

The Role of Foreign Language Study in Campus Internationalization

I. Internationalization Assumes Foreign Language Learning

- ❑ The Commission on International Education of the American Council on Education (1995) outlined 10 ground rules for internationalizing institutions, the first one being that institutions require that all graduates demonstrate competence in at least one foreign language.
- ❑ The first goal of the U.S. Department of Education, International Programs and Activities (2004) is to “Increase U.S. knowledge and expertise about other regions, cultures, languages and international issues.”
- ❑ Back in 1980, a report of the International Studies and Programs review and planning committee at MSU published “International Education at Michigan State University in an Interdependent World: Recommendation for the Strengthening of International Studies and Programs,” and their first recommendation (p.18) included the “phasing in of new language requirements”.
- ❑ “Foreign Languages” is the first section of the American Council on Education’s Status Report 2000, “Internationalization of U.S. Higher Education,” which notes that the percent of students enrolled in higher education dropped from 16.1% in 1960 to 7.9% in 1998 (p. 5), and there has been a nationwide decrease in the number of language faculty (p. 18). Both of these issues are considered to be a threat to internationalization in higher education.

II. How Foreign Language Departments Internationalize the MSU Campus

- ❑ **Study abroad** - Learning a foreign language enhances study abroad opportunities. All of the languages we offer traditional class instruction in have study abroad programs in countries where those languages are spoken, with the exception of Vietnamese (and Latin and Ojibwe, for obvious reasons). Thirteen of the study abroad programs at MSU focus on language study. Statistics are not available for what percent of students take language classes during their study abroad experiences, but 70% of students who study abroad do so outside of English speaking countries (the United Kingdom and Ireland). (stats from Cheryl Benner, bennerc@msu.edu, 432-5166)
- ❑ **MSU Area and Resource Centers:** A goal common for many MSU area centers is the promotion of language. Below are some examples:
 - **African Studies Center.** A National Resource Center (NRC) on Africa, the African Studies Center awards FLAS Fellowships (Foreign Languages and Area Studies) from the U.S. Department of Education for the study of 25 different African languages. Faculty with this center also developed a system of offering language study for FLAS recipients on a personalized, tutorial-style course, which has provided a format for other area studies centers to offer less commonly taught languages.
 - **CASID.** A comprehensive NRC for Foreign Language and International Studies, CASID awards FLAS Fellowships (Foreign Languages and Area Studies) from the U.S. Department of Education for the study of varied languages. These fellowships are intended to support those students planning a career in the study, research and/or implementation of projects in international development.
 - **Asian Studies-** As a designated NRC, the center’s funding pays for less commonly taught Asian languages, which brings diverse staff to the campus

- **CLACS-** CLACS also awards FLAS fellowships for language study to allow students to become proficient in a language related to their area of study. Foreign languages allow these students to do research abroad and increase cultural awareness.
 - **CLEAR** - As an LRC, CLEAR promotes and supports the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the United States through various projects and outreach activities. CLEAR's activities bring diversity to the campus. Diverse teachers come to campus for their training programs and workshops, and CLEAR has hosted the Japanese Teachers' Association of Michigan's (JTAM) Japan Bowl since 2000, which promotes the understanding of Japanese language and culture as well as cultural activities such as martial art demonstrations, tea ceremony demonstrations, Japanese music, origami, sushi-making, etc.
- **Integrating members of the local international community to MSU**
- Foreign language class offerings attract heritage learners of languages from the community to our campus
 - Activities organized or hosted by language departments such as conversation hours and movie nights, etc. attract community members to MSU and expose students not enrolled in the language class to the culture
 - CASID's financial support under Title VI support the integration of community members into our less commonly taught languages classes **, and in Spring of 2004 the following languages used this funding to bring local community member of campus for cultural lectures and film discussions in the target language: Korean, Vietnamese, Hindi, Tagalog
- ***"CASID&WID seek to: 1) engage the language resources of local heritage communities to supplement LCTL offerings through weekly conversation groups (Appendix C/B.1.f); and 2) enhance language across the curriculum through for-credit foreign language discussion sections of course offerings in primary disciplines (e.g., Anthropology, Geography, Political Science) in three world regions (Africa, Islamic Asia, Latin America) (Appendix C/B.1.e)."
- **Foreign Language Departments' Staff Globalizes Campus**
- Many foreign language instructors are native speakers of the language whose cultural experiences diversify our campus
 - Faculty in foreign language departments can teach cross-departmentally to share their cultural knowledge
 - Staff for foreign language departments can provide linguistic / cultural support needed in international research supported by MSU
 - The staff of language departments contribute much of the content to International Education Week. Contributions by language teachers and students teach the general MSU community about cultural issues
 - Language Awareness Day in 2005 is bring organized by staff from foreign language departments and will promote MSU language learning opportunities to high school students through cultural and language based activities, promoting a more globalized incoming freshman class
- **Time Spent in Foreign Language Classes Internationalizes MSU Students**
- Emphasis on Communication with Native Speakers- Language departments at MSU increasingly emphasize communicative competence over studying grammar and practicing translation. MSU foreign language programs normally aim at teaching students to be able to communicate with members of the target culture and not just study the language as an object.

- Sociolinguistic competence – Language instruction includes the ability to select and use language that is appropriate given the situation and the people involved, thus providing students with valuable cultural information.
- Simulated Cultural Immersion - Good language instruction allows students to experience the culture; not just study it. An instructor who demonstrates cultural patterns of behavior and teaches sociolinguistics by example is creating a culture in their classroom, allowing students to learn by becoming part of it. Furthermore, researchers like Yang (2003) have found integrative motivation and cultural interest were one of the most frequently cited reasons for college students studying an Asian foreign language, an idea much discussed by other second language researchers. Thus, students see learning language as contributing to learning culture. ACTFL standards of language learning, which MSU foreign language classes frequently use as a guide for proficiency objectives, entail cultural knowledge. See <http://www.actfl.org/>
- Promotion of global current events awareness – Resources such as satellite TV provided by the MSU Language Learning Center and used in foreign language classes provides students with international news programs. See <http://llc.msu.edu/tvschedule.html>. Language class instructors also encourage students to attend cultural and current event focused presentations on campus which are relevant to the target culture(s) being studied.

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