

# ***Challenges in the 1990s for College Foreign Language Programs***

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# Introduction

The American Association of University Supervisors, Coordinators, and Directors of Foreign Language Programs (AAUSC) is pleased to introduce, on its tenth anniversary, this series, *Issues in Language Program Direction*. In accordance with the mission of AAUSC, these annual volumes aim to foster scholarship and research in postsecondary foreign language learning and teaching. Through the dialogue provided in these volumes, AAUSC hopes to contribute to the development of language acquisition theory and to the improvement of undergraduate curricula and methodological preparation of teaching assistants.

As we rapidly approach the twenty-first century, our profession faces a potential crisis of having too few qualified teachers for increasing numbers of foreign language students. Indeed, we already benefit from renewed national interest in language learning, which is stimulating creation or reinstatement of college language requirements for both entrance and graduation. This renewed appreciation of language study is bringing us, in addition to students who are fulfilling degree requirements, more upper-level learners and majors who, excited by their high school language experience, wish to continue with a foreign language in college.

Who will teach these students? How will the next generation of college foreign language instructors be prepared? In the past decade of professional accountability, we have heard many calls for higher teacher standards linked with national demands for improved education. The profession responded with guidelines and recommendations in many areas of *elementary* and *secondary* instruction; but the *college* curriculum remained relatively unaffected, except in the area of preparation of secondary school teachers.

We now embrace the ideal that foreign language instruction is for *all* students, whatever their professional goals. Our changing student body is making new demands on our programs. As many colleagues have advocated, it is time to reject traditional divisions between beginning and intermediate language programs and upper-level study of litera-

ture, linguistics, and civilization. It is also time to reject the traditional boundaries between college departments that reserve teaching in languages other than English as the exclusive domain of "foreign language" departments.

We need to create a more continuous curriculum that begins an international and sociolinguistic perspective to language learning in our basic skill courses and continues and expands it through our advanced literature, linguistics, and civilization classes. We need also to work with colleagues in other disciplines to design content courses taught in languages other than English: for example, a history course taught in French, perhaps jointly by History and French faculty.

Clearly, such a broadening of scope of our undergraduate curricula, combined with the challenge of offering students a broad and articulated learning experience, places considerable demands on faculty. The expectation of hiring many new faculty in the next decade puts our profession at a crossroads: our students will be able to pursue new directions in foreign language learning only if we prepare faculty to meet these greater demands. Establishing high standards for preparing future college faculty is now as necessary as creating innovative programs in which they will work.

Most college faculty learn to teach in two ways: by following the models of their own professors and by working as language teaching assistants under the direction of a faculty supervisor, most often the director of basic language courses. The language program director thus fulfills two key functions in most departments: designing and implementing basic curriculum for undergraduates and preparing teaching assistants for their future professional careers.

*Issues in Language Program Direction* will address this group of faculty in particular, but not exclusively. It will also examine topics of interest to teaching assistants, faculty, and administrators, issues that extend from basic language courses to the entire undergraduate curriculum. Indeed, the main purpose of this series is to encourage cooperative research and scholarship and program innovation. Toward this end, AAUSC is pleased to present the first volume, *Challenges for the 1990s in College Foreign Language Programs*.

This volume presents papers in four key areas: 1) structure and articulation of language courses, 2) responsibilities of the language program director, 3) methodology courses and teaching assistant preparation, and 4) pedagogical materials. Seven articles are position papers; two are reports of innovative efforts at specific institutions; one is a research study; and the last is a comprehensive bibliography. Taken together, they represent the diverse interests of AAUSC, its members,

and, we hope, the readers of this series.

The volume opens with an examination of the most basic element of instruction, the relationship between teacher and student. In "Style Wars: Teacher-Student Style Conflicts in the Language Classroom," Oxford, Ehrman, and Lavine discuss possible consequences of a mismatch between the ways teacher and student approach learning. Their suggested responses to such incompatibility include changes in scheduling, curriculum, classroom structure, and behavior of teacher and/or student. The first challenge is thus deciding which direction to follow.

For many teaching problems, the chosen path of curricular reform involves revising course goals and articulating them with the goals of preceding and subsequent courses. In her provocative article, "Articulating Learning in High School and College Programs: Holistic Theory in the Foreign Language Curriculum," Swaffar challenges us to re-examine and ultimately reject traditional views about how language is taught in college, to unite high school to undergraduate and graduate curricula through a holistic pedagogical framework anchored in a broad definition of language competence.

An example of improved high school-university articulation is presented by Barnes, Klee, and Wakefield, who describe the University of Minnesota experience of reorganizing the language program to meet proficiency goals. Such reorganization poses particular problems for the course director and teaching assistants: yet, as the authors point out, it may have positive effects in student motivation and achievement and in student and colleague respect for language teaching.

In another article about program revision toward proficiency goals, "Team Teaching French with Teaching Assistants," Braun and Robb report on a curricular experiment at the University of Delaware. Motivated by a desire to provide French students with varied voices and teaching styles, the program teamed teaching assistants and part-time instructors with faculty members in the first three courses of language instruction. The authors report that such teaming stimulated cooperation and sharing among faculty, teaching assistants, and part-timers and thereby strengthened articulation between courses. Their experience thus offers a model for responding to the need for varied teaching styles, as signaled by Oxford, Ehrman, and Lavine, and to challenges of articulation discussed by Swaffar.

In his intriguing research study, Loughrin-Sacco offers insights into yet another pervasive pedagogical and administrative problem of the beginning language classroom: combining "true" beginners and "false" beginners. His data show that the presence of more confident and more verbal false beginners in introductory French classes intimidates true

beginners, increasing the latter's anxiety and most likely inhibiting their ability to learn. Clearly a challenge for the 1990s is to find administrative solutions to alleviate this pedagogical problem; Loughrin-Sacco suggests several possibilities.

Another challenge facing administrators in particular is how to provide a truly *academic* environment for the course director, which will enhance the director's scholarly productivity as well as support the language program. Lee and VanPatten correctly point out that many faculty who supervise language courses are allowed to slip into situations where they unfortunately become overly engaged in departmental service, to the serious detriment of their scholarly pursuits. Following numerous calls to rectify this situation, most institutions are now highly sensitive to the problem. Lee and VanPatten propose an innovative route toward a solution.

Following these six articles, the volume offers two articles that consider teaching assistant preparation. Murphy outlines five areas of competency in which future faculty will need professional training in order to meet the teacher standards now being advocated: language proficiency, culture, linguistics, literature, and methodology. From Murphy's substantial list of required knowledge and abilities, it is clear that many institutions that prepare teaching assistants for college faculty positions should re-examine the breadth and depth of their programs. One of many interesting possibilities suggested by Murphy is to offer teaching assistants/graduate students a second graduate methodology course in order to ensure their exposure to important theoretical and practical notions that could not be adequately discussed in the introductory course.

In "Advancing the Case for an Advanced Methods Course," Lalande offers concrete suggestions and a bibliography for such a second methodology course. He bases his discussion on a pilot course in which he brought together high school teachers and university teaching assistants, providing an opportunity to foster the mutual understanding that underlies strong articulation between secondary and postsecondary programs. Clearly, in broadening the experiences in teaching assistant preparation, we respond to two challenges for the future: producing highly competent teachers and creating more coherent sequences of language instruction.

The final two articles in the volume consider instructional materials, often the primary vehicles to shape curriculum and structure teaching. In "Bridging the Gap Between Teaching and Learning: A Critical Look at Foreign Language Textbooks," Schulz bemoans the fact that our recent innovations in methodology have not yet been reflected in our

materials. From her examination of current theories of second language acquisition and how they suggest ways to encourage classroom interaction to maximize learning, she concludes that the time has come to abandon the notion of a textbook in favor of an integrated package of both authentic and pedagogical materials in a variety of media forms.

Perhaps the potentially most useful, yet least used, media forms today are computer and video technology. In "CALL Today: Implications for the Multisectioned Language Programs," Ariew reviews the state of the art in these two key areas, offering valuable explanations, information, and references for the novice as well as the somewhat experienced user. The breadth of this article represents the magnitude of the challenge we now face: new materials are needed to help our students meet more demanding and varied learning goals. Providing teaching assistants with experience teaching with computer and video technology is yet another task we clearly must undertake in the next decade.

The authors of this first volume of *Issues in Language Program Direction* identify new directions for college foreign language education in the 1990s, challenges to be met not only by the directors who run language programs and the teaching assistants who provide much of the instruction, but by *all* faculty and administrators involved in foreign language teaching. Forward vision is, of course, enhanced by a firm understanding of the past. To help readers benefit from current knowledge, we close this volume with Benseler and Cronjaeger's extensive bibliography of scholarship on the preparation and support of foreign language teaching assistants. Their 377 entries provide a solid beginning for a data base on the improvement of postsecondary foreign language programs. Building and maintaining this data base is yet another challenge to which this series hopes to respond in the years to come.

The 1990s offer a period of renewal and exploration for foreign language instruction. It is the hope of AAUSC that *Issues in Language Program Direction* will contribute, throughout this decade and beyond, to our understanding of second language acquisition, to the development of our undergraduate programs, where we attempt to apply this understanding to classroom practice, and to the preparation of our future colleagues.

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