

Teaching German  
in America:

Past Progress  
and Future Promise

A Handbook for Teaching  
and Research

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American Association of Teachers of German

0004-L

The Future of German in American  
Education: A Summary Report

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**I. Introduction**

During the past academic year the AATG has sponsored a project whose theme had been the focus of professional events for some years and which, more recently, attracted renewed interest and urgency, "The Future of German in American Education." Building on the momentum gained at a number of specific events (e.g., the October 1994 Vanderbilt Symposium whose published proceedings are now available, the 1994 AATG conference in Atlanta, and two open fora at the August 1995 IDV/AATG meeting in Stanford), but, more importantly, on a general awareness that there are matters the profession can no longer ignore, the AATG decided to formalize the deliberations over a one-year period. The result was a series of regional invited fora, held at Anaheim during the national conference (Nov. 19, 1995), at Washington University, St. Louis (March 2-3, 1996), and at Georgetown University (May 4-5, 1996), and an open session conducted in conjunction with the MLA meeting in Chicago (Dec. 29, 1995).

Each forum was attended by approximately twenty colleagues who were representative of different levels of instruction and diverse educational environments. In each case, five designated attendees highlighted issues in one of the following areas: undergraduate, graduate, and institutional administrative mat-

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ters, teacher education, and the articulated curriculum K-16. Their opening thoughts provided the basis for stimulating discussion by the entire group.

This summary reports on the project in terms of its two goals:

1. to clarify the issues facing the German profession by placing them in a larger socio-political and educational context, and
2. to develop a prioritized list of possible actions the AATG as a professional organization could and should undertake.

The Report draws on written summaries that were prepared following each meeting and distributed to all participants in the series; they are also available on the AATG web-site. These summaries in turn were based on unusually engaging discussions, conducted in a fashion that was not only noteworthy for the wide-ranging expertise, professional experience, untiring dedication, and practical know-how that informed them but also for the spirit of cooperativeness and solidarity that pervaded them, all attributes from which the AATG as a professional organization has richly benefitted.

Given the well-known preference of academics for deliberativeness over action it is not inappropriate to be concerned that the project reach its second goal. This will require a series of steps subsequent to presentation of this Report. Among them are:

- Discussing the Report's contents within the profession, a conversation most easily accomplished on the AATG electronic listserv;
- Reaching a consensus regarding the actions the AATG wishes to take, both short-range and long-range. An open meeting at the 1996 AATG national meeting in Philadelphia provided occasion to receive input and get a sense of the profession's response;
- Seeking funding sources, creating focused groups, and finding individuals who will assume responsibility for implementation of specific projects. The internet discussion and the Philadelphia session are the most appropriate way for AATG members to indicate their willingness to participate;
- Taking regional and local actions that implement the recommendations of this Report in their specific contexts.

Readers are invited to react to this summary, and to respond to its contents, in thoughtful comments and in action, as all of us work together to strengthen the presence of German in the United States.

## II. The Educational Environment for the Study of German in the United States

### I. General Characterization

Until recently many of the societal changes being observed and, by extension, the terminology used to refer to them were associated with the corporate world (e.g., downsizing, restructuring, total quality management, outsourcing, accountability, access). Where they had entered education they seemed to be limited to public K-12 education. However, by now they undeniably affect all of higher education and, due to the larger societal discourse on the topic, private education as well.

Two major points recur:

1. the concept of accountability (e.g., vis-à-vis local, state, national legislative and fiscal units, and institutions and their varied constituencies) is no longer a passing phenomenon; and
2. incremental changes at the margins may well be insufficient; indeed major structural changes are already being piloted (e.g., different governance of departments and programs, new forms of budgeting based on performance criteria and outcomes, greater reliance on long-distance education, reconsideration of tenure).

As in society at large so in education, too, measures of organizational effectiveness are becoming constituent-based. The customer, consumer, patient, and now the student are the transforming force, and education becomes a product. The public we serve sees us, and our work, through the lens of the delivery of valued outcomes not as a self-evident good.

Frequently captured in the term "competency-based" education, this shift emphasizes individualized student learning and measurable outcomes while demanding access to educational opportunities for all students. It gains additional force through the transforming power of technology, which dissolves the past privileged practice of a single, standard learning environment, institutionalized for students around seat-time requirements (whether for a degree, course, or class) and for college faculty around teaching loads in terms of hours in the classroom. In contrast with the past, the technology available now inherently shifts the emphasis from teaching to student learning, opening up new roles for learners and teachers alike, and inviting a reconsideration not only of the process of learning,

but also of the kind of learning deemed to be crucial for responsible and rewarding citizenship in an American democracy in the twenty-first century.

Taken together, these developments are redefining the role of education. Under the impact of an increasingly knowledge-based information society—and the particular place technology in general and media in particular occupy within it—the nature and status of areas and types of knowledge are shifting as well.

Finally, these considerations occur in a constricted fiscal environment and a declining public willingness to support educational expenditures. As a result, major responsibility for educational policy making and for financial responsibility is being relocated from federal initiatives and directives to state, local, and individual initiatives, resulting in different funding priorities.

## 2. Impact on the Field of German

For the field of German the following developments and their consequences were identified:

- massive demographic changes that favor certain languages, both nationally and regionally
  - German is increasingly becoming a college-level subject only, much like the less commonly taught languages;
- a change in the make-up of the profession (less and less an immigrant group)
  - redefinition of the field of German or *Germanistik*, with particular repercussions at the college level for the content of the field, faculty priorities in research and teaching, and the role of the German language;
- demands on teachers made by communicatively oriented language instruction
  - need for continued in-service work and faculty development, with regard to language ability, curriculum construction, and pedagogy, where the collegiate reward system is not focused on service and teaching, therefore provides few incentives for change;
- closing of programs at all levels of instruction, sometimes due to low enrollments, sometimes due to demand (and fiscal consequences) for other language programs
  - tightness in the academic job market, leading to lack of interest in an academic career, irrespective of educational level;
- increasing pre-professionalization of college curricula
  - curricular prescriptiveness that leaves less and less room for electives; drop in language requirements;

- reduced usefulness of German (in light of other demographic and economic realities and the dominance of English in many academic disciplines) and perceived difficulty of German;
- increased demands from colleagues, programs, disciplines across institutions for certain kinds of programmatic foci
  - inability to meet these demands easily and competently (e.g., insufficient breadth of general knowledge about the cultural area and within the disciplines on the part of faculty; limited support in terms of materials and awareness of pedagogy for advanced and professional level use of German; therefore continued preference for a grammatically driven, formal, mastery-focused approach that is primarily based on and limited to experience in the introductory and intermediate classroom);
  - possible loss of intellectual identity due to overwhelming “service” demands from other units of an institution or through various cross-disciplinary linkages.
- down-playing the use and usefulness of German language abilities in order to facilitate link-up with other constituencies (e.g., disciplines, programs, professional groupings)
  - loss of language ability in graduates, with particular repercussions for the future quality of language instruction.

The groups concluded that, for the field of German, two seemingly opposite courses of action and attitudes are required and must be interwoven continuously in order to achieve “A New Positioning of German.”

- reaching out (intellectually, programmatically, administratively) beyond our normal boundaries, whatever their instantiations, and
- critical and honest reflection about our identity and unique contributions to American education and about realistic and effective ways to strengthen the presence of German.

## 3. Special Opportunities—Potential Obstacles

Participants agreed that this new positioning is possible only to the extent that all members of the profession work cooperatively and collaboratively. Furthermore, maximal effectiveness may indeed call for conceptualization on the national level, but success depends on carefully planned and executed actions on the local and regional level. Such a multidimensional approach requires a sophisticated knowledge base on the part of all members of the profession, particularly those who occupy leadership positions. It also presupposes a high level of com-

mitment and engagement, and a well-articulated sense of common purpose, even vision. Last but not least, it demands excellent lines of communication so that successful partnerships (e.g., regional, across institutional types and educational levels, issue-oriented) can be formed.

The German profession is fortunate to have a number of favorable conditions for such complex and substantive cooperation: e.g., a well-run national organization with a highly effective executive office; support through the Goethe Institute and the DAAD, as well as other funding agencies, a number of nationally visible curricular innovations (e.g., German across the curriculum) and, most importantly, dedicated teachers at all levels of instruction and, in general, a competent and committed professional leadership.

However, serious obstacles exist as well:

- a K-12 environment that can be simultaneously extraordinarily demanding (e.g., teaching several languages, split appointments between several schools, large classes, multiple levels, range of student abilities), tedious (repetition of German I and II), administratively and financially unsupported, and isolated (e.g., little support for professional development needs or outreach work with students even when colleges are nearby);
- teacher preparation models that do not integrate pedagogical preparation with the disciplines, resulting in lower prestige of this kind of work (particularly the methods course and TA supervision); no careful planning of pre-service and in-service development;
- a reward structure for collegiate faculty which favors institution-independent knowledge creation over institutionally moored service and teaching;
- insufficient preparation of department chairs for their pivotal bridging roles between individual faculty and the administration; in particular the ability to unite a department's efforts under a coherent set of priorities that is anchored in the institution's mission and goals;
- the bifurcation of the curriculum into a language and a content component with its repercussions in a discontinuous curriculum and radically different faculty status which, most recently, has led to "outsourcing" of the language component, thereby endangering the viability of the remaining content component;
- little inclination in US foreign-language departments to engage in serious discussion of curriculum construction and pedagogy since faculty have highly specialized research interests but an insufficient knowledge base regarding advanced language teaching and learning and almost no preparation for collaborative curricular work;

- materials and assessment practices which, because of the insufficient preparation for teaching at all levels, can become the *de facto* curriculum and pedagogy;
- unique demands on graduate education to prepare specialists in the discipline and generalists for a wide range of institutions;
- the financing of graduate education, which depends on and results in inexperienced apprentice teachers (TA's) handling the bulk of language instruction;
- institutional competition and resources that inhibit collaboration.

While many of the above points are common to a number of foreign-language groups, their combined impact on the German profession is now being felt quite harshly in many areas of the country. Others have not yet experienced precipitous declines, nevertheless notice tell-tale signs within the education system that are highly unfavorable to many foreign languages.

### III. Recommendations

The groups identified five interrelated areas for critical attention if German is to flourish in the future:

- The curriculum in terms of its content and delivery system,
- Outreach and student recruitment,
- New approaches to accountability,
- Teacher education and faculty development, and
- Governance, structures, and leadership.

#### I. The Curriculum in Terms of Content and Delivery System

Reforming curricula at all levels of instruction is the most important task for the German profession in the United States. The need for such reform is greatest at the collegiate level, both undergraduate and graduate. The key concept in curriculum reform is articulation, in the form of vertical articulation (integrated sequences of study) and horizontal articulation (motivated linkages to other areas of the curriculum). Reforming curriculum comprises academic and co-curricular (including study abroad) components. Among the most important recommendations are:

- Replace an additive model of language learning (e.g., first mastery of the formal inventory of German, then content knowledge, then culture, then literature,

then access to professional subfields; first oral then literate use of the language) with a holistic model that integrates linguistic and cultural knowledge right from the beginning in a fashion that is appropriate to the educational level/age of the learner;

- Provide for multi-year integrated sequences of instruction that are conceptualized on the basis of long-term instructed language learning (vertical articulation). Only then can students be expected to attain usable, preferably advanced, German language abilities;
- Establish explicit linkages across the curriculum/discipline (horizontal articulation) in order to create the highest quality program which consider the generally changed student body and the specific student population of a given institution (e.g., GAC, German for specific purposes, such as engineering, business);
- Overcome curricular discontinuities with a comprehensive curricular view that explicitly connects the faculty's diverse content interests with the crucial language-learning/teaching enterprise. Articulated and integrated curricula can provide the critical intellectual foundation for both undergraduate and graduate college programs. Such curricular work can send a powerful signal that all faculty of a unit jointly take responsibility for helping students acquire academic literacy in German, something that even under the best of circumstances takes many years of dedicated work, often reaching well into graduate study.
- At the graduate level, assure that all students, irrespective of program emphasis, leave the program with high levels of German-language ability and differentiated cultural knowledge and insights ("multiple literacies"). Departments need to shift from a near-exclusive focus on Ph.D. studies to creating multiple exit points (diverse M.A.'s) and making connections with a variety of professions and employment opportunities. For the Ph.D. this means including non-academic career paths as a deliberate option, not merely a default position. The number of Ph.D. graduates who ultimately attain tenure-track status in the academy is no longer the only indicator of program quality. On a related note, the field may have to consider the appropriateness of Ph.D. programs developing different emphases, presumably with some measure of loose coordination. In any case, it is critical that programs advertise honestly the areas in which they do or do not have well developed expertise.
- Participate in the core curriculum by teaching "German" topics in English. However, two opposing forces may result:
  1. build-up of an intellectual presence for German and the department within the institution, accompanied by increased enrollments in German courses;
  2. loss of scarce faculty resources to courses taught in English and insufficient at-

tention to the departmental curriculum that is taught in German, resulting in the loss of the German language as a defining focus.

- Attend to vertical articulation, from pre-collegiate to collegiate but also between the diverse pre-collegiate levels and undergraduate and graduate instruction.
- Determine realistic goals for German at the end of K-12 instruction and develop assessment instruments that reflect students' task-based communicative language abilities in various modalities, not only their grammatical accuracy. Because pre-collegiate instruction varies in length, a first effort might focus on developing rich descriptors for students who have had three years of pre-collegiate German instruction.
- Based on that information, develop collegiate language programs that build on students' extended performance profiles rather than privileging grammar and lexicon as formal entities only. This shift alone would dramatically change the delivery system of college language instruction (e.g., beginning graduate students may not be able to teach such courses).
- For the field as a whole develop model articulated curricula and materials for German on two tracks:
  1. pre-collegiate instruction with the potential for articulated collegiate instruction;
  2. collegiate instruction only.
- Become thoroughly familiar with institutional practices and procedures that can help or hinder enrollments: e.g., work with admissions office to reach incoming students who have placed out of the language requirement; consider placement and credit rules (e.g., "retro-credit"); put strongest teachers in second-year courses to encourage third-year enrollments; address enrollment minima and cost-intensiveness of language instruction with faculty assignments in language courses (enrollment averaging).
- Consider technology not merely as an optional add-on but as potentially reshaping the entire language-learning construct (more individualized, student-centered learning, access to on-line information, task-based learning, interactive linked learning with native speakers of German, distance learning in areas where German programs can otherwise not be supported, language maintenance, specialized programs).

## 2. Outreach and Student Recruitment

Active recruitment for students was identified as the second most important task facing the profession. We know that enrollment at the K-12 level is crucial since almost all future majors at the college level make that choice on the basis of

satisfying pre-collegiate experiences with learning German. Thus the "New Positioning of German" is at heart a more inclusive approach vis-à-vis students, with high quality curricula and pedagogy being indispensable.

However, in the current environment that may not be enough to assure a healthy future for German. Our difficulties in attracting students into K-12 classes have many causes, some well beyond our control, others complex and highly varied in different contexts. There is neither a simple nor a "one-size-fits-all" solution. On the other hand, surprising turn-arounds are possible when energetic leaders make savvy use of information about the institution, initiate bold and highly visible initiatives, cultivate contact with school boards and other administrative levels (e.g., principal, counselors) and parent groups, and are familiar with priorities in the region and state and the institution's respective position among its peers.

For example, the profession may consider developing courses and training teachers for diverse short courses to be offered before or after school, on a paid basis or as enrichment, in conjunction with FLES/exploratory options, or as part of a longer sequence. Also, the AATG may have to initiate a concerted effort to involve diverse "middle persons" who make critical decisions regarding German, whether these are within education (with a range of professional affiliations) or in the community at large. We must clarify to them just exactly what it is that we do; we must be seen at "their" events, including their publications, and invite them to attend "our" events.

New students beyond the usual pool may need to be found among non-traditional students in terms of age (e.g., young children, returning and career change students), educational path (e.g., GED students), different income levels and academic profiles, and different career goals than the German profession has considered in the past. To many this raises the fear of lowered standards or a further loss of interest in literature. However, one can also take the opposite stance: a certain number of students is necessary for upholding academic quality, for the viability of continued literary studies, and for fostering students' interest in majoring in the language, a choice that for many, at least initially, is tied to expertise in another field, whether an academic discipline or a profession.

Comprehensive advising which makes students aware of multiple possibilities in conjunction with German is crucial. Often students need this help in order to discuss a German option successfully with their parents. At the college level this includes

- connections with or placement in regional industry,
- summer internships here and in German-speaking countries,

- campus activities for German students,
- creation of a co-curricular transcript,
- creation and use of portfolios which attests to their development, and
- career placement help.

### 3. New Approaches to Accountability

While the demands for accountability are frequently interpreted as threatening and as narrowly focused on new modes of testing/assessment/ evaluation, accountability should be seen positively and comprehensively. In fact, a carefully considered revitalized curriculum is probably the best way to indicate to the constituencies we serve our awareness that we can and should be held accountable.

Beyond that, accountability in terms of assessment pertains not so much to individual students' scores on national standardized tests as to continuous program enhancement which is undertaken to assure students' growth over a period of time within a specific German program.

Portfolio assessment has been suggested as an important way to respond to demands for accountability. However, guidelines for the entire profession that would address the development, evaluation, and use of such student portfolios at all levels of instruction are urgently needed.

### 4. Teacher Education and Faculty Development

The German profession's ability to implement curriculum reform successfully and to attract more students can only be as good as the education its teachers and faculty receive in preparation for their work. The following suggestions were made:

- Coordinate teacher education between the FL methods faculty member, the education department, the cooperating teacher, and the student. The dedicated work required for this coordination to be effective should be reflected in rewards and recognition;
- Support teachers who are interested in broadening their expertise base (e.g., German teacher as the assessment specialist, the technology expert, collaborating with the science or social science teacher);
- Consider a proficiency requirement for German teachers in order to address weak language abilities;
- Foster a mentoring culture that gives a broad interpretation to the role of future teachers as part of their professional preparation (e.g., advocacy, recruitment,

community relations, co-curricular programs, opportunities for student recognition);

- Coordinate TA training across multiple language departments;
- Develop model teacher-education programs;
- Encourage dual certification for German teachers.

## 5. Governance, Structures, and Leadership

The third major area of action identified by the fora was the quality of departmental leadership. For example, increasingly, institutions are restructuring their "language departments," a trend that is best exemplified in the appearance of language centers. These deserve particularly close scrutiny since, depending on the institutional setting, they can be everything from a very favorable environment that could truly support the goals of a cultural studies program with a high level of language competence, all the way to thinly disguised moves to close entire language programs.

However, these are symptoms only for much deeper issues: the quality of departmental leadership together with the willingness and ability of all faculty to understand and act in the interest of program viability and substance for the benefit of their students and not primarily in their own individual interest.

This, of course, strikes at the heart of the matter. As a consequence, the creation of a leadership seminar evolved as the top action item the AATG should pursue. The goal of such an event would be to familiarize participants with the following critical issues:

- *Strategic planning/setting priorities* (as opposed to "trying to cover the waterfront"), which demands reflection on the mission of the discipline of German, of the institution, the department, and the nature and level of quality contributed by a given German program;
- *Benchmarking*, involving the drawing up of a list of peer institutions and sets of criteria for assessment of program quality;
- *Resources*, current and projected, as these are required in relation to quality programs of different configurations, and how these might be allocated in the face of potential budget cuts or structural realignments;
- *Audience served*: who and how well, with what kinds of linkages to other programs and what outcomes;
- *Curriculum*, in relation to the needs of the audience, potential changes with regard to content, format, and delivery system;

- *Creativity/innovation* (to replace "business as usual") that addresses possibilities for innovation, particularly with regard to technologies and distance learning;
- *Departmental leadership* which encourages involved priority-setting and decision-making;
- *Administrative models* and their repercussions for the delivery of departmental and institutional goals as these are expressed in the respective mission statements.

## IV. Summary: A Proposed Action Plan for the Profession

On the basis of the picture that emerged as the context for the field of German the groups made a number of recommendations for actions that the AATG as a professional organization should implement as expeditiously as possible. Undoubtedly some resources will be required. However, by far the biggest resource is the willingness of members of the AATG to devote themselves to collaborative action. Since much could be accomplished through carefully coordinated information gathering and information dissemination efforts, the AATG should devise innovative ways of using the available electronic media (e.g., internet, e-mail, WWW, CD-ROM). Relatively modest expenditures (e.g., to graduate students who could help set up and keep current certain information lists) might bring very high benefit to the profession. Also, some form of traffic control for this information superhighway within German may be required if AATG members can reasonably be expected to continue to access this information.

The following recommendations are listed roughly in prioritized order:

- ***Develop a leadership seminar***

The need for visionary, innovative, and highly effective leadership at all levels made this a high priority action item at all fora (see previous section). The leadership of "foreign language departments" is targeted since this is the customary administrative unit in K-12 education and increasingly also at the college level where separate German departments are on the decline.

Offered across the country by major regions according to institutional feeder relationships, this workshop for departmental leaders (chairs, program heads, language coordinators, undergraduate/graduate coordinators) should be devel-

oped in two versions: (1) for K–12 faculty leaders, and (2) for collegiate faculty leaders.

The groups recommend an inclusive stance: strengthening of all foreign-language instruction in this country will ultimately benefit German as well even though some fears of a zero-sum relationship are initially not totally unjustified. With a focus on collaboration and on strengthening a department's commitment and ability to contribute to its respective institution/students/community, such a seminar (perhaps of a week's duration) might be able to draw on multiple funding sources within education and outside it (department, school district, dean/provost; embassies; industry). Perhaps it could be coordinated with the MLA's Association of Departments of Foreign Languages (ADFL).

Participants should come prepared with information about their own institutions and the role of the department within the institution. Within the context of the institute they would begin to work out specific action plans to be implemented within a multi-year strategic plan.

- **Support curricular reform**

- K–12;
- In undergraduate programs, for both the “language” sequence and the literature and content courses;
- In graduate programs.

- **Develop pilot programs/models for articulation**

- In regions with well-established feeder relationships and through regional collaboratives, focus on curricular articulation between high school and college;
- Support such projects with innovative assessment initiatives;
- Develop models for language learning that span the entire undergraduate sequence.

- **Encourage and disseminate information about models for excellence**

The AATG should help prepare or assemble and subsequently disseminate information about models of excellence, including *criteria for excellence*, regarding

- Curricula that integrate language and content teaching;
  - articulated curricula that connect precollegiate and collegiate teaching;
  - freestanding collegiate curricula;

- Materials requirements for an integrated curriculum, articulated or freestanding, in German; a document might be prepared which would be brought to the attention of foreign language materials publishers;
- Assessment of program quality;
- Assessment of language competence at key points (e.g., at the end of high school, at the end of the required sequence, for language teachers);
- Teacher preparation;
- Graduate student mentoring;
- Student recruitment models;
  - K–12 focus
  - High-school to college
  - Within the college.

- **Devise ways for official recognition of efforts under the above rubrics**

(e.g., recognize programs that have particularly supportive mentoring cultures for graduate students, successful regional collaboratives, innovative recruitment or advocacy programs)

- **Plan for the strategic use of technologies to advance information gathering and sharing on issues that pertain to the entire profession**

- Facilitate focused (perhaps monitored) electronic discussion on previously announced topics which is limited in time. This would benefit many programs which face remarkably similar issues and often need decisive action on short notice.
- Devise an electronic information sharing system on the following topics:
  - Syllabi for German-focused courses offered within the general education component of colleges; similarly collect syllabi for GAC efforts, arranged by major delivery models;
  - A data bank of program profiles, particularly graduate programs; a task force/working group should first develop a set of criteria for standardizing electronic data entry. The information should be linked with the AATG Web site;
  - Internship possibilities and foci of study abroad programs.



- *Prepare a document which lists desiderata for materials development.*

This document should reflect the materials needs in an articulated curriculum K-16 (in that sense conceptually akin to the FL Standards document). It should be widely disseminated to publishers and the profession.

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## Reflective Statement

### Reflections on a Report

My reflections on the document "The Future of German in American Education: A Summary Report," published in the fall of 1996, are contextualized in several ways.

First, I am the document's author only in a narrow sense of authorship since its contents were developed by a group of approximately fifty colleagues who participated in the fora that created the Report. Second, my observations may be premature because the intervening time of six years is hardly sufficient for "creating the future." Third, stock-taking about analyses and an action proposal such as this Report would ideally rely on inventories of projects undertaken based on its recommendation or on formal surveys that probe whether the original analysis "got it right" and whether its recommendations "made a difference," that is, how, where, and why significant changes came about and if not, why not. Absent such documentation evaluating, judging, and critiquing the Report's approach to engendering change require great caution. Finally, neither this Report nor any other professional organizational activity stand in isolation. Instead, one should assume that a host of events—anticipated and unanticipated, supported by the German field and promulgated through larger dynamics in educational policy-making, friendly toward German interests and subversive of them, somewhat controllable and clearly beyond our reach and grasp—shaped and continue to shape the future of German. In light of these considerations I focus on only one general, though fundamental point regarding the Report and explore how it has played itself out in the intervening years.

The unspoken central assumption behind the document is that the acquisition and competent use of the German language are inherently and irrevocably the essential project that characterizes the field at all educational levels. That focus on the German language can unite the field ideationally; imaginatively expanded it could also unite the field in its practices, across many intellectual, scholarly, pro-

grammatic and curricular, and pedagogical variations. The Report gathered its findings, presented its prioritized action plan, and publicized its results on the basis both of the merits of that foundational belief and of its actionability. Indeed, the viability of both assumptions could briefly be glimpsed at the forum session at the Philadelphia AATG convention in the fall of 1996 when the Report was formally unveiled and further discussion invited: there seemed to be a moment of insights which engendered a general will for new beginnings.

Since then I have come to understand that moment in our professional history as fragile and fleeting, its awakened hopes quickly ceding territory to complexities and challenges inherent in the case. These arise not from a non-caring attitude toward the importance of the German language or an insufficient commitment to the field of German or, even more pointedly, a disregard for the importance of teaching or the central position of students, all characteristics that are frequently attributed in frustration to faculty in higher education. Rather, the complexities and challenges lie in the differentially configured ideational and decision spaces that circumscribe the two educational levels, K-12 and higher education. More importantly, both of these educational contexts have in the intervening years evolved their primary metaphors and therefore their preferred actions in increasingly distinct ways. As a result, the exquisite agreement in principle that the Report assumed and on the basis of which it invited cooperative action has become even more difficult to attain than we have always known it to be. Let me explain.

In K-12 education I see the movement away from what the Report, with some idealism, could still imagine as our joint future as resulting from the pervasive influence and intimate connection between the teaching and learning of German and the irresistible dynamics of American public education in general, all foreign language education in particular. A suitable short-hand descriptor for that dynamic might be the term professionalization. The following are among the most outstanding markers of that influence over the last thirty years or so: the creation of the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in the late sixties, as a way of emphasizing language teaching and learning when scholarly content issues beyond the language seemed otherwise to dominate within the umbrella professional organization, the Modern Language Association (MLA); the so called Proficiency Movement with its emphasis on communicative language teaching, understood as largely transactional oral language use and intimately related to curricular and pedagogical recommendations and preferred forms of outcomes assessment that, by and large, have remained unelaborated beyond the intermediate level of performance; its follow-up Standards project which extended the movement away from a grammar-based ap-

proach to language teaching and learning, yet retained almost all of the conceptual and practice-oriented apparatus of such an approach to language and language acquisition; the development of Language Centers that are dedicated to the goal of assuring the quality of language teaching and learning; the relatively recent inclusion of foreign languages into the NAEP assessment scheme, which continues the advance of the foreign language field toward being seen as a central rather than an optional or even marginal educational interest; the current effort to participate in the NCATE teacher standard work, as a way of assuring student learning under competent teachers; the on-going LANGnet project of the National Foreign Language Center which endeavors to evaluate the suitability of all instructional materials, a project that is as ambitious as it is shaped by largely unspecified criteria that bespeak a certain ideology regarding the nature of language learning and teaching; and, finally and yet to be worked out for its precise implications for the foreign language field, the recently passed federal mandates for assessment of educational outcomes.

If one were to generalize across these seemingly disparate developments one might say that these successes live within the following tensions: standards-setting is both quality enhancement and a form of standardization which favors prevailing, institutionalized metaphors of great staying power; the capacity for collaboration with other professional organizations and therefore for a presence in educational policy setting inherently involves assent to broad, generally agreed to notions, even though these might not fit more carefully considered understandings of the nature of language learning or the particular situation of the German field; our justified desire and, remarkably, our success at influencing important professional initiatives requires us to adopt forms of discourse that are understandable to all but that may also alienate us from ways of identity formation that might further our particular interests; finally, our ability to be valuable and valued players is dependent on our accepting an education-as-intellectual-commodities model that follows a goals-means-ends trajectory in order to be amenable to the dominant approach to educational planning.

Turning to higher education, its success stories, too, reveal internal tensions. The breaking open of the presumed hold of a canonical literature in favor of a cultural studies focus has resulted in scholarship that increasingly favors sociological and anthropological frames of reference or abstract literary theories in a post-modernist vein. As I have pointed out elsewhere (Byrnes, 2002), that shift has distanced the enterprise from its language-specific moorings, a presumably unintended or, at the very least, unreflected detachment that also distances it from a concern with language teaching and learning. If, then, we are to uphold language teaching and learning as a focus of the field, we face a serious double bind.

Higher education would have to find ways of rethinking itself with regard to its foreign language-ness in order to change its practices, and it would have to change its practices by initiating a reconsideration of fundamental assumptions about the nature of language and knowledge in a fashion that could affect all its intellectual work, first in the native language, and then in subsequent languages that are acquired in linguistic adulthood, that is, in terms of foreign/second/third language acquisition. Such intellectual explorations and practical initiatives do not now shape the culture of undergraduate and graduate departments, therefore do not shape the privileged actions of existing faculty and therefore cannot shape the ethos of future K-12 teachers and future faculty (Byrnes, 2001).

Even so, as I hope to have made clear, in their totality these developments are rightly interpreted as representing milestones in our evolution as a field in the last thirty years or so and constitute major advances in our profession. At the same time, they reveal an increasingly focused and that is also an increasingly delimited intellectual space and a more and more closely circumscribed action space. While the initiatives listed above reside primarily in the K-12 educational context their impact spreads throughout the system. Similarly, intervening developments in higher education might appear not to have many consequences for the K-12 context. But here, too, intellectual and practical channeling of efforts influences K-12 work. When both of these movements tend toward non-congruent or even incompatible stances, as I believe is increasingly the case, speaking of a future of joint successes for German in the United States that includes both K-12 and higher education becomes less and less possible.

Therefore, imagining a future of German that involves the very beliefs that the Report presupposes appears even more burdened than we have known it to be for some time. Earlier on we seemed sure about both the diagnosis and the cure and seemed "merely" to find it extraordinarily difficult to put our findings into practice, expressing our collective frustration at a perennial habit of going back to the future while largely unheeded recommendations piled up. To me, what is new since the Report's creation is that professionalization, institutionalization, and intellectual preferences, all with their respective discursive practices, have now deeply eroded even that earlier assurance along with its admittedly fragile capacity for change: we have not even a viable shared language for a shared imagined future. Therein might lie the real meaning of corporatization and professionalization of education at all levels which we are so fond of interpreting as being caused by unidentified others. In the age of Standards, with their focus on communication, culture, connections, comparisons, and community, flanked by mandated outcomes assessments, and in the age of a firmly established, largely language-independent cultural studies paradigm with its attendant rewards, finding

a common language in order to find a unifying center is extraordinarily demanding. Beyond the earlier difficulties, the project would now require an incisive analysis of the nature of the particular successes that mark the two educational levels, it would challenge our imagination in order to find new directions for our efforts, and it would demand our cooperative actions against the increasingly established weight of processes, structures, and institutions—all of this with one rallying point and purpose: to find an intellectually and practically productive focus on language and language acquisition in a fashion that is suitable for the entire field and, most particularly, all of higher education, undergraduate and graduate.

Listing these challenges is not to say that there is not a future for many things German. It is only to say that such a future will likely be built on premises different from those that the Report was bold to assume. Therefore, it will likely look quite different than the Report envisioned it to be, took to be valid for the entire field, and attempted to spell out in order to begin to create it.

### Works Cited

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## Wem gehört die deutsche Sprache?

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### Einleitung

**W**em gehört die deutsche Sprache? Auf diese Frage würden viele antworten: "Ja —, den Deutschen natürlich — und auch den Österreichern, den Schweizern, all jenen, deren Muttersprache Deutsch ist!" Mit anderen Worten, Deutsch gehöre dem deutschen *native speaker*.

Aber schon stoßen wir auf ein eigenartiges Phänomen: Die deutsche Standardsprache hat keinen Namen für ihn, man sucht das Wort "Muttersprachler" vergeblich in vielen deutschen Wörterbüchern. Und dennoch ist der *native speaker* seit jeher das Fundament jedes Deutschunterrichts, die unerschöpfliche Quelle stets korrekter grammatischer Intuition, die letzte Instanz in puncto Sprachgebrauch. Wo kämen wir *non-native speakers* hin ohne die *native speakers*? Wir holen sie zu Rat, wir richten uns nach ihnen, wir ahmen sie nach. Jede Sprache hat ihre *native speakers*, die sich<sup>a</sup> gewisser Privilegien erfreuen, und zwar:

- *Native speaker* ist man von Geburt an, man *wird* es nicht. *Native speakers* müssen nicht ständig darüber reflektieren, daß sie eine besondere Sprache sprechen; sie sprechen einfach und werden dadurch von anderen *native speakers* automatisch verstanden. Ein Naturrecht also, ein Geburtsrecht.
- *Native speakers* besitzen eine unangefochtene Autorität, um die sie beneidet werden: "Ach", seufzen manche Deutschlehrer, "ich wäre so gern ein *native*