Proposal for modifications to the World Languages General Education requirement in the College of Arts and Sciences

October 26, 2017

*“Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt”*

*(The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.)*

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung 1921*

The study of foreign languages has been a fundamental part of higher education in the Western world for at least two thousand years, in part because language is not just a means of communication; it is also way of thinking. Acquiring another language means acquiring the means to think in ways that are not possible when one knows only one’s native tongue. Through the development of foreign language interactional skills and cultural literacy, a Liberal Arts education liberates students’ minds from the limits of their native language, expands their view of the world, and frees them from misconceptions about other people, societies and cultures.

The bylaws, codes and rules of the Board of Trustees state that the ASC faculty have jurisdiction over the General Education requirements:

**3335-5-27  Powers.**

The faculty of the arts and sciences shall have jurisdiction over:

(A)  All programs for the "untagged" bachelor's degrees, subject only to approval by the council on academic affairs and the university senate. Such degrees shall be awarded only upon the recommendation of the faculty of the arts and sciences.

(B)  The general education requirements for all programs in the colleges of the arts and sciences, and joint responsibility for planning the general education requirements for colleges outside arts and sciences on a cooperative basis. Jurisdiction for the general education requirements for colleges outside arts and sciences shall lie with the university senate through the council on academic affairs, and not with the faculty of the arts and sciences.

(Board approval dates: 10/11/1967, 6/18/2010, 6/7/2013)

Given this mandate, the onus is on the ASC faculty to create the educational requirements that best serve our students. The changing demographics of our student body and their background before coming to OSU, the role of OSU as a leader among Midwestern universities, as well as globalization trends have prompted a review and update of the foreign language requirement.

This report begins with an overview of the increasing importance of foreign language study at the university level (Section I) and the role that OSU has played and will play in setting the standard for the internationalization of our student body (Section II). This is followed by the goals for foreign language study (Section III) and the proposal for modification to the requirement (Section IV). Information supporting the decision for the modifications are found in the remaining sections, which present the proposed modifications to placement testing, comparison data from other large, public institutions, and how technology has facilitated language learning and streamlined access to instruction for students whose schedules are increasingly complicated.

I. The importance of FL learning at the University level

* Solid evidence demonstrates the benefits and necessity of language study. We know that study of a second language positively influences academic achievement, cognitive development, creativity, memory, and attitudes and beliefs about other cultures (<https://www.actfl.org/advocacy/what-the-research-shows>).
* Language study provides students with a set of essential skills that are necessary for keeping up with today’s growing global economy, such as flexibility, adaptability, the ability to tolerate ambiguity and, for many, to function outside of one’s comfort zone. Indeed, knowledge of a second language increases chances for employment opportunities in, for example, technology, government, the military, and industry, including the STEM professions, as noted recently by the Columbus Council on World Affairs: <https://columbusworldaffairs.org/event/global-education-intersection-stem-cultural-competence/>.

The following testimony from an undergraduate demonstrates the importance of learning foreign languages in order to succeed professionally:

“In high school I studied Spanish because it was a graduation requirement, and when I came to Ohio State I had virtually no intention to continue studying a foreign language because I didn’t believe it was completely necessary for my career path. I thought it would be more beneficial to fill my credit spaces with other classes more pertinent to my major. Then, in the summer of 2017, I had the extraordinary privilege to work for a real estate investment group in Chicago, IL that does a great deal of business overseas. Over this period I spent a lot of time with the chairman and founder of the company, and one of the things he constantly expressed to me is the fact that whether we like it or not, humanity is growing more connected every day, and it is more important now than ever to be able to effectively communicate with and understand people from all over the world. With the access that we have now to quality education and the exposure we have to other cultures, there is *no excuse* for young Americans to graduate from college and know only one language. There are 1.5 billion English speakers on Earth. That means that by not learning a foreign language, you are effectively isolating yourself from *5.9 billion* potential business and personal connections - 80% of the population. Tomorrow, the world will be more interconnected than it is today. To be a competitive businessperson, it is absolutely essential to actively learn the languages and cultures of other nations. After being part of the foreign language program at Ohio State, I believe that my understanding of another language (or two) could be the single most valuable skill I acquire during my time in college.” **John Schmidt, Fischer College of Business**

The following testimony demonstrates how language skills transfer to life skills:

When you learn a new language, you not only gain the immediately obvious benefits of being able to communicate with new people and immersing yourself in new cultures, but it also changes the way you think. Learning a second language isn't like taking a course in psychology or calculus - in addition to learning a set of new facts and new information, you are learning an entirely new way of thinking. You are leaning a new way to encode your own thoughts, and also a new way to process and understand those of others. You are forced to think analytically about what you see, read, and hear in order to create and verbalize thoughts and to understand those of others. You begin to think about your native language or languages in an entirely different way. Whether or not you realize it, you take these skills with you wherever you go - to other classes, to personal and professional relationships, and to the world beyond graduation. Learning new languages has opened my world to not only new people and new cultures, but also to a new way of thinking and processing new thoughts. I am a more analytic consumer of new information and a more critical thinker. I am grateful to my professors and my university for providing me with so many opportunities to grow in my knowledge and confidence and am excited to use my skills in the world after graduation. **Victoria Sevich, Romance Studies and Linguistics**

Proficiency in a language other than English is a reality of the 21st-century. Our students need to speak and operate in foreign language**s** (in the plural) in order to compete with their peers world-wide. For example, students in German who participated in the Global May program in Berlin (German 2798.02, “Berlin, Then and Now”) which is conducted in English, wrote in their evaluations that their lack of German skills made them feel “disoriented,” “flustered,” “scared,” “nervous,” or “anxious,” as well as “guilty,” “embarrassed,” “stupid,” “dumb,” “ashamed,” “uncultured,” “rude,” or “bad.” One student stated, matter of fact: “When we went to Prague we met a German from Frankfurt and he was talking about how Americans ‘are a little dumb when it comes to multiple languages’ and I don’t disagree with him. Germans often speak almost three languages fluently while most Americans only have a firm grasp on English.” As our society/community/world rapidly changes and becomes more connected, diverse and multilingual, familiarity with a second language has become essential for the well-rounded and well-educated citizen. Without foreign language education, our students will lose in the world market place. The assumption that everyone knows or needs to learn English is not the reality in which we live and work. (In fact, demographics actually demonstrate that everyone needs to learn Spanish and Chinese.) As our undergraduates pointed out above, their cohort in other countries speak multiple languages. Without foreign language education, our students will not be able to compete.

Understanding other cultures via cultural comparison and immersive language-study remains a key proficiency for any world citizen today. Foreign language courses taught in the target language expand students’ world view by challenging them to experience difference and diversity directly. Courses about foreign cultures taught in English often times present a collection of facts to be learned. Instead, like History courses that privilege primary texts, foreign language courses privilege the target language as the vehicle through which cultural and social diversity is understood. Particularly now, in the increasingly xenophobic atmosphere that is gaining ground in our country and the world, it is our responsibility to give our students exposure to the world through language.

II. Ohio State is a recognized leader in the study of world languages

This year OSU has the most students studying abroad in the nation, and in 2014 OSU won a national award for globalizing its curriculum (<https://news.osu.edu/news/2014/02/25/ohio-state-wins-senator-paul-simon-award-for-comprehensive-campus-internationalization/>). This is a reputation that we will continue to develop. We offer over 35 languages, most of which are not offered in high schools and at OSU have majors and/or minors for students enhancing their education with language study.

* [American Sign Language](http://www.asl.osu.edu/), from the American Sign Language Program.
* [Arabic](http://nelc.osu.edu/), from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures.
* [Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian](http://slavic.osu.edu/), from the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures.
* Cantonese, from the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures.
* [Chinese](http://deall.osu.edu/), from the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures.
* [Czech](http://slavic.osu.edu/), from the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures.
* [French](http://frit.osu.edu/), from the Department of French and Italian.
* [German](http://germanic.osu.edu/), from the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures.
* [Greek](http://classics.osu.edu/), from the Department of Classics.
* [Hebrew](http://nelc.osu.edu/), from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures.
* [Hindi](http://nelc.osu.edu/), from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures.
* [Italian](http://frit.osu.edu/), from the Department of French and Italian.
* [Japanese](http://deall.osu.edu/), from the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures.
* [Korean](http://deall.osu.edu/), from the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures.
* [Latin](http://classics.osu.edu/), from the Department of Classics.
* [Persian](http://nelc.osu.edu/), from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures.
* [Polish](http://slavic.osu.edu/), from the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures.
* [Portuguese](http://sppo.osu.edu/), from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese.
* [Quechua](http://sppo.osu.edu/), from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese.
* [Romanian](http://slavic.osu.edu/), from the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures.
* [Russian](http://slavic.osu.edu/), from the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures.
* [Somali](http://aaas.osu.edu/), from the Center for Languages, Literatures and Cultures.
* [Spanish](http://sppo.osu.edu/), from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese.
* [Swahili](http://aaas.osu.edu/), from the Center for Languages, Literatures and Cultures.
* [Swedish](http://germanic.osu.edu/), from the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures.
* [Tibetan](http://deall.osu.edu/), from the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures.
* [Turkish](http://nelc.osu.edu/), from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures.
* [Urdu](http://nelc.osu.edu/), from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures.
* [Uzbek](http://slavic.osu.edu/), from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures.

Since many of our students have never left the country (or Ohio) and may not plan to do so, it is our mandate to give them the most real experience of contact with a foreign culture that they can have, which can only be achieved through immersion courses in foreign languages.

III. Goals for foreign language study at OSU

The desired goal for required foreign language study at the Ohio State University is achievement of the level ‘Intermediate Low’ according to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines (<https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012/german>).



The following is a description of the Intermediate Low proficiency level for speaking in a foreign language:

*Intermediate Low Speakers at the Intermediate Low sublevel are able to handle successfully a limited number of uncomplicated communicative tasks by creating with the language in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to some of the concrete exchanges and predict able topics necessary for survival in the target-language culture. These topics relate to basic personal information; for example, self and family, some daily activities and personal preferences, and some immediate needs, such as ordering food and making simple purchases. At the Intermediate Low sublevel, speakers are primarily reactive and struggle to answer direct questions or requests for information. They are also able to ask a few appropriate questions. Intermediate Low speakers manage to sustain the functions of the Intermediate level, although just barely.*

*Intermediate Low speakers express personal meaning by combining and recombining what they know and what they hear from their interlocutors into short statements and discrete sentences. Their responses are often filled with hesitancy and inaccuracies as they search for appropriate linguistic forms and vocabulary while attempting to give form to the message. Their speech is characterized by frequent pauses, ineffective reformulations and self-corrections. Their pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax are strongly influenced by their first language. In spite of frequent misunderstandings that may require repetition or rephrasing, Intermediate Low speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors, particularly by those accustomed to dealing with non-natives* (ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012: 8).

Testing data from 1103 students in Russian and German demonstrate that the Intermediate Low ACTFL proficiency level is achieved at the end of three semesters of language study. In Chinese this level is attainable by the more able students.

**IV. Proposed foreign language requirement for Arts and Sciences**

**Working title: The World Languages and Cultures Experience**

**For students who have not taken a world language other than English in high school, the world language experience is three semesters (12 credits) of one language (including ASL). All incoming freshmen without AP or CC+ credit but with at least two years of a world language in high school will be required to take a placement test during freshman orientation. After taking the test, students will be encouraged to take their next language class their first or second semester on campus to avoid language attrition. If a student does not take their first language course in their first year, they must retake the placement test before starting coursework.**

**Placement guide:**

* **Place into 1101, take three courses**
* **Place into 1102 or have credit for 1101, take two courses**
* **Place into 1103 or have credit for 1102, take one course**
* **Place beyond 1103 or have credit for 1103, take one course (which could count for a GE category)**

**Students who are native speakers of a language other than English are exempted from the world language experience. Native speakers are defined as those who have finished high school in their language.**

**Heritage speakers are encouraged to take a placement test in their heritage language.**

V. Placement testing data

Multicat is the OSU placement test for French, Spanish and German. Comparative data from 2009 and 2017 of the results of placement tests are shown below in Tables A-C. Table A shows that fewer students overall are coming in with no FL credit. Approximately 50% of students who take the placement test today are meeting the mark for university-level FL study in French and Spanish. The number of students who test out of the FL requirement is minimal (4-5% in all three languages in 2017). However, the data in Tables B and C suggest that the other 50% of students are placing into 1102 or 1103. *Note that German appears to be an exception, with more students testing into 1102, as shown in Table B.*

There are a variety of possible reasons for students not testing out of an elementary college-level foreign language course, one of which is the age difference (a different level of cognitive ability), which does not permit many high school teachers to teach with the same immersion approach and intensity that is employed at the university level. Another possible problem is the fact that students often wait to take their placement test until right before they decide to take a language course, which may be a year or more after their high school exposure to the language. We can’t affect the first issue, but we can take action on the second. If all students who do not have AP or CC+ credit are required to take a placement test as soon as they arrive at OSU, there will be less attrition of skills, and students would most likely test higher.

Table A. Students placing into 1101 (i.e. do not have the university equivalent of foreign language study)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | French | Spanish | German |
| 2009 | 62% | 57% | 26% |
| 2017 | 51% | 48% | 10% |

Table B. Students that earn 4 college credits (test into 1102):

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | French | Spanish | German |
| 2009 | 23% | 30% | 47% |
| 2017 | 21% | 35% | 62% |

Table C. Students that earn 8 college credits (test into 1103)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | French | Spanish | German |
| 2009 | 7% | 6% | 14% |
| 2017 | 22% | 11% | 24% |

VI. Comparison with similar institutions

As Ohio’s flagship university reviewing the GE, we are poised to set the standard for our peer institutions in the Midwest, who are eager to see the decisions we are making. We have the task of defining the skills and knowledge that a university-educated citizen should have upon graduation. The following table displays the requirements at institutions similar to OSU.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| University | No. courses | No. credits/course |
| Wisconsin-Madison | 4 semesters(two years of high school may count for two semesters) | 4 credits |
| University of Michigan | 4 semesters | 4 credits |
| Indiana University | 4 semesters(Completion of high school foreign language courses is not accepted as a basis for exemption. Students may fulfill the entire Foreign Language requirement by placing into the third-year level, although students will not receive credit for these courses unless they take, on the Bloomington campus, the next course in the sequence (the course into which they place).) | 4 hours |
| University of Iowa | 4 semesters(Can be satisfied by completion of the fourth year in a world language in high school) | 4-5 semesters hours |
| U of I Urbana-Champaign | 4 semesters at college level or 4 years in HS.(If a student took 3 years in HS, the student can either continue the same language and complete the 4th semester course, or start a new language and complete the 3rd semester course.) | 4 credits |
| U of I at Chicago | 4 semesters at college level or 4 years in HS. |  |
| UCLA | Equivalent of 3 college level courses | 4 credits |
| U of Texas at Austin | No. of sem. and credits required to complete vary by language |  |
| U of Florida | 2 semesters or 3 depending on language | 8-10 (total) |

Like our peers, we permit high school foreign language study to count at the university level, but we require students to place out of the coursework through placement testing, AP testing, or CC+. Like Indiana University, we require a minimum of one college-level foreign language course. Differences in the cognitive abilities of high school students compared to university students mean that instruction in high school differs from the rigor of the university environment. Indeed, current placement testing data demonstrate that half of students who test do not place out of any foreign language courses. However, we expect the number of students who place out of courses to increase once early and mandatory placement testing is implemented. Since placement tests are limited to testing vocabulary, grammar and possibly reading, university training serves to ensure interactional competency and sophisticated cultural literacy.

VII. New technologies have facilitated FL learning through alternative formats for completing foreign language credits

Depending on the foreign language selected, students have a variety of options for completing their designated credits. That is, it is not necessarily the case that students will have to take face-to-face courses, but rather, thanks to online alternatives, they may complete their FL credits on their own schedule. Many foreign language departments offer the GE language courses in a variety of formats to accommodate students with increasingly busy schedules:

**Individualized Instruction (I.I.):** The AT&T Individualized Language Learning Center (IILC) houses the individualized language programs of eight different languages: **Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian** and **Spanish**. Individualized programs offer self-paced, mastery-based language learning courses designed to mirror the content of courses offered in the classroom. One complete course is generally worth four credit hours. In the classroom, these 4 hours would be completed in one 14-week semester. Students in individualized programs have the option of completing a course in one semester or in spreading these four credit hours over several semesters. Students who wish to progress more quickly can enroll for more than the four credit hours.

Other alternative formats are the following:

**Italian**: Italian offers hybrid courses in 1102 and 1103 (55 min classes 2 days in the classroom, 2 days online) and is creating blended courses for the 1101-1103 sequence (three days, 55 min in the classroom, one day online); the department also has a five-credit intensive course that meets 3 days/week and covers 1101-1103.

**French**: French offers courses in I.I. and are considering changing the four-day/week face-to-face courses to a three day/week schedule. The department is also considering developing fully online courses in I.I.

**German**: In addition to I.I., Germanic Languages and Literatures is creating an online track of their Individualized Instruction courses and they are creating hybrid courses (two days in class, two days online) for German 1102 and 1103.

**Spanish**: In addition to I.I. courses for Spanish, Portuguese and Quechua, the department offers SP1102.0, SP1103.01, SP2202.01, PTG1101.01, PTG1102.01, PTG1103.01 completely online and SP1101.01 and SP1155 are in the planning stages.

**Russian**: In addition to I.I., Slavic and Eastern European Languages and Cultures is developing on-line versions of the I.I. materials.

**Polish**: 2 days/week classroom meetings plus on-line materials: currently 1101, will add 1102 in spring.

**Chinese**: In addition to I.I., Chinese offers summer intensive 1101/1102 and 2141/4142 (intensive intermediate spoken).

**Japanese**: In addition to I.I. Japanese offers intensive 1101/1102, 1103/2102 and 5101/5102

**Korean**: In addition to I.I., in summer 2018 intensive Korean 1103/2102 will be added.

**Czech, BCS, Armenian**: distance learning/shared instruction, with primary site at IU, Michigan, or OSU