Title

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Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7188g4z0

Journal

L2 Journal, 3(1)

Author

Warner, Chantelle

Publication Date

2011

DOI

10.5070/L2319067

Peer reviewed

Rethinking the Role of Language Study in Internationalizing Higher Education

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This article critically examines current discourses of internationalizing higher education both inside and outside the humanities and considers whether some contemporary practices and positions taken on by departments of languages, literatures and cultures might actually undermine public perspectives on language study by encouraging conceptually reductive views of language. Three common myths about language study that commonly surface in discussions of internationalization are then identified and analyzed, with the intention of exposing the discursive traps that scholars of languages and literatures often set for themselves and finding new ways of explaining our potential role in institutional efforts to internationalize curricula.

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INTRODUCTION

Attitudes towards foreign language study at American institutions of education have increasingly come to be defined by a staggering contradiction: even as many administrators and educators peddle the belief that universities should prepare students to exist in an evermore *globalized* and *intercultural* world, the perceived importance of departments specializing in foreign languages, literatures, and cultures is diminishing (see Bernhardt, 1997; Brustein, 2007; Gehlhar, 2009; Holquist, 2006; Wilkerson, 2006). The drops in enrollments, the elimination of language requirements, and the closure of entire departments that constitute the current "crisis in the humanities" come in spite of numerous public statements made by government and university representatives that Americans urgently need to become more proficient in other languages, cultures, and world views.[i] Survey studies and status reports on the internationalization of higher education repeatedly reveal a correspondingly bizarre statistic: humanities fields, including foreign language and cultural studies departments, are regularly cited as the least "internationalized" disciplines, while business and economics are often listed as the most internationalized fields (Knight, 2006, p. 17). The latter are also the least likely to have language requirements for their majors (Hayward, 2000, p. 2). Although individuals at every level seem to agree that, to quote Catherine Porter, "English isn't enough", the role of university foreign language and literature departments in this project of internationalizing our higher education curricula seems at best murky and in the eyes of some, marginal.

With words like "internationalization", "global perspectives" and "intercultural competence" now embedded in the lexicon of higher education, how is it that departments of foreign languages and cultures are not positioned more prominently in university mission statements, budget designs, and general education requirements? Why is foreign language study currently devalued by many university administrators and by American society as a whole? What role might departments of foreign languages and literatures play in the internationalization of higher education in the U.S. and, conversely, how might this conceptual framework help those

of us who reside in these departments to not only justify, but also to reconfigure foreign language education for today's society? This article contributes to ongoing discussions about the state of foreign language study and the humanities in American higher education today by considering how educators and scholars in the modern languages participate in these broader institutional efforts. The framework of internationalization has been invoked within the foreign language/humanities disciplines in order to explain and to justify the role of language and culture study in general higher education; however, there is much evidence that these discussions have not been heard by those outside of our field.

In what follows I will approach this not as a PR problem, to be remedied through better marketing of our academic pursuits, but – staying true to my background as a scholar of language and literature – as an issue of discourse. For this reason, I will begin by examining the ways in which internationalization has been framed in recent years and the positions that the humanities and in particular the traditional departmental configuration of foreign languages, literatures, and cultures have occupied in these discussions. I also argue that some of these efforts, when given central importance in our educational missions, could actually undermine public perceptions of languages and literatures as legitimate areas of academic inquiry by reinforcing reductive myths about language, which in turn, vastly oversimplify views of what concepts like *global literacy* and *intercultural competence* should entail. The trouble with myths, as Roland Barthes (1972) has argued, is not their objects, but the ways in which they are uttered and the beliefs that they render "falsely obvious" (p. 11). Thus, my purpose in this article is neither to critique existing efforts nor to offer alternative best practices, but rather to draw our attention to some possible discursive repercussions of how we frame the great work that we do in and out of the classroom.

DISCOURSES AND DIRECTIONS OF LANGUAGE STUDY IN AN INTERNATIONALIZED PERSPECTIVE

Searching for a definition of internationalization, it is easy to feel as though one is afloat in a sea of tautologies. Many of the discipline non-specific discussions of internationalizing higher education in some way echo such broad descriptions as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post secondary education" (Knight, 1994, p. 7). To what degree and in what ways internationalization overlaps with related terms such as globalization and transnationalism is also a topic of dispute (Knight, 2004, p. 8). Indeed, it often seems that internationalization serves more as an ideal construct or even an empty signifier than a particular set of institutional practices or educational objectives (see Kehm & Teichler, 2007, p. 261; Knight, 2004, p. 11).

Hans de Wit (2002) offers one of the most concise discussions of internationalization trends in the U.S. and in Europe. de Wit categorizes the most often cited reasons for why internationalization is important to post-secondary education into four groups: economic, political, academic, and social/cultural (see also Deardoff, 2006). Economic rationales encompass both the potential career benefits to students and the income that can be generated for the institution through, for example, the recruitment of international students and the establishment of satellite campuses abroad. Political reasons, especially in the years since September 11, are related to matters of national security and foreign policy. Academic rationales for internationalization are usually tied to the missions of liberal education in the age of globalization and accordingly stress world-mindedness and global, critical thinking skills. Finally, sociocultural motivations emphasize skills for intercultural communication. As Kubota

(2009) has noted, the latter two rationales are most clearly – although not exclusively - related to foreign language learning; however, it is the former two categories – those typically portrayed as more practically-oriented - that have received the most attention in recent years (p. 613). As universities are forced to marketize, internationalization is increasingly seen as an economic additive for the institution, rather than an educational objective in itself (see also Kubota, 2009). This move can be witnessed in the changing publication trends within the American Council of Education; while the 2000 preliminary status report devoted the first, five-page section to the study of foreign languages and an additional two pages to study abroad, more recent publications have concentrated heavily on the recruitment of international students to U.S. universities and the development of branch campuses in other countries.[ii]

Given the broad and often vaguely defined motivations and definitions available for internationalization, it is unclear what types of learning and teaching objectives humanities departments might imagine for themselves. It is, however, easy to identify three initiatives related to the study of foreign languages and cultures that have received widespread attention and support in the last two decades: 1) Languages Across the Curriculum, 2) study and work abroad programs, 3) the promotion of less commonly taught languages and critical languages. All three are valuable to governmental and institutional objectives to internationalize and to engage the collaboration of scholars and educators from departments of foreign languages and cultures. However, as I introduce each of these focus areas in more detail, I will question to what extent these programs might actually diminish the perceived importance of the study of languages and cultures in the process, when they are packaged too reductively or when they become the primary means by which foreign language/humanities fields contribute to the internationalization of higher education.

LANGUAGES ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

During the late 1980s and 1990s, around the same time that internationalization entered into mainstream discourses on education, attempts were made to better integrate foreign language study with other types of coursework. These efforts found theoretical support within fields of second language acquisition and language pedagogy in the form of Content Based Language Instruction (CBLT), an approach that was popularized in ESL and EFL classrooms, but garnered the interest of foreign language instructors in light of the Communicative Language Teaching movement of the 1990s (see Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989; Jurasek, 1993; Krueger & Ryan, 1993; Stryker & Leaver, 1997). One of the most concerted of these effort dubbed Languages Across the Curriculum (LAC), was funded by grants from the NEH, FIPSE, the Center for International Education and the Department of Education as well as private organizations such as the American Council on Education. While the particulars differ widely, all LAC programs aim to integrate students' use of foreign languages into courses outside of language and literature departments (see Adams, 1996; Grenfell, 2002; Klee, 2009; Straight, 1994 & 1998). Although they are not always packaged as such, LAC educational objectives continue to be popularized through the familiar *Language X for Special Purposes* courses such as *Chinese for Business* or *German for Engineers* and are echoed in the MLA report's call for "interdisciplinary collaborative courses" (2007, p. 5). In addition to citing research evidence from second language acquisition that the integration of language study and content from other disciplines fosters motivation and promotes active learning, LAC enthusiasts often emphasize that their programs increase the visibility of foreign language study and help to establish more clearly their academic and professional relevance.

A more recent evolution of the LAC programs, known as Cultures and Languages Across Curriculum (CLAC), follows the wider cultural turn in language pedagogy over the past decade, in acknowledging that language learning and cultural awareness are inseparable. The CLAC movement differs from its predecessor in another key way; its proponents explicitly separate themselves from Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) and Content-Based Instruction (CBI). According to the web site of the CLAC Consortium, "while CBI puts content at the service of language learning, CLAC engages languages (and intercultural perspectives) to achieve a better and more multi-faceted understanding of content" (n.p.). The recognition that disciplines are themselves discursively constructed within particular languacultures is one of the most valuable contributions that departments of languages, literatures, and cultures can make to the general educational missions of higher education; however, this critical stance is rarely featured in CLAC teaching practices. What CLAC supporters often foreground is another aspect of this stance towards language learning, namely the tendency to decenter language and culture as legitimate areas of academic inquiry in and of themselves. The basic sentiment implied here is perhaps best expressed by Richard Lambert, former director of the National Foreign Language Center in his keynote address to the 1989 CALICO Conference - a speech cited on the CLAC Consortiums web site:

> This lack of a direct utilitarian orientation of much of language instruction in the formal educational system leaves the goals of foreign language instruction somewhat unclear, and educational purposes other than actual use of the language for communication purposes tend to be emphasized. For instance, some view language instruction as a way to deparochialize large parts of our citizenry so that they can develop an empathetic understanding of other cultures and societies. This argument resembles that used for universal science education aimed at producing scientific literacy, not the ability to "do" science (Lambert, 1989, p. 11).

Underlying the analogy suggested by Lambert, is the assumption that there are a number of tangible, incontrovertible "things" that need to be "done with science" or that need to be "communicated" through language. The legitimacy of this assumed dichotomy between *literacy* and *use* requires further analysis, and I will return to this point later in the article, but the import of Lambert's statements is that foreign languages are tools for learning and practicing other disciplines, rather than media for interrogating the conceptual and rhetorical presuppositions of disciplines - abilities that are central to innovative inquiry. The type of cross- campus collaboration supported by LAC and CLAC may be laudable, but it ought not be misinterpreted as interdisciplinary. These approaches are rooted in the assumption that direct application is the best kind of relevance; consequently, these models do little to establish the importance of foreign language *studies* even if they do promote language *learning.*

STUDY ABROAD

In order to address what they described as Americans' lack of global literacy, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution four years ago to declare 2006 as the Year of Study Abroad, a gesture accompanied by the creation of a fellowship program for overseas study. Citing statistics from 2002, the official resolution notes that 80% of the U.S. population may believe that study abroad is important, but as of 2007 only around 1% of students actually ended up studying in another country (Obst, Bhandari & Witherell, 2007, p. 6). While the number has risen in the last

few years, the majority of students who go abroad participate in programs that run for 8 weeks or less with only 4% in programs that last an entire academic year or longer (Institute of International Education, 2009). In particular, shorter programs typically offer courses for just their students, who are also housed together in dorms; thus, the American students are insulated within the program and contact with the foreign culture is primarily through organized excursions (see Burn, 1991, p. 256). For many students the primary motivation for studying abroad is not always language acquisition, thus the fact that they will be surrounded by other English-speaking peers, is not necessarily perceived as something negative. English-speaking countries remain favored destinations for American students, with the United Kingdom topping the list and Australia and Ireland also appearing in the top ten. An increasing number of university departments in fields such as business, engineering, and pharmacy offer programs abroad in non-English speaking countries without a language component, stationing the students in institutes and internships for which English is the *lingua franca* and knowledge of a foreign language is considered a *soft skill*, a desirable but not integral addition to their résumés.

Given the small minority of students who study abroad, the short duration of their stays, and the preference for Anglophone locales and coursework, the conventional wisdom that such programs are better suited for fostering interculturally competent global citizens than in-class experiences requires further examination. While there is some evidence that students' *global perspective*, *cultural sensitivity* and openness to *cultural diversity* are enhanced through study abroad (e.g. Carlson & Widamen, 1988; McCabe, 1994; Sell, 1983; Wallace, 1999), multiple studies have also complicated this assertion. In a study of American students studying in Japan, Mizuno (1998) found that prior cultural exposure positively impacts both social and academic experiences while living abroad. Kitsantas (2004) found that the single greatest predictor for the development of cross-cultural skills and global understanding was whether students treated these as explicit goals of study abroad. These findings complement previous claims by Gao and Gudykunst, (1990) and more recent claims by Allen (2010), Paige, Cohen and Shively (2004) and Shively (2010) that cross-cultural training programs are needed to help students to productively cope with culture shock and to facilitate cultural awareness and cross-cultural effectiveness. They add to the findings of a study of cross-cultural tandem projects using computer-mediated communication by Ware (2005), in which it was demonstrated that students' contact with peers from other cultures did not necessarily lead to intercultural awareness or understanding.

The studies cited above suggest that instructors here at home have an important role to play in preparing students to study abroad and should provide a word of caution to those who might see study abroad as an alternative to rather than an aspect of university-level foreign language study. While study abroad can be a powerful and life-changing experience – as many professors of language and culture, including the author of this article, can attest first-hand -, if students are to become more interculturally competent and aware through their sojourns, they must first perceive these abilities as important goals, have some understanding of what they entail and have an idea of how they can go about attaining them.

THE STUDY OF CRITICAL LANGUAGES

In the last almost a decade since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, numerous government sponsored programs have been created in order to increase the number of Americans learning less commonly taught languages (LCTLs). In the context of national

security this category of languages is mostly synonymous with critical languages, those considered central to the financial and defense efforts of the state.[iii] An example of one such program is The National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), which was started by President Bush in 2006 and continues to be funded by millions of U.S. dollars. The NSLI offers programs for high school students who wish to learn certain LCTLS – a list that for the 2010/2011 school year is limited to Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Farsi, Russian, or Turkish. Although the rationale for the program is couched in the language of tolerance and intercultural competence, the choice of languages suggests that concerns about national defense guide the program. The languages supported by the NSLI overlaps with the more extended list covered by the Critical Language Study Program (CLS), a comparable program that provides 7-10 week immersion study for undergraduate and graduate level university students. Languages to be offered through 2010 CLS institutes include: Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bangla/Bengali, Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Punjabi, Russian, Turkish, and Urdu.

As is the case with the two trends that I previously discussed - languages across the curriculum and study abroad programs - it is difficult to take issue with the basic premise that more Americans should be learning world languages that have previously been neglected in our institutions of secondary and tertiary education; however, some of the ways in which critical languages have been promoted in recent years should be cause for concern for scholars and teachers of foreign languages and cultures at U.S. colleges and universities. In practice, these efforts only minimally translate into financial or institutional support for university language programs, since the funding is notoriously fickle and much of it is channeled into government run institutions or newly created programs, rather than pre-existing departments (see Walther, 2007, p. 7). In fact, critical languages are often treated as replacements for more commonly taught languages, and their implementation is regularly accompanied by the reduction rather than expansion of language and culture teaching overall (see Edwards, 2004, p. 269-270; Holquist, 2006, p. 8). Intellectually, it is difficult to reconcile the MLA's charge to foster *translingual and transcultural competence,* an ability to operate in and between multiple symbolic systems, (MLA, 2007) with languages and cultures that are essentially framed as *enemy.* The status of critical language is usually assigned based on national conflicts, which locks languages into the hegemonic "tripartite entity of language-culture-nation" (Scollon, 2004, p. 271). Instead, as Scollon argued in a *Modern Language Journal* discussion of foreign language study post-911, the "real, day-to-day power of the nation state, that is, its ability to get information, assess information, communicate information, and, of course, disinformation (which may be a higher priority) derives from language and culture as being complex, diverse, multifarious, slippery, changing, unstable, or even indeterminate because that is how language really is on the lips and bodies and texts of people throughout the world" (Scollon, 2004, p. 273).

IMPLICATIONS OF CURRENT TRENDS

Scollon's (2004) critique of defense-driven language study cited above could, with slight modification, be applied to all three of the approaches that I have discussed here. Both the assumption that students will gain language proficiency and intercultural competence through a sort of osmosis during a study abroad or other immersion experience, and the assertion that simply working with materials from another discipline in another language will enable students to adopt an international perspective rest on the belief that there are other, "foreign" meanings out there and that our students simply need to come into contact with them. Scollon's point is

that meanings are not somehow hidden in the other language, but are themselves complicated, shifty, and subject to revision.

Of course, study abroad, LAC, and critical language programs manifest themselves in a variety of ways and many fall outside of the general schemes that I have described; however, because they have played an integral role at many institutions in increasing enrollments and visibility for foreign language departments, they are the primary public faces for language and literature departments today. For this reason, it is of eminent importance that these programs be used to discourage conceptual reductionism of the subjects that we research and teach. This requires that language, literature, and culture departments not only broadcast themselves as experts in the linguistic and cultural practices mapped out by the nationally, geographically, and linguistically oriented monikers that identify them, but that they also affirm that they are uniquely situated to attune students' to "the multivoiced and dialogized discourse that characterizes the production and distribution of knowledge in the globalized information-society" (Hansen, 2004, p. 124). For, as scholars such as Canagarajah (2007, p. 94) and Pennycook (2010, p. 9) have argued, even global English is manifest in local processes and practices, which are sensitive to unpredictable environmental factors of the sort that are heightened in an explicitly multilingual encounter.

In today's social reality, fluency ceases to be an assurance of international transposability and learning a language involves not only the ability to translate, but the ability to respond and adapt to new meanings and new contexts. In other words, globalization results in a surplus, rather than a homogenization of meanings, and foreign language, literature, and culture classrooms are one of the privileged spaces where the processes of communication can be slowed down and made into objects of inquiry. Exactly because language and literature classrooms are somewhat removed from the pressures of content learning and the life worlds of immersion and diplomacy, we can use this space to revel in *miscommunication* and pause to consider what we or others *have* and *might have* said.[iv]

In our classrooms, we can better teach language as multivoiced and dialogized discourses bearing complicated, shifting meanings by including some of the following practices:

- Systematically using translation and translations to highlight differences in meaning between the L1 and the L2 version of the same text and to consider the extent to which translation is also an act of interpretation. For example, students can consider how a published translation from the 1950s differs not only from the eighteenth-century German original, but also from their 2011 renderings.

- Bringing into the classroom transcripts from online communication (see Ware, 2005; Warner, 2004) and from recorded face-to-face communication, when the possibility exists, to ask students to reflect on their own linguistic choices in terms of style and position.

- Brainstorming with the students alternative ways in which a text could have been written, a speech act could have been realized, a description could have been performed, a dialogue could have been conducted and what the difference in meaning would have been (see McRae, 1996, p. 19; Kramsch & Nolden, 1996.

- Juxtaposing texts with similar informational content but different styles or genres, e.g., a text and its summary, a poem about love and a love story, a short story about a political execution and a newspaper article on that same event (see Simpson, 1996). Have

students consider how do different styles *mean* differently, while still conveying the same information?

- Enabling students to analyze their own affective and stylistic reactions to texts, by providing a metalanguage from pragmatics and related fields in order to question how utterances (including literary texts) index socially situated exchanges and the ways in which different texts are addressed such that our students, as L2 readers, feel legitimately included and excluded (see Gramling & Warner, 2010).

INTERNATIONALIZATION EFFORTS AND LANGUAGE MYTHS

It has been my contention in the above sections that the three main shapes which internationalization efforts relating to the humanities typically take – namely, LAC or CLAC initiatives, study abroad programs, and support for so-called critical languages – have been framed in ways that have discernible discursive effects on how people view language(s). In what follows, I more closely analyze what I see as the three main myths about the nature of language that have been propagated by contemporary internationalization practices, all of which contrast sharply with current theories from within the fields of literary and cultural studies and applied linguistics, whose practitioners are most often housed in departments of languages, literatures, and cultures. My hope is that by drawing attention to the disconnect between our self-promotion and our scholarly work, we can begin to formulate new ways of participating in institutional discourses, such as those on internationalization, and better use these types of programs as opportunities to expand student's understandings of concepts like *communication*, *culture* and *language*.

Myth 1: Language is a Tool or Skill

A recent article in the journal *Inside Higher Education* describes an intriguing example of how foreign languages become categorically excluded from efforts to internationalize or globalize institutional requirements. The article describes programmatic reforms at George Washington University, where faculty have voted this year to eliminate foreign language requirements and – even more startling – to no longer allow any general education credit for language courses (Jaschik, 2010, n.p.). Instead, students will now enroll in a "global perspectives" course that emphasizes "the ability to analyze and evaluate information, understand scholarly literature and argument, and formulate a logical argument based on that analysis." Quoting Teresa Murphy, an associate professor of American Studies at the university and chair of the faculty committee that initiated the curricular changes, the article ends with a final damning statement: while introductory foreign language may be "very important and very difficult," it does not fulfill these requirements - critical thinking "isn't learning grammar" (Jaschik, 2010, n.p.).

Most university faculty in foreign language departments would take issue both with the insinuation that what we do in our classrooms can be reduced to the learning of grammar and that it does not involve critical thinking; however, it is worth considering to what degree we ourselves may be complicit in advancing reductionist views of foreign language study. There is a tendency even within our own departments to bifurcate our educational endeavors into language and literature, lower-division and upper-division, practical and intellectual (Byrnes, 2002; Carter, 2010; Kramsch, Howell, Wellmon & Warner, 2007; Maxim, 2009; MLA Report, 2007; Seidl, 1998; Walther, 2007 & 2009).[v] The metaphors governing our language classes are

often transactional: "targets", "acquisition" and "information exchange". In our online self-presentations, conversations with other academic colleagues and even sometimes our discussions amongst ourselves, we have adopted the discourse of utility emphasizing our instrumental relevance to other fields and endeavors, by preparing students to communicate with an idealized speech community of native speakers.[vi] The impression given is that language and culture are practical skills to be acquired, and that what we do in our beginning level courses has little to do with critical thinking or deeper understandings of culture and difference.

The emphasis on linguistic skills is linked to the lingering influence of the proficiency movements of the 1980s, which were driven by pressure to turn away from the structural analysis that shaped grammar-translation methods and philological study in favor of more authentic, meaningful language use. Successful foreign language learning came to be synonymous with communicative competence, a capacity which in turn was often gauged by a person's ability to "get his or her point across," and when necessary to "negotiate for meaning". Although the term communicative competence can be traced back to the work of Dell Hymes and his anthropologically inflected view of language as historically and socially situated, the pedagogical focus has remained on information-exchange, usually in the context of oral, face-to-face interaction. Communicative language teaching has become the dominant model of language pedagogy over the past four decades, yet in the past several years it has fallen under fire for its inattention to content (Swaffar, 2006), its restrictive conceptualizations of language use and acquisition (Kramsch, 2006; Block, 2002), and even its legitimacy as an attainable goal for postsecondary foreign language education (Schulz, 2006). In the "Perspectives" section of the *Modern Language Journal* titled "Interrogating Communicative Competence as a Framework for Collegiate Foreign Language Study", in which the articles by Kramsch (2006), Schulz (2006), and Swaffar (2006) appeared, editor Heidi Byrnes (2006) goes so far as to suggest that the emphasis on oral speaking abilities in our language classes may be limiting our students from developing toward "high functional multilingualism" (p. 574). As Byrnes (2006) explains "as the profession is being challenged, in the current globalized and multilingual environment […] oral communicative approaches may themselves be creating conceptual and practical ceiling effects that need to be addressed." (p. 574). While communicative language teaching has proven to be effective for getting students to talk, the pedagogical methodologies that have most often been adopted under this approach offer little space for learners to critically reflect on the ineffability of meaning, the elusiveness of translation, and the potential symbolic and social excesses of what they say.

The conceptualization of language study as the acquisition of basic communication skills facilitated through grammar paradigms and vocabulary lists leaves humanities departments susceptible to being positioned as service disciplines. This parallels a general shift in Anglo-American education over the last couple of decades towards - in the words of Norman Fairclough (1995) - "seeing knowledge operationally, in terms of competence . . . and towards seeing education as training in skills" (p. 239).[vii] In response to these institutional pressures, some scholars and practitioners from foreign language disciplines have argued that it makes strategic sense to sell the practical uses of language and culture, and they suggest that it is even a matter of self-preservation (e.g. Bernhardt, 1997). Others have cautioned against the commodification of language study (Holquist, 2006; Kramsch et al, 2007; Kramsch, 2006 & 2007) on the basis that it encourages reductionist views of language and culture.

At issue in this debate are the oppositions that I have already referenced in this article, the oppositions Richard Lambert (1989) summarized through his call for *use* not *literacy*. If language

is taught as the mastery of a skill set rather than, say, an ongoing struggle to participate in dynamic, socially-constituted systems of semiosis, then – to paraphrase Teresa Murphy of George Washington University (Jaschik, 2010, n.p.) – it has nothing to do with critical thinking and, furthermore, the intellectual inquiry that characterizes many upper-division literature and culture courses has little to do with practical language abilities. The latter viewpoint is represented well in an article by Brustein (2007) titled "The global campus: Challenges and opportunities for higher education in North America," which was published in the *Journal of Studies in International Education*, one of the primary scholarly publications devoted to the topic of internationalization. Brustein, an associate provost for international affairs at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, makes an impassioned case for the importance of foreign language to the *global competence* of American university students, only to then focus in on ways in which administrators can extend language study beyond departments of languages and literature, whose faculty, he states, "have limited interest and few resources to teach foreign languages relevant to students who plan to major in other disciplines than their own (p. 390)." This echoes the findings of Bernhardt (1997) who offered the eye-opening indictment that although the colleagues whom she interviewed almost universally agreed that familiarity with the language and even of the belles-lettres of another culture was important, many of them also believed that language and literature departments were not properly imparting this knowledge. When language is understood as a tool, departments of language and literatures sink quickly into a spiral of doublethink in which they are both too practical and too impractical to be of any relevance. The legitimacy of the assumed dichotomy between literacy and ability and the consequent inference that the intellectual is by definition not practical requires further examination and will be the focus of the following section.

Myth 2: The Practical is Not Intellectual, The Intellectual is Not Practical

New conceptual models within applied linguistics inspired by sociocultural theory (e.g. Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), language ecology (e.g. van Lier, 2004; Kramsch, 2002; Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008), and complexity theory (e.g. Larsen-Freeman, 1997; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Wildner-Bassett, 2002) have focused our attentions on the ambiguities of language and the symbolic dimensions of meaning, which had been downplayed within the pedagogical rubric of communicative language teaching. These theoretical discussions have been complemented by the development of literacy-based approaches (e.g. Byrnes, 2005; Kern, 2000 & 2002; Swaffar & Arens, 2005) and a renewed interest in textuality (e.g. Byrnes, Crane, Maxim, & Sprang, 2006; Magnan, 2004; Maxim, 2009 in language teaching over the last several years. The concept of literacy, as it is being defined in contemporary applied linguistics and second language acquisition theory, places renewed emphasis on interpretation and critical awareness in language study, but it also maintains language use as an important objective of language study. Understood as "the use of socially-, historically-, and culturally-situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts" (Kern, 2000, p. 16), the notion of literacy problematizes the dichotomies of practice/use and intellectual/awareness by trading metaphors of transaction for design. Given its ambiguous status as both a noun and a verb, product and practice, the notion of design captures both pre-existing resources for making meaning and the process by which a specific speaker combines them in a particular context. Meanings are not merely exchanged, but constructed, confirmed and contested through language, which makes the assessment of a given utterance's "effectiveness" far from straightforward. For this reason, literacy-approaches value not only

the performance of speech acts, but also critical language awareness. In literacy-based approaches communication continues to top the list of pedagogical objectives, but it has been expanded to include a wide array of modes and media and it is understood to encompass a variety of different social and cognitive functions beyond "getting one's point across". Language is not conceived of as a tool, but as systems of symbolic affordances and loosely corresponding moves within social fields. An intellectual engagement with linguistic discourse is encouraged such that learners can potentially take on the role of "participant users" (Magnan, 2004, p. 97).

In discussions of internationalization outside of the humanities, the word literacy has also surfaced in the phrase "global literacy". While precise definitions of this concept are as elusive as those for the broader term "internationalization." Schuerholz-Lehr (2007) offers the following comprehensive description, which emerged from discussions during a cross-disciplinary curricular re-design workshop for faculty and teachers conducted at a Canadian university:

> Ability to function effectively in the global community. Concern with the condition of all human beings, no matter where they live. Acquiring an understanding of what is happening around the world, and not judging but respecting others' rights to live those differences (Bender-Slack, 2002). Contrary to cultural relativism or ethnorelativism that denotes a theoretical framework which assumes that cultures must be understood relative to one another and that behavior always needs to be assessed within its cultural context (Bennett,1993), global literacy focuses on individuals' values, belief systems, and behaviors (Schuerholz-Lehr, 2007, p. 183).

As we try to carve a niche for the humanities in institutional internationalization efforts, it is helpful to compare this discipline non-specific definition of *global literacy* with the notion of *literacy* as it is being currently discussed within the field of applied linguistics.[viii] While both concepts entail some degree of self- reflection, a recognition of differences in attitudes, behaviors, and world views, the relation of these individual disparities to cultural schemas and local practices is downplayed and perhaps even rejected in the definition of global literacy espoused in Scheuerholz-Lehr's article. This may in some part be connected to the fact that language is distinctly absent from her set of terms, a list that includes intercultural competence, global awareness, and world-mindedness (Scheuerholz-Lehr, 2007, p. 181). Later in the article she does cite a study by Olson and Kroeger (2001), which found that advanced proficiency in a language other than English and substantive experience abroad were positively correlated with global competence as defined by the researchers, however, as in the previously mentioned discussions of internationalization, the role of languages and cultures is largely marginalized. Global literacy for Scheuerholz-Lehr's group is a cognitive framework, an attitude, a stance. Without diminishing the value of such a mindset, I would like to suggest that excluding language study from global literacy and downplaying the symbolic systems of culture, leads us to lose - to quote Holquist's words - "the humility that comes from never forgetting that we are in signs" and "the ineluctable foreignness of language itself" (even when we think we are speaking our mother tongue) (Holquist, 2002, p. 79). Without this recognition, literacy loses even its metaphoric sense of *reading* as *interpreting* and is rendered a competence or a proficiency that allows individual to look past rather than to recognize differences in values, belief systems, and behaviors.

Myth 3: Intercultural Competence is Located in a Mono-Symbolic World

The concept of global literacy described above is closely connected to another theoretical construct that is prevalent in both discussions of international education and theories of second language teaching and learning – intercultural competence. The desired outcome of internationalization is in many cases described in terms of an "interculturally competent" student body; however, this complex concept is often left under- or undefined (see Deardorff, 2006, p. 241). Perusing the chapters of a comprehensive publication such as the *Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (Deardorff, 2009), it quickly becomes clear that definitions of this term, ideas about its educational implementation, and understandings about what is at stake in its development vary widely across geographic and disciplinary spaces.

As a pedagogical framework for foreign language teaching in the U.S., intercultural competence has been responsible for a heightened recognition of the role of cultural paradigms in language learning. In the space of this essay, it would be impossible to exhaustively discuss the massive volume of scholarly literature on intercultural competence, its theorization, its development, and its assessment; however, Altmayer's (2006) categorization of the work on intercultural competence into three strands – pragmatic, pedagogical and hermeneutic - can help to paint a quick picture of the different approaches to this concept.

Pragmatic models posit intercultural competence as an aspect of communicative competence, stressing the ability to communicate successfully and culturally appropriately in cross-cultural contexts (e.g. Byram, 1997; Brislin & Cushner, 1996; Fantini, 2000). The primary educational objective for language educators in pragmatic models is to foster learners' evolution into "intercultural speakers" (Byram, 1997) with the ability to recognize and resolve misunderstandings that might arise due to distinct social and cultural experiences. The pedagogical concept of intercultural competence, sometimes also called intercultural learning, is typically situated in a multicultural, global society, in which – it is argued – tolerance of diversity is a necessary component of general education (e.g. Bach, 1998; Gochenour, 1993; Seelye, 1996). Learners must be prepared to deal with the various inter- and intracultural differences with which they will be confronted. This approach stresses the kind of empathy captured in the metaphor "putting oneself in the other's shoes" in order to better understand the *foreign* viewpoints of others. The hermeneutic view of intercultural competence – sometimes called intercultural sensitivity - entails a similar change in perspective. Through their engagement with the foreign culture, learners acquire access to a new way of viewing the world that differs from that of their own culture (e.g. Bennett, 1993; Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003). The moral and political implications of intercultural learning and intercultural understanding share in common the assumption that tolerance and acceptance are key attributes of the enlightened, educated individuals we (presumably) hope students become in an internationalized higher education curriculum.

The pragmatic approaches to intercultural competence, which emphasize communication and even linguistic awareness, are closely connected to fields of second language acquisition and teaching, and in fact many of their most prominent proponents work in those disciplines. The pedagogical and hermeneutic approaches - which more easily side-step linguistic aspects of interculturality - are more prevalent in the broader literature on internationalization in higher education. This is symptomatic of approaches to internationalization outside of the fields of second and foreign language teaching learning; in spite of the focus on cultural diversity, human beings are more often than not depicted as oddly monolingual, or perhaps more accurately

monosymbolic. Thus, one of the most-cited theorists of intercultural sensitivity, Milton Bennett offers a developmental model in which the desired educational outcome is represented as a shift through three phases of enthocentricism (denial of difference, defense against difference, and minimization of difference) and into three phases of ethnorelativism (acceptance of difference, adaptation to difference and integration of difference). Differences are described in terms of behavioral patterns and worldviews, but little attention is paid to the discursive i.e. the linguistic and semiotic mediation of these differences or to the potential incompatibility of the symbolic systems within which different actions and utterances participate. The abilities valorized within Bennett's framework of intercultural sensitivity - the tolerance of ambiguity, the ability to adapt and overcome differences - are necessarily abstract; without recourse to a theory of semiosis or, more specifically, a theory of language as a social-semiotic practice. In this framework it is not possible to fully account for the fact that the different ways in which we compartmentalize and order the world around us are at times difficult to articulate and may even be structurally incommensurable.

In an article titled "Was bleibt? After class and after culture: Intercultural German Life" (2008), Alison Phipps challenges the theoretical usefulness of the core concepts of *culture* and *competence*, and argues instead for "intercultural being" as the educational aim of foreign language study. In her critique of "culture" Phipps voices another common complaint about intercultural models, namely that they portray individuals as first and foremost representatives of (at least) two, distinct, relatively stable cultures (see also Altmayer, 2006, p. 47-48). The site of learning is often taken to be the "intercultural encounter" in which the learner takes on an outsider position vis-à-vis the foreign culture. Teaching towards "intercultural being", Phipps (2008) argues, "moves beyond culture with what it knows about culture and reflects firmly on the symbolic and ethical significance of what it thinks it knows (p. 231)." The intended outcome of culture learning is not then cultural knowledge for the purpose of understanding, but heightened critical reflection on the very categories through which we define culture. In other words, we ought to not only teach about German or Chinese or Italian culture, but also encourage students to question what we mean when we speak of or attempt to represent a particular culture, and what we obscure when we conflate nation, culture, and language. In her book *The Multilingual Subject* (2009), Claire Kramsch describes how even in the wake of the contemporary boom in applied linguistic scholarship on bilingualism and multilingualism, discussions of foreign language learning contexts often continue to conceptualize their learners' subjectivities, identities, and the conceptual paradigms within which they operate as secure and constant (see also Block, 2002; Pavlenko, 2006). In the ecological view of language, inherent in both authors' approaches, speaking a language involves living in and through a dynamic matrix of emergent linguistic and semiotic relations. Kramsch (2009) and Phipps (2008) are pointing to a lacuna in both theoretical and empirical SLA research and in our understanding of when and how *language learners* become *bilinguals,* what constitutes and controls the degree of participation in the new symbolic fields afforded through the learning of a new language, and what our role as educators can and should be in this process.

By reconceptualizing the process of foreign language learning in terms of "intercultural being" (Phipps, 2008) or "multilingual subjectivity" (Kramsch, 2009), these scholars also more or less directly thematize the central problem with the proficiency movement's focus on "competence". If defined as possessing "requisite or adequate ability or qualities" (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*) to accomplish some activity, "competences" can only describe the discrete capacities enabled by the kind of "social miracle of today's rich, intercultural life", as Phipps describes it (2008, p. 228) and not our plays and parries within it. The mindset of

internationalization foregrounds mobility, both in the sense of literal movements between diverse geographic locations and figurative movement between cultures that is often associated with "bridge" metaphors; cultures and languages, however, are conceived as relatively stabile and as conceptually distinct from the individuals and groups who live in and through them. The common image of the interculturally competent individual as a transnational traveler with the ability to effectively mediate between various cultural and linguistic differences oversimplifies the polyphony and conceptual conflict that reside in what we typically identify as a single language or culture. While we cannot anticipate and teach towards every local context in which our students might find themselves speaking the languages of our classrooms we can prepare our students for the multisymbolic world by viewing *comprehension* as merely a pedagogical point of departure. It is only by destabilizing meanings that have become frozen in the practice of understanding and being understood, that we can make students do a "double take" and reconsider what gets glossed over in communication. In this way we can use the space of the foreign language, literature, or culture classroom to foster students awareness of the meanings that are in excess of what we comprehend, and in particular those that get lost in translation.

Beyond the Language Myths

In his writing on self-presentation, Erving Goffman (1959) distinguishes between information that individuals admittedly and advertently *give* about themselves and the inexplicit, often intentional signals that they *give off* (p. 2). In our best attempts to present our relevance in a way that is easily apprehensible to our students, colleagues, and to the public, we must remain vigilant of the undesirable and downright inaccurate information that we might be *giving off*. If, in the name of outreach and program expansion, we peddle the study of languages and cultures as the acquisition of a prefabricated skill-set for the global market and not as a worthwhile area of inquiry in and of itself, then the myths that I have outlined here stand to follow, and *language* and *culture* become, as Barthes (1972) describes, "material worked for communication" (p. 110), robbed of social and symbolic life. Without understating the central importance of being able to communicate across languages and cultures, we should also use the time that students spend in our classrooms to complicate their presuppositions about what a language is and what it means to use it, and to question the very categories through which we understand cultures and what it means to analyze or participate within them. This requires that we conceptualize curricula that are not only meaning-oriented (see Maxim 2009, p. 128), as all communicative and textually-focused curriculum in some sense are, but in which the processes and histories through which meanings are created and in some cases sedimented are themselves a subject of inquiry. This interrogation of words, phrases, and sayings as moving texts, and the ensuing estrangement of communication is essential to critical thinking and is indispensable for individuals in a globalized world. Without it, the myths of *language* and *culture* become accomplices in the propagation of a brand of internationalization that ironically excludes languages and cultures as they are actually studied by scholars across the diverse fields of the humanities.

The following are some examples of curricular innovations, which work to complicate or undercut the language myths that I have described above:

▪ As suggested by recent curricular innovations at a variety of institutions, applied linguists in foreign language departments can join efforts with their literature colleagues to offer courses for majors and for graduate students that deal explicitly with multilingualism, language and discourse, language and power, and literary linguistics.ix

These courses allow applied linguists and literary scholars to contribute their unique awarenesses of how various types of language are socially embedded in shifting landscapes of linguistic markets.

- The creation of degree programs or minors in language studies, such as the Minor of Applied Language Studies created at the University of California, Berkeley, can give students in a variety of disciplines an understanding of the workings of language and the construction of meaning that will serve them well in their future academic and professional lives.

- Graduate programs such as the Ph.D. in Transcultural German Studies at the University of Arizona encourage students with an emphasis in both pedagogy (applied linguistics) and those with a focus on literary and cultural studies to minor in the other area. Such programs work to create future teachers and professors with broader understandings of language acquisition, linguistic theory, textual analysis, and stylistic and aesthetic awareness, and who, with these combined insights, may be better prepared to teach and talk about language in its many complexities.

FINAL WORDS: KEEPING LANGUAGE CENTRAL

The ways in which we teach and research shapes public perceptions of our academic subjects. Teaching languages as practical skills or tools for effective communication in order to appear more practically relevant is intellectually dishonest, because it by no means captures the complexity and the power of language use and acquisition (see Block, 2002). It is also pragmatically risky as it allows our colleagues in other disciplines, administrators, and policy-makers to overlook our relevance to the loftier pursuits of critical thinking and literacy necessary to foster truly globally aware citizens. If basic language teaching is dismissed as a service enterprise with no substance, courses in literary and cultural studies are criticized as being substantially irrelevant. Others have already eloquently stated the many intellectual arguments for reconciling the language and literary studies housed in our university foreign language departments (Kern, 2002), developing cross-curricular goals (Byrnes, 2002), and investigating our disciplinary commonalities (Swaffar, 1999). I have tried to demonstrate in this article that our inability to articulate well our common enterprise as departments of languages, literatures, and cultures has repercussions well beyond our intra-departmental structures. The bifurcation of our departments into basic language studies and literature and cultural studies has left it too difficult for outsiders – be they fellow colleagues, administrators, or potential students – to evaluate what exactly we bring to general education efforts such as internationalization, and as a result it is too easy for them to assign our contributions to extreme and opposing positions such as "practical" versus "intellectual".

The pressure to justify our existence is undeniable and we are right to want to position ourselves securely within the discourses of internationalization and globalization that are shaping the way in which universities are run today; however, rather than conforming ourselves to vaguely defined objectives to foster "international skills and knowledge", we should be using our expertise to critique strictly utilitarian discourses of internationalization and to complicate myths of language and culture. We should continue to endorse and develop exactly the kinds of internationalization efforts described above, but we should also use them as platforms for better articulating the insights of the past couple of decades of applied linguistic and cultural studies research which have forced those of us in foreign languages/humanities fields toward analytic models rooted in the complexity, rather than the transparency or translatability of social

and linguistic encounters. Maintaining the complexity of language in discussions might allow us to define our role in internationalizing higher education in terms of what we do well, namely questioning how "individuals and groups use words and other sign systems in context to intend, negotiate, and create meanings" (Swaffar, 1999, p. 7). And by returning foreignness to language, communication and social behaviors – both our own and others (see Marshall, 2008, p. 23) - we can hopefully prepare students more radically for the sublime messiness of their international and intercultural lives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

NOTES

i. Of the 10 ground rules for internationalizing institutions outlined by The Commission on International Education of the American Council on Education (1995), competence in at least one foreign language is ranked number 1. The first stated goal of the U.S. Department of Education, International Programs and Activities (2004) is to "increase U.S. knowledge and expertise about other regions, cultures, languages and international issues."

ii. See for example the resources for International Education listed on the web site of the American Council of Education.
(http://www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=InfoCenter&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPage Display.cfm&TPLID=23&ContentID=15877).

iii. It is important, however, not to conflate LCTLs with defense languages. There are in fact a number of programs and centers that promote the learning of less commonly taught languages for other purposes.

iv. An anonymous reviewer questioned how CBLT differs from the foreign language literature courses that have been traditional taught in language departments. In the approach that I am suggesting here it is important to emphasize that literary texts do not first and foremost represent moments along a literary-historical trajectory or members of a canon, but help us to expand the repertoire of discourses that we bring into the classroom.

v. In a response to the MLA report, Levine, Chavez, Crane, Melin, and Lovik (2008) take issue with the universality of this divisiveness, and cite evidence that this two-tiered system has been dissolving over the last decade.

vi. See Kramsch, Howell, Wellmon and Warner (2007) for a more extended critique of vaguely defined models of speech community in language pedagogy.

vii. See also Deborah Cameron's discussion of "communication, 'skills' and the 'new work order'" (Cameron, 2002, p. 71-74).

viii. In an interview for the journal Language and Intercultural Communication, James Gee questions the efficacy of the term "global literacy," reconfiguring the issue in terms of local literacy practices, which in the age of digital media are given nonlocal meanings and enabled to resonate in a multitude of contexts (St Clair & Phipps, 2008, p. 6).

ix. Programs such as the Ph.D. in Transcultural German Studies at the University of Arizona, which requires that students with an emphasis in pedagogy or literature and culture minor in the other area, aim to train future instructors and professors with an awareness of both language acquisition, textual analysis, and aesthetics.

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