include a literacy component that may have been missing for students who learned the language primarily orally. Often, students need prescriptive feedback on writing conventions to improve in that area. The language classes can explain why cutting the ends off the roast is appropriate for some circumstances but unnecessary for others.

2.2 *Civilization/Culture*

A nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people. -Mahatma Ghandi

The importance of teaching and learning culture in lockstep with language cannot be overstated. New language learners often violate cultural norms initially, but the consequences are quite low. In fact, the bumbling foreigner is its own archetype, and novices are often excused for their ignorance. However, that linguistic offering

of grace diminishes as learners become more proficient and interlocutors forget they are speaking with second language speakers. Cultural missteps and ignorance transition from being the cute mistakes of naïve bumbler to intentional rudeness being perpetrated by jerks that are skirting the traditional linguistic norms of polite society.

Consequences for those with higher levels of language proficiency can be high-stakes if cultural competence is lacking. For example, an expat working in another country was quite proficient with the language and worked at the university as a professor. He had lived in the area for many years and felt that he understood the culture. However, he shared that once during a faculty meeting there was a disagreement between two parties; while he understood every word that was uttered, he could feel a palpable coldness enter the room, even though the words themselves were not harsh, argumentative, or dismissive. There were things said that touched the hearts and souls of the participants that he was not privy to because he lacked some of the unspoken cultural knowledge and background his colleagues shared. Thus, it was his inability to grasp localized cultural subtexts that kept him from fully participating in and understanding his colleagues' exchange, highlighting the need for ongoing cultural attenuation.

What is necessary and appropriate for inclusion in a culture course will vary widely depending on the institution, the population they are serving, and the intended outcomes. In general, however, the course on culture should help students better understand how to continually learn about the history and culture for a given language. In truth, no course can be expected to teach students an exhaustive list of dos and don'ts for a given language. In fact, for global languages used throughout the world, even mastering one region can take a lifetime. However, the civilization/culture course can and should offer a ten-thousand-foot view of the lay of the land. It should instill a curiosity in how to approach the language and its culture with wonder, humility, and critical thinking. That way, when learners descend to lower altitudes, they can be aware of more specific topographical features pertinent to the place in which they will be landing. At BYU, courses, such as language culture classes, can qualify as core Global and Cultural Awareness credits through an administrative curriculum review process.

2.3 *Literature*

Around Valentine's Day a few years ago, the following meme was making its way across higher ed. social media forums:

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Not without a control group and ethics approval.*

Whether or not the meme made someone laugh was highly dependent on whether the person reading it was aware it had literary origins. While some might rightly attribute it to Shakespeare, others might assume it was someone else. The fact remains that all

languages have literary catch phrases that become part of the cultural lexicon used to communicate. This begs the question: why study literature? Many memes and pop culture references flow like whisps of smoke, but literary references are more enduring—like the soot used to make ink that in turn can create lasting artwork in its own or derivative right.

The literature class serves as a gateway to help learners discover who has made an impact on the language and how. Once again, a single class cannot by its nature be comprehensive, but learning how literature affects language can help instill curiosity to continue lifelong learning. Whether the class surveys small samples of many different authors and genres or goes into depth with a single work, the intent should once again be to instill a sense of curiosity about future possibilities of what to read and consume.

2.4 Proficiency Assessments

More important than knowing about a language, how it works, its culture and literary greats, we want students to be able to use the language for meaningful communication in real-world contexts. In effect, we want to test students' ability to use the language in the real world, with the closest proxy being language proficiency. Whatever you choose to assess becomes the de facto learning objective for a curriculum. The way you choose to assess it becomes the de facto learning and teaching philosophy. If we want students to use the language instead of knowing about the language, we need proficiency assessments. Assessments that are based in communicative competence with all its glorious messiness which require students not only to draw on the vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar they have learned, but also to incorporate content knowledge gained from studying about civilization, culture, and literature. The assessments we choose are the ACTFL OPI and WPT with at least one advanced rating for either test required in order to obtain the Language Certificate.

3 Proposing the Language Certificate Program

While the Center for Language Studies (CLS) at Brigham Young University had been contemplating the certificate for a few years, we were able to get it approved through patient discussions and compromises with different language departments and programs. For instance, we needed to determine who would manage the program, including processing requests, keeping track of students, ordering tests, proctoring them, etc. While one model could be to have each department do it themselves, there is some loss of efficiency as well as each department would need more personnel resources. On the other hand, moving the administration to a central location requires establishing and maintaining clear and open lines of

communication with each department. Additionally, we needed to determine what proficiency ratings would need to be met in order to get a certificate and find sufficient funding to carry out the program in perpetuity.

While each institution has unique circumstances, we offer the proposal (see below) that we sent to our university's administration as a template to help others contemplating adopting this program. Note that it was intentionally written with bullet points to ease readability of busy administrators with little background second language learning. Furthermore, the answers to potential questions we predicted approvers might ask were included as their own bullet point.

3.1 Language Certificate Program Proposal—Example

3.1.1 Background

The Language Certificate Program is neither a major nor a minor degree program. Rather, it is an official certificate program that is available in the University's 10 major languages. The Language Certificate Program is a "blended" program with two types of qualification requirements.

1. *"Course" requirements that are fulfilled by taking three courses – one from each category of the "Language," "Civilization," and "Literature" option lists that are defined for each of the 10 major languages in the College of Humanities.*
2. *"Proficiency" requirements that are met by passing the internationally recognized and externally controlled American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages tests of Speaking and Writing proficiency.*

3.1.2 Eligibility and Qualifications

1. *The Language Certificate is available to matriculated BYU students who are pursuing a BYU degree, or who have completed a BYU degree within the previous 5 years.*
2. *The course requirements must be met while the student is enrolled as a matriculated undergraduate student, but the testing requirement might be satisfied at a later time.*
3. *The qualifying course work must be taken at BYU; transfer credits do not qualify, and no substitutions or waivers of course work will be allowed.*
4. *Graduate students are only eligible for the Language Certificate if they have completed a BYU undergraduate degree during the previous 5 years, and if they met the course completion requirements as part of their undergraduate work.*
5. *The proficiency ratings attained on the Speaking and Writing tests will determine eligibility for the Language Certificate and the level of the Certificate that will be awarded.*

- (a) *If both the Speaking and Writing proficiency ratings are in the Novice or Intermediate ranges, no Certificate will be awarded.*
- (b) *If at least one proficiency rating is Advanced Low or Advanced Mid, then an “Advanced” Certificate will be awarded.*
- (c) *If at least one proficiency rating is Advanced High, then a “Mastery” Certificate will be awarded.*
- (d) *If at least one proficiency rating is Superior, then a “Professional” Certificate will be awarded.*

3.1.3 The Process

The process for obtaining a Language Certificate includes several steps.

1. *Students will apply for the Language Certificate Program by submitting an application form to the Center for Language Studies.*
2. *CLS will review each application and provide a written assessment of the student’s current eligibility for the Language Certificate.*
 - (a) *If not, all qualifying courses have been taken at the time of the application, the students will be informed of their enrollment options and asked to reapply once they have registered for the last of the required courses.*
 - (b) *If the applicants have completed all of the course requirements (or are at least registered for the last of the required courses), but have not taken the Speaking and Writing tests within the previous year, they will be scheduled to take the Speaking and Writing tests.*
 - (i) *CLS will contact the candidates and arrange for individual testing times as well as payment of the testing costs.*
 - (ii) *The cost for the administration and scoring of the Speaking and Writing tests totals about \$200.*
 - (iii) *The College of Humanities will pay these testing costs for language majors.*
 - (iv) *An endowment to CLS may provide some cost-sharing options for language minors.*
 - (v) *For candidates from other colleges, they (or their college) will have to pay the cost of administering and scoring the tests.*
 - (c) *If the applicants have completed the course requirements and have taken the Speaking and Writing tests within the past year, their application will be processed as described in the following steps.*
3. *CLS will obtain the test results and notify the students of their test results.*
4. *Upon receipt of their results, students will review their scores and the level of certificate for which they qualify.*

- (a) *If they are satisfied with their proficiency results, they will formally acknowledge that:*
 - (i) *They desire to receive the Language Certificate they have earned.*
 - (ii) *They wish to have that Certificate information added to their official BYU transcript.*
 - (iii) *They understand that the entry on their transcript cannot be changed by retaking the tests and obtaining a higher proficiency rating.*
 - (b) *If they are not satisfied with their proficiency results, or if they do not meet the minimum proficiency requirements — they may elect to either “opt out” of the program or to be tested again at their own expense.*
5. *For those who qualify and state that they wish to receive the Certificate for which they qualify, CLS then prepares and certifies the Language Certificate information.*
- (a) *CLS will send a separate Certificate Qualification Document to the Registrar’s Office for each student who is to receive a certificate.*
 - (b) *CLS will prepare a paper Certificate for each student’s personal use.*

4 Initial Implementation of the Language Certificate

The Language Certificate program was first implemented in August 2010. During the last few months of that year, 35 students completed the requirements for the Certificate. By April 2011, 140 students had completed the process, and by the end of 2011, there were 413 students who had been awarded certificates. After 10 years, over 4,725 Language Certificates have been awarded, with over 4,000 awarded to non-language majors. Over the past 3 years, we have awarded an average of 475 per year. Further, the top five top majors completing Language Certificates are not from language majors:

1. Exercise Science (175)
2. Psychology (130)
3. Economics (125)
4. Communication (119)
5. Neuroscience (101)

These numbers suggest that the Language Certificate recipients are not simply language-degree majors looking for an easy add-on to their transcript, but rather, that the Language Certificate is perceived as adding real value to those in other majors who want to improve and highlight their language ability.

The first pancake is always a lump. — Russian proverb

There are always inevitable bumps and mishaps when starting a new endeavor, so it is best to just assume there will be problems and plan for some extra time to work

things out. Since our institution was already testing graduating seniors that were language majors, we had an infrastructure in place for administering ACTFL exams. The biggest difficulty we encountered with the certificate program has been growth. Managing a few certificates a week is much easier than managing a few hundred, and it is hard to request yearly funds for a program to cover costs for which there is no historical data.

It is relatively easy to manage data and generate reports for tens of students by hand. When that number becomes hundreds of students, the cost in time and needed skill to generate reports via software tools becomes much greater. Additionally, any time an individual or organization has a problem that has not been subsumed under a process, it requires personnel time to resolve the concern. Thus, when a program grows and there are more individuals that fall into the category *exception to the rule*, the greater the cost in personnel time to resolve the issues. Growing pains are inevitable but should be planned for until an organization can show how increased funding is needed from the larger institution.

5 Unexpected Benefits

One concern of some language programs was that there would be a decrease in students minoring in their languages. We reassured the departments that our intent was to market to students that would not have minored anyway, and we have seen no decrease in enrollments in those programs. In fact, we have seen enrollment increases in many instances with students either minoring or double-majoring in a language.

What caused this? While we have only anecdotal evidence, we think through a series of small serendipitous or surreptitious steps, the departments were able to upsell their language programs to the students. Many of our students who have learned informally did so through voluntary missionary service. They lived and served among people that speak the language they are studying and have a love for the languages and culture. They often have a desire to do something to keep up their language and keep in contact with their friends, but signing up for a language minor (6 classes/18 credits) seems like a huge commitment to make up front.

Historically, we have offered a 16-credit challenge for the 100 and 200 level classes for these advanced informal language learners. To take that exam, students needed to enroll in an advanced-level language class. This is the same class that satisfies the language requirement for the certificate. Once students have actually taken a language class, it is easier for them to self-identify as the type of student that studies language at the university. They have had a chance to make friends that are also language students. All they need to do to get their language proficiency noted on their transcript is to take two more classes: a civilization/culture and a literature class. Two more classes to fit into a class schedule with students who arrive as Freshmen or Sophomores is not too onerous a task.

After the requirements of the certificate are met, though, there are only 3 more classes for the minor - at this point, students are already halfway there. If the departments have great instructors for those certificate classes, students - often on their own - will choose to continue with the minor. In fact, some of our departments found they needed to find more instructors that could teach those 300 level classes. Even if they choose not to minor in the language, we have tried to communicate how language study can make them more marketable when looking for jobs through the “+ Humanities” initiative.

6 + Humanities Initiative

While we were implementing the Language Certificate, the College of Humanities was simultaneously pushing against the narrative that majoring in their subjects had little to no return on investment (ROI). So, the college started marketing the critical skills developed in a humanities education with an emphasis on critical thinking and communication. The target audience was students majoring in fields like business, medicine, statistics, engineering, computer programming, the sciences, etc. These students were encouraged to continue developing the technical skills and expertise with their current majors, but to differentiate themselves in the job market through showing they were skilled in the humanities as well. These students could articulate how partnering their technical expertise with their knowledge of the human experience would bring an immense ROI for employers wanting to hire them. The Language Certificate became a de facto + *Humanities* option for students that wanted something on their transcript which shows their competency. For instance, a 2010 graduate in Business Management reported:

“I first interviewed with Citigroup. After I explained the requirements for the Language Certificate, [. . .] I received an internship offer to work for their offices in Ft. Lauderdale. I was also interviewed by JP Morgan Chase, and once again, after they assessed my knowledge in Finance they wanted to know more about the Certificate. I work now in the Finance team at [. . .]Meritor, which is a multinational company with a presence in 24 countries. [T]he Language Certificate was a great plus in their decision to hire me.”

7 Cost of the Language Certificate

A perennial problem in academia is procuring funds for new initiatives, especially when there is no historical data on the need. While there are costs associated with proctoring the proficiency exams and administering issues at the program level, the biggest expense is the cost of the external proficiency exams.

For our program, we started it with some grant funding that covered testing for all individuals. As we launched the program, we gathered data about what the students

could do with the language through the OPI and WPT. We kept track of number of certificates awarded and predicted growth trends that allowed us to project future costs of the program. Finally, we gathered testimonials from students that participated in the program.

In our annual reports to the college and then the university, we included this data. Since the ACTFL proficiency ratings are tied to real-world communicative skills, we could demonstrate to the administration and donors how the Language Certificates with their associated programs were adding value to our graduates, and since we started out small, the cost was minimal. As important as numbers and scores are, though to procure funding on an ongoing basis, we needed stories from the participants.

No one ever made a decision because of a number. They need a story. —Daniel Kahneman

The small launch acted as a proof of concept. We were confident we could get funding from the College of Humanities for its majors as the leadership was supportive of providing external evidence of what students in our language programs could do. We hoped that we could get funding from the university or from a donor to pay for the exams of students majoring in other programs, but were prepared to ask students to pay for the associated exams as a last resort.

While you can have the students pay the fees associated with the exams, we suggest building it into the program itself when feasible. If a program is trying to attract students who otherwise might not take language classes, we want to eliminate barriers be they psychological or financial. Even mention the word “test” to some students, and they start breaking out in a cold sweat. Then tell the student they have to pay for that test. To the student, it is the educational equivalent of pouring salt in a wound, and psychologically the program may have introduced a barrier that would deter students from participating in the program. Perhaps more important from a position of creating an equitable learning environment, we want to minimize out of pocket expenses that might deter economically disadvantaged students from pursuing language study. This is particularly important as heritage language learners from immigrant backgrounds would be an ideal group of students to recruit to a certificate program.

8 Current Status

The success of our initial launch has led coordinators of other language programs at the university to seek to join the Language Certificate program. We first extended the program to our language minors and then to other programs that had at least 3 advanced language classes that align with the language, civilization, and literature paradigm and for whom there were proficiency exams available. For instance, when the Scandinavian Studies minor wanted us to include Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, and Swedish, ACTFL was not offering tests in those languages. So, we asked the coordinator of that program to recruit language educators that were willing to go

Table 1 Languages which offer certificates

*Arabic	*German	*Portuguese
Cebuano	Haitian-creole	*Russian
*Chinese	Indonesian	*Spanish
**Danish	*Italian	**Swedish
Dutch	*Japanese	Tagalog
**Finnish	*Korean	Thai
*French	**Norwegian	Vietnamese

* Languages with majors and minors

** Part of Scandinavian Studies minor

through ACTFL tester training, and we facilitated some workshops to get examiners ready so that those languages could be tested as well. At this point in time the decision on which languages to offer certificates for is based on enrollments in the language (there need to be enough students to take 3 advanced language classes) and availability of proficiency tests. As of 2022, we offer the certificate in 21 languages (See Table 1).

The annual reports we generate now and go to our administration as well as to donors who want to see how the funds allocated to the program are being used. Since the Language Certificate will just be one small part of any program, the report is kept to a single page with bullet points. For donors, we ask students to handwrite thank you cards that we can distribute. A sample of our annual report is below:

9 BYU Language Certificate Program—Annual Report Example

Details and Statistics as of 6/1/2022

- *University recognized program available to any matriculated BYU-Provo student, across all disciplines.*
- *Program description and information: see attached flyer used in marketing the program to students throughout campus.*
- *Certificate appears on student's official BYU transcript through Records Office.*
- *Competency and proficiency based.*
- *Program began in 2010 with 36 students earning a Language Certificate the first year.*
- *On 12/31/2021 the total number of Certificates awarded was 4,140.*
- *Total awarded YTD (6/01/22) 4,360 Total changes daily as we receive ratings results for completed student proficiency assessments.*
- *Eligible in 21 languages (see attached flyer for complete list of eligible languages). Newest language added Winter semester 2022: **Haitian-Creole***
- *Three (3) **advanced** language courses required (300 + level) consisting of a language course, civilization course, and literature course. **Course-eligible***


options are determined by the individual language department that oversees the eligible language (See attached flyer for course requirements by language).

- *Proficiency assessment(s) required upon completion of the coursework with a **minimum rating of Advanced Low** on the ACTFL proficiency scale at least one of the assessments is necessary to earn Certificate. (Exception is Japanese with an Intermediate High requirement).*
- *Language proficiency guidelines established by **ACTFL** (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language) an organization that established proficiency guidelines and has set industry standards for language teaching (see attached 'ACTFL proficiency pyramid' for a good visual).*
- *Proficiency assessments run between \$154.00–\$220.00 per student (based on available tests for specific language). This amount is paid on behalf of the student pursuing a Language Certificate through a **generous financial gift** to the Center for Language Studies by Ira A. Fulton in 2010 specifically for test fees.*
- *Certificates have been earned from **157 majors** across the University (of the currently offered 186) or 84%.*
- *Outside the College of Humanities (38% of certificates earned), students from the College of Family Home and Social Sciences (17%) followed by the College of Life Sciences (15%) earn the most Language Certificates. The other 30% of Certificates are earned across the other colleges (Fig. 1).*

10 Conclusion

The Language Certificate has been the central component of the College's + Humanities initiative. The Certificate option allows students in Engineering, Business, Music, Nursing, or any other field of study to document their proficiency in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

The distinguishing feature of the BYU Language Certificate is that it includes a strict competency-based proficiency requirement, but it also includes instruction to prepare students for those competency exams. Since in the real world students will be required to communicate accurately in a foreign language about real-world challenges, societal issues, and topics of interests to educated members of that society, students must complete three upper-division language classes designed to improve their knowledge of the targeted language, civilization, and culture. Those who have satisfied this curriculum requirement take internationally recognized, standardized competency tests that document the students' level of functional proficiency in the foreign language. Only those who pass are awarded a Certificate. Through having a competency-based Language Certificate, our graduates have an advantage when applying for employment in today's international job market and we hope similar programs at other institutions could help more students have that advantage as well.



Language Certificate


Program Requirements

- 1. Complete three (3) courses*** each focusing on one of the following areas:
 a. Language b. Civilization c. Literature
 *See reverse side for eligible courses in each language.
A minimum of a B- grade in each class is required for the courses.
- 2. Complete two (2) proficiency assessments:**
 - **The Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI):** "The Oral Proficiency Interview is a carefully structured, 20-30 minute telephone interview between an ACTFL certified tester and a candidate. The interview is interactive and adaptive to the experiences and linguistic competence of the candidate."
 - **The Writing Proficiency Test (WPT):** "This is a proctored, standardized test for global assessment of functional writing ability, measuring how well a person writes in a language." The WPT is an 80-minute computer-based or hand-written short essay-answer writing sample.

A proficiency rating of Advanced Low (AL) or higher on either of the assessments will qualify you for a BYU Language Certificate.


Your transcript will reflect your accomplishment and your official certificates will prove your language proficiency!

certificate.byu.edu



CENTER FOR
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Fig. 1 Graphic presentation of the language certificate requirements



Certificate Language	COURSE OPTIONS - Choose one class from each column		
	Language	Civilization	Literature
Arabic	ARAB 302 ARAB 426R	IHUM 242	ARAB 424R ARAB 425R
Cebuano	CEBU 321	CEBU 330	CEBU 340
Chinese	CHIN 302	ANTHR 343 CHIN 345R HIST 340 HIST 341	CHIN 342 CHIN 343 CHIN 344
Danish	DANSH 321	SCAND 430	DANSH 340
Dutch	DUTCH 321	DUTCH 330	DUTCH 340
Finnish	FINN 321	SCAND 430	FINN 340
French	FREN 321 FREN 322	FREN 361 FREN 362 FREN 363	FREN 340
German	GERM 303	GERM 330	GERM 343
Haitian-Creole	CREOL 321	CREOL 330	CREOL 340
Indonesian	INDON 321	INDON 330	INDON 340
Italian	ITAL 321	ITAL 360 ITAL 361 ITAL 363 ITAL 445 ITAL 446	ITAL 322
Japanese	JAPAN 321	JAPAN 345	JAPAN 322 JAPAN 350 JAPAN 351 JAPAN 352
Korean	KOREA 302	KOREA 345	KOREA 321 KOREA 340 KOREA 441
Norwegian	NORWE 321	SCAND 430	NORWE 340
Portuguese	PORT 321 PORT 323R PORT 325 PORT 326 PORT 360 PROT 520	PORT 321 PORT 345 PORT 355 PORT 395R PORT 447R PORT 457R	PORT 321 PORT 330
Russian	RUSS 321 RUSS 322 RUSS 323	RUSS 330 RUSS 343	RUSS 340 RUSS 341 RUSS 342
Spanish	SPAN 321 SPAN 323R SPAN 325 SPAN 326 SPAN 360 SPAN 421 SPAN 520	SPAN 321 SPAN 345 SPAN 355 SPAN 395R SPAN 447R SPAN 457R	SPAN 321 SPAN 330
Swedish	SWED 321	SCAN 430	SWED 340
Tagalog	TAGAL 321	TAGAL 330	TAGAL 340
Thai	THAI 321	THAI 330	THAI 340
Vietnamese	VIET 321	VIET 330	VIET 340

Fig. 1 (continued)

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Global Honors: Responding to Twenty-First Century Language Learners' Real-World Goals



Catherine Baumann, Ahmet Dursun, and Lidwina van den Hout

Abstract This chapter describes Global Honors, a new academic distinction in the undergraduate College at the University of Chicago. It was designed to raise the visibility of language study, tie it to real-world, career-enhancing skills, and give students a way to demonstrate their engagement with languages, cultures, and other global activities. Language enrollments are falling, and the perceptions and expectations of twenty-first century learners are changing. They are focused on their careers and on the skills that enhance them. Understanding who these students are and what they want is critical to making a compelling case for language study. Global Honors shows promise as a way to incentivize language study in ways that respond to the specific needs of the twenty-first century learner, while also equipping them with twenty-first century skills.

Keywords Language proficiency · Language enrollments · Twenty-first century skills · Global engagement

In November 2019, a Language Learning and Teaching (LLT) Committee was charged at the University of Chicago by the dean of the graduate Humanities division and a deputy dean for Humanities in the undergraduate College to examine issues around language learning and teaching on campus. The broad questions initially posed by both deans led to the formation of five (in most cases overlapping) subcommittees: graduate language requirements, the undergraduate language requirement, innovative course design, language learning beyond the classroom, and data. A set of recommendations for graduate language requirements was developed separately from the broader document written to address issues around language learning by undergraduates. Global Honors, a new academic distinction in the College, was created as a result of the LLT Committee's findings.

For several years at the University of Chicago, professional staff in the Chicago Language Center (CLC), working in collaboration with language instructors, had

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been intentionally working to reframe language learning as an invaluable complement to career and academic goals, rather than as a requirement to fill or a box to check. In 2017, the director of the CLC was asked to create a professional development program targeting language instruction that would not only support instructors in the reflection of their teaching practices, but also shift them away from traditional pedagogies. Working in close collaboration with the director of the Office of Language Assessment (OLA) in the CLC, the Language Pedagogy Innovation Initiative (LPII) was born with reverse design as an operating principle. It offered a range of professional development programs for instructors, based on outcome-oriented instructional practices across languages and levels. All curricular revisions follow a reverse design model: language instructors first identify and define outcomes, then design performance-based assessments, and finally, realign curricula to achieve the identified outcomes.

The new performance-based assessments across languages developed under the LPII resulted in the creation of the Foreign Language Proficiency Certification (FLPC) program, administered by the OLA. By identifying ACTFL levels as end-of-sequence outcomes and designing four-skills proficiency tests to measure student progress, the OLA offers students the possibility to “show the world what they can do with language.” Students receive certifications that document their proficiency and describe their abilities in speaking, writing, reading, and listening.¹ Having proficiency tests in place began to have a washback effect on the ways instructors were teaching, and subsequently on the ways they advertised their courses. As OLA testing and certifications moved into areas in the social sciences and professional units such as medicine and law, designing language for specific purposes (LSP) proficiency assessments and courses also fell under the LPII’s purview. LSP courses are also developed through reverse design, with their starting point in domain analysis research. Language study that culminates in proficiency testing, especially LSP courses, raises the visibility of the value of the language proficiencies gained by students and ties it to real-world skills they can use in their careers.

The LPII was already established when the Language Learning and Teaching Committee conducted a survey that made it possible to gain a rich depiction of the perspectives and motivations of University of Chicago students. It was sent to all undergraduate and graduate students on campus via the Qualtrics survey platform and contained eight Likert-scale questions and 27 open-ended questions. A total of 905 students responded from over 70 different majors and graduate programs. Data analysis tools in Qualtrics were used to analyze quantitative data obtained through the Likert-scale items. Manual inductive coding was used to identify themes and patterns in the open-ended questions; the patterns were subsequently sorted by frequency. The subcommittee was, of course, interested in why students were studying languages, but even more interested in why they were not. The survey

¹It is important to note that while ACTFL levels were used in the reverse design process as valid descriptions of outcomes, the OLA does not use ACTFL levels or ACTFL Guidelines descriptions in its certifications because it does not administer official ACTFL tests.

also sought to ascertain students' perspectives on the pertinence of language proficiency to their studies and careers, on different types of language courses, and the views of heritage learners.

The results revealed that the top reasons motivating students to take language classes were degree requirements, research needs or academic interest, learning one's heritage language, and maintaining or improving existing skills. Some of the reasons students opted not to study language were scheduling and "indecisiveness," lack of a requirement or having the requirement fulfilled, irrelevance to coursework or career goals. An intriguing contrast is the perceived usefulness of high proficiency in a language for one's career by students taking language classes and those who are not. 65% of students taking a language class see proficiency as extremely or very useful, the percentage is almost the same, 62% for students not taking a language. The perception is there – students believe language proficiency is useful! But they are not all in our classes. The survey found similarly comparable results for current learners and non-learners when asking about taking language classes designed for a career or major and earning certifications of language proficiency (Table 1).

There is, however, a striking contrast between student perceptions of high proficiency in a language to their future career, compared with the usefulness of a major or minor in a language to their future career as shown in Figs. 1 and 2.

These data demonstrate that language proficiency is valued by these learners, but getting a major or minor in a language is not. Offering proficiency certifications is one way of reframing the goals of language study as gaining real-world skills that one can use in a career and thus keeping them in language classes longer, until they reach the point where they will reach the identified proficiency outcomes. Global Honors was also designed as a way to incentivize an even broader range of international engagement that includes language study. In fact, many Global Honors components are only achievable once learners have reached higher proficiency levels.

Unlike academic honors, which is essentially rewarded for a high GPA, the LLT committee brainstormed a list of components to "count" toward Global Honors. Each component was given a point value from 1–4; students must earn 15 to achieve the distinction. The committee strove to include components that reflected a wide array of experiences in order to make Global Honors meaningful (and achievable) by students across all disciplines in the College and to encourage language study but, even more importantly, to reflect the very real-world experiences with language and culture students were already deeply engaged in (Table 2).

Table 1 Current learners' and non-learners' perceptions of taking language for specific purposes courses and proficiency certifications. (Reproduced from Dursun & van den Hout, 2021)

Perception	taking a language class	not taking a language class
Interest in taking a language class specifically designed for a career or major	Yes = 56.5% Maybe = 24.9% Total = 81.4%	Yes = 48.8% Maybe = 29.2% Total = 78%
Earning a language proficiency certification	Yes = 56.5% Maybe = 25.6% Total = 82.1%	Yes = 43.3% Maybe = 28.9% Total = 72.2%

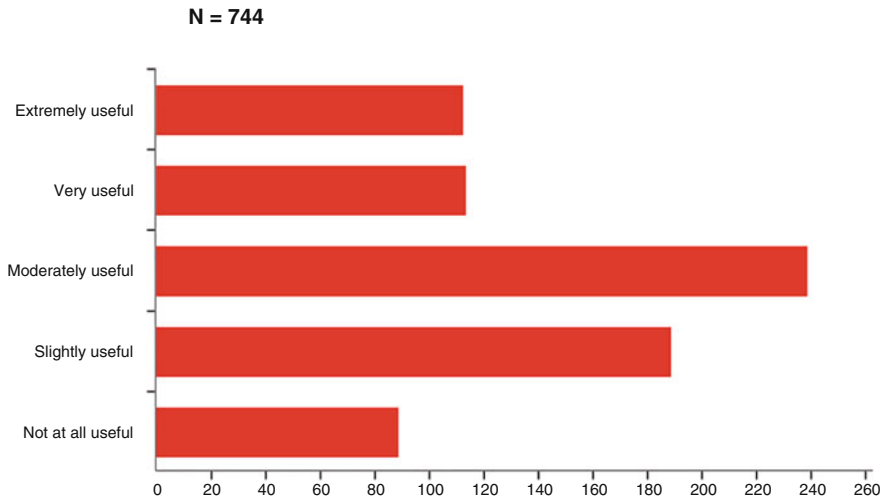


Fig. 1 Student perceptions of the usefulness of a major or minor in a language to their future career. (Reproduced from Dursun & van den Hout, 2021)

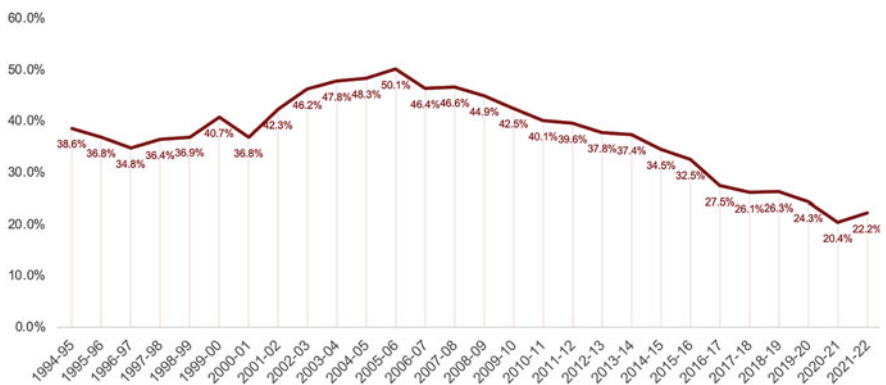


Fig. 2 Language enrollments in the undergraduate college controlling for increases in college size. (Reproduced from Tabatowski & Baumann, 2022)

In an effort to expand the components and to determine whether the committee (comprised exclusively of Humanities faculty) had captured the full range of student experiences, the College Center for Research and Fellowships (CCRF) was consulted. They helpfully supplied one committee member with curricula vitae from students majoring in a variety of disciplines who were applying for competitive international scholarships and fellowships after graduation. These artifacts proved to be both useful and revealing. For example, several students had engaged in teaching English internationally in the Summer, or had volunteered with immigrant groups in the U.S. The CCRF CVs were not only a rich source for additional Global Honors components, there were also students who ostensibly had engaged in enough

Table 2 Global Honors components, first iteration

1 point each	Participating in a language across the curriculum (LxC) course Participating in a language for specific purposes (LSP) course Participating in a language theater or video project course Taking a Reading for Research course in a world language
2 points each	Practical Foreign Language Proficiency Certification in a language Completing a minor in a world language or area studies Participating in 3 quarters of an intensive course in a world language Acting as a TA or LA for an LxC or other course with responsibilities for language support Taking a leadership role in a registered student organization for language learning or language use Citing six or more target language sources or materials in the BA thesis (or comparable research project) Supporting faculty research with translation or archival research using a world language Publishing a paper or giving a presentation or talk on a topic in a world language or culture Taking a leadership role in the organization of language tables or language spaces, both physical and virtual
3 points each	Advanced Foreign Language Proficiency Certification in a language Completing a major in a world language or area studies Participating in a study abroad program where another language is spoken Receiving and carrying out a Summer Research Grant in a country where another language is spoken Receiving and carrying out a Foreign Language Acquisition Grant for intensive summer language study Doing an internship in a country where another language is spoken Doing an internship in North America for a company where another language is used in the workplace Undertaking a University supervised project with a target language community in the US or abroad Performing research based on target language materials at an archive in the US or abroad Living on a language floor or in a language suite
4 points	Participating in a direct enrollment study abroad program where another language is spoken (ex. Chicago programs in St. Petersburg, Kyoto)

components to achieve Global Honors yet had no contact at all with the language departments or programs. This sent a strong message that departmental goals might be irrelevant or mismatched with the needs and interests of potential students. Another result of the consultation with the CCRF was a resulting suggestion for an additional component. The CCRF wanted more and better students applying for their fellowships, and asked whether completing the full application process could count. The component was added (for three points). Its addition is an example of how Global Honors serves to beneficially impact multiple programs: Listing the CCRF's application process on the Global Honors list raised the visibility of its many fellowship and scholarship opportunities. Offering Global Honors points may incentivize more students to apply, thus increasing the number and quality of the

university's pool, while also increasing the possibility of additional UChicago students becoming award recipients. Furthermore, demonstrating strong proficiency in a world language may also strengthen those students' applications.

The LLT committee conferred with other programs on campus to begin the process of outreach for Global Honors, as well as to find other possible components. One of these programs was Veteran Scholars. These students possessed language proficiency from their time stationed internationally, and are now being encouraged to continue their language study with the goal of gaining a proficiency certification toward Global Honors. Along with that, gaining a government-issued proficiency certification (i.e., the Defense Language Institute) was added to the list. The Study Abroad office was also consulted. They helped to sort out the distinctions between non-language focused programs, language-intensive programs, and direct enrollment programs. They also asked for language about Global Honors that could be included in their brochures and on their website. This consistent and widespread messaging turned out to play a critical role in Global Honors' rollout in the Spring of 2022.

In March 2022, a Global Honors Canvas site was created and the program was piloted with third- and fourth-year students. Additional components were also added at this stage. "Research assistance to faculty involving translation or archival work using a foreign language," already existed, "curriculum design" was added. It was hoped that the addition would have a bidirectional impact: Even as language programs are revising their curricula to ensure that their learners reach identified proficiency outcomes, students can gain Global Honors points by working on the revision of curricular materials. Subsequently, the University's Office of Career Advancement indicated that students who took part in such activities could receive micro-grants as funding, representing another instance where multiple programs became involved, were able to expand their impact, all to the benefit of students – while they earned Global Honors points.

Earning the major or minor in programs with an emphasis in language study was already included in the Global Honors components (sufficient "emphasis" had been determined by the LLT committee). Two master's programs asked about inclusion in the list. One was Middle Eastern Studies, an MA in the Title VI center on campus. Its language requirement of six quarters, or 2 years of study) was enough to include it. On the other hand, the International Relations MA had no language requirement whatsoever. In fact, it prohibits language study except during the Summer. After two students who were pursuing the dual BA/MA advocated to include it, a decision was made to allow it when students also achieved a higher-level language proficiency certification or a major in a language.

In perusing online descriptions of major and minor requirements to determine which programs would be included, several were noted that were using the OLA's proficiency certifications as their language requirement, instead of "two years" of language study, or, even more ambiguous, "intermediate" language ability. The Global Studies major stood out. It requires the Practical Proficiency Certification, usually pegged at ACTFL Intermediate High or Advanced Low. An aspirational goal of the Global Honors program is to encourage other programs to define their

language requirements using proficiency certifications. Not only do those define and describe real-world language skills, they also count toward Global Honors (2 points for Practical Proficiency; 3 for Advanced Proficiency). Along with an accompanying minor (2 Global Honors points) or major (4 points) a student will be well on their way toward the designation.

A last multi-directional impact of the Global Honors program is the bottom-up pressure from students on instructors to offer more classes and more proficiency certification opportunities. Within a couple of weeks of the Spring 2022 pilot, a Chinese native speaker undergraduate majoring in Economics (the most popular major on campus, bar none) asked whether he could sit for the Advanced Proficiency Assessment. That was not possible; the test is not designed for native speakers. Nor should the student need to demonstrate his language skills having grown up and been formally schooled in China. However, it was pointed out to the student that because he had studied Economics here, he did not necessarily have the specific language proficiency in the domain to work as a professional. Instead, it was recommended that the students approach the Chinese program and ask them to develop an LSP course that would meet his needs. That course would meet the needs of both native speakers of Chinese, and traditional or heritage learners who were at the Advanced level. It is the hope that across languages, more LSP courses and more opportunities to demonstrate high proficiency will be demanded by students and provided by instructors and programs (Table 3).

Based on survey data, and the initial reception of Global Honors (20 students achieved the honor in June of 2022, just 10 weeks after it was piloted; current Canvas site enrollments are in the hundreds) it is meeting the needs and responding to the goals of learners on the University of Chicago campus. Global Honors could be a meaningful answer to falling enrollments. The MLA has been conducting enrollment surveys since 1958; an analysis of possible trends is included in this volume (Lusin, 2023). Enrollment trends on the campus of the University of Chicago bear out the MLA's most recent results (Looney & Lusin, 2019). The University of Chicago teaches over 50 languages each year (<https://languages.uchicago.edu/languages/>) to both undergraduate and graduate students, and as a member of the "Ivy Plus" consortium admits a highly selective student body. Looking at undergraduate enrollment data since 1994 one sees a peak of 2315 enrollments in language classes in the Autumn quarter of 2005. By 2021 this number has fallen to 1599, a drop of 31%. But that decline is even more precipitous when one controls for the enormous growth of Chicago's undergraduate College (4620 students in 2005 versus 7201 in 2021, a 36% increase). In 2005, 50.1% of the College students were enrolled in a language class, by 2021 only 22.2% are.

As noted above, multiple Global Honors components serve to keep students in our classes longer to earn proficiency certifications and in order to have the higher levels of language skills that make it possible to use resources in their BA thesis, participate in internships and research projects, make themselves competitive for post-university opportunities, and perhaps earn a minor or major. But one must also look beyond the UChicago campus to understand these students' needs.

Table 3 Global Honors components, final iteration. (<https://tinyurl.com/2s3tdwx8>)

1 point each	<p>Language across the curriculum (LxC) course</p> <p>Language for specific purposes (LSP) course</p> <p>Reading for research purposes course</p> <p>Course or workshop for teaching foreign language (including English as a second language)</p> <p>International trek or innovation challenge student assistant</p> <p>International job shadowing program</p> <p>UChicago September course abroad</p>
2 points each	<p>OLA-approved practical proficiency certification in a language</p> <p>Language proficiency rating from a government agency (e.g., defense language institute), earned as a UChicago student</p> <p>Complete a 3-quarter sequence of a less commonly taught language (LCTL)</p> <p>Minor in a program with a significant language emphasis</p> <p>3-quarter intensive sequence in a world language at the University of Chicago</p> <p>Course assistantship or language assistantship providing language support</p> <p>Research assistance to faculty involving translation, curriculum design, or archival work using a foreign language</p> <p>Summer research Grant to a country where another language is spoken, minimum 2-week stay</p> <p>Substantive use of foreign language sources in BA thesis or comparable research project</p> <p>Faculty-directed research based on target language materials at an archive in the US or abroad OR in a lab in a country where another language is spoken (i.e. an international lab experience)</p> <p>Editing or publishing language-focused journal or other publication</p> <p>Leadership in registered student organization for language learning, language use, global or international issues</p> <p>Leadership in organization of language tables/spaces (physical or virtual)</p> <p>Significant volunteer work using a foreign language</p> <p>University-supervised project with target language community in US or abroad</p>
3 points each	<p>OLA-approved advanced proficiency certification in a language</p> <p>Study abroad program where another language is spoken</p> <p>Intensive summer language study</p> <p>Internship or work experience requiring active use of a foreign language</p> <p>BA thesis written in a foreign language</p> <p>Completion of the MA in middle eastern studies, or completion of the MA in international relations with practical proficiency in one language, or a major in a language</p> <p>Receipt and fulfillment of Sraetz international research award (intensive summer international research experience with foreign university, faculty, or research team, including through programs like the UChicago-USussex international junior research associates program or DAAD rise partnership program)</p> <p>Successful completion of application for a qualifying nationally competitive fellowship.</p> <p>Successful completion of application for one of these nationally competitive fellowships for international graduate study: UChicago Cathey scholars program; Yenching, Rhodes, Marshall, Mitchell, Churchill, and gates-Cambridge</p>
4 points	<p>Major in a program with a significant language emphasis</p> <p>Participation in a direct enrollment study abroad program where another language is spoken</p>

Descriptions of twenty-first century skills from the point of view of educators, business leaders, academics, and governmental agencies have been discussed since the 1990s (Stuart, 1999). Pres. George H.W. Bush established “America 2000: An Education Strategy” in 1991, anticipating the challenges that would be faced in the coming new millennium. World language study was added as the seventh and final subject area and the initiative was renamed “Goals 2000” under President Clinton. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, working in collaboration with the AATG, AATF and AATSP developed the “World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages,” and “Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the twenty-first Century” appeared in 1996 (ACTFL). Global Honors has many components that correspond to the “5 C’s.” (Table 4)

By 2010, multiple skills related to world language study and intercultural skills were counted among twenty-first century skills (Kay, 2010); these also resonate with Global Honors components (Table 5).

What about the voices of the learners themselves, especially those coming of age in the new millennium and are our students right now? Across higher education anecdotally, one talks about how college students have changed in terms of their perceptions and expectations. A monograph published recently by the Chronicle of Higher Education gives credence and adds valuable details to these assumptions (Selingo, 2018). “The New Generation of Students” describes attributes of Gen Z (those born starting around 1995) that distinguish them from Millennials. In terms of career goals, Gen Z students are financially conservative because they experienced

Table 4 ACTFL Standards and Global Honors components

Standards	Global Honors components
Communication	Practical and advanced proficiency certifications Government proficiency rating Intensive language sequences (academic year and summer courses) Editing or publishing a world language focused journal One-year study of a LCTL
Cultures	Course for teaching world languages or English Minor, major or MA in a program with a world language emphasis Course or language assistantship
Connections	Language across the curriculum courses Language for specific purposes courses Reading for research purposes courses Research assistance to faculty (multiple) Summer research grant Use of world language resources in BA thesis Internship or work experiences
Comparisons	International job shadowing Application for international fellowships and scholarships
Communities	International trek or innovation challenge student assistant Leadership in student organization or language tables Significant volunteer work or project with language communities Study abroad experience (multiple) Application for fellowships (multiple)

Table 5 Twenty-first century skills and global honors components

Twenty-first century skills	Global Honors components
World languages as a core subject	Practical and advanced proficiency certifications Intensive language sequences (academic year and summer courses) Minor, major or MA in a program with a world language emphasis Language across the curriculum courses Language for specific purposes courses Reading for research purposes courses Use of world language resources in BA thesis
Global awareness	Summer research grant Study abroad experience (multiple) Application for international fellowships and scholarships
Communication and collaboration	Leadership in student organization or language tables Significant volunteer work or project with language communities
Social and cross-cultural skills	Course for teaching world languages or English Internship or work experiences Significant volunteer work or project with language communities Study abroad experience (multiple) Application for international fellowships and scholarships

the Great Recession as children. They expect a “return on investment” when they consider attending college, and their majors should be “practical subjects with clear paths to careers.” Gen Zers are also skeptical about whether “things they learn in school will be very important later in life,” and their “top reason to go to college is to get a better job.” The Global Honors components and the way world languages are (or should be) taught resonate with the expectations around higher education expressed by Gen Z, although at times we need to connect the dots.

While we can make a case for language study as an *enhancement* to many careers, the “path” is often not direct. One way to do this is to highlight language skills in terms of proficiency and provide the assessments and documentation that demonstrates exactly that, just as the Foreign Language Proficiency Certifications are doing. But it isn’t enough to tell students they will leave our classrooms with “an education they can apply.” We have to be more transparent about teaching and testing for proficiency and do so with consistent messaging. In this regard language instructors, whether tenure-line or not, can find themselves at odds with both the goals and the messaging of the faculty teaching the courses that lead to minors and majors. That inconsistency is evident in the LLT committee’s survey results (above), where students expressed interest in achieving high levels of language proficiency, but not in pursuing minors and majors. Learners don’t think those are the same thing, and frankly, in many programs they are not. The Modern Language Association (MLA’s) 2007 report described a language study continuum with “principally instrumental” goals on one end and “the core of translingual and transcultural competence” at the other (Geisler et al., 2007). The authors of this chapter never

accepted that characterization: language instruction has integrated content and culture into its “instrumental” goals since the 1980s. But more critically, the transformation advocated by the report to replace the “two-tiered” bifurcation in language departments with a “coherent curriculum in which language culture and literature are taught as a continuous whole,” has not yet taken place. This is only too evident to Gen Z students. They are very clear about what they want: “. . . crucial marketable skills” (Selingo, 2018) and not necessarily minors and majors with emphases in literary or cultural study. It’s no wonder that the percentage of students majoring in the largest Humanities undergraduate degrees (English, history, philosophy, or a world language) has dropped to 5% from 10% in just 10 years (*ibid.*).

The learning experiences that happen in language classes – at least in those focused on developing proficiency – have much to offer Gen Zers who value “in-person activities with classmates.” Since the 1980s the adage “not the sage on the stage, but the guide on the side” has been a tenet of proficiency-oriented instruction.² Even pre-pandemic proficiency-oriented language instruction urged maximizing in-class time for interactive, communicative activities. One can find this characterization in the first edition of Omaggio’s *Teaching Language in Context* (1986):

The use of small-group and paired communicative activities that allow students to practice language in context for some simulated or real communicative purpose should lead more readily to the development of oral proficiency than do methods that are primarily teacher-centered or that focus mainly on language forms and convergent answers.

Small group and pair work also deliver the collaborative skills needed in the twenty-first century workplace. There are other Gen Z attributes that both resonate with language teaching and learning and develop twenty-first century skills. A “mix of learning environments and activities, both face-to-face and online” (Selingo, 2018) could describe the pedagogy of many language courses, even before the pandemic, and describes the preferences of Gen Z. Finally, “integration between academics and practical experience” (*ibid.*), another GenZ preference, can happen on a micro level by engaging students with real-world activities in class, and on a meta level by tying the skills they learn in our classes to experiences abroad, whether language study, research, direct-enrollment programs, or international internships – Global Honors components all. We must be more consistent in getting our message out. To do so, our instructional and assessment practices need to favor the application of knowledge and skills over simple knowledge recall, and provide opportunities for students to apply what they have learned in novel contexts and situations representing authentic real-world scenarios.

We know what our students want, and what they need. To be clear – the argument here isn’t catering to students’ whims. Rather, it is making a compelling case that becoming proficient in a language enriches one’s academic experience and career possibilities. Language proficiency checks all of the Gen Zers’ boxes and develops

²This phrase has been used consistently in the session entitled “Implications and Applications,” on day 4 of ACTFL’s Oral Proficiency Interview Workshop. I first heard it used by Chantal Thompson, lead OPI trainer for French, at ACTFL Annual Meeting’s workshops in Boston, MA, in 1989.

the skills identified as necessary by educators, business leaders, academics, and governmental agencies. It is hoped that Global Honors makes a compelling case for students at the University of Chicago to gain significant proficiency in language, not simply in order to bolster enrollments, but because we believe we have something to offer them: real-world skills that enhance their studies, their careers, and their lives. Global Honors can also incite language instructors to expand and perhaps reexamine their course offerings to ensure that they fill the promise made to our learners. Because it is a new initiative, the extent to which Global Honors will reshape students' perceptions and expectations of language learning and global engagement is not yet known, but we are certain we have created a program that meets their needs and the needs of future students.

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You Have Reached the End: Now the Work Begins



Emily Heidrich Uebel , Felix A. Kronenberg , and Scott Sterling 

This chapter has two broad sections. First, global themes and takeaways from the volume are reviewed, focusing on three main points:

- Takeaway 1 attempts to put things into perspective by reframing enrollment concerns as local issues and trying to move away from a doom and gloom mindset.
- Takeaway 2 highlights some of the high impact practices that can be seen across multiple chapters in the volume.
- Takeaway 3 discusses the need to professionalize enrollment work, including using data, setting expectations, and offering training.

The second portion of this chapter answers the question, “Okay, you read this book. Now what?” It answers this in two distinct sections. First, some of the issues related to language program vitality that are not addressed by this volume and need further exploration are highlighted. Next, a call to action is issued, addressing what is next for the reader by issuing a call to action, providing both next steps and a framework for individuals as well as departments to consider as they decide what steps they should implement in their own contexts.

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1 Takeaways

1.1 Takeaway #1: *It's Not All Doom and Gloom*

This first takeaway allows us to put things into perspective. If you want to make sure you are wrong, just try to predict the future. Most of us could not have predicted the COVID-19 pandemic weeks before the lockdowns happened nor would many people in the 1980s have predicted the changing demographics, external geopolitical forces, and perception of value of the role and importance of universities in the USA that has helped to drive down enrollments in the 2020s. Knowing what language programs will look like in the future is challenging to say. However, concerns over the demise of language instruction in the USA are likely overstated. Language programs are going to be okay. They will be different, but they will be okay. Different might mean smaller programs, fewer courses offered, reduced faculty positions, and constant concerns of programs being eliminated. Of course, different could also mean exploring new avenues that bring in more students, expanded needs to hire more faculty, and programs that are not only thriving, but also ones highlighted as the gold star when the next crisis hits higher education. The difference between these two realities is not simply down to chance. Instead, the programs that thrive will be the ones that put in the hard work early, that see a need to change and innovate towards it, the ones that promote new ideas, that push for continual evolution and revitalization, and of course, the ones with a little bit of luck.

The chapters in this volume all situate issues faced in the local contexts, often resulting from (slight) panic caused by the popularization of the 2016 MLA data (Looney & Lusin, 2019). The MLA report caused ripples of write-ups and hallway conversations that seemed to spark a sense of doom and gloom for many faculty members. When considering how to fix a problem, the best place to start is to isolate what the actual issues are. As Tripiccione (Chapter “[Beyond the Crisis: Tools for Analyzing Historical Enrollments in Languages other than English](#)”) points out, the MLA data is reported in aggregate across the whole country. Institutions and locations were impacted differently by the enrollment decreases and each institution had different reasons for programs to see decreases in students. As an example, Karmanov (Chapter “[The Increasing Diversity of World Language Study in the United States, 1958–2016](#)”) data shows how geopolitics impacts enrollments as both Russian and Arabic saw sharp declines after prolonged military conflicts ended. Other programs did not worry about the overall number of enrolled students at their institution but were more concerned with how to entice students to join particular language programs (see Miller et al., Chapter “[Leveraging Language for Specific Purposes as a Motivating Factor for World Language Study](#)”, and Maggin et al., Chapter “[The Language Placement Brief: Showcasing Language Learning Opportunities](#)”, in this volume). Other programs had students taking lower-level courses while struggling to retain those students into higher levels (Reisinger, Chapter “[Language as a Bridge to Other Disciplines](#)”). Our point here is that no one should search for a one-size-fits-all approach. Each program will have its own

problems to solve and their own resources to utilize to do so. Without doubt, some of the ideas in this book are predicated on having considerable funds or other resources available. Some readers might be in a position where losing five majors could warrant closing their entire department, while others are concerned that 50 fewer people are taking particular courses.

Likewise, a lack of increase in enrollments is not itself an indication of weakness. The data tend to show that we are offering more languages but to a smaller set of students. That fact alone is a reason to celebrate. Continual growth for a program would be great, but in reality, most programs are capped by the amount of faculty and courses they can offer. Many programs have room to grow, but growth might not be the only goal nor one that can be controlled by a program. For some programs, holding steady in terms of enrollments might be the goal. These programs might instead look to increase their standing within the university or be seen as exemplary programs by administrators. Increasing the status of a program might itself provide a cushion in the event that enrollments do become problematic. Other areas of growth might be in the types of courses and languages offered. The ability to provide support of nurses to speak Spanish (Fees, Chapter “[Professional Content-Based Courses for Novice Language Learning](#)”) or for military officers to use German (Miller et al., Chapter “[Leveraging Language for Specific Purposes as a Motivating Factor for World Language Study](#)”) could be seen as helping the greater good.

In the end, every reader will need to focus on their own programs, their own resources, and as we discuss later, their own goals. No single initiative will resolve all of the issues that cause decreases in language enrollments, nor can any single faculty member remove all of the institutional barriers that students face. That said, doing nothing and hoping for the best possible outcome does not seem highly viable as an option at this stage in the American landscape of language learning. Language faculty tend to be an innovative lot – we are used to doing more with less to continually engage and support our students. Understanding our own problems and then seeking out methods of improving them is going to be key. Marshalling our own resources to combat these problems should be seen as a high priority in all language programs. However, language faculty can also be, at times, curmudgeons who are resistant to change. Raz (Chapter “[Staying Afloat: Attracting Hebrew Language Students with Collaboration and the Use of Content Based Instruction](#)”) highlights the benefits of working with, and sometimes against, faculty when attempting to update programs. Innovation is key but not easy.

1.2 Takeaway #2: Consider Focusing on High Impact Practices

When considering how to move a language program from simply surviving to thriving, suggestions may range from small actions to enormous initiatives that involve many stakeholders. Later in this chapter, we will present questions for

thinking about creating an intentional process and framework when approaching efforts to sustain or enhance program vitality. The chapters in this volume demonstrate that focusing such efforts on high impact practices has been crucial for many programs.

Articulating the value of language study is essential for our programs. Regardless of each program's particular goal, be it a certain level of language proficiency or global awareness, students need to understand and be able to articulate how language study connects to their own interests/majors. Murphy and Martin (Chapter "[Amplifying Student Voices: US. Undergraduate Student Perspectives on Expanding Access and Increasing the Relevance of Courses in Languages Other Than English](#)") encourage facilitating highly personalized learning, Baumann et al. (Chapter "[Global Honors: Responding to Twenty-First Century Language Learners' Real-World Goals](#)") assert that educators must make "a compelling case that becoming proficient in a language enriches one's academic experience and career possibilities." This can be done not only through talking to students and showing them relevant statistics, but can also be accomplished through enhancing opportunities to study across a variety of disciplines (see Reisinger, Chapter "[Language as a Bridge to Other Disciplines](#)"), or through creating tracks for specialized study (see Armengot, Chapter "[Language Programs at Rochester Institute of Technology: A Successful Recent Initiative \(2018-Present\)](#)"; Fees, Chapter "[Professional Content-Based Courses for Novice Language Learning](#)"; Langley, Chapter "[Contributing Factors and Achievable Solutions to the World Language Enrollment Downturn: A Midwestern Case Study](#)"; Maggin et al., Chapter "[The Language Placement Brief: Showcasing Language Learning Opportunities](#)"; Miller et al., Chapter "[Leveraging Language for Specific Purposes as a Motivating Factor for World Language Study](#)"; and Rubio, Chapter "[A Revamped Major: Reimagining the Role of Languages at a Business University](#)"). Some of the aforementioned chapters encourage a focus on recruitment and related curriculum development efforts with high enrollment majors. However, changing up the curriculum is not the only way to attract these students; Edwards and Lynd (Chapter "[Internationalize Your Major: Embracing the Supportive Role of Language Study](#)") demonstrate how personalized 4-year plans of study can help students envision, in very practical terms, how language study can fit into their schedules.

Programs should not jump to altering curricula without **listening to what students want**. This volume demonstrates that programs should ask themselves: "Which students are we listening to/should we listen to? The students we currently have or the ones we want to attract?" Several chapters focused on responding to current student needs through targeted retention efforts, such as Lange and Windham (Chapter "[Trial, Error, and Success: Recruitment and Retention Initiatives in a Small German Program](#)") and Sommer-Farias and Carvalho (Chapter "[Portuguese Language Program Evaluation](#)"). Other chapters focused on both students studying world language and those who were not currently enrolled, albeit with slightly different aims. While Spino (Chapter "[Leveraging Student Surveys to Promote](#)")

[Recruitment and Retention](#)”), discussed surveys as a method for recruitment and retention, Murphy and Martin (Chapter [“Amplifying Student Voices: US Undergraduate Student Perspectives on Expanding Access and Increasing the Relevance of Courses in Languages Other Than English”](#)), D’Amico and Sterling (Chapter [“Understanding Student \(A\)motivation Towards Learning a Language: Students’ Perspectives on Continued Language Study”](#)), and Linford (Chapter [“Why Doesn’t Everyone Take a World Language Class? University Students’ Perspectives on World Language Learning”](#)) examined reasons why current, former, and/or never enrolled students would or would not take languages.

Another high impact practice centers on **highlighting diversity in language learning and encouraging a broader range of students to engage in language study**. There is heartening news that “diversity in language study in the USA has increased significantly over the course of the twentieth century” as Karmanov demonstrated in Chapter [“The Increasing Diversity of World Language Study in the United States, 1958–2016”](#). This coincides nicely with the fact that, over the past few years, many institutions have become more vocal about their plans to enhance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility on their campuses. Language study, and particularly, the diversity of languages on campus, are drivers of institutional diversity (Fritzsche et al., 2022). Several of our chapters have highlighted efforts by less commonly taught language (LCTL) programs (Sommer-Farias & Carvalho, Chapter [“Portuguese Language Program Evaluation”](#); Raz, Chapter [“Staying Afloat: Attracting Hebrew Language Students with Collaboration and the Use of Content Based Instruction”](#); Cho & Chun, Chapter [“Innovative Strategies for Stabilizing Enrollment in Korean as a Foreign Language \(KFL\) Education”](#); Rosen et al., Chapter [“Retaining Students with Shared Courses and Meaningful Credentials”](#)). In addition, Thompson and Agoke (Chapter [“A Multilanguage Seminar for the Twenty-First Century: Rethinking Self-Instruction for the Least Commonly Taught Languages”](#)) demonstrate how a “multi-language seminar” can help students get credit for the *least* commonly taught languages. Student reasons for studying language are quite diverse, and research has shown that “heritage affiliation with the language and culture” is listed as a motivating factor for all languages, albeit for LCTLs more often than commonly taught languages (CTLs). Recognizing home/heritage languages is important for both LCTL and CTLs at the university level. One such way of recognizing that is through the Seal of Biliteracy, which was designed to recognize those who have proficiency in two or more languages, not just for those who have learned in a classroom setting, but also to recognize those who have proficiency through their home/family and other settings. The fact that some institutions are now recognizing the Seal of Biliteracy, sometimes for credit (see Eckerson and Jacobs, Chapter [“The Seal of Biliteracy as a Recruitment Opportunity”](#)), paves the way for those of more diverse backgrounds to demonstrate and receive college credit for their language experience.

1.3 Takeaway #3: Professionalizing Enrollment Work

It is pretty unlikely that many job postings will include a line reading “we are seeking a high quality and innovative scholar who will save our department.” Yet, enrollment and student success in language programs should be everyone’s concern. As language educators, one of our goals should be to help support people who are currently engaging with the language learning process. Issues such as institutional barriers to registering for classes or creating a class rotation that is nearly impossible for students to be in are probably never our intentions. Just like a car that needs regular oil changes (even though there is still oil in the engine), a language program will need to be revitalized from time to time. The 2016 MLA data, the COVID-19 pandemic, and changing discourse around the value of college have kickstarted many programs down this path, though in a survival rather than “thrival” mindset.

This takeaway comes from mostly unspoken or marginal comments from the chapters – these instructional changes, approaches, etc., were often uncompensated, invisible efforts driven by individuals or a small group. To make changes to language programs, we must recognize that it is going to take collective work, effort, resources, and very likely some tears. Having everyone throw their hands in the air yelling “this isn’t my job!” will most likely result in programs stagnating and for those facing enrollment challenges, it might mean the end of programs and jobs. Thus, we need to find ways of professionalizing and acknowledging enrollment work and standardizing our practices. This could take the form of compensation (monetarily or via time release) for curricula development (Fees, Chapter “[Professional Content-Based Courses for Novice Language Learning](#)”; Court et al., Chapter “[Expanding Access through Online Asynchronous Language Courses](#)”), formalizing the work through awards, fellowships, or official committee/service work, and including it as part of the official job duties and expectations. There also needs to be a larger discourse about such enrollment efforts and training opportunities available to faculty and graduate students.

While we hope this volume contributes to this conversation, there need to be additional spaces for people to publish and discuss their initiatives. This will make the “invisible work” visible and, in turn, give credit and acknowledgement for creating, running, and sharing initiatives. Locations might include journals specifically designed for this topic, or at least sections of journals that cover the topic, research threads could be created at conferences, or less academic venues such as blogs and using groups through different social media channels.

2 Okay, You Read This Book. Now What?

As the co-editing team mentioned in the first chapter of this volume, we believe that this volume can serve as a launching point for discussions and as inspiration for innovation. In the first section of this chapter, we highlighted takeaways from the

volume from our authors. In this section, we call attention to what is *not* in this volume and which topics related to language program vitality may need further investigation. Then, we present a call to action, providing next steps and a framework for individuals as well as departments to consider to help decide what steps they should implement in their own contexts.

2.1 What's Missing in This Volume and in the Field?

This volume covers a wide range of approaches that a variety of programs and institutions have implemented, but no volume could ever serve as a completely comprehensive guide – language programs and their students are simply too diverse to encompass in one volume. With that in mind, we would like to highlight some topics that have *not* been addressed.

Language programs need to reflect upon and share their “failures” in supporting their language programs. Even though we encouraged potential authors to submit ideas “regardless of the initiative’s success,” no one provided examples of initiatives that failed. Those trying to engage in efforts to improve their programs need to avoid misusing time for ideas that don’t work, so the less-than-effective efforts need to be shared. This is similar to the ‘desk drawer’ issue in research, in that projects that are not successful are not shared and might result in duplication of effort. A lack of understanding of the field’s failures might also set up a situation akin to current social media phenomena, where the best aspects of people’s lives are shown and hardships are hidden, which presents a skewed view of reality. Finding ways of sharing both successful and non-successful initiatives is an important area of growth for the field.

Some suggestions for adjusting language programs have not been thoroughly tested to see if implementing those changes would result in positive changes. For example, Murphy and Martin (Chapter “[Amplifying Student Voices: US Undergraduate Student Perspectives on Expanding Access and Increasing the Relevance of Courses in Languages Other Than English](#)”) suggest that programs could offer different options for course meeting times that more closely align with other subjects in the university (changing from 5 days per week to 2–3 days per week), yet Lange and Windham (Chapter “[Trial, Error, and Success: Recruitment and Retention Initiatives in a Small German Program](#)”) found that even with alignment of meeting days, students cited “higher-priority courses” as a reason for not enrolling in language courses. A more systematic examination of the implications of course scheduling (in terms of outcomes of language proficiency as well as program vitality) would be helpful. Programs should also consider: Are courses in a language program and extracurricular opportunities offered with students’ availability or preferences in mind or are they created based on faculty preferences? Using data-driven approaches or tracking progress, even internally, might help boost outcomes.

Contributions in this volume made only passing mention to some of the work going on in the realm of sharing language courses across institutions, which has expanded student access to courses and supported articulation of language classes. The advances in online language teaching have made more interinstitutional partnerships possible, whether they be synchronous online classrooms (see Girons & Swinehart, 2020, for a practical guide on facilitating such courses) or fully asynchronous. Models of sharing languages across institutions continue to evolve with the times, ranging from long-standing consortial models (such as the University of Wisconsin’s Collaborative Language Program (highlighted in Chapter “[Retaining Students with Shared Courses and Meaningful Credentials](#)”), the Big Ten Academic Alliance’s CourseShare, the Shared Course Initiative, and the Five College Center for World Languages, among others) to one-off agreements. The National Less Commonly Taught Languages Resource Center (nlrc.msu.edu) is exploring additional models of interinstitutional course sharing efforts. A forthcoming co-edited volume by Heidrich Uebel, Kraemer, and Giupponi will highlight methods of sharing less commonly taught languages across institutions. Course sharing should not be seen as a threat to residential programs or tight-knit student cohorts, but rather as a way to expand or think outside of the box in terms of program opportunities.

As each language program considers what they want to do, we hope that they are inspired by the successful approaches in this volume. However, they also must be mindful that there are additional opportunities, ideas, and even pitfalls that are not covered here and, perhaps, don’t even exist yet.

2.2 *What Could You Do Next? A Call to Action*

The call to action depends on your position, as those who are graduate students, language instructors, and/or administrators will all engage with these issues in different capacities:

- For everyone, you should share the information you have learned and start a discussion with your colleagues (*Editor note: we oh-so-humbly suggest buying them a copy of the book!*). The chapters in this volume include anything from small, quick tweaks to complete curriculum or program overhauls. As you experiment with different ideas, you should document, measure, and share your results. This should be a constant, iterative process that keeps pace with trends in society.
- As a language instructor or professor, your classes need to be informative but also engaging. You might be the first face of the program. Faculty might need to think of creative initiatives that attract students to your program and help them stay in the program. Faculty with tenure should use the trust the institution has placed in them to advocate for enrollments and to actively engage in all aspects of the life of the program.

- At the chair/head/director level, you can give enrollment growth concerns priority over other concerns. You can add items to meeting agendas, appoint a committee to gather information and make recommendations for a more systematic way of dealing with enrollment issues, or even organize workshops or retreats where your program can tackle these issues. You might have to be the voice that pushes people out of their comfortable ways and into new frontiers. You might have to prioritize how funds are used or help your faculty develop academic agendas that support your ideas for program growth. Initiatives need leaders, and it might have to be you.
- As a graduate student, you could consider research into program vitality. You can also consider shadowing faculty members in the department as they do work in this area to gain valuable experience. If you plan to go into academia, while your research might focus on something like the syntactic development of German cases or seventeenth century literature, the reality of language programs means you will impact more students through introductory courses than courses in your area of specialization; this means that your job might ultimately depend on your ability to recruit and work with students. This area of focus might also be a strong place to consider consultation work.

How can you convince others and make your ideas spread? One framework that might be useful is Roger's (2003) Diffusion of Innovation Theory framework. Innovations, including those for implementing departmental changes to support enrollments, are more likely to be adopted if they provide a relative advantage compared to current practices. Changing out one course that doesn't spark students' interest with another one that also doesn't create enthusiasm, for example, provides no advantage. Whether the changes are in curriculum, outreach, marketing, extra-curricular programming, or data collection, the innovation has to provide an actual advantage.

For a program or department to adopt an innovation, the change will be more feasible if it is easy and not too complex to implement. It needs to be compatible with existing structures – for example, an innovation at a small liberal arts college might not work at a large research university, and vice versa. Furthermore, the innovation should be able to be tested and tried. Within a departmental context, that might mean starting with a pilot project before it is adopted more permanently or on a larger scale. Lastly, it is important that the innovation can be observed. Partly, this was the motivation for this book. Departmental policies, curricula, and structures are not often observable from the outside. This characteristic also implies that we should be more open about our efforts to create more thriving and flourishing programs, and to share our successes as well as our failed attempts in order to allow promising innovations to be implemented widely.

2.3 *You Need an Intentional Framework*

In order to increase enrollments, a crucial first step for departments and programs is to **agree on a shared vision and mission**. While this step itself will not have any effects on enrollments, it is a foundation that is necessary for sustained enrollment success.

Typically, academic institutions are loosely coupled systems and relatively autonomous – departmental missions are not centrally dictated, but rather defined by each unit itself. In the absence of prescribed goals, departments must find common ground among its faculty and stakeholders. Creating a vision and mission statement is often the first step when planning strategically for the future and determining high impact priorities.

The department's or unit's **vision should be aspirational**. The unit should collaboratively imagine where it wants to go and consider how it will need to start now to get there. Program and departmental **missions should be concrete and define their goals and objectives**. This is an essential basis, without which more granular enrollment work cannot be done. This must first be determined before moving forward. There are different enrollment strategies for different missions. Several of the chapters suggest that listening to student voices in a systematic way is a crucial component when finding answers to these questions. This can be done through surveys, through interviews, through student participation in department and program strategic planning, etc.

Another advisable first step is **defining the unit's values**, which provide a stable framework for future changes and when making difficult decisions around curriculum, finances, hiring, etc. Being intentional in these areas can provide a broad basis to create future pathways to stabilize and increase enrollments. Furthermore, it will make the mission transparent to all stakeholders: students, administrators, peer departments and units, alumni, etc.

Many language programs constantly strive to be better programs. That can lead to a better program: a more up-to date and more engaging curriculum, more diversity, more equity, etc. A better program, however, does not necessarily translate into higher student numbers. **What are the goals of the initiatives you implement?** Is an increase in enrollments actually the goal? Or is stabilizing it and preventing decreases sufficient? Those questions should be answered collectively to see if a program's stakeholders actually agree on them. It is not unimportant to check and see if everyone agrees that working on enrollments is everyone's priority and goal.

There's an assumption that everyone in a program or department has the same goals in mind. Why is the department teaching languages, and what should students learn? For example, does the program want to focus on a more humanistic and liberal arts-oriented mission, or more on language proficiency and specific linguistic skills? Does the program want to educate future graduate students and scholars in their discipline, or does the program see its mission in providing basic language courses?

Something in-between? Are numbers of program majors or minors more important than total enrollment numbers, probably with the majority of students in the basic language program? Do you focus on either recruitment or retention, or are both of equal importance? Is language a skill to demonstrate on a CV? If so, think about more credentialing and specialized curricula might be a solution. If the goal is more holistic and less career focused, such courses might not be the solution. In terms of curriculum, does the program think the students' opinions or wishes matter? If so, shouldn't the students have a large role in making appropriate decisions?

Be able to **define and explain your program** well! A crucial first step to be able to convey your program to others – it needs to be concise and to be understood by diverse types of people that are not familiar with it (or with language learning in general). Many programs are not good at conveying what they are all about. Rather, they seem like an organically accumulated web of courses and offerings. Maybe the faculty who have long taught in the program understand the logic behind the course offerings and structure. Will outsiders be able to understand easily and quickly? Marketing a program well starts with being able to hone its message. Even the most innovative program needs to be conveyed to others in order to yield higher enrollments.

Using clear language is also key. Will new first-year students really know what you mean by “communicative competence,” “intercultural communication,” and “critical thinking”? A simple, believable, and understandable – but consistent – message works better than complicated and aspirational treatises.

If you found some chapters in this book energizing or exacting, how will you carry that enthusiasm with you as you begin to make long term changes? **Strategic planning is useful to determine priorities and goals** and to be intentional in where (usually scarce) resources and energy are focused on within a certain time frame. Not all suggestions and ideas to increase enrollments can be tackled. In planning for the future, a coordinated and structured process can help both with collecting relevant information and data, and also with assessing which pathways and actions are likely to be most effective and acceptable among all stakeholders. It's about prioritizing and being realistic. Ask yourself what small steps can you do to work toward your vision? What can be done easily and yield relatively good and dependable results? With very little bandwidth, it is important to be realistic what stakeholders can actually accomplish in this area. Ask yourself: Do you need radical redesign, splashy projects, nudges towards a new path, or something useful but rather mundane? Furthermore, programs should consider what they might gain from a change vs. what they might lose.

If you're a one- or two-person department, it will look very different than a huge program (Tang, 2019). Small programs benefit from nimbleness, but all the work falls on fewer people. In a large department, the work can be distributed, but it may be harder to get people on board. It's important to take time for strategic planning– it cannot be accomplished during a department or program meeting. Consider a retreat that prioritizes a more systematic approach. If the process is too daunting, consider involving a consultant or advisor from another institution.

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