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The New Paradigm and International Education: Of Babies and Bathwater

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IN RECENT years, commentators on the profession have referred consistently to the need for a new paradigm in foreign language education. This literature reveals that although many of us favor implementing new approaches and more socially responsive goals for foreign language education in North America, recommendations vary about the directions we should take and the scope of the change required. Contributors to *Profession 89*, for example, discuss the "blurring of disciplines" and the consequences of interdisciplinary approaches for literary and language study; the Spring 1989 issue of *German Quarterly* provides theoretical bases for cultural studies; in 1991 an issue of *Monatshefte* presents strategies for delivering language for special purposes. Claire Kramsch, in "New Directions in the Study of Foreign Languages," elaborates on the integrative implications of communicative competency for every aspect of our profession; in "Re-shaping the 'College-Level' Curriculum," Dorothy James argues for more realistic appraisals of what our undergraduate students can actually achieve and for reformed curricular goals that elevate language acquisition and deemphasize literary expectations; and in his 1991 National Foreign Language Center position paper, "A National Plan for a Use-Oriented Foreign Language System," Richard D. Lambert advocates a coordinated national effort to refocus current practices in foreign language education and to explore alternative delivery systems that will better develop and maintain practical foreign language skills for adults.

Internationalizing our curriculum has also been part of the discussion of a new paradigm, and articles by Roch C. Smith, Heidi Byrnes, and William F. Prokasy in the Fall 1990 *ADFL Bulletin* remind us that cross-cultural awareness and an ability to interact effectively with a second culture are not goals shared by all foreign language programs across the United States and Canada. As Dorothy James reports, the two 1991 ADFL summer seminars, whose theme was Foreign Language Departments and the "New Paradigm" in Higher Education, reflect the diversity of interpretations and the wide-ranging implications of a

new paradigm for foreign language education ("From the Editor"). Despite the complexity and enormity of the tasks ahead, this discussion has been buoyed by accounts of significant progress from individuals and departments, as well as from entire campuses where programs have been redefined, risks taken, and reward structures revised.

I present here further arguments for the viability of international education as the primary guiding principle for the new paradigm. Like *new paradigm*, *international education* has become an overworked phrase that may sound good but often has little practical meaning. On one end of the scale, I think of international education in grand terms when I wonder what the structure and goals of foreign language education would be if we were starting from scratch, with only the educational expectations of our students and the demands of our society on which to build. On the other hand, I need a real, practical idea of what I am up to when I turn in a book order, list course requirements, or write exams. So I begin by explaining what I understand international education to be and how it might guide us when we devise reading lists and propose curricular objectives. I apologize if I cannot avoid speaking in general terms, but details are best left to individuals, and examples tend to trivialize.

I use *international education* to describe the type of learning that provides us with sufficient knowledge of the language, history, values, and beliefs of other national groups to interact more effectively with them in the political, cultural, personal, economic, or global realm. It differs from culture studies primarily in its explicit practical goal: learners are expected to come away with skills,

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insights, and sensitivities that will allow them to relate in active, critical, and informed ways to the cultures whose language and texts they are studying. Casual speakers often use *international education* interchangeably with terms such as *global education*, *cross-cultural education*, and *multicultural education*. I distinguish it from global education, whose objectives supersede national interests and groups. Global education addresses our role as members of humankind in general, as people who share practical, ecological, and ethical interests with others, regardless of their nationality. (Prokasy argues that we ought to offer students "global education," pointing out that educated citizens today are globally, not internationally, oriented [16]. While this statement may or may not be true, it is difficult to see why a foreign language program would abandon the national or language-area focus that gives it its identity to refocus on global concerns that negate that identity.) Cross-cultural education is similar to international education except that, if one wants to split hairs, it deals specifically with groups distinguishable by common cultural traditions rather than by the national boundaries within or across which cultural groups may find themselves. Cross-cultural education becomes multicultural when we attempt to understand various cultural groups within multicultural societies—for example, in the United States and Canada.

The subject matter of international education is broad, interdisciplinary, and dependent in part on the disciplinary base of the faculty offering it. In foreign language programs—and we have as much claim to interdisciplinary work as does any other field in the university, if not more—our choice of materials and emphases will reflect the expectations that we and others customarily have of our subject matter: the study of language, texts, individuals, values, and beliefs as expressed in whatever language group we teach. But whereas we now often choose course materials according to how well they suit a certain language level or represent the literary expressions of a period, our first criterion in this new context would be how well they reflect the values and beliefs of members of our target culture at a given time. A minor shift but a significant one.

It is difficult, if not foolish, to try to specify materials selection any further. Just as there is controversy now about which texts and topics are most appropriate to our goals, we are likely to disagree even more about what values and beliefs are worthy of study and about which historical periods and strata of society should supply them. Whatever we do, however, we must guard against cultural and historical stereotyping; thus we should avoid searching for materials thought to be "representative" of a time and place. It may be sufficient to require that our materials be relevant. Here we have an ally in current research into cultural value and expression. Renato Rosaldo's *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, for example, cautions against the misconception that any value or group of values can adequately "represent" a cultural group

or period. Rosaldo argues instead that it is often the most unrepresentative value that lends vibrancy and life to a culture and provides stimulus for cultural change. What we can hope for and seek out are course materials that help us reflect on human motivation, personal and social values, and the role of historical and social contexts in their formulation and expression. While not directly transferable to current or future situations, value formation and personal decision making within a given historical and cultural context can be useful in our cross-cultural interactions as models for adaptive and corrective behavior in unfamiliar situations. Good materials selection might rely on two criteria: how easily materials lend themselves to the study of value formation and expression within a specific historical tradition and how relevant that study is to our interaction with members of the target culture today.

The relative significance of the values and beliefs that motivate someone to write will be seen differently by each of us as individuals and according to traditions specific to the language groups we teach. But the values and beliefs themselves are likely to be found in areas already identified by sociologists and anthropologists: family, interpersonal relations, institutions and authority, social relations, economic security, religion, education, and personal ethics. Text types from which we can legitimately draw our selections will be varied as well, ranging from advertisements and fliers to laws and court decisions, to essays and novels, to films and songs.

This change in educational focus toward the interpretation and understanding of values and beliefs through language and text may at first not appear significant, especially if seen as tantamount to cultural studies. Many departments have already developed viable cultural studies programs, especially in areas with large local communities where the "foreign" language is spoken. Programs in non-Western languages, such as Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic, also tend to focus on cross-cultural, rather than literary, approaches to the field. But in many colleges and universities foreign language departments are still dominated by a hierarchy that places literary studies above all others, often to the exclusion of cultural studies beyond the first two years of language learning. Faculty members responsible for successful culture programs may suffer in status and reward because of their involvement with what tends to be regarded as peripheral. I need not recite the persistent tensions in our field among language, literature, and cultural interests. To my mind, if we make the study of cultural values and beliefs through language and text the central mission of foreign language education, we must be ready to do three things. We must question not only the primacy of literary studies in the undergraduate curriculum but the very existence of independent courses in literature. We must ensure that our language instruction not only aims for successful communication but also conveys the notion that our every utterance implies or imparts a certain set of cultural values and assumptions. Finally, we

must ensure that our cultural studies programs are not merely descriptive exercises but critical inquiries as well.

Any discussion of new paradigms implies the replacement of an old one, and for those of us who have dedicated years to educating students in the study of foreign literatures, the probable displacement of this goal is not readily welcome. But for educators who believe that an educational system must respond to the expressed needs of the society it serves and helps lead, the call for greater international understanding from almost all sectors of government, business, and industry is hard to ignore. Our reply needs to be both socially responsive and professionally responsible, and it should at a minimum show movement toward assuming a larger role in preparing our students to act effectively and creatively in the multicultural world they are entering. Defining a new role for foreign languages in the educational system is not unthinkable or unrealistic. Not only have many programs already undertaken important change, but few lack faculty members with the expertise to make great strides today. Foreign language education with the objectives of international education makes no unreasonable demands on us; rather it takes advantage of our training and intellectual curiosity to understand and interpret texts, to discover and describe the beauty and nuance of language, and to explore and interact with a culture different from our own. Within this context we are no longer required, because of professional and institutional traditions, to swim against the current, trying to stimulate interest in the study of foreign literature that, whether we like it or not, is of minimal relevance to the vast numbers of students who enroll in our courses today and to the society we advise and serve. As the profession moves into a new paradigm, our strengths in language and cultural awareness and in interpretive methodologies constitute the baby we want to save, and for many programs a consumptive focus on national literatures is the bathwater that must be discarded.

Although the dominance of the study of national literatures has gone unchallenged for decades, significant changes in our approaches to teaching language and culture have occurred regularly, usually in response to external economic, political, and social pressures. (Dieter Buttjes gives an excellent historical overview of the innovations in cultural studies and language teaching in German programs.) Although comprehensive in scope, a proposal to displace literary studies as the ultimate goal of the undergraduate and graduate foreign language degree is no more unusual than the numerous reassessments we have already witnessed and no less occasioned by the needs of our society.

Redefining our primary mission as foreign language educators to accord with some of the objectives of international education—such as increased awareness of culture and an understanding of how people in differing social and historical situations form and express values—would require a fundamental shift in the way many of us view

what we do. At first, that seems ultimately absurd. Where outside foreign language programs would we be more likely to find a stronger international focus in research and teaching? Unfortunately, many disciplines and study centers have far broader international components than traditional foreign language departments do. Until recently, when international initiatives were discussed at the university, in the business community, or in government, seats were rarely reserved for foreign language instructors. The core faculty members in such endeavors are usually drawn from the social sciences and the professional schools. And when participants in such discussions turn to us for help they are often disappointed in what they find: language teaching that stresses correctness before communication and courses in culture far outnumbered by those in literary periods, genres, and great authors. They find few indications of cross-cultural emphases in our course names, our objectives, or our degree programs. Rarely is a student's progress in cultural understanding rewarded in the grades we assign. Granted, many outsiders looking at our discipline are unable to see anything more than the foreign language class they left thirty years ago, even though much has changed since then. Nevertheless, there has not been sufficient progress in our overall approach to dispel the negative perceptions of outsiders. In a recent analysis of the current disharmony between foreign language programs and international studies, an insider, Heidi Byrnes, rightfully laments that our current programs "focus on the wrong outcomes for learners and follow a nondistinctive instructional approach" (11). Byrnes concludes that cross-cultural awareness must become an acceptable goal of our programs if we are to become decisive players at the university in the international education of our students.

Happily there is movement in the profession to remedy these perceptions, and I am hopeful that our response will not be timid. We have a great opportunity to become part of the mainstream of American or Canadian education, offering essential learning to future generations. But we will not take advantage of this occasion by working at the edges, fixing up beginning language courses with communicative-competency methodologies or augmenting upper-level literature offerings with a culture or film course. One option for systemic change is to build on our direct association with the languages we teach and to become focus-study areas in the educational system for the nations and cultural groups where those languages are spoken.

Taking on the institutional role of a focus-study area moves us into the educational mainstream without our running the risk of compromising a unique mission and encroaching on the work of such disciplines as anthropology, sociology, history, and economics. A course of study and field of scholarship that draws together multidisciplinary insights to concentrate them on the interpretation of forms of expression and the development of values within a given cultural tradition is not found elsewhere within

and also a consciousness of generation!

the educational framework today. The model is that of the departmental cultural studies center in a given language area offering internal faculty expertise and an integrated curriculum, drawing on individual course work from related areas of the university, and acting as a coordinator for cocurricular programs relating to that language area.

One concern with this model involves the diminishing importance of the nation-state in today's world, especially in the light of the European unification in 1992. Many believe that in an interdependent world the study of global interdependencies is more relevant and more desirable than the study of the independent states. But equally apparent, and most noticeable in the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the civil war in Yugoslavia, is a reemergence of ethnic and national identities. If politicians, economists, educators, bankers, journalists, and businesspeople expect global interdependencies to function smoothly, players on the global scene must be well schooled in the character and culture of the national and ethnic groups involved. A common language, along with a common heritage and religion, is a major component in the self-identification of these groups, a fact that again permits us to lay claim to a pivotal role in the education of future leaders, even in an increasingly global society.

A brief A new paradigm for foreign language education based on the goals of international education would provide us with an educational orientation quite different from the literary one inherited from previous generations. Foreign language programs and professionals would *study, offer instruction in, and promote scholarship in the values and beliefs of speakers of the target language throughout history (as those values and beliefs are expressed in language and text.* A statement as concise yet as broad as this one can serve as a guiding principle for all the disparate aspects of our profession today: language teaching, literary studies, cultural studies, general-education courses, professional education, teacher training, and the topics we choose for our research. The statement can be adapted to apply to cultural groups within our own country for cross- or multicultural education, or it might be restricted to cross-cultural education within a global framework. But its basic thrust can remain the same: to evaluate the texts and the language of a cultural group different from the mainstream culture in this country to discover values and beliefs that motivate people to write and take action. (I reiterate that these objectives by no means imply the existence of any static or enduring "national character," a concept often advanced for political and chauvinistic purposes, which, once internalized, deceptively simplifies and prejudices our interaction with the other culture. Enduring national characters surely do not exist outside the stereotypes that many of us still carry around about the Germans, Mexicans, Chinese, French, and others. The values and beliefs we discover and study should not be viewed as "representative" but merely as "evident.")

Rather than present in detail the arguments in favor of international education, I refer the reader to the section

on international studies in the Fall 1990 *ADFL Bulletin* and to my discussion in the Spring 1990 issue of *Die Unterrichtspraxis*. For business and government the advantages of international awareness are well known, and they can be grouped together in what one could call the "global village" argument. As for foreign language programs, one can now observe with relief that other disciplines, business, and government are giving us a second chance and looking to us again for foreign-cultural expertise, as is seen in the many cooperative efforts of the Centers for International Business Education and Research and the organizations cited by Roch C. Smith (7). Many factors support this direction for foreign language programs: the close relation between international education and the traditional teaching of foreign language and literature, new theories of cultural study from the social sciences and the humanities, the politically neutral character of international education, and, most significantly, the expectations and desires of the overwhelming majority of our students to use their language skills to interact with native speakers of the target culture.

Despite the many persuasive arguments for redefining our educational goals, we are often confronted with foot-dragging and even hostility from our colleagues when we present such ideas. I would like to offer a few additional perspectives on the introduction of international-educational objectives by responding to three stock phrases repeatedly used to thwart change in general: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it"; "We weren't trained to do that"; and "Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater."

Perhaps the most common response to any change that seems unnecessarily disruptive and personally distressing is the ultimate plea for the status quo, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." The basic fallacy in this remark might be summed up by the title of a new book for corporate managers, Robert J. Kriegel and Louis Patler's *If It Ain't Broke, Break It!* This exclamation is not a call for anarchy but a clear assessment of modern reality: in a rapidly evolving world something that might have been "perfect" yesterday might not be so tomorrow. To remain competitive and prepare people and organizations for the future, the responsible planner must be willing continuously to reassess and, if necessary, to discard accepted ways of doing things. This attitude is not without danger, but remaining static is riskier than changing, if change seems indicated. Similarly, most recent reports on the status of education in this country conclude by recommending ongoing assessment of any implementation to ensure its currency.

The question we should be asking is not only whether something is "broke" but whether it is still relevant. If it's broken, you need to fix it; if it has become irrelevant or outdated, you discard it or relegate it to some other part of the house. Kerosene lanterns never really broke, although the soot they produced meant they often needed repair; they simply were replaced by something more reliable, more efficient, and less dangerous: electric lights. Edison's

yet another

If it is broke!

invention better served the needs of the people, and it was heartily welcomed. We might fetch lanterns from the garage to create a romantic or nostalgic atmosphere, but not to light the kitchen.

Similarly, we will be deceived if we use outdated standards to assess whether our programs are successful or in need of radical change. Measured by campus standards, programs may be flourishing, with large enrollments of happy students earning good grades and with the faculty productive and publishing. But are we living up to the expectation of our students? Are we meeting and helping define the needs of our society regarding foreign language education? Is the education we offer and the research we do really relevant to the demands that will be placed on the overwhelming majority of our students, who do not become foreign language teachers but who nevertheless seek to use their foreign language training in their personal and public lives?

Reliable answers may only come if faculty members look outside their departmental boundaries and call on authoritative external sources that can provide broader educational perspectives and alternative measures of value. Most useful are mandates from university-wide platforms for change or, if these are unavailable or too parochial, resolutions from our national professional organizations. Even within the context of differing institutional missions, "successful" education in the United States at this time in our history depends on how well we are heeding and helping shape the educational needs of our society and how often we are reassessing our programs against this continually changing norm. Only after we can say we are satisfied with our performance in this area can we go on to ask how many students we have, how high they score on exams, and how positive our student evaluations are.

If our counterarguments to the "if it ain't broke" tactic are successful, competency issues are often used as a second line in defense of the status quo. A comment like "I wasn't trained to do that" would dismiss proposals for radical change as totally impractical, even if they might have some intrinsic merit.

One could begin with an apples-and-oranges response. It is often an unfortunate fact that the training we receive in graduate school has little to do with much of what our positions in higher education require of us. PhD degrees, as well as most MAs, are granted when candidates have demonstrated sufficient expertise in an area of literary or linguistic research and analysis. Our degrees have become steadily more professionalized since the latter part of the nineteenth century, when humanists began to model their activities after those in the natural sciences (see Bruce Wilshire's *Moral Collapse of the University: Professionalism, Purity, and Alienation*), and graduate schools today rarely offer systematic guidance in the responsibilities their candidates must later assume as educators, teachers, and members of an educational community. It is self-evident that we "weren't trained to do that" as long as "that" refers

to anything beyond the narrow confines of our research specialty. But this is no excuse for remaining ignorant of our other professional responsibilities, and in reality few of us do remain uninformed and aloof.

Even so, training must be understood as much more than developing competence in a narrow specialization. All of us have gained expertise in textual interpretation, in the nature and use of language, in methodologies of epistemology and analysis, and in various pedagogical techniques, from planning syllabi to designing and grading exams. Such training is ultimately transferable. In fact, if our training is so specific that it becomes useless in an altered environment, then it has little value. We would certainly want to guard against offering education of that sort to our students. Training should never be an excuse to stifle anyone's personal or professional growth.

While the technology of mass production relies heavily on the efficient manufacture of replicas from a mold, higher education does not share that requirement. But those who say "we weren't trained to do that" seem to be implying just that sort of standardization. Should the objective of foreign language education be the transfer of what we learned from the last generation of professors to the next generation of students? I suspect not. Academics, however, are especially susceptible to the disease of "clonitis," since many of them go through their careers without any professional development. In a rapidly changing world the worst thing we can wish for our students is that they become like us. If they do so they will be hopelessly out of step with the world they enter.

Finally, after much time and discussion, when a faculty has reached consensus on the value and necessity of the new paradigm and has approved proposals for curricular modifications and new standards of student and peer evaluation, it must still be on the lookout for yet another remark, one that can undermine all the progress so far achieved: "Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater." This is an adage to which people willingly subscribe without much thought. Almost all of us have experienced the harm done by precipitous change, so that this admonition carries much authority.

Colleagues who sound this warning call are appealing to our compassion and goodwill, asking us to agree that what they do is valuable, that it is OK to correct grammatical errors while a student is struggling to communicate, and that classical literature can still provide us all with great insight into the nature of "man." The ultimate hope is that the change makers will go ahead and change but will leave others alone to do what they have always done. The baby in their admonition is usually the study of literature, its genres, major periods, great authors, and timeless ideas and also, of course, a rigorous language program that provides students with a tool for understanding the literary texts presented to them.

The bathwater? Well, the bathwater tends to vanish when the metaphor is applied. Everything really ought to

be saved, since everything is valid in some way or another. The weary change makers agree to a compromise by accretion. This error in judgment results in conflicting objectives and a disjunctive program that becomes untenable only a few months later. *at least*

Before agreeing to this compromise by accretion, however, there are opportunities to respond forcefully to the baby-bathwater argument. We must assert first that foreign language education, realigned according to the objectives of international education, does indeed take the baby out of the tub before pulling the stopper and second that there is indeed lukewarm, scummy bathwater that does need to go down the drain.

By creating an international focus in foreign language education we are not throwing out the baby but are retaining the valuable aspects of our training that are transferable and adaptable to a new educational environment. This baby, however, is not the study of literature. It is (1) our sensitivity to the nuances of language, its use and abuse, its beauty, and its emotive force; (2) our analytical skills dealing with texts, modes of discourse, authors and intentionality, and audience and reception; and (3) our familiarity with cultures different from the mainstream of this country. In the new paradigm this baby is dried and diapered and then put into a different and much larger playpen.

To avoid the mistake of compromise by accretion, we cannot pretend that there is no bathwater. If we are truly serious about adopting a new paradigm, then we must identify and replace those parts of the old one that are no longer viable. This is especially true if our discipline intends to assume an essential role in education today, one that does not merely cater to the needs of the relative few by concentrating on the study of foreign literatures. That emphasis, inherited from the nineteenth century when institutions had a far more elite student body and professoriat, constitutes the bathwater we must abandon. In contrast, the goal of developing students' ability to function effectively in the international realm fits with the curricular, professional, and personal needs of the diverse student body and professoriat of today. It provides an interdisciplinary perspective, breadth, and relevance that will permit members of both groups to become active adult citizens of the global village. It should also strengthen the position of foreign languages in the academic life of the university, and it should persuade our colleagues in other disciplines to view our field more favorably.

The bathwater we need to discard is the *primacy* afforded to the study of foreign literature. No one would deny that a people's literature is among the most enjoyable and insightful pathways to understanding their values and beliefs, and literary texts would continue to be well represented within the framework of international education; they would, however, serve a purpose far different from the one they do today. The study of foreign literatures per se would be far better located in a separate department of

comparative or world literature. There the literary focus of the program would be identifiable for what it is, and unsuspecting students would not enter literature courses by default when they enroll in third-year foreign language courses—a healthier situation for all concerned.

The curricular reform now under way at Michigan State University illustrates some of the innovations I have been discussing. In fall 1992, when the university converts from a quarter system to a semester system, it will drop its entire current curriculum and institute new courses. Given this opportunity for campus-wide curricular review, the president and the provost charged the faculty to seek ways of implementing a set of student- and faculty-generated proposals for change. A major share of these proposals aimed at strengthening the curricular commitment to national and international diversity and foreign languages.

The German faculty received approval for a significant revision of its curriculum. Individual faculty members invariably interpret curricular changes somewhat differently, but from my perspective the department's reforms incorporate many points outlined in this article. The advanced courses will stress the values and beliefs of Germans at different times in their history, using both literary and nonliterary documents from various discourses. A capstone seminar will help students critically review their undergraduate course of study as well as look at the future and the ways that a degree in foreign languages can affect their lives as adults. As the accompanying table shows, the old three-term quarter courses were reduced by a third in the new two-semester plan.

Old Curriculum	New Curriculum
<i>Third Year</i>	<i>Third Year</i>
Standard Language Sequence	Standard Language Sequence
Business Language Sequence	Business Language Sequence
Introduction to Culture	
Contemporary Culture and Civilization	
German Film	German Life and Literature: Contemporary Period
Introduction to Literature I	German Life and Literature: Historical Epochs
Introduction to Literature II	
Introduction to Literature III	
<i>Fourth Year</i>	<i>Fourth Year</i>
Advanced Conversation and Composition	Language through Media in Contemporary Germany
German Style	
The Contemporary German Scene	Life and Literature: Cultural Difference
Special Topics in German Literature	Life and Literature: Mainstream Culture
German Literature before 1700	
The Age of Goethe	Introduction to German Literature
Romanticism and Realism	