

COORDINATING THE TEACHING OF EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

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The Department of European Languages and Literature at the University of Hawaii teaches ten languages on a regular basis (French, German, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Polish, Latin, and Greek) and a few others (such as Rumanian and Serbo-Croatian) on demand. It also co-directs a summer Study-Travel Program in Europe with the School of Travel Industry Management. Although such a diversity of languages and interests prevails, the Department has a unique system for coordinating the teaching of its beginning languages. This article describes how the system works and how some of its procedures have involved and affected the local high school and college community.

Administrative tasks within any university language department (including English), whether devoted to a single language or to more than one, are numerous. Delegating the organization of the lower division courses to a competent, interested, and experienced faculty member can significantly lighten the department chairman's administrative load. Far more important, with specialists in language instruction directing the basic courses, future college teachers receive the kind of training which our profession and most university language departments sorely neglect but which is so vital if teaching in higher education is to improve.

The MELCC Committee

Beginning with the fall semester 1971 and after rather extensive interviewing, three parallel positions of foreign language methodologist and lower division coordinator of French, German, and Spanish were filled in the Department of European Languages and Literature at the University of Hawaii. Such a position had already existed in Russian. The job description was identical for all positions: to coordinate and supervise first and second year language courses, to train graduate assistants studying for the MA degree and teaching these multi-section courses, and, every fall semester at least, to teach one section as a demonstration class.

Although none of the four methodologists knew each other and there was no intention to create a team approach, their personalities, professional backgrounds, and interests happened to be so complementary that close cooperation developed spontaneously. The group met informally for a year to consider methods, materials, and related matters and to promote efficient use of the resources at hand. These joint activities were so effective that the group was formally named a standing committee of the department: the "Modern European Languages Coordinators' Committee" (MELCC).

Toward Team Teaching

With the goal of establishing a system to improve language instruction and teacher training, the four method instructors developed a team-teaching approach for the modern language methods course. The same basic text is used in all the sections. In addition, they are scheduled at the same time, which permits each instructor at regular intervals to share his area of special interest with the graduate students of all four languages. Members of the Committee have arranged four presentations for the combined classes: (1) writing behavioral objectives, (2) interaction analysis, (3) theories of learning, and (4) textbook evaluation.

The single-instructor approach to teaching is necessarily limited in the kinds of experience one can draw on to train one's own students. Four heads are better than one. The joint sessions are especially productive because teacher-student and student-student interaction reflects the varying and unique approaches taken by each instructor in his own methods class. What might be considered an eclectic approach to language teaching in a given class is further enhanced when the classes work together, sharing and discussing philosophies and theories of teaching and learning as well as practical experience.

For the 1973-74 academic year, a new approach will be initiated involving inter-language mini-teaching lessons. Each language group will dem-

onstrate a variety of techniques for teaching a given aspect of a lesson (e.g. dialog, pattern practice) with the other groups acting as students who for the most part, actually don't know the language. Instead of the usual situation in which the trainees practice with their peers who already know what's going on, this new technique will provide an approach that is more varied and realistic in terms of students' total non-acquaintance with a new foreign language.

Class Visits

The great majority of those enrolled in methods are teaching assistants responsible for the first semester of a first-year language. These students are required to make at least four visits to classes of other teaching assistants. Two visits must be made to languages other than their own. In order to provide the TA with constructive criticism and useful feedback, the visitor is also required to write a critique, following specific guidelines, of the class observed. He then discusses the observation with the methods instructor and sends the critique on to the teacher observed. Some methods instructors prefer that these written analyses remain anonymous and that the discussion between instructor and visiting TA center around the method and content of a visitation critique. Others have found that the teacher visited does not feel threatened or intimidated by the procedure but, on the contrary, welcomes a detailed discussion with the observer. The beginning teachers recognize that by visiting other classes and by being visited they develop a greater awareness of their own teaching behavior and are thus able to improve systematically their teaching techniques and interaction with students.

Reading List

The methods instructors have developed a reading list both for the methods course and to serve as a guideline for the methods section of the Masters degree comprehensive examinations. The list includes (1) general methods texts, (2) specific studies dealing with language teaching and learning, (3) journals, yearbooks and series publications, and (4) handbooks. A list of key articles is also being compiled.

Liaison with the Language Laboratory

Since listening and speaking practice are basic to the lower division language programs, the methods instructors, language teachers and lan-

guage lab personnel work closely together as colleagues concerned with insuring its effectiveness.

During orientation week before the fall semester begins, the lab director gives an intensive workshop to all new teachers and to those who wish a refresher on the operation of the library and class labs. Two class labs are reserved for periodic testing and creative activities. The teachers are trained through special workshops and printed manuals in a variety of approaches for using these rooms and their equipment. A unique feature of the lab is its cartridge system, which provides for highly individualized library work and an easy means for assessing students' speaking ability.

The coordinators schedule testing with the lab director, who supervises his technicians in preparing all the cartridges and readying the lab for testing. When commercial test tapes are unavailable, teachers write and record tests in the language lab studio built to professional specifications. Teachers have access to five booths in the operations center for correcting oral exams. (With some kinds of testing, the exams for an entire class can be scored in less than an hour.)

During orientation week teachers are also trained to operate slide and film projectors, tape recorders, and cassette players as well as overhead and opaque projectors. All of this equipment is available with extensive software audio-visual materials for use in classes and in the lab.

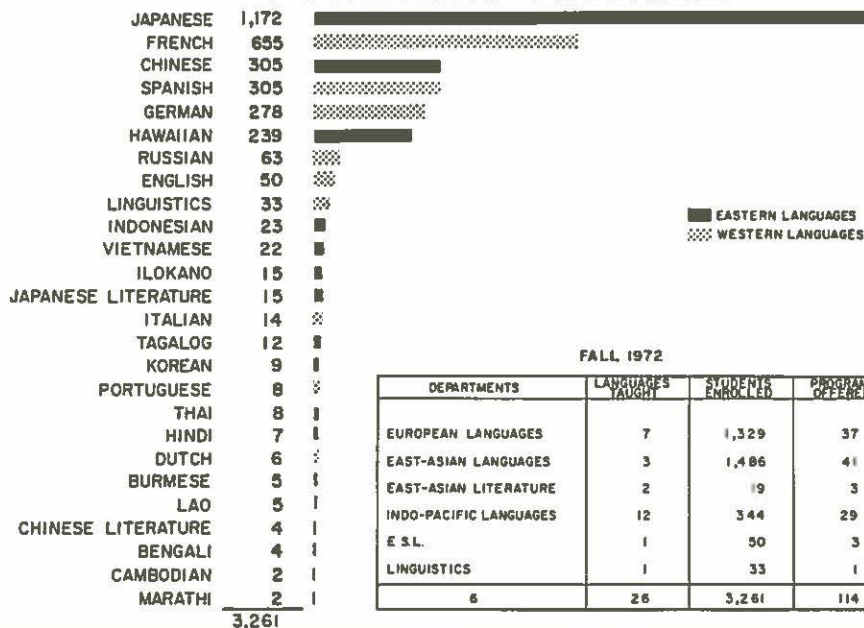
Teachers also have access to the lab studio for developing culture packets for first and second year language classes. A specially-trained lab technician assists in recording the cultural scripts and dubbing music and other sound effects. These cultural packets are then presented with accompanying exercises either in the classroom or in a class lab. The packets are catalogued so they can be retrieved easily and used again.

For the academic year 1973-74 all departmental audio-visual equipment will be kept in a central storage area. Teaching assistants are to be assigned on a rotating basis to check out the equipment and to make sure it is returned in good operating condition.

MELCC and Lower Division Academic Affairs

Among the working committees of the Department is one concerned with lower division academic affairs: curriculum, articulation, placement testing, teacher evaluation, and liaison with other

STUDENT CHOICE



FALL 1972

DEPARTMENTS	LANGUAGES TAUGHT	STUDENTS ENROLLED	PROGRAMS OFFERED
EUROPEAN LANGUAGES	7	1,329	37
EAST-ASIAN LANGUAGES	3	1,406	41
EAST-ASIAN LITERATURE	2	19	3
INDO-PACIFIC LANGUAGES	12	344	29
E.S.L.	1	50	3
LINGUISTICS	1	33	1
6	26	3,261	114

departments and the high schools. Since these activities fall very much into the area of MELCC's interest, the members serve as a core of that committee. This arrangement is advantageous to the Committee and to the Department. Because the methodologists supervise lower division teaching and represent the four modern language divisions of the Department, there is ample communication established between the divisions, MELCC, and this lower division committee. Further, decisions on academic affairs in that area can be implemented speedily. On occasion, lower division business is given entirely to the coordinators' committee. Several projects are delegated to them since they have already established the lines of communication. Some of these activities outside the University are described below.

University and Community Activities

The kinds of service the University provides to local teachers and the quality of student teaching and teacher training are major concerns of the Modern European Language Coordinating Committee. During the past year, in cooperation with the College of Education, MELCC met with leading high school teachers representing most of the languages taught at that level and formed a plan-

ning and consultation body. The results have been unusually fruitful.

First, three subcommittees have become engaged in developing in-service and summer training programs and also University courses of practical value to high school teachers. Of particular interest are individualization and innovative techniques in using the language lab. A fourth group is involved in a joint high school and university effort to review placement procedures as well as to relay the results of the examinations and the subsequent achievement of the students back to the high schools.

A fifth group is planning a new approach for training and evaluating the language and professional preparation of prospective teachers. To gain practical experience in the field, the members of MELCC have visited high schools to observe student teachers in action and to talk to their critic teachers. More ideas will be sought from students, master teachers and the language and education faculty of the University. At present the group is exploring the possibility of using a review board to evaluate prospective teachers before they are sent out to do their student teaching.

In order to monitor the progress of students in the teacher training program, the MELCC mem-

bers serve as academic advisors for these students in their respective languages.

Curriculum Consultation

Another important role which MELCC plays in community service is that of consulting on secondary school curricula. For example, the Asian and European languages department of a central Honolulu high school decided to reorganize their whole program by putting foreign language study into an entirely new context: that of language-culture studies developed along an individualized, interdisciplinary approach. The teachers wanted foreign language study to become an integral and more tangible part of the student's basic education.

In working out this new system, foreign language teachers joined forces with teachers of other disciplines (social studies, English, music, agriculture, industrial arts, etc.), teachers from other schools, guidance counselors, administrators, curriculum specialists, along with foreign language scholars and methodologists. The result was the formulation of a program whereby the student can "learn to identify the needs, desires, and aspirations that are common to all mankind while also coming to an awareness of how people are uniquely different." The program focuses on the basic linguistic skills as the most complete expression of the culture and on the teaching of foreign language as an important cultural goal in itself.

The program is implemented in the following way. A basic interdisciplinary course introduces the student to an anthropological view of the development of language and its general history. Then follows an intensive study of the culture of a specific area of which the particular foreign language forms a fundamental part.

The Committee was asked to participate in working out the new curriculum for German and Russian. German is a new language at the school and required a fresh start in tailoring the program to the local needs of the students. The organization of the material is based on a thematic view of the grammar but includes "learning how to learn" and "the art of guessing" as important elements. Although in the beginning emphasis is on phonemic discrimination and production ability, together with mastery of approximately one-third of the spoken grammatical structures of the language, major efforts are directed toward developing a clear understanding of German-speak-

ing peoples and their lands through communicating directly, even if simply, in the language.

The interest in Russian arose from the school's attraction to experimental and innovative projects. In Hawaii, interest in the language has developed as a result of the growing economic presence of the Soviet Union in Japan and South-East Asia where Hawaii has strong cultural and economic ties. In addition, geographic proximity of the USSR affords the possibility of closer cooperation with that country in all fields. Given the special need for informed citizens and speakers of Russian, a new kind of program was devised. The aim of the basic course is to prepare students who can communicate in the language, and to develop a fundamental understanding and insight into the Russian culture, particularly contemporary Soviet society. The experimental features of this course lie in the organization of materials centered around culture rather than around grammatical structures, and also stresses the systematic development of listening and reading skills through real language contexts.

Liaison with AAT and ACTFL

The Modern European Language Coordinating Committee sees as one of its principal roles open-ended communication with the various AAT groups (American Association of the Teachers of German, for example). Each committee member belongs to his respective association and keeps the membership up to date on developments within the University and the Department of European Languages and Literature. The Committee also keeps the Department informed about national AAT and local chapter activities (e.g., student trips, awards, materials, programs, speakers). MELCC members also maintain a similar link by active participation in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, as well as by local, grass-roots activity in its state affiliate, the Hawaii Association of Language Teachers.

While some colleagues might wonder at MELCC's involvement in so many groups and activities, the members feel that, despite the many meetings, minutes and brainstorming sessions involved, seldom has their work ever grown tedious or repetitive. More accurately, the opportunity for frequent participation with high school colleagues in a variety of groups provides a refreshing interaction which has opened ways to discover new approaches to common problems.



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John E. Crean, Jr. received the A.B. degree from Holy Cross College and the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Yale University. He taught at Yale for two years and at the University of Wisconsin, Madison for five years. In Fall of 1971 he was appointed Associate Professor of German and Lower Division German Coordinator in the Department of European Languages and Literature, University of Hawaii. Since 1972 he has also been the Chairman of the German Division in that department.



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David J. Quinn is Assistant Professor of French at the University of Hawaii. Receiving his B.A. from Willamette University, M.A. from University of Washington and Ph.D. from University of Oregon, he has taught previously in Tunisia, in France at the University of Grenoble, and at the University of Oregon. A recipient of a Fulbright research grant to the Sorbonne, Dr. Quinn is currently serving at the University of Hawaii as Senator for the College of Arts and Sciences, and Coordinator of the Lower Division French Program.