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Language Program Articulation: Developing a Theoretical Foundation

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Chapter 1

The Role of the Language Program Director Within a Three-Dimensional Model of Articulation

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Abstract

Post-secondary educators have been discussing the challenges of foreign language (FL) program articulation since the 1960s, and have as yet been unable to find a generalizable approach to achieving coherent programs. Research to date on this topic has been descriptive, making it difficult to generalize the successes of one program to others. To address the need for a generalizable model of language program articulation, the authors propose a model of articulation and report the results of a pilot survey used to test, and subsequently modify, the model. Survey respondents' perceptions of the relative contributions of eleven factors to overall program articulation suggest that these factors interact differently and to varying degrees along three axes of articulation: Curricular Content and Instructional Delivery, Learner Experience, and Scope of Influence. The role of the language program director in articulation is compared with the role of the ten other factors on each of the three axes independently as well as in the three-dimensional model. Finally, implications of the survey results for the proposed model and for FL program articulation are presented.

Much of the research on foreign language (FL) program articulation has been descriptive, focusing on successful efforts and challenges related to achieving articulation. Descriptive and practical work is an essential starting point for understanding the articulation of language programs. Nonetheless, the diversity of educational contexts, goals, curricula, target languages, program sizes, and so forth make generalization of this work difficult. Moreover, consensus among researchers as to the specific characteristics of well-articulated programs is lacking. The development of an empirically-based theoretical model is therefore desirable to make general conclusions about the nature of well-articulated programs, and to provide a theoretical paradigm for a variety of program types seeking successful articulation. The goal of this chapter, then, is to contribute to the development of a generalizable theory of articulation. To carry out this task, we propose and test a model of FL program articulation. Based upon empirical data collected in an online pilot survey, this model describes the dynamic interaction among a group

of contributing factors, including the role of the language program director (LPD). In this model, we identify and define (1) articulation and the characteristics of well-articulated FL programs, (2) significant factors contributing to well-articulated programs, (3) the relationships among these factors that constitute a theory of articulation, and (4) the role of the LPD in articulation. The model comprises three central axes that interact with eleven sets of factors to contribute to articulation. The role of the LPD within the undergraduate language program constitutes one of these factors and is the specific focus of our discussion. The results of the survey data show the relative importance of the LPD's role with respect to overall articulation, the three central axes, and the remaining ten sets of factors. We argue that this LPD factor interacts with and influences various aspects of program articulation both within and beyond the introductory language program. To provide a foundation for the model, we start by developing a theoretically motivated definition of articulation, and then define the characteristics of a well-articulated program; these definitions lead to the identification of key factors contributing to articulation.

Constructing the Model

Although research on language program articulation has been predominantly descriptive in nature, several scholars have taken a more theoretical approach by defining articulation and identifying factors that contribute to or detract from successful articulation efforts. According to Lafayette (1978), articulation is the specific linking of what has been learned previously with what is to be learned in the future; in other words, articulation implies continuity. Lange expands upon this notion of continuity: "articulation is the interrelation and continuity of contents, curriculum, instruction, and evaluation, with the focus of all aspects on the progress of the learner toward comprehending and communicating in a second language" (1997, p. 32). Byrnes claims that well-articulated curricula, and by extension, well-articulated language programs, are "designed from the standpoint of learning as a developmental process, not as an outcome, that is, as facilitating learners' ability, over long and carefully integrated instructional sequences, to develop, gradually, but successfully, advanced competencies in a second language" (2001, pp. 163–164).

Successfully articulated programs are characterized by "well motivated and well designed sequencing and coordination of instruction toward certain goals" (Byrnes 1990a, p. 281). Yet the characteristics of a program that allow it to work well in one educational setting may not yield success in another. What, then, does it mean for a program to "work" in more general terms? Four traits gleaned from the literature are characteristic of successfully articulated language programs. First, a **well-articulated program** considers the program as a whole as well as the experiences and perspectives of the individuals within the whole. For example, students majoring in an FL experience a whole program, moving through each of its parts. Many language faculty, on the other hand, actively participate in only some parts of the program (e.g., the introductory language program, twentieth-century literary studies, second language acquisition [SLA]). Second, a well-articulated

program develops a cohesive relationship among instruction, content, assessment, and goals; each of these elements must live in symbiosis with the others for the program to run smoothly. Next, a well-articulated program views language as both a process and a product; FL proficiency, for example, is one desired outcome of program completion, but to reach that outcome, there must exist input, recycling, expansion, and so forth. Finally, in a well-articulated program, the curriculum and instructional techniques facilitate the development of content knowledge and proficiency skills¹, spiraling language and content at all levels of the FL program.

Throughout the professional literature on articulation, three elements recur consistently: a well-planned curriculum, coordinated instruction, and an awareness of the learner's experience and development. Because of the primacy of these elements in the literature, the proposed model of program articulation integrates them as three axes of articulation—Curriculum, Instruction, and Learner—that together constitute overall program articulation.

The articulation literature identifies a multitude of key factors that contribute to program articulation. These factors represent the interests of all participants involved in the articulation of FL programs (administrators, faculty, students), and fall under the larger umbrella of the characteristics of well-articulated programs identified above. A careful examination of the articulation literature (Byrnes 1990a, 1990b, 1991, 2000; Fountain 2001; Jackson 1996; Kramsch 1998; Lafayette 1978; Lange 1982, 1997) yielded a list of thirty-five factors influencing articulation. To build a testable model and generate a concise list of factors, we grouped together individual factors sharing common characteristics to create sets of factors. For instance, student characteristics, goals and needs, socioeconomic status, and prior language experience all share the student as a common characteristic; we therefore combined this set of factors into one factor called student characteristics (see 10, below). The result is eleven factors included in the model:

1. communication among program participants (students, faculty, administrators)
2. curriculum (e.g., course offerings, course materials, program goals and content, influence of national, regional, and local organizations)
3. development of proficiency skills versus content knowledge
4. faculty expertise, experience, and competence
5. institutional culture (e.g., research classification of university, commuter versus residential campus, demands on faculty, constraints of educational system, general education requirements)
6. language learning context (e.g., program size, enrollments, class size, length of study, place of study)²
7. language program directors (e.g., presence, oversight, role, policies or approaches for maintaining consistency in course methodology)
8. program administration (e.g., placement, awarding of credit, program evaluation, requirements, budget)
9. SLA research findings or beliefs about language learning and learner development

10. student characteristics (e.g., goals and needs, socioeconomic status, prior language experience)
11. teaching methods and assessment (including use of technology)

Each of the eleven factors interacts with the three axes of articulation (Curriculum, Instruction, Learner) to varying degrees. Specifically, the way in which a single factor interacts with the three axes varies—it may have a greater effect on one axis and a lesser effect on the other two axes. At the same time, the way in which the eleven factors interact with one another along a single axis varies—one factor may be more closely linked to some factors and less closely linked to others—and these relationships may not hold true along the other two axes. The specific interactions among factors and axes will create pathways or barriers to successful articulation in a particular programmatic context; the net result of these interactions is the quality of overall program articulation. For example, program administration may be more closely linked to the Curriculum axis than to the Learner axis, thereby having stronger implications for the curriculum than for learners' experience. In addition, within one particular axis, program administration may be more or less important than the other ten factors (e.g., on the Curriculum axis, program administration may be more influential than SLA research or beliefs, but less influential than language learning context). Determining how and to what degree each of these factors interacts with each axis results in a three-dimensional model of FL program articulation.

The presence, oversight, role, and policies of the LPD form one of the eleven sets of factors influencing program articulation, the LPD factor. Given the focus of this volume, it is important to first understand the specific tasks of LPDs, and then to hypothesize how the LPD factor interacts with the proposed model of articulation. Here we discuss the roles and responsibilities of LPDs as identified in the literature. Later, we discuss the role of the LPD factor within our model of articulation based upon the results of the survey data.

In general, LPDs oversee language instruction at the introductory or intermediate levels across multiple sections. Glew's (2000) survey of job announcements in the 1996 Modern Language Association Job Information List reveals that departments hiring an LPD seek candidates who will be responsible for coordinating the language program and supervising and training instructors. According to Guthrie (2001), the responsibilities of LPDs fall into three general categories: teaching and program direction, training and supervision, and professional engagement within and beyond the home institution. This pattern is corroborated by Schulz (2003), who gathered survey data from ninety-nine respondents about the background, role, and job satisfaction of LPDs of FL programs in U.S. universities. In addition to teaching and research, more than 50% of the LPDs surveyed reported the following duties (listed in order of frequency of response): evaluate teaching performance of instructors, select books, conduct coordination meetings, conduct pre-service workshops, conduct class observations, develop course syllabi, schedule courses, teach methods courses, participate in the selection of graduate students, recruit graduate students, offer in-service development workshops, coordinate placement testing, develop achievement tests for classes supervised, and develop Web sites for

classes supervised. In addition, a number of secondary duties (reported by less than 50% of respondents), such as recruitment, outreach, advising, budget preparation, and distance education fall within LPDs' responsibilities. Other, less easily quantifiable duties also contribute to the complex nature of an LPD's job. For instance, Leaver and Oxford (2000) point out that mentoring is an essential part of training and supervising instructors. LPDs, then, in addition to carrying out the more tangible administrative, pedagogical, service, and scholarly duties outlined above, must also be proficient in the less tangible duty of understanding and managing the individual differences among participants in the language program.

The myriad of roles and responsibilities required of LPDs make clear that the person in this position plays a pivotal role in language departments. According to Lee, "everything from the quality of the individual TA's instruction to the efficacy with which the office staff produces final exams is tied to the position of the language program director" (1987, p. 22). Indeed, how well LPDs do their job influences various aspects of the language program, not the least of which is articulation. Dvorak argues that the primary task of LPDs is to link theory to practice through "articulation of curricular objectives, consistent with both language learning theory and overall department goals, and also achievable within the specific classroom context of the language program" (1986, p. 219). Some scholars argue that an LPD's role in articulation is particularly important because this position straddles the introductory- and advanced-level language programs, affecting both vertical (across levels) and horizontal (within levels) articulation. According to Guthrie, "the Language Program Director (LPD) is situated at the intersection of language programs and upper-division work, and the construction of this position reflects the way a department situates its language program with respect to its curriculum as a whole" (2001, p. 41). Kramsch echoes this stance: "Whatever their research background, professional language teachers-researchers are in a particularly vulnerable position, because they are likely to be isolated on both sides of the foreign language department's language-literature divide. ... But it is vital for them not to lose sight of the unity of language and of the crucial role they can play in acting as intermediaries between the two halves of their department's curriculum" (1998, p. 35-36).

LPDs, then, contribute to horizontal, vertical, and interdisciplinary articulation through the planning of an FL curriculum across multi-section courses, a curriculum that must seamlessly feed into courses following the introductory language program and that increasingly includes interdisciplinary content. As a result, language departments must view LPDs as integral and equal players within the department, players who make curricular and instructional choices affecting all aspects of the language program, to allow for a more positive effect on all types of articulation choices.

In what follows, we report the results of a pilot survey based on our model and discuss in particular the results relevant to the role of the LPD factor in language program articulation. Given the small sample size, and the fact that the data represent respondents' perceptions of articulation, the results and conclusions must be evaluated with caution. This discussion is nonetheless significant because it provides a sound starting point for developing, testing, and implementing a theoretical model of language program articulation.

Situating the Language Program Director in the Model

In this section, we address our research question, “What is the relative contribution of the LPD factor to program articulation?” by analyzing the position of the LPD factor on the three axes that constitute overall program articulation. Survey data collected from thirty-three respondents provide the foundation for this analysis. The survey elicited demographic information and judgments about the relative importance of eleven factors to overall program articulation, the curriculum, instructional delivery, and learners’ experience.

Research Design

To understand the relative contribution of the role of the LPD factor and the ten additional articulation factors proposed above, we designed a survey³ comprising five sections, starting with demographics:

Section I: The ten items in this section ask for respondents’ area of specialization, position, rank, type of institution and department, and opinion about the degree of articulation in their own FL program.

In Sections II through V, respondents judge the relative contribution of the eleven articulation factors to program articulation. In each section, one question is repeated; it is presented with all fifty-five possible pairings of the eleven factors in a paired comparisons approach. Each pair of factors is presented with the question as a binary multiple choice response option, resulting in fifty-five items per section. The order of the items was randomized using a Perl script for random order generation. The questions by section are as follows:

Section II: “Which set of factors contributes more to *overall program articulation* in a post-secondary foreign language program?”⁴

Section III: “Which set of factors contributes more to a coherent, well-articulated *curriculum* in a post-secondary foreign language program?”

Section IV: “Which set of factors contributes more to coherent, well-articulated *instructional delivery* in a post-secondary foreign language program?”

Section V: “Which set of factors contributes more to *learners* having a coherent, well-articulated *experience* in post-secondary foreign language programs?”

The following is a sample survey item from Section II:

Which set of factors contributes more to *overall program articulation* in a post-secondary foreign language program?

- communication among program participants (students, faculty, administrators)
- faculty expertise, experience, and competence

The communication factor is also paired with the remaining nine factors in nine additional questions in Section II.

Section II, although identical in format to Sections III through V, does not correspond to one of the three axes of articulation. Rather, Section II provides the basis for a global perspective on program articulation compared with responses related directly to the three proposed axes of articulation.

Section I contains ten questions, and Sections II through V each consist of fifty-five questions; as such the complete survey includes 230 questions. Given this burdensome length and the well-documented low response rates for surveys, we distributed six shorter versions of the survey (120 questions each) to encourage greater completion rates and adequate sample size. All participants received Section I (Demographics), plus two of the sections on articulation (II through V), resulting in six versions of the survey. The six versions of the survey were delivered through KeySurvey (www.keysurvey.com), a Web-based survey creation and delivery software. A total of seventy-six post-secondary FL faculty representing both LPDs and non-LPDs were asked to complete a specific version of the survey. Table 1 summarizes the distribution and response rates by survey section. The survey was available for three weeks from mid-October to early November 2003. Responses were downloaded in Excel format from KeySurvey at the end of the three-week period.

Table 1
Survey Response Rates

Section	Number of recipients	Number of respondents	Response rate
I. Demographics	76	33	43%
II. Overall program articulation	37	19	51%
III. Curriculum	38	15	39%
IV. Instructional delivery	39	19	49%
V. Learner's experience	38	13	34%

Data Analysis

Data from the six survey versions were compiled and organized according to the five survey sections. Excel files were then imported into SPSS 12.0 to generate descriptive and inferential statistics as well as multidimensional scaling analyses. The multidimensional scaling approach is based on Torgerson's (1965) work, which determines

1. the minimum number of dimensions (or axes) that account for the set of stimuli, and
2. the value of each stimulus on each dimension.

Within the current study, the stimuli are the eleven factors, and the dimensions correspond to the axes that together contribute to program articulation. These two elements combined provide a more complete and informative indicator of the

relationships among factors than a simple ranking of factors because they reveal the degree of similarity or closeness between factors on multiple scales.

The data analyzed and reported herein focus on the role of the LPD factor in post-secondary FL program articulation. We briefly describe the results of the complete survey data relevant to the three dimensions or axes of the overall model of program articulation to accurately situate the discussion of the role of the LPD factor. Data analysis indicates a modified interpretation of the proposed axes (Curriculum, Instruction, Learner) that combines Curricular Content and Instructional Delivery on one axis, retains Learner Experience as a second axis, and introduces a new dimension, Scope of Influence, as a third axis.⁵

Results

In this section, the analyses focus on the relative role of the LPD factor as compared with the ten other factors in achieving program articulation within a multidimensional scaling model. To ground this discussion, we first present the results of Section I, Demographics.

Demographics of Respondents

Of the thirty-three respondents who completed Section I, twenty were LPDs and thirteen were not (non-LPDs). Table 2 summarizes the specialization, rank, and university affiliation of these two groups of respondents. Notably more LPDs than non-LPDs specialized in linguistics, were untenured, and worked at large public universities.

Relative Contribution to Program Articulation of the LPD: Factor Preferences by Frequency

Response frequencies based on all thirty-three respondents indicate that the LPD factor plays an important role in program articulation. Respondents preferred the LPD factor over seven of the ten remaining factors as the greater contributor to articulation 60%–81% of the time. The LPD factor was most frequently chosen over program administration and SLA research or beliefs, and somewhat less frequently over institutional culture, student characteristics, and language learning context. Only faculty traits (53% of the time) and curriculum (63% of the time) were viewed as more important than the LPD factor to articulation. This finding provides evidence of the central role LPDs play in establishing articulated programs. Interestingly, both LPDs ($n = 20$) and non-LPDs ($n = 13$) were in substantial agreement about the value accorded to the LPD factor.

Relative Contribution to Program Articulation of the LPD: Multidimensional Scaling Results

According to the multidimensional scaling analyses, survey results from all respondents ($n = 33$) vary on three dimensions, or axes.⁶ Stress and fit measures range from .00043 to .06438 and from .99904 to .99952 respectively, indicating that a three-dimensional model accounts for a very high degree of the data. A scree plot indicates that a fourth dimension would not explain a useful additional proportion of the data.

Table 2
Demographics of Respondents

Item	Subcategories	LPD (<i>n</i> =20)	Non-LPD (<i>n</i> =13)
Specialization:	Linguistics (applied or theoretical)	16 (80%)	4 (31%)
	Literature	2 (10%)	5 (38%)
	Other (Classics and Area Studies, teacher education, language education, curriculum and instruction)	2 (10%)	3 (23%)
	Linguistics, Literature, and Other (unspecified)	0	1 (8%) ^a
Faculty rank:	Adjunct/lecturer	2 (10%)	1 (8%)
	Tenure-track	11 (55%)	4 (31%)
	Tenured	6 (30%)	7 (54%)
	No response	1 (5%)	1 (8%)
Language(s) taught: ^b	Arabic	1 (5%)	0
	Chinese	1 (5%)	0
	French	7 (35%)	5 (38%)
	Greek	0	1 (8%)
	Italian	0	2 (15%)
	Japanese	0	1 (8%)
	Latin	0	1 (8%)
	Spanish	6 (30%)	5 (38%)
University affiliation:	Large (above 20,000 students)	16 (80%)	7 (54%)
	Medium (5,000–20,000 students)	4 (20%)	3 (23%)
	Small (0–5,000 students)	0	3 (23%)
	Research	15 (75%)	9 (69%)
	Liberal arts	5 (25%)	6 (46%)
	Residential	5 (25%)	5 (38%)
	Commuter	2 (10%)	3 (23%)
	Private	2 (10%)	2 (15%)
	Public	11 (55%)	5 (38%)

a. This respondent indicated belonging to all three categories.

b. Percentages among non-LPDs exceed 100% because four respondents teach multiple languages: French and German; Spanish and Chinese; Italian, Latin, and Greek; French and Italian.

The three dimensions reflected in the scaling analyses correspond to Curricular Content and Instructional Delivery (Dimension 1), Learner Experience (Dimension 2), and Scope of Influence (Dimension 3). Table 3 provides the distance coordinates between factors along each of the three dimensions; closer distances indicate more perceived similarity between factors, whereas greater distances indicate less perceived similarity between factors. For example, on Dimension 1, curriculum (.925) lies farthest on a line from institutional culture (-.788), indicating that respondents perceived little similarity between these two factors. In contrast, curriculum (.925) and faculty traits (.814) are near neighbors, suggesting greater perceived similarity. Figure 1 provides a line plot of the distance coordinates for the eleven factors along Dimension 1. Figures 2 and 3 are similar line plots of the distance measurements in Table 3 for Dimensions 2 and 3. Figure 4 presents all distance coordinates together in three dimensions, illustrating the interaction of the eleven factors in overall program articulation. In all four figures, factors that are close together are perceived as more similar than those set at greater distances from one another.

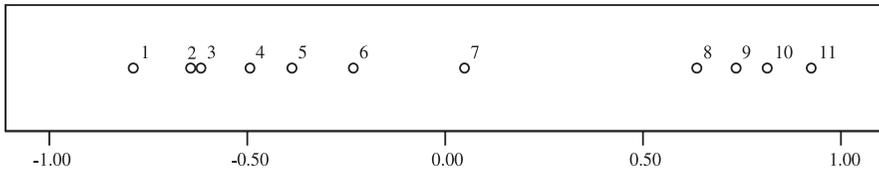
Table 3
Distance Coordinates for Multidimensional Scaling Model

Articulation factors	Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 3
Communication	.049	-.120	.339
Curriculum	.925	.353	.052
Development of proficiency skills vs. content knowledge	-.493	-.103	-.024
Faculty traits	.814	.033	-.026
Institutional culture	-.788	.461	.015
Language learning context	-.232	-.279	.057
LPD	.636	-.099	-.151
Program administration	-.643	-.086	-.056
SLA research or beliefs	-.617	.101	-.075
Student characteristics	-.387	-.144	-.070
Teaching methods	.735	-.117	-.060

Dimension 1: Curricular Content and Instructional Delivery On Dimension 1 (see Figure 1), the relatively close distance measure between the LPD factor and curriculum, faculty traits, and teaching methods indicates that respondents perceived these four factors as making similar contributions to Curricular Content and Instructional Delivery. These four factors are internal to the undergraduate program; they contribute most directly to coherent course content and instructional delivery. However, the LPD's influence on articulation is less pervasive beyond the introductory courses; thus curriculum, faculty traits, and teaching methods may be perceived as having a broader effect than the LPD

Figure 1

Dimension 1: Curricular Content and Instructional Delivery



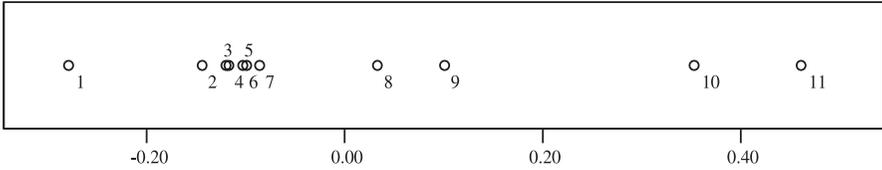
Note: 1=institutional culture, 2=program administration, 3=SLA research or beliefs, 4=development of proficiency skills vs. content knowledge, 5=student characteristics, 6=language learning context, 7=communication, 8=LPD, 9=teaching methods, 10=faculty traits, 11=curriculum

factor alone. In contrast, the distance measure is greater between the LPD factor and institutional culture, program administration, SLA research or beliefs, the development of proficiency skills versus content knowledge, student characteristics, and language learning context, reflecting a perception of greater dissimilarity. These six factors are more external to curricular content and instructional delivery; they are not easily manipulated or controlled from within the undergraduate program, with the possible exception of SLA research or beliefs and development of proficiency skills versus content knowledge.

The presence of SLA research or beliefs within this group of external factors may be caused by the different value accorded to this factor by LPDs versus non-LPDs. Whereas LPDs assigned SLA research or beliefs a high priority in overall articulation, non-LPDs ranked it as the least frequently valued factor. Moreover, LPDs perceived SLA research and beliefs to be similar to the contributions of the curriculum, teaching methods, and faculty traits (program internal factors) along Dimension 1. In contrast, non-LPDs perceived these factors as making quite dissimilar contributions to Dimension 1, placing SLA research and beliefs among those factors perceived as external to curricular content and instructional delivery. The perception that proficiency skills versus content knowledge is more external to the undergraduate language program may reflect the institutional culture of survey respondents. The demographic results indicate that twenty-three of thirty-three respondents are from large institutions, where curricular changes can be cumbersome; this fact may have biased the results. Moreover, if the proficiency skills versus content knowledge distinction is well entrenched, respondents may perceive this factor as out of their control, thus relegating it to the external end of this dimension.

Dimension 2: Learner Experience On Dimension 2 (see Figure 2), four factors that most prominently and directly affect learners' daily experiences throughout the undergraduate program lie at one extreme: language learning context, student characteristics, communication, and teaching methods. The distance coordinate of the LPD factor places it near zero on this axis along with the development of proficiency skills versus content knowledge, program administration, faculty traits, and SLA research and beliefs, indicating perceived similarity among these five factors. Although these factors certainly influence the degree to which

Figure 2
Dimension 2: Learner Experience



Note: 1=language learning context, 2=student characteristics, 3=communication, 4=teaching methods, 5=LPD, 6=development of proficiency skills vs. content knowledge, 7=program administration, 8=faculty traits, 9=SLA research or beliefs, 10=curriculum, 11=institutional culture

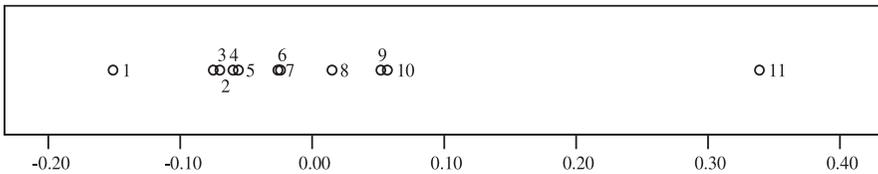
students' learning experiences are coherently articulated, this influence is less pervasive than that of the more prominent factors listed above. To the other extreme lie institutional culture and curriculum. Institutional culture is unlikely to have a direct effect on students' language learning experience, yet this monolithic constant underlying all of their courses does have an oblique influence on their daily interactions within the program. Similarly, the undergraduate language curriculum certainly determines what students are studying, but it is merely the background to their everyday exposure in the classroom, and may therefore be viewed as a less direct influence on the coherence of learners' own experiences. In addition, as Woody (this volume) argues, to some extent students must create articulation; it does not exist independently of their perception. By implication, the broader curriculum may be seen as peripheral to learners' experience unless they actively reflect upon it.

Dimension 3: Scope of Influence Dimension 3 (see Figure 3) is particularly interesting because of the perceived role of the LPD factor in comparison with the other factors. The distance coordinate of the LPD factor locates it on one end of this axis as a relative outlier, whereas communication is an outlier on the other end. The relatively large distance between the LPD factor and communication reflects respondents' view that these two factors are least similar to each other with respect to Scope of Influence, and are not closely linked to the remaining nine factors, either. In contrast, the remaining nine factors are grouped together quite closely in the center of Dimension 3, indicating that their contributions to this dimension are seen as similar to one another.

On this dimension, there appears to be a trend in the degree of autonomous contribution to articulation that reflects the scope of influence of each factor. At one extreme, LPDs often have a great deal of individual, autonomous control over horizontal and vertical articulation at the introductory level, while also contributing to vertical articulation beyond that level to a lesser degree. At the other extreme lies communication, which presumes the collaborative participation of multiple program participants to improve articulation, yet it is rare that a single participant has the autonomy to substantially and independently influence the articulation of the entire undergraduate program. This type of influence is directly opposed to the

Figure 3

Dimension 3: Scope of Influence



Note: 1=LPD, 2=SLA research or beliefs, 3=students characteristics, 4=program administration, 5=teaching methods, 6=development of proficiency skills vs. content knowledge, 7=faculty traits, 8=institutional culture, 9=curriculum, 10=language learning context, 11=communication

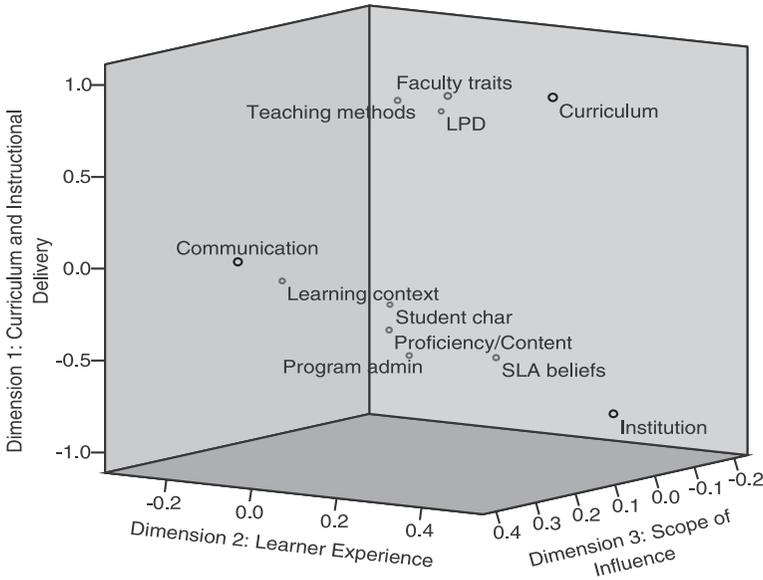
autonomy of many LPDs. In the centrally grouped factors on Dimension 3, those closer to the LPD factor also tend to be somewhat more individualized. For example, teaching methods can be as diverse as the number of instructors involved. On the other hand, those centrally grouped factors that lie closer to communication tend to be somewhat less individualized. Instead, factors such as institutional culture are more dependent upon group relations.

The Three-Dimensional Model of Program Articulation To arrive at a three-dimensional model of program articulation based on the results of the pilot survey, the distance coordinates for each factor on each dimension were plotted onto x , y , and z axes as a single point (see Figure 4). Proximities on Dimension 1 are represented vertically and proximities on Dimension 2 are represented horizontally. To highlight the three-dimensional nature of the figure, proximities on Dimension 3 are represented by marker size; larger markers indicate relatively larger values for distance coordinates, and smaller markers indicate relatively smaller values. This multidimensional representation shows the interaction between the three axes and the eleven factors, and provides a basis for deriving more general conclusions about the role of the LPD in overall program articulation.

When the three dimensions are combined into a single model, two loose groupings of factors and three isolated, individual factors become apparent. In the upper center portion of Figure 4, faculty traits, teaching methods, and the role of the LPD are clustered in close proximity on all three dimensions, reflecting respondents' perception that these three factors make similar contributions to overall program articulation. Similarly, in the lower center portion of the graph, five factors are clustered in close proximity on at least two dimensions: language learning context, student characteristics, development of proficiency skills versus content knowledge, program administration, and SLA research or beliefs. In contrast to these two clusters, curriculum, communication, and institutional culture are distanced from all other factors on at least two dimensions, as indicated by greater horizontal or vertical distance and by larger marker size.

The distribution of clusters and relative outliers in Figure 4 suggests at least two possible interpretations. The first focuses on the centrality of factors to

Figure 4
 Three Dimensional Model of Program Articulation



successful program articulation. Moving from the bottom of the graph to the top, there appears to be a trend of increasing mutability, with communication representing a middle point between static and dynamic ends of the continuum. Survey respondents may perceive the factors in the top portion of the graph as most central to successful articulation because they are more easily influenced. As such, LPDs can enhance articulation by making changes to teaching methods and curricular content. Similarly, the introduction of an LPD in a department that previously did not have such a position can have a substantial effect on curricular content and ultimately on program articulation. However, this interpretation raises the question of whether other, more peripheral factors can also be influenced in such a way that they improve articulation to a greater degree than the pilot survey data suggest. For example, the development of proficiency skills versus content knowledge may be a fairly stable aspect of a given undergraduate FL program, but that stability may be altered as faculty traits and teaching methods change or communication increases. Even institutional culture, a very stable factor, might be better used to the benefit of program articulation if program participants search for ways in which to dovetail articulation and institutional priorities. Certainly, institutional culture can facilitate or impede efforts at program articulation, but it is less central to articulation efforts than the curriculum, for example, because it is more static in nature. The published research to date on program articulation supports this interpretation, given that it deals predominantly with curricular reform and the involvement of program participants in that reform rather than on the potentially more static factors in the lower portion of Figure 4.

A second possible interpretation of the three-dimensional model focuses on the perceived interaction among factors. If we hypothesize that factors that are closest together interact most directly, then a change to one factor is more likely to have an effect on its nearest neighbors, and less likely to have an effect on more distant factors. For example, because the LPD factor lies in close proximity to faculty traits and teaching methods on all three dimensions, the model predicts an interaction among these factors: the LPD may become involved in professional development efforts related to the implementation of a new, shared teaching methodology, which in turn would have an effect on faculty traits, in particular faculty competence in instructional delivery. This same change in teaching methodology may potentially affect more distant factors, albeit less overtly. It is possible, for instance, that faculty beliefs about SLA might change as a result of faculty members' experiences with the new methodology. The model predicts, however, that this second change is less probable than the change in faculty traits because of the greater distance between teaching methods and SLA research and beliefs. An interpretation of the three-dimensional model based on the interaction among factors better captures the dynamic nature of program articulation than an interpretation based solely on the centrality of one factor or another, and moves from a more descriptive approach to articulation toward a theoretical model that is able to predict the effect of changes implemented to increase articulation.

Discussion

The results of this pilot study make significant progress toward developing a theoretical model of articulation that is generalizable to multiple contexts. The findings support a three-dimensional model of articulation because multiple dimensions effectively reflect the complexity of overall program articulation as well as the effect of individual factors that contribute to it. When constructing the model, we predicted that each of the eleven factors would interact with the three axes of articulation to varying degrees, and that one factor would interact with the other ten factors differently on each axis. This prediction is borne out in our analysis of the LPD factor within the model. Specifically, on Dimension 1, the LPD factor is seen as an important internal contributor to articulation at all levels of the undergraduate program. On Dimension 2, the LPD factor has an indirect influence on the daily reality of learners moving through the program. On Dimension 3, the LPD factor has a strong, autonomous scope of influence on articulation, at least at the introductory level. Also as predicted, on each axis the factors perceived as more and less similar to the role of the LPD vary, suggesting different interactions among variables on each dimension.

The proposed model was motivated in large part by conclusions and generalizations drawn from published literature on language program articulation. Our survey results support this literature to a substantial degree, and reinforce the characteristics of well-articulated programs identified therein. In particular, the results support claims by Guthrie (2001) and Kramsch (1998), who argue that LPDs have a pivotal yet tenuous role in the undergraduate program; LPDs contribute to the horizontal and vertical articulation of introductory- and intermediate-level language courses, influence the vertical articulation of advanced-level content

courses, and serve as the hinge between these two halves of the department. In our model, the LPD factor lies at one end of the scope of influence over program articulation, emphasizing the independent role of many LPDs in the articulation of introductory courses, and their potential for bridging students' experiences at this level with their experiences at more advanced levels.

Based upon an analysis of the model as a whole, it is clear that the LPD factor has an important function that contributes to overall program articulation, and the results point to several conclusions about the ways in which LPDs can contribute to well-articulated language programs. Survey respondents agree that the LPD factor contributes to the articulation of the curriculum and instructional delivery within the undergraduate program as a whole, both within and beyond the introductory language program. This observation provides a convenient inroad to further communication among all program participants, allowing an opportunity for the exchange of ideas and information from different disciplinary perspectives to improve articulation. The placement of the LPD factor among those factors perceived to be more internal to language programs (curriculum, teaching methods, faculty traits) and its distinction from those factors perceived to be more external to language programs (communication, language learning context, student characteristics) suggests topics for discussion that could improve articulation.

LPDs in particular believe that knowledge of SLA research and beliefs should help improve articulation across the curriculum; in addition, LPDs see a strong interdependence among language learning context, student characteristics, and SLA research and beliefs. This knowledge leads to two important conclusions. First, it can help us spiral language and content across the curriculum in keeping with what we know about the language learning process. Second, it provides a useful starting point for discussions with faculty in other disciplines to exchange ideas about the content that can be integrated into introductory courses. Simultaneously, LPDs can offer input to other program participants about SLA processes and ways to support learning at all levels (Murillo, this volume). In particular, LPDs can model the ways in which SLA research and beliefs fit together with the other factors to promote more effective horizontal and vertical articulation of the entire undergraduate FL program.

Because LPDs work with a more global perspective spanning multiple courses, they are often more familiar than other program participants with the concrete issues that can and should be addressed to improve articulation. This knowledge can serve to initiate greater communication among program participants and to help them focus on important decisions about the curriculum and instructional delivery to substantial effect at all levels of the undergraduate program. In so doing, we move closer to achieving the characteristics of well-articulated language programs outlined at the start of this chapter.

Conclusion

The three-dimensional model presented here is a first attempt at developing a theoretical model of FL program articulation. It provides a principled point from which to conduct further empirical research into the reasons for successes and failures of articulation in language programs, thereby permitting more coherent

efforts toward practical solutions to the challenges of articulation inherent in the post-secondary context. The implications of the model for a dynamic, process-oriented approach to increasing program articulation underline its importance. Once the model is further tested, it may help those in diverse programmatic contexts understand, diagnose, and improve the horizontal, vertical, and interdisciplinary articulation of their language programs. Specifically, language programs can use the model to identify and evaluate areas affecting articulation in their own educational contexts. In addition, because the model reflects perceptions of the characteristics of well-articulated programs, it can serve as a basis of comparison with actual program descriptions. Language program participants can compare the position of factors on each axis of the model with their own programs in an effort to diagnose problem areas. Finally, once participants have evaluated their programs and identified problem areas, they can use the model as a basis for finding tangible solutions. Certainly, the application of the model to a variety of programmatic contexts would elicit indispensable evaluative data about the generalizability of the model.

Several limitations of the study suggest directions for future research. First, a larger sample size would help gain a more representative view of faculty perceptions of articulation and would permit analyses that take into account the broad variety of undergraduate FL programs. Because this study is a pilot project with a small sample size, the interpretation of the data must be evaluated with caution. In particular, the greater response rate from LPDs as opposed to non-LPDs, the significant number of respondents from large institutions, and the fact that many smaller institutions do not have LPDs may have affected the results. Second, investigation into each of the eleven factors in greater detail would help to identify the range of definitions for each one. An awareness of all the possible variations of a single factor enables a more accurate interpretation of its effect, as well as a more precise definition of its relationship to other factors. Such information would also enhance the ability to evaluate the validity of the model as a whole and to base conclusions on the actual relationships among factors rather than on perceptions of the relationships among factors. Finally, non-faculty perspectives, particularly from students and departmental administrators, are absent from the current study, yet may provide information that would suggest important modifications to the model of articulation.

Notes

1. Proficiency skills are those associated with the development of language competence: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Content knowledge is knowledge of a specific subject. These notions are typically associated with the traditional split between language courses, which focus on the development of proficiency skills, and literature, culture, or linguistics courses, which focus on the development of content knowledge.
2. See Wilkinson (this volume) for a discussion of study abroad as a place of study relevant to program articulation.
3. Available from authors.

4. The eleven factors are referred to as “sets,” given that multiple elements contributing to each factor are provided as parenthetical information in the response options. The use of the term “sets” served to lead respondents to consider all contributing elements to guide their understanding of the factors.
5. Values for each dimension were determined based upon the placement of the eleven factors on each axis. A full presentation of the data and arguments underlying this interpretation are beyond the scope of this chapter, however, and thus are not presented here.
6. Because of small sample sizes within some of the survey sections, it is not possible to complete similar multidimensional scaling analyses for Sections II through V independently.

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