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AUTHOR Alter, Maria P.
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ABSTRACT

Noting a 14.3 percent decline in student enrollment in college German-language programs between the fall terms of 1968 and 1970, an analysis of the situation is developed and proposals for reversing the trend are outlined. Six major sections discuss: (1) the sad evidence of figures and what they mean for German, (2) the foreign language crisis then and now, (3) 36 traditional reasons for retaining foreign language requirements, (4) the modern world and what foreign languages can do for it, (5) the modern reasons for studying foreign languages, and (6) the modern case for German. Concluding remarks stress the idea that German studies, in order to remain competitive in the curriculum, will have to find ways to become relevant for today's student. (RL)

ED 058809

# A MODERN CASE FOR GERMAN

## Maria P. Alter

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M. P. A.

# Foreword

Today, another kind of illiteracy and cultural parochialism also threatens. The interest in foreign languages has declined sharply. Traditional language requirements were clearly insufficient for giving most students any meaningful proficiency in a foreign tongue. This failing contributed to the demand to do away with the requirement, altogether, a demand that was sometimes acceded to. Whether or not it was, new experiments are called for, that will enable the student to use a foreign language in his or her other studies, particularly in the examination of other cultures.

Talcott Parsons
President
American Academy of Arts and Science

(From *A First Report; the Assembly on University Goals and Governance*, published by the American Academy of Arts and Science; p. 19)

# A MODERN CASE FOR GERMAN

I. The Sad Evidence of Figures and What They Mean for German
II. The FL Crisis, Now and Then
III. 36 Traditional Reasons for Retaining FL Requirements
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V. Three Modern Reasons for Studying FLs
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### I. *The Sad Evidence of Figures and What They Mean for German*

The most recent figures available for FL enrollment in colleges are quite disturbing:[1]

| Language | Enrollment in 359 2-yr and 4-yr colleges in 1968 (Fall) | in 1970 (Fall) | Percent change |
|---|---|---|---|
| French | 64,244 | 58,139 | -9.5 |
| German | 34,125 | 29,237 | -14.3 |
| Spanish | 67,003 | 69,482 | 3.7 |
| Italian | 4,652 | 5,583 | 20.0 |
| Russian | 5,750 | 4,491 | -21.9 |
| Latin | 6,917 | 5,021 | -27.4 |
| Greek | 3,296 | 2,513 | -20.7 |
| Other | 2,985 | 4,403 | 47.5 |

This sample is still small, and more complete data may change the picture to a certain extent. In fact, earlier figures, based on 153 colleges, were even blacker for most languages, showing decreases of 15.1 in French, 26.6 in Russian, 2.5 in Spanish, 31.4 in Latin, and an increase of only 7.1 in Italian; unfortunately, the only language which did not come out better at the later date is German, for which the decrease went from 13.7 to 14.3.[2] However, a few percent shift one way or another will not modify the basic lesson of this table: *Teaching of German in American colleges is in trouble.*

Of course, we all suspected it. For the last couple of years we have been raising our voices to sound the alarm, to look for causes, to search for remedies. Now we know. Yet the figures are even more alarming than our confirmed suspicions. Not because of the magnitude of set-backs, which optimists will minimize and pessimists magnify, finding them better or worse than circumstances seemed to warrant, but because of a pattern they make among the various languages. The last data, indeed, not only show that German is in trouble, but that, unless we succeed in reversing the trend drastically, it is in worse trouble than its direct competitors in the field of FL, and is heading straight toward even greater disasters. Unpleasant and hazardous as it may be, it is worthwhile to have a closer look at this pattern, to realize the perils it discloses, and perhaps better to understand the nature of the trouble.

1. A first puzzle is offered by the different rates of change among the three major FLs. In some ways the relative resistance of Spanish was to be expected: Large areas of the United States have a Spanish speaking population, Latin America is just south of the border, the trend toward urban studies and area studies benefits Spanish; in fact, Spanish has been a most dynamic discipline since the war, making extraordinary progress. The 3.7 percent change (if it is confirmed) actually represents a small absolute gain but probably a relative loss, since the total college population has increased proportionally. But this somewhat disappointing performance can probably be laid at the door of a single factor, the elimination of FL requirements, counteracted by the positive factors. The discrepancy between French and German raises a more complex problem. Neither profit from the special circumstances of Spanish. It may be argued that French could benefit from area studies centered on Africa, but no significant numbers

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seem to have been involved up till now, though the situation may change in the future. Both French and German have been in that sense more or less autonomous disciplines, relying on their own appeal, at least from an academic viewpoint. It is also true that for many years French benefited from a favorable prejudice while German, in the aftermath of two world wars, was viewed with disfavor. Yet the spectacular rise of German since 1957 showed that these prejudices no longer exert a strong influence, and it is most doubtful that they may explain the difference in the current recession of both languages. Finally the fact that French is better entrenched, has a larger base in secondary schools, and disposes of a greater reserve of potential teachers, could explain a variation in the rate of progress, when resources dictate the speed of the advance; in a process of resorption, this circumstance loses its relevance. The reason for the discrepancy must thus lie somewhere else, perhaps in the internal nature (or appeal) of the two languages. If the enrollment drop in German is relatively larger than in French, obviously German must be more vulnerable to various factors that are causing the general crisis of FLs. But why? Another pattern suggests at least a partial answer.

2. Let us compare the fate of Italian and Russian, the former showing a 20.0% increase, the latter a 21.9% decrease. Neither have ever been very popular. Both have always appealed only for "special" reasons. But the resemblance ends there. The differences are more important. In the first place, Italian enjoys an ethnical base in the United States, comparable, though on a much smaller scale, to Spanish. It has, so to speak, a built-in potential clientele among Italian communities, and to that extent can profit from the recent resurgence of ethnic identity. Russian, on the other hand, has comparatively few roots in American society, and has been implanted, as it were, artificially. The influence of these factors should not be discounted, especially since the tremendous rise in the "other" languages can probably be explained by similar causes (for they are mainly languages of minorities or associated with minorities: Hebrew, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Polish, Swahili, etc.). The losses experienced by the Classical languages perhaps reflect on opposite situation, which would account for the relatively better resistance of Classical Greek (closer to the spoken language of a minority) than Latin. On the other hand one should not overestimate this factor. After all, it does not seem to work for French and German, since French in that sense would be more like Russian, without a significant ethnic base (excepting Louisiana and a part of the Northeast not known to give an exceptional support to the study of French), whereas a large and very active population of German origin, especially in the Midwest and in Pennsylvania, should provide a base as in the case of Italian. Is there then another difference? A further factor, more subjective, and in terms of which French and Italian would contrast with Russian and German? Old stereotypes may provide the answer. The study of French and Italian has always been presented on conceived, and frequently engaged in, as a labor of love, and not for pragmatic reasons.[3] Assuredly, all sort of rationalizations tried and still try to justify this sentimental approach: Italian is musical and essential for music, French is international and the language of culture, etc. Few of these reasons, however, have a

clearly practical connotation. After all, to be cultured, etc. is a luxury, and the satisfaction it provides is best measured in self-contentment. Conversely, the main appeal of Russian and German has been basically pragmatic.[4] Not all their appeal, granted; students and teachers of German were and still are much more covered with the humanistic values of the language than its practical advantages. But stereotypes die hard, and the prevailing notion today still is that German is "good" for science and trade, and that Soviet scientific and technical achievements as well as the prominent role of the Soviet Union make it imperative to learn Russian. How often have we heard that German or Russian are "pretty" languages? And it is not a coincidence that German classes in college used to be populated by strongly motivated and ambitious young men, whereas French traditionally had more appeal among girls. Young ladies, until recently, were supposed to get "culture" and a well-rounded liberal education without much attention to professional or pre-professional training; and they could afford to study what pleased their fancy, i.e., glamorous, "pretty" languages; whereas boys had to be serious and think of their career. Doesn't it suggest that the dramatic enrollment drop in German (and even more so in Russian) reflects this pragmatic reputation of the language at a time when educational pragmatism itself is subject to attack. If so, then German is in real trouble, unless it can change its image, i.e., discover it can have a different appeal.

3. A third pattern offers both some hope and further cause for alarm, depending on our future course. Four languages in the table may be said to benefit from some type of idealistic appeal: French, Italian, Latin, and Greek. In all four cases this appeal is partly based on "culture," i.e., the concept of humanistic education which used to be prevalent in the Western World, especially from the XVIth to the XVIIIth century. To understand man, one was supposed to understand his cultural past, particularly along the privileged path from Greece to Rome to Italy to France. The two Classical Languages still rest their appeal to the non-specialist on this reverence for the past as the fount of the present;[5] and they are those which show the greatest losses. Italian, on the other hand, with more modest claims of this type, has been supplementing the "cultural" and "historical" appeal with other considerations, none particularly commanding or authoritative, so that no special single reason can be said to motivate students of Italian, but a variety of reasons suitable for individual cases. That, in the face of the pressure by competitive languages, armed with "better" rationale and – let us not forget the realities – more powerful organizations and greater facilities, so many students have chosen Italian indicates the strong role of personal motivations. And Italian progressed miraculously. French is somewhere in between. As a language of "culture" it probably suffers from the same handicaps as the so-called "dead" languages; but as a language of a living community, a medium of communication with other people, be they foreigners, it retains the rich variety of reasons which is the *forte* of Italian, and has a similar relevance to the "present." Within this framework, German stands close to Italian, and is probably less identified with the past than French. It is therefore alarming that its losses were relatively larger, though it is comforting to think

that they could be reduced in the future if this pattern prevails.

A series of factors seem thus to be at work, exerting uneven and contradictory influences. The existence of an ethnic minority associated with the language, and the role of the language as a live medium of communication today, are positive factors and should sustain the interest in German; on the other hand, its reputation as a practical language appears to have a particularly powerful negative effect, nullifying the positive influences. A downward trend is the final outcome, pointing again to the commanding role of the adverse influence. No doubt we can make a better use of the favorable elements and strengthen their effects, but only a radical change in the type of appeal exerted by German as a language will successfully reverse the trend. In other terms, the study of German must be made attractive and not utilitarian. All this, of course, is a hypothesis only, drawn from an incomplete set of enrollment figures. On the other hand, however, this hypothesis fits with the current mood of our clientele. There seems to be little doubt that the choice of a foreign language by the college student today is becoming increasingly more dependent on expectations for an individual self-satisfaction than on practical considerations. In that sense, the problem transcends German and concerns foreign languages as a whole.

## II. *The FL Crisis, Now and Then*

Specific problems besieging German are indeed but a part of the overall crisis of FLs. The figures quoted above may reveal surprising differences among individual languages, but their total gloomy impact should surprise no one. The great FL bubble burst officially in December 1969, when the new Ph.D.'s discovered at the MLA Convention that they "were a glut on the market."[6] There had been tremors before; but it took several more months for the awareness of the crisis to seep through the *academia* to the school system and to public knowledge. The *New York Times* front page article on 23 August 1970: "Study of Foreign Languages Declines," merely confirmed what the profession already knew: enrollments were down, language instruction in elementary and high schools was cut back, requirements were under attack in colleges, a new wave of isolationism was leading to a questioning of the value of foreign studies, students were losing their interest, methods and goals were criticized, problems of relevance were raised, new proposals saw the day.[7] The process thus briefly summarized actually took several years, and resulted from many changes on many levels. The first to be stricken were the earliest FLES programs which flourished in the fertile post-Sputnik years; while still multiplying in many areas, they began to wither in others by the early 60's as the enthusiasm of parents began to wane, problems of continuity occurred, and budgetary pressures started to cut off the frills. In a way, the first FLES programs had perhaps been too successful. After three or four years in elementary schools, the young linguistic prodigies descended upon junior high schools which were completely unprepared for this invasion. By the time the secondary system caught up with the demand, it was too late. Federal funds began to dry up. NDEA Institutes, in-training programs, all sorts of support dwindled from the mid-60's on. And soon the first rumblings were heard in colleges, most frequently taking the form of protest against FL requirements both for the undergraduate and graduate degrees.

The profession took up the challenge, admirably. In an effervescence reminiscent of the Sputnik years perhaps we did more creative thinking about FL teaching during the past three years than during the fat decade of 1957-1967. At first, instinctively sensing a malaise, then in full cognizance of the approaching perils, the professors banded together in new organizations, innovated programs, issued special publications, reappraised methods, called meetings, and debated far and wide the symptoms, the causes, and the solutions of the crisis. It is difficult to single out the most valuable contributions to this renaissance, for they were and are many. In the field of German, the most impressive undertaking will possibly prove to be a 2-year study on the National Potential for the Advancement of the Teaching of German in the United States, culminating in the December 1967 Symposium in Philadelphia and a Report published in 1968.[8] The creation of the ACGS (American Council on German Studies) is a direct outcome of this work, which opened new visits for German studies in a still optimistic and dynamic reaction to the first signs of stagnation. The next "landmark" document in the field reflects a much deteriorated situation; it is indeed a rear-guard battle that seems to have been fought in the monumental collection of *Comments on the Foreign Language Requirement by Department Heads*, collated and published by the AATG in 1969.[9] A similar evolution of mood took place in all FLs. In December 1968, Andre Paquette, Executive Secretary of the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages), celebrating the first anniversary of his organization, spoke of "A Measure of Hope;" he recalled a recent symposium on FLES problems, the alarms of Department Heads, and the warning editorials in the *Foreign Language Annals;* he called for a greater cooperation of all interested parties and disciplines; he urged the profession to re-examine its goals and methods; but finally he reaffirmed his faith in the dream of a bilingual society.[10] It was an uplifting speech, with undercurrents of fear. Barely a year later, in the bulletin of the newly created *ADFL* (Association of Departments of Foreign Language), Douglas W. Alden's report on "The Threat to the College Language Requirement" (March 1970) tolled the knell of these hopes.[11] The situation continued to deteriorate. The most disturbing factor was that it did so in the face of a vigorous improvement and modernization of the FL teaching. The secondary school FL bulletins during these years abounded in innovative ideas and reports on successful new programs;[12] college departments were busily designing and implementing better and more attractive curricula;[13] new attention was given to the problem of teacher training. Were all these reforms insufficient or ill-advised? Was there something wrong in the basic nature of FL teaching, which could not be remedied? These questions resulted in increasingly open and penetrating self-evaluations, such as the devastating "Three Dozen Reasons Why College Foreign-Language Instruction is in Trouble" by Harlan Lane.[14] And again meetings mushroomed, papers were read, volumes were issued on FL problems,[15] new solutions were proposed. But to no great avail. Finally – today – a certain consensus seems to be reached on one point at least: While a lot remains to be improved in the FL teaching, and even more must be changed or added to have FLs move with the times, this isn't the way to turn the tide. For the current crisis stems not from FL studies, but from outside. In simplest terms, our entire clientele is turning away from us. Students, parents, our own colleagues, and the powers that be, no longer believe that one should study FLs.

This unanimity, obviously, is largely coincidental. In the case of Federal and State support, for example, the phasing out of assistance appears to be more a by-product of a general reorientation of priorities in face of economic stress than a concerted discrimination against FLs; other disciplines suffer equally. Students who clamor for the end of FL requirements do so within the context of a rebellion against all requirements (English included) and in the name of an abstract freedom of choice. In the academia, FLs share the misfortunes of humanities *in toto*. And the indifference or hostility of parents often reflects political isolationism. But these distinctions are not reassuring. Whatever the specific reason, the reaction of each group reveals indeed two negative assumptions about FLs which may be expressed in various ways and feed on various pretexts but are more dangerous than any of them. In brutal terms, these two assumptions are: 1) The study of FLs has failed to accomplish what it promised to do, and 2) The study of FLs is "not relevant." Or, even simpler, FL studies were a failure and are futile.

These ideas are not new. In the pre-Sputnik era they justified keeping FLs in the ghettos of tiny academic departments and elite private institutions. Their resurgence today recalls the crucial years of 1957 and 1958, when the profession, rising up to challenge as it does now, and fighting the same prejudices, achieved its greatest victory. In a true American tradition the Sputnik crisis was a success story. The embattled profession gained the support of the Government, fired the public opinion, conquered the students, seduced the parents, and the old specters of failure and futility were exorcised. Many still remember these glorious years, and some draw from their memory "a measure of hope:" We did it once, we shall do it again. Unfortunately, while similar in many respects, the two crises cannot be equated. The decisive difference is a simple but dramatic matter of dynamics. In 1957, the profession was facing the exhilarating task of raising a deplorable status; in 1971, it faces a threat to its prosperity. Fifteen years ago, it was moving with an upward trend; today it is bucking a downward trend; it had nothing to lose, and it has nothing to gain; and the effervescence which was then based on hope is now grounded in fear. The story of FLs in America, since Pastorius began teaching German to children around 1700, has been a story of ups and downs, We just went from down to up; are we on the way down again?

Most people in our profession are aware of dangers of complacency. In the Sputnik crisis they seek not reassurance but a source of inspiration. The discovery — or rediscovery — at that time that a language was a live medium of communication and that students must be taught first to speak and then to read, played a decisive part in disproving the notion of an inherent failure of FL studies. In the same spirit, today, the discovery — or rediscovery — that language does not exist in an audio-oral vacuum but must relate to emotional, intellectual, cultural, and social preoccupations is dictating the current innovations in teaching. The realization, at that time, that teachers must learn to speak the language they teach in order to be effective, is echoed today in new teaching programs which stress less literary, and more pedagogical, linguistic, and cultural background. In a sense, our response may be less spectacular than in 1957, but it is perhaps more serious, and less vulnerable to disappointment. We do not have a Nelson Brooks, nor an audio-oral Bible; we have instead a variety of experiments, a contest of approaches, and much more experience upon which to build. It is characteristic, for example, that the 1968 German Symposium devoted much space to the ways and means of upgrading future high-school teachers,[16] or that Douglas W. Alden, in a journal normally concerned with college FL departments, followed up his gloomy prophecy about the fate of FL requirements with an ardent call for new teacher training programs.[17] There are other examples which indicate that the concern for the effectiveness of FL studies promises to be as fruitful as during the Sputnik crisis. The alleged failure of FL studies will be disproved once again. In the last analysis, as teachers of FLs, we do not have to try to convince our clientele that we can teach successfully; we have to prove it; and we are on the right path.

What we are failing to do, however, is to persuade our clientele anew that FLs *are* worth studying and *must* be studied; that they are not futile, but necessary; that 1971 has its own reasons, as 1957 did, for studying FLs. Not that we are not trying. Again inspired by the memory of the Sputnik crisis, our profession has been issuing forth an impressive mass of manifestoes, publications, papers, essays, emulating William Riley Parker and seeking to demonstrate the need for FL studies. This campaign reached its climax in response to a specific issue: FL requirements in colleges. In the defense of these requirements, the profession has found indeed both a testing ground for its arguments, and a cause which mobilized all those who believe in the need for FLs. The arguments skillfully couched in print by the leading exponents of the FLs found their way to the most secret and most open forums of Academia, small committees and student newspapers, faculty meetings and faculty clubs, overflowing to reach the public at large, perhaps the authorities, and involving practically everybody. Rightly or wrongly, the battle against the assumption of futility was thus joined on the field of requirements. The issue is still uncertain, but it is time to wonder why we failed to win as easily as we did after Sputnik; and perhaps we shall better understand why we are losing the larger battle for our clientele.

## III. *36 Traditional Reasons for Retaining FL Requirements*

There are various ways of looking at FL requirements. For the students, for example, they embody a paternalistic, if not authoritarian, attitude of the academic establishment which "knows better" what is good for them and forces on them a certain concept of education in order to mold them in a preconceived image. The stress is on requirements, not on the intrinsic value of FLs. For the administration, FL requirements are a delicate and horny issue, a potential powder keg which may explode into student confrontation or faculty revolt. For many FL professors the requirements are the direct and unfortunate cause of elementary classes overcrowded with resentful and uncooperative students, in short an obstacle to teaching interesting subjects to interested parties. None of these positions can be easily dismissed. There is, however, another concern which in the present context must have an overriding priority, i.e., "that the language requirement is the official formulation of a principle that the United States needs foreign languages."[18] If FLES were generalized, if 4-year sequences of FLs were compulsory in high schools, if a FL proficiency were required for admission to all colleges, the burden of sustaining this principle could be gratefully shifted to the elementary or secondary levels; but the system seems to work from the top to the bottom rather than the other way around, and the failure to enforce the principle on the college level runs the risk of undermining FLs on all the lower levels. It is significant, for example, that flyers put out by high school FL departments list college requirements as the main reason for study in FLs. Because of this symbolic and decisive role, FL requirements must be viewed, defended or abandoned, in terms of whether or not one believes in the general need for FLs in America. Arguments for FL requirements dovetail with arguments for the study of FLs; and they will convince students, colleges, administration, and the wavering members of the profession, to the very extent that they are able to convince them, and the public at large, that FLs are indeed not only useful, but necessary, and that a return to a monolingual society must be prevented.

This too is largely understood by the profession. The reasons most frequently quoted for retaining FL requirements rarely address themselves to the special objections of students or the pragmatic considerations of faculty and administration, but rather go back to the Sputnik days and, *mutatis mutandis*, refurbish the old arguments about the general necessity for FLs. Obviously, since they succeeded once, they must be excellent arguments, and it may be useful to recall them. Almost all have in common a unified concept of what a FL is, what it does, and what is involved in its learning. This concept of an ideal FL, of which the real FLs are, but concrete manifestations, may be questioned, especially insofar as "what it does" and "what is involved in its learning" are concerned. A "dead" language, for example, or an esoteric language with no available speakers does not allow for a direct contact with other human beings. A language with no written tradition cannot be learned in the same way as a literary language. However, most FLs used to satisfy requirements are indeed identical in these respects: They all constitute a system of signs through which an individual and a culture express themselves; they are used for communication and for coding knowledge; and their learning involves deep psychological processes of identification, differenciation, classification, systematization or relationships, etc. Arguments promoting FLs necessarily draw upon these three notions and could be presented in these terms. But since they are *arguments*, it seems more appropriate to organize them according to the type of appeal that they exert, i.e., their rhetorical intention. On the other hand, they are sufficiently well known, and found easily enough in a great number of writings, to justify dispensing with long quotations, and reducing the list to basic ideas.[19] As follows:

I. *Required study of FLs results in a personal gain for the student:*
  A. It improves his potential:
    1. Learning a FL increases intellectual capacities by exercising analytical and synthetic faculties, memory, attention, etc. Scientific studies have shown that bilinguals perform better than monolinguals.[20]
    2. Required learning of FLs, especially during their earlier stages, develops will-power and self-discipline which are particularly needed for the assimilation of speech patterns and vocabulary.
    3. Learn a FL and foreign literature automatically enriches the personal culture of the student and diversifies its content.
    4. Studying a FL enables and accustoms the student to get an authentic knowledge of matters transmitted by language; he learns to shun second-hand information.
  B. It improves his understanding of:
    5. His own language, through comparison and identification of linguistic structures.
    6. His own culture, through comparison and identification of cultural structures, but also through the discovery that language always ex-

presses a culture.

7. Himself, through a better understanding of the language through which he expresses himself and of the culture which dictates his patterns of thinking and behaving.

C. It improves his approach to the world in:

8. Helping him to distinguish between the "words," and the things or actions that they represent; these relations are often different in a FL and he learns to discover their nature.
9. Teaching him principles of relativity and tolerance as he realizes that there is more than one way to say the same thing, and more than one set of rules followed by different speakers.
10. Providing him with the liberating experience of escaping acquired routine patterns of expression and discovering an expanded or new personality through a FL.

II. *Required study of FLs is a necessary part of a liberal education:*

11. FLs provide the only genuine access to the culture of foreign nations, for language and culture interact one with another, and both reflect the spirit of a people.
12. Study of FLs guarantees against provincialism and parochilaism which threaten a nation isolated from its neighbors.
13. Learning a FL leads to appreciating and understanding other people, both individuals and groups, in what they have in common, but also in their differences.
14. The major FL involved in requirements, and the cultures that they represent, are at the source of Western Civilization.
15. Only the mastery of a FL allows one to understand the great masterpieces of literature which reflect human fate and historical human situations.

III. *Required study of FLs will make better Americans:*

16. It will preserve the image of America as a cultured nation and dispel the notion of the primitive "Ugly American."[21]
17. It will win friends abroad, even with imperfect mastery; see the success of "Ich bin ein Berliner!"[22]

1 18. It will further peace through a better international understanding.

19. It is "likely" to form "more valuable citizens" by adding a FL to other skills and knowledge.[23]
20. It will preserve the prestige of the educational system in America at a time when other countries are strengthening their FL requirements.

IV. *There are various practical reasons for requiring FLs:*

21. They are needed as tools for other disciplines.[24]
22. They are needed to enable freshmen to major in FLs within a 4-year college career.
23. They are needed for the graduate reading examinations.
24. They are needed to prepare students for numerous vocational opportunities: Foreign Service, Business, Federal Agencies (both abroad and at home), Peace Corps, Foreign Study Programs, Research, Travel Agencies, Translating and Interpretation, etc.
25. They are needed during trips abroad which, in the age of Telstar,

Jumbo-Jets, and charter-flights, are becoming easier and cheaper, especially for students.

26. They are needed to "assure our future in the international marketplace," as foreign trade increasingly influences our economic life.[25]

V. *Finally, the FL requirements are dictated by the development of the modern world, in various ways:*

27. Because FL studies are an essential part of investigating modes of communication and their complex nature — a crucial problem in modern life.
28. Because, an anthropology has shown, languages makes man in many ways, and studying FLs shows an interest in man in general and the "other" in particular.[26]
29. Because the study of FLs, in an age torn by turmoil and suspicion, represents a humanistic endeavor "free of any kind of political, economic, social and ideological allegiance."[27]
30. Because, in an age of doubt and crisis, FL studies will help to achieve intellectual awareness and leadership.[28]
31. Because, in a world of quantitative structures, FL learning will shape "qualitative sensibilities of young people."[29]
32. Because the study of FLs benefits disadvantaged students, especially of foreign background, by putting them on the same level or ahead of others, and showing them that others may have as many troubles as they do.[30]
33. Because we are moving toward a "leisure time" civilization, and the pursuit of FLs may well fill hours of stultification with creative leisure.
34. Because the knowledge of FLs can perform a social service in areas with a heavy concentration of ethnic minorities.
35. Because it is time to provide a guidance to students and reaffirm the principle of authority.[31]
36. Because it is one world, where we are all involved with one another, and there are millions of German speaking, or French speaking, or Spanish speaking people around us.

Some of these reasons may be found questionable. Others are directed toward special groups only. Several contradict each other. All however, must have an appeal at least for some people, since otherwise they would not have been invoked by them. The great majority appear sensible and quite persuasive. This versatile barrage should have easily convinced students and faculty to keep requirements, and the general public to support FLs, repeating the Sputnik miracle.

Why then didn't it happen? Why do all these good reasons fail us? Their nature has not changed: if they were true in 1957, they are true now. Yet they worked then and do not work now. Nor have we been less forceful in presenting them, even when losing battles on the campuses. It must be therefore, since neither the reasons nor our efforts are at fault, that those to whom we are appealing have changed, and no longer want to listen. In other terms, that during these fifteen years society at large has evolved to the point where it needs new arguments, better fitted to its present mood. Or rather, better adapted to the different moods, or attitudes, or problems of its different groups, for, among the changes that affected it, a most important one brought about a greater fragmentation. At the time of Sputnik we were able to address students and faculty and parents and the authorities as if they were diversified, but essentially united sections of a single entity; practical, cultural, educational, political, idealistic reasons supported each other in evoking the same positive response among all of them. Today, not only do many of these reasons appear obsolete, but each sectional group reacts to them in a different way. It still may make sense, for example, to speak of good citizenship to the authorities, or stress practical gains at a PTA meeting, but neither approach will get much enthusiasm from the students. This fragmentation has some positive aspects, insofar as it allows us to hope that most of the traditional arguments can be salvaged, provided that they are used at the right time and with the right public. It demands, however, that our profession make an effort to understand the differences between the groups, the mood of each one, and finally, the general evolution of society to which we have to adapt. In short, this is the moment to realize that teaching of FLs does not exist in an academic vacuum, but profits or suffers from the general conditions of the *milieu.* The profession should remember that the 1957 renaissance was brought about by Sputnik, but also by our ability to adjust to the new situation it created, and to exploit it. The changes which shook our society in recent years have been even more dramatic than Sputnik's aftermaths. It is all the more surprising that most of our attention and effort during the current crisis has been centered on its internal manifestations – requirements, subsidies, teacher training – without taking much account of what was happening in the world outside. Any formulation of new strategies, new attitudes, new arguments must be preceded by taking a comprehensive look at the new society in which they will have to work.

## IV. *The Modern World and What FLs Can Do for It*

What then has happened since the Sputnik? Involvement in day to day changes, gradual erosion of traditions, dramatic events such as war tend to blind us to the radical transformation of society. To appreciate it fully, a certain distance is needed; let us jump over the intervening years and compare, or better, confront the state of affairs in the early 'seventies' with that in the late 'fifties.' Ours was at that time a dynamic and closely structured society. The social machinery was running rather smoothly after having recovered from the McCarthy tangle; racial and social injustices were attacked enthusiastically on many fronts with great hopes for orderly solution in a not too remote future. Economic difficulties were explained away as temporary adjustments of an ever-expanding industrial system. Spurred on by our rivalry with the Soviet Union, but secure in its moral and material superiority, the entire nation was geared to progress. In political, social, economic fields everybody seemed highly motivated: citizens trusted their leaders, youth trusted their elders, and students trusted professors. A healthy, constructive questioning rarely aimed beyond specific issues. On the whole, the population was united behind common goals, and expected the establishment to lead it toward the achievement of these goals. Assuredly, from an individual viewpoint, life in the late 'fifties' had little resemblance to Utopia, and problems plagued one and all as much as they always do. But in terms of social organization, and especially with hindsight, these appear today as utopian years.

Since then, the texture of society has been pulled apart by failures, dissensions, and fears. The machinery is misfiring, its parts break down, one after another, at a rate defying repair. For the first time in many years the economy has gotten out of control. Racial and social issues have taken on an ugly form of despair and violence, echoing the violence of war and criminality. The quality of life has been plummeting downward. Cities are dying, and damage to the environment casts doubt on the very survival of the nation and the human race. A pervasive distrust warps human relations: distrust of the establishment, distrust of anyone over thirty, distrust of the white man, distrust of the minorities, distrust of the faculty and distrust of the students, distrust of hard hats and long hairs. Finally, most basic, distrust of the goals proposed by society. Instead of a unified thrust forward, we are witnessing the emergence of autonomous and mutually antagonistic groups which retreat into bitter particularisms. Instead of the drive to move ahead and get to that room at the top, we observe all sorts of withdrawals around us, into one's inner self and one's own thing, into communes, into artificial paradises of drugs, etc. Instead of striving for maximized progress, we are worrying about minimizing dangers. Our direct and indirect clientele has been polarized into hardly communicating camps, with incompatible attitudes and interests. Students have become rebellious and sceptical toward ideas handed down "from above;" parents have learned to look with suspicion at ideas originating in the academia; the faculty is ridden with a host of complexes, from culpability to inadequacy to paranoia to resignation to Ivory Toweritis; and the authorities, embroiled in their own military and political nightmares, besieged by everybody, believe no one.

In this our modern world, we are bringing arguments born in the times of Utopia. We speak of the contributions of FL studies to a liberal education. Obviously, we are right, and no one denies it. But obviously too, the notion of a "liberal education" has fallen into disfavor at the same time as FLs, or at best is a matter for controversy. "Liberal education" may survive for a while in the elementary and secondary systems, but hardly among the authorities sadly disappointed with the recent products of that education, or among many parents only too eager to confuse liberal and libertine, and lay at the academic doors the responsibility for the demoralization of their children; it certainly does not survive among the students who, rightly or wrongly, reject a concept of education formulated in the past and seeking to perpetuate the type of the "well-rounded man" which they see as anachronistic and deceitful; and it seems to be slowly dying among many of our colleagues won over to efficiency and early professionalism. We also repeat that FL studies help to learn English, and we bring structural linguists in support. Again we are right, but again who cares? A few professors of English, perhaps, although it goes against their grain. For the rest, standards of literacy have a vanishing interest. Better communications is the key word today, but other ways are preferred to the King's English: music, gestures, grunts, sensitivity sessions, or community involvement. Students want to abolish the English requirements as well as the FL requirements, and their conservative parents, appalled by the new lack of articulation, are willing to settle for the knowledge of English that they reached themselves without the aid of FLs. Or what about FLs as a door to the understanding of other people, other cultures, other nations? This was a very noble argument, particularly apt to appeal to generous feelings, and particularly successful in a stable nation which was deeply involved in world problems. It still is noble, but the circumstances have changed. The stability is gone; Middle America has learned the Vietnam lesson, and confusing military and peaceful involvements, is undergoing an isolationist cure. As for youth, they have too much trouble understanding themselves to worry about other people, especially far away, and their reserve of generosity, altruism and curiosity is barely sufficient to interest them in the life of their less privileged neighbors in domestic ghettoes. Why learn about the German language, literature, civilization, when confusion reigns at home? Possibly in Government circles, the international argument still retains a measure of appeal, but not for the masses: Foreign service and good-will ambassadors and tourists form, after all, a limited corps and we are getting out of Vietnam!

However valid these reasons are, offering them today for public consumption is often like urging rich food on a man who is dying of thirst. If we want him to buy what we have to sell, we must persuade him that it will satisfy his need. Instead of praising virtues that seem of littel relevance to our clients, let us rather find out what needs of our clients we are able to meet, and pitch our sell in that direction. Some attempts have been made in that spirit. Among the three dozen reasons listed above, a certain number can be easily adapted to the modern world. Self-understanding, for example, is as valid today as it was fifteen years ago. Similarly, the role of FL studies in rehabilitating underprivileged children of foreign background and in reaching ethnic minorities is more today's thing than ever, though perhaps too limited to certain areas to warrant a total change in "Our base of operations."[32] Other reasons draw their justification directly from developments. The growing number of travel-prone or leisure-bored senior citizens can be offered FLs as a ticket to another world; and with Ford factories in Germany and Volkswagen cars here, the business community needs FLs to bridge the frontiers. In this context, we can compare successfully with the increasing popularity of "hobbies" in the first case, and with the appeal of computer operation, accounting, or management studies in the second. We must realize, however, that these arguments, while enriching our armory, are effective only for special groups, and that, because they do not refer to the dominant social problems, they do not address themselves to the groups with the most sensitive and desperate needs. To continue the original simile, they provide food for those who have already quenched their thirst. And most of our clientele is thirsty.

For most of our clientele is made up of groups caught in the rift in social fabric: restless students, bewildered parents, doubting faculty, etc. Taking each group apart, in both meanings of the word, could possibly result in a more detailed, but perhaps too complex, analysis of their problems; symptoms of their malaise abound; at their roots must lie some specific needs that one hopes FL studies could meet. It seems simpler, and more expedient at this stage, to approach all modern society in which these groups are imbricated, and find if it does not call for general services that FLs can perform. Obviously it would be both presumptuous and futile to try to do this job singlehanded. The body of traditional reasons was put together over a period of years by many scholars, teachers, and friends of FLs, each one contributing an idea, or developing or adapting the ideas of others. It is even difficult to speak of originality in that sense, for most of these ideas were "in the air," and have been expressed often by many people at the same time, or "rediscovered" in total good faith. The best remembered or the most influential statements on the role of FLs owe their popularity quite frequently to the literary talent or the prestige of their author rather than to chronological priority or intrinsic originality. The present situation is not different. The effervescence of the profession has already, or will, usher in a new era of creative formulation of arguments for FLs based on the new social needs. Within this framework, it is sufficient here to outline only three modern reasons to study FLs (and particularly German), in the belief that they may help in winning our battle but also that they may inspire an ever broader search for other modern ways of seeing the function of our profession.

## V. *Three Modern Reasons For Studying FLs*

### 1. *FL help adapt to a world in transition*

A disorganized social machinery reveals that society has entered a stage of accelerated transition. The current uncertainties, withdrawals, violence, manifest a tension that takes place when obsolete structures (institutions and ideas) still survive and new structures are not yet apparent. When the evolution is slow, old structures merge gracefully into clearly conceived new ones, and the tension is low. The recent years have brought about an extremely fast evolution, and no one seems to be able to discern where it is leading. Some believe that eventually everything will quiet down, and we shall return to normalcy. Others think they can prophesy the forms of future "expanded consciousness." But clocks cannot be turned back, prophets err nowadays, and speculation is not the business of education. The business of education — our function as teachers — is to prepare our youth with the world. In times of stability, it is a conservative and relatively easy task since coping with the world then means adapting to the existing structures; education has simply to further professional training, assimilation and development of accumulated knowledge, integration within the social patterns. In times of stress, however, the task becomes difficult, problematic to say the least, since the adjustment to obsolete structures works against the goal of education, and the new structures are still invisible. Under such circumstances, the best we can achieve is to prepare our youth for the unexpected and the unknown, i.e., to teach them how to adapt to still fluctuating institutions and ideals, ways of life and problems, jobs and environments. In short to provide them with flexible responses which will enable them to move with the unpredictable times instead of copping out.

Language plays a key role in such a training. We know — and have drawn on this knowledge for our traditional arguments — that it is through language that our responses are taught, learned, and fixed. Linguistics have shown that we think and react according to patterns set by our language, and that the habits of our language determine and rule our cultural habits. Thus, from early childhood, when naming the world means discovering the world, to the school years, when describing relationships obtaining in this world means defining these relationships, and finally to college, when discussing ideas means formulating ideas, language training enables society to shape well-integrated members, and protect itself against change. It is not coincidental that many revolts against society start with a revolt against its language patterns, and that dissent finds its early forms in children's secret codes, slang, and/or the defiance of linguistic tabus. This conservative function of language plays a positive part in a stable society where routine leads to smooth adjustment and linguistic patterns are harmoniously articulated on social structures. In times of sharp transition, routine turns into rigidity, and set patterns of language (i.e., thinking and responding), tailored to obsolete structures, prevent rather than further adjustment to emerging structures. The present confusion, especially among the youth, has been attributed by ironic observers to the attempt to apply 19th century ideas to a 20th century situation. This may be true. But doesn't it in turn reflect the failure to escape intellectual patterns of the past when dealing with the present, i.e., to break the restraint of a fossilized language?

A second language opens the way to a solution. Not that it corresponds better to the new reality; if it did, it would be a fluke, and a most unlikely one in a nation which appears to be leading in the social evolution rather than repeating the experience of other countries. The decisive factor is that the very process of learning and assimilating a second language breaks up the conditioned patterns of the original language, undermines routine responses, teaches how to acquire new reflexes in meeting new structures. Encountering a second language, to a surprising extent, is similar to living in a period of accelerated transition: One must discard old habits and discover new ones in what at first appears as a chaotic mass of signs. Of course a second language is no panacea, and will not transform groping youth into infallible analysts of social change. But better perhaps than other disciplines, expressed in, and hence bound by, the language of the past, it can supply the youth with the flexibility and adaptability required for their bout with modern life.

In this function, the second language does not necessarily have to be a FL. In theory, mathematics or a computer language could perform a similar service. Practically, however, they are too alien to be very effective. They are too far from English, or what stands for English today, to break linguistic conditioning through the confrontation with closely conflicting patterns. Mathematics develop the ability to think in new ways, which is valuable, but do not break down the rigidity of old habits; they do not compete with English, existing on a different plane. A FL on the other hand deals with the same material and serves the same purposes as English; its structures are sufficiently similar to insure an intimate contact with the original structures; and yet it is different enough to entail a constant movement, to and fro, between new and old patterns, resulting in flexibility and agility. In that sense, German is probably more efficient than, say, French or Spanish, since its basic structures are closer to English, and thus better apt to elicit comparison and differentiation, substitution and freedom. This, however, is a matter for linguists to study and evaluate. It would be also interesting to verify whether the study of a third language increases proportionally the beneficial effects, or rather, as has been occasionally surmised, follows the rule of diminishing returns. These are details. To sell German, we must first sell FLs in general, and make it clear and evident that they have a tremendous potential in helping to alleviate the major hang-up of youth; adaptation to a changing world.

### 2. *FL can help with alienation, too*

Next to, or together with, social disorganization, the second great problem of our society is probably individual alienation. Most observers of the American scene agree on this point, even when it is the only point on which they agree.[33] Some claim that alienation expresses individual protest against a bureaucratic and soulless social organization. Others rather stress the dehumanizing influence of machines. At a certain time it was fashionable to accuse mass culture and the impersonal environment. Leftist theoreticians attribute alienation to the evils of materialistic values or even money-culture. Marxists speak of alienation from the capitalist society, and Ayn Rand denounces alienation from too much democracy. Whatever the reason, however, each of these theories postulates that society is somehow dehumanized and dehumanizing, and fails to offer self-satisfying goals to the individual, especially at college age. The expressions of alienation in turn may vary. The most extreme attract the most attention. At one end of the spectrum, we are shown total cop-out – withdrawal into sub-cultures of various kinds – and its milder versions of apathy and indifference; at the other end, total rebellion with bombs, riots, and proposed destruction of society, and its milder variants of peaceful demonstrations or working within the system.

There exists, however, a third response to alienation which can be detected in a surprising surge toward the creative fields of the humanities: music, theater, movies, crafts, dancing, writing, painting and sculpture, etc. It is surprising inasmuch as it takes place spontaneously, despite or against all sorts of economic, social, and ideological pressures.[34] Obviously no practical considerations play a part here, nor idealistic involvements in a cause. Rather these humanistic pursuits are attractive to youth partly because they are not tainted with the sins of the establishment, but mainly because their very nature permits the individual to affirm his participation in the human race and its achievements while remaining an individual. The process of creation, interpretation, or even simply comprehension of a poem, a play, or a picture ritually confirms both the personal and universal mastery of man over his environment, establishes an intimate and harmonious relationship with the world, in short alleviates the feeling of alienation for a while. To further this escape into adjustment and sanity is also the task of education. And FLs, learned in the spirit of a creative game, or pursued into their cultural manifestations – poetry, fiction, theatre, and the magical posturing of man facing destiny in other places and at other times – can and should perform this function, and help in channeling alienation into creative humanism. Here again a special case may be made for German, for it is exotic enough, as are all FLs, to appeal to the exiles from the ambient culture, and yet its background lends itself more than others to meaningful reflection. With a similar stress on pragmatic values, national drive, mechanical efficiency, Germany over the centuries has perhaps managed better than America to combat alienation by keeping the channels to arts open and cultivating (be it forcefully) the humanistic outlets of individual expression. Even from periods when the balance collapsed, and dark ages ensued, a positive lesson can be learned, showing the perils of extreme forms of alienation and the need to react against them.

3. *FLs can help to find an Identity*

The third great crisis today appears to be that of identity. There is no need to belabor that point: All educators know how much this problem preoccupies the youth. Nor is it useful to point out that a search for identity, as well as the cause of alienation, reflects a self-indulging view of life, allegedly unknown in earlier and sturdier generations, including our own. A historical approach to the problem yields, however, an interesting observation insofar as it reveals that this basically individual matter has cultural and national connotations. After melting for 200 years in the great common American pot, all sorts of minorities are suddenly jumping out and claiming their original identity. The establishment of spearate programs of national studies on campuses only provides a particularly visible and controversial manifestation of this trend, just as the flowering of ethnic or regional fiction shows that it can have sophisticated forms as well. One may question whether or not national particularism represents the most positive approach to identity, but one cannot deny that it satisfies a need. And since the need blatantly exists, and must be satisfied, it is important to stress that FLs are admirably suited to that function. If the roots of identity are indeed to be found in cultural heritage, what better way to reach them than to work backward through the language and literature of the old country, and to assimilate its spirit through the mastery of its forms of expression. As Eleanor Roosevelt used to say, we are a nation of immigrants; many came from English speaking areas, many not. Spanish and Italian ethnic groups have not forgotten it. But there are also numerous descendents of German settlers in this country. Their attitudes toward Germany vary, for manifold reasons. But the vast majority, and in particular the young people looking for identity, surely can be made to respond to appeals based on the cultural achievements of the German people, that is, the linguistic, literary, and artistic inheritance. The traditional popularity of German studies in the Midwest does not have to be limited to areas that are heavily populated by Germans: it can expand to all places where there is need and possibility of solving the identity crisis through the identification with the German heritage.

## VII. *The Implications of a Modern Approach for German*

Obviously this last argument, and the first two to a lesser extent, appeal only to a section of the population. Other arguments must be found for other groups. Obviously too, these arguments do not draw on any new discoveries about the nature, the function, and the use of language, but frankly put new labels on old bottles. Novelty is not at issue here. Our product – German language and literature – has not changed, nor have its properties. A modern approach to German cannot add to the product and its properties, but can and should view them from a new angle, reflecting the changed world around us; it can try to find a place for them in our modern society. It may be that this place will seem somewhat strange. Modern reasons for requiring the study of German must indeed be derived from concerns that transcend the field of the language. Let us face it: With the exception of undergraduate majors and graduate students, whom we do not have to win over, our potential customers have little or no desire to ponder the merits or demerits of a FL. They are all wrapped up in other issues, more relevant to the new world. We may deplore this order of interests, and the rearrangement of values that it entails, but we are bound to acknowledge that the specific goals of language study – linguistic proficiency, cultural enrichment – have to be integrated in the more general goals of society if they are to have a meaning today. Which means, in turn, that the entire profession must reassess its function, reexamine long cherished ideals of a simon-pure scholarly discipline, give up its olympian disdain of worldly entanglements, and, at the limit, accept the idea that its services are but means subordinated to a different and external end.

This is quite an order, and probably unpalatable for many. But it ought to pay off, and actually strengthen the profession and its role. In the last analysis, our best arguments will be convincing only if they reflect our own convictions, and the modern approach will succeed if it is backed by a modern attitude toward the world. A recent survey has shown that high school and college students rarely chose a FL on the basis of arguments pro and contra; in most cases they go by word of mouth, seeking the most effective teacher.[35] But what makes an effective teacher? A gift of gods, and professional training, no doubt; but even more so, and particularly today, his own attunement and adjustment to the world, and his genuine feeling that his subject has a real meaning for his students: that he is not involved in a peripheral job for the sake of earning his own living and contributing minor frills or thrills to the "liberal education," but that his work is essential and his role is central in the educational process; that teaching German, for example, is more relevant to the major problems of youth than teaching, say, sociology or English, which help to understand and articulate the problems, but do less to resolve them. A charismatic teacher more often than not has a touch of megalomania. But also, more often than not, teachers are eminently rational, and like to have a reason for their conceit. In the past, it was an easy matter: A stable society oriented toward traditions fed back and magnified our claim to play a commanding part in interpreting these traditions; after the Sputnik crisis, we rode on the crest of faith in ever-expanding progress through better communication and international involvements. Many of us still live in that era, keep on drawing a seemingly inexhaustible fund of confidence in their *raison d'etre*. These are some of the best and most respected teachers, and inspire our graduate students. Among the younger faculty, however, in direct contact with undergraduates, and also among some older colleagues, more sensitive to the solicitation of social issues or more responsive to the changing world, doubts are rampant. About the meaning of their profession. About their role in society. About their work. About their responsibilities. The twin-headed specter of failure and futility is haunting many halls of academia; if we lend an ear, we can't miss its faint bemoanings. There is nothing loud about it yet, and the doubts still rarely result in discouragement. In fact, these younger faculty members often are particularly effective teachers because in their very unrest they are closer to the students. But do they win over our clientele? Wouldn't they be more effective in promoting the cause of FLs if they believed in its crucial role? *Perhaps they too are waiting for a modern approach to justify their function.*

The issue of requirements is a case in point. Or rather: the attitude of many sincere people in the profession who have ethical objections to give an all-out support for retaining or reintroducing FL requirements. They feel, and understandably so, that for the majority of students the intrinsic goals of FLs are irrelevant, and that, even when they are required to take FLs, many of these students neither achieve a linguistic proficiency nor reap a cultural enrichment. It is always a delicate matter to prescribe for others what is good for them; and it becomes outright distasteful when one does not believe that it is really good or attainable. So these professors waver, some rally to the foe, and the profession is split, friend pitted against friend; and as a result, requirements are dropped where they could be saved. The entire issue of requirements revolves in this case around doubts about FL relevance. Within the perspective of the modern approach, these doubts can be resolved. When we look at FLs as a means to meet an urgent social demand, relevant to all students, our ethical scruples must wither! If we believe that studying a second language helps to adjust to a confusing world, alleviates alienation, bolsters identity, we no longer can waver and hesitate and question our right to make decisions for others. For the achievement of these goals is not problematic. It is not measured by the amount of knowledge acquired and the resulting grade, but is concurrent with the very process of learning, whatever the grade. Willy-nilly, the gifted and the dumb, the eager and reluctant alike, will better function in society after undergoing a FL experience. Requirements, in that sense, may not lead to academic excellence but fulfill the fundamental task of education. Opponents like to remind that you can take a horse to the water but cannot make him drink. True, provided that the horse is not thirsty. When we have a thirsty horse, it is our duty indeed to take him to the water, even when he resists. Once he is there, he will drink. Besides, students are not horses, and are amenable to reason. If we are convinced that FL study does indeed satisfy their needs, we shall be able, with a clear conscience, to discharge our responsibility toward them by upholding the requirements.

Not that requirements are a magic panacea, or that our obligations end with their defense. The implications of a modern approach to German reach far beyond that. They touch upon the curriculum, for example, and the nature of our offerings to students. Recently, in a last ditch bid to gain more students and preserve the departments, our profession has been turning to solutions dating from the pre-Sputnik era: German literature in translation, reading courses, German civilization courses in English, etc. While interesting and perhaps useful in various ways, these programs are not oriented to the modern world, and meet none of its basic needs. Conceived for pragmatic reasons, they bear the pragmatic stigma and can be at best only stop-gap measures, rather dangerous. Similarly, methods of teaching or presenting materials are involved: Memorization of grammar rules, passive exposure to literary history, hand-me-down cultural information will not do the job, further alienating the students. What is needed to implement the goals of the modern approach is an active, creative, lived participation in all forms of learning German. A language that the student actually uses, a literature that he experiences, a culture that he assimilates directly. A single cliche' with a pattern contrasting with English will be more an acquisition, if thoroughly ingrained in speech, than the theoretical knowledge of the subjunctive. A single text, pursued to its ultimate recesses, will be more meaningful than a full list of Goethe's writings. A trip to Germany on a Christmas charter-flight, or even a thorough study of a German newspaper will do more than the most brilliant lectures on the German national character or civilization. Just looking around at the life on campuses should inspire us. Let us perform, direct, write drama in German, have poetry recited and composed in German, debate political and social issues in German, and German issues as well; let us ask students to teach lower classes in German, or go out and teach German in community schools; let us set up economic courses in German, cooking courses in German and courses about German wines; let us discuss the Volkswagen in German; let us form German-speaking music groups and movie clubs; let us encourage and support and organize trips to Germany, long and short, on all levels; and let us be generous and consistent, and give credits for all these activities. Above all, let us insist over and over again, from elementary German to senior German seminars, on an idiomatic and automatic use of German, even at the expense of finer points of grammar.

All these ideas, of course, are not new either, and some have been tested. Yet as long as the knowledge of German language and literature was our main and ultimate end, most of these activities were looked down as questionable "teaching aids" at best, and childish carry-overs of high school mentality at worst. Within the pragmatic perspective on German studies, geared to the serious and already professionally minded student, such an attitude made sense; all this funny-business only distracted from learning linguistic and literary facts. With a grim determination to turn all our customers, even those who populated our required elementary classes, into educated and dedicated German majors, we were logically reluctant to devote time and efforts to enterprises that might amuse or stimulate all students, but would not prepare them for their future career nor at least provide them with a smoothly rounded liberal education. We insisted on the integrity of our goals, and the purity of means, and rightly suspected that a German music club, a summer trip to Germany, a debate on German politics would lead to enjoying music, travel, or political discussion more than learning grammar or civilization. In fact, we even had doubts about the latter, and tried to redeem it by heavily stressing its most cultural and historically significant features. That students might get some "non-strictly-German" benefits from all these activities did not concern us; besides, we were rather suspicious of Dewey's "learning through doing." In some way, we conceived of our profession as curving on itself like the fabled worm Uroboros; a circular chain of teachers and students equally oblivious of the outer world. Today this chain is broken, and its pieces lie scattered and exposed to the winds of social change. No longer limited to a single-minded pursuit of an academic objective, we are discovering that in the open spaces a new and greater mission awaits us; that far from losing face, status, and purpose, we can claim to fulfill the essential aims of education in a much more significant way than before; for we can help the many who need help most, and not only a happy few. Turned toward the needs of the youth, rather than toward the needs of our discipline, we have finally reached the time to open our programs and curriculums to innovations which serve both the general goals of education and our particular goals. If we believe in the value of a modern approach to German, all the not-so-new ideas on modern ways of teaching German might become a vast reality.

By the same occasion we will help to change the appeal of German studies. Rejuvenate them. Replace the old image of an austere and difficult subject, reserved for the mature, motivated, intelligent student who knows what he wants and where he is going, with a more frivolous but much more attractive image of a "fun" subject for everybody, taken at least partly for enjoyment. A subject, furthermore, which has not fossilized in splendid isolation from the changing world, but, on the contrary, is changing with that world, projecting its substance in new forms, issues, and games of society, opening channels to all directions. A subject which does not limit its relevance to a past culture or current pragmatism but wants to be and is relevant to life. A young subject, a dynamic subject, a modern subject. With or without requirements, in high school or college, the competition between the FLs will grow fierce in the years to come. If we cannot make a modern case for German, showing that it breathes the present and looks toward the future; if we cannot make German a natural first choice of a second language by the average student today and tomorrow; if we cannot make German into a subject for the "now" student,[36] responding to his needs; if we ourselves cannot make the adjustment to a world in confusion – then we might as well resign ourselves to a strictly academic future, letting other languages carry on the battle for a bilingualism and for the sanity of youth.

Maria P. Alter

NOTES:

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1. *PMLA*, March 1971, p. 286.

2. *ADFL*, December 1970, p. 11. These figures were released by the same MLA staff which has been working on the later data. Final data will be provided in future issues of the *PMLA*.

p. 6

3. A very interesting survey of Pennsylvania State University students reveals for example, that the most popular specific reason for taking French is "enjoyment" (41%), although the most frequently cited reason was continuing the high school FL (48%), Conversely, for German, the highest percentage was obtained by "It was required for the major" (44%), a practical reason. Cf. John Dalbor *et al*, "A Look at Student Attitudes and Opinions," *ADFL*, March 1970, p. 60.

p. 7

4. *Ibid.* In fact, even in high school, where 65% of students took a FL for "enjoyment," the only exception were students in German who were motivated mainly by requirements of their future university work.

5. This is not their only justification. Most of the arguments about the value of FL studies for the intellectual development and understanding of language in general (see below) also apply to classical languages. However, in that sense, they have to compete with "live" languages, which offer additional interest. It is, therefore, in this "cultural" character that classical languages find their specific appeal.

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6. *New York Times*, 28 December 1969.

7. *New York Times*, 23 August 1970.

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8. *Investigation of the National Potential for the Advancement of the Teaching of German in the United States.* US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. October 1968.

9. *The Foreign Language Requirements. A Collection of Comments.* Letters written by Department Heads in answer to H.W. Deeken's inquiry made in March 1969. No date.

10. André Paquette, "A Measure of Hope." Speech delivered by the Executive Secretary of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in New York City on 27 December 1968.

11. Douglas E. Alden, "The Threat of College Language Requirements," *ADFL*, March 1970, pp. 11-19.

12. Literature on this subject is extremely abundant. Only as examples one may use the Marshall-University High School innovations in offering "mini-courses" in FLs, and specialized subjects such as German cooking, German theatre workshop, or German news media, for the purpose of giving "as many students as possible a successful and meaningful experience in FL learning" (cf. Course Description 1970-1971). Cf. also materials issued by the Superintendent of Public Instruction in the State of Illinois; Living Language Centers set up by Denver high schools; the experiment in individualized FL studies and "modular scheduling" in the Mountain View School in California and in various Delaware schools; FL seminars in the Nathan Hale High School; various workshops and innovations in Baltimore City, Indiana, etc.; the non-graded FL program in the McCluer High School in Saint Louis county, and many others.

13. The bulletin of the *ADFL* informs us regularly about curriculum innovations in colleges. In the single issue of December 1970, it summarizes innovations introduced at eighty-eight colleges. In addition, the issue contains a long report by Robert J. Nelson on "A Modern Curriculum in French Studies" at the University of Illinois (p. 25)

14. Harlan Lane, address to the Great Lakes College Association on 9 November 1968.

15. Insofar as German is concerned, the most monumental, and somewhat overwhelming is the anthology on *The Teaching of German: Problems and Methods.* Ed. E. Reichmann. NCSA, 1970. Historical, practical, theoretical problems are examined.

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16. Cf. *Investigation on the National Potential ...*, pp. 37-46, and *passim.*

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17. Douglas W. Alden, "Response and Responsibility," *ADFL*, December 1970, pp. 13-19.

18. *Ibid*, p. 13.

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19. The rhetorical impact is obviously lost in this procedure. It is, therefore, recommended that we go back to the sources if in need of particularly convincing arguments. The choice of sources is practically unlimited, since all literature on FLs contains at least a couple of these arguments. *The Foreign Language Requirements* presents the advantage of containing most of them in the various comments by Department Heads. Flyers issued by high school departments may also be used. Among the "classical" documents of this sort one should also mention William Riley Parker, "Why a Foreign Language Requirement?" *College and University*, Winter 1957, and, more recently, Frank M. Grittner, *Teaching Foreign Languages*, 1969, pp. 28-37, and Wilga M. Rivers, *Teaching Foreign-Language Skills*, 1968, pp. 8-9. See also Andre Paquette's article in *The Teaching of German*, "Why Study Foreign Languages" pp. 17-20. For bibliography up to the Sputnik, cf. Nelson Brooks, *Language and Language Learning*, 1964. The list that follows also includes some arguments encountered in countless mimeographed and often anonymous statements. Most of them are repetitive. New original statements are attributed to individual authors.

20. See, for example, Elizabeth Anisfeld, *A Comparison of the Cognitive Functioning of Monolinguals and Bilinguals.* Ph.D. thesis, McGill U., 1964; E. Peal & W.E. Lambert, "The Relation of Bilingualism to Intelligence," in *Foreign Language Teaching*, ed. J. Michel, 1967; or an older study by Dorothy Spoerl, "The academic and verbal adjustment of college-age bilingual students," *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 1944, pp. 139-157.

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21. In a statement by Prof. Herbert W. Reichert, U. of North Carolina, in *The Foreign Language Requirements.*

22. Strangely enough the clearly politically inspired success of President Kennedy's only known utterance in German finds its way into a great number of otherwise rational defenses of FL requirements. It is an example of a misuse of Madison Avenue tactics, and an illustration of the very shortcoming that FL studies are supposed to remedy; see reason No. 8.

23. Cf. position paper on "Motivation and Rationale," authored by Prof. Helmut Rehder in *Investigation of the National Potential ...*, p. 27. An excellent example of an unsupported argument, and acknowledged to be so, which may work well with one group (parents or authorities) but would fall on deaf ears with another (students).

24. *The Foreign Language Requirements* contains official endorsements of German studies by University of New Hampshire chairmen of the following departments: Philosophy, Microbiology, Music, Psychology, Political Science, and even Animal Science!

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25. This is actually quite a mild quote from a rather incredible address by George Burk, from Carrier International Ltd., "Let's prepare for the future – an International Future," at the Central New York Chapter of the AATG, February 1970, in Vestal, N.Y. Again, it may appeal to some groups.

26. See Benjamin Whorf, *Collected Papers on Metalinguistics* (1952), articles by Ernst Cassirer and Levi-Strauss (especially in *Structural Anthropology),* and Harry Hoijer, ed., *Language in Culture*, 1954.

27. See "Motivation and Rationale," in *Investigation of the National Potential ...*, p. 27. Another example of an argument unlikely to succeed with students and more liberal faculty.

28. *Ibid.* Why?

29. Prof. Peter Demetz in *The Foreign Language Requirements*, expressing the opinion of his colleagues.

30. A "modern" or "committed" argument, forcefully presented by John H. Lawson, Superintendent of Schools, Shaker Heights, Ohio, in his address to the Secondary Schools FL Symposium at Indiana U., on 7 October 1969.

31. This appears at least to be the message of Prof. Reichert, U. of North Carolina, in *The Foreign Language Requirements.*

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32. See the very "modern" and critical address by Dwight Bolinger, Harvard U., "Let's Change our Base of Operations," calling for FL studies based on existing ethnic minorities. (no date)

p. 19

33. Is it really necessary to recall here Bruno Bettelheim's theory that modern society robs man "of his personal importance in the scheme of things," ("Obsolete Youth," *Encounter*, September 1969, p. 32), and then, for the various attitudes that follow, list the names of Bell, Marcuse, Riesman, Reich, etc.?

p. 20

34. This surge is academically manifested in the amazing popularity of "humanities" in both capitalist and socialist countries, and mixed regimes such as Frence or England. Many socialist countries, for example, are imposing strict quotas in order to limit the literature or art departments.

p. 21

35. See John Dalbor *et al*, "A Look at Student Attitudes and Opinions," p. 61. In high school, in particular, 90% of students do not follow any advice (parents, teachers, etc.) but are guided by the "reputation" of a course and teacher. Students who chose German are an exception, which confirms the "serious" and therefore largely unsuccessful character of the appeal of German language.

p. 24

36. The expression is borrowed from Lorraine A. Strasheim, "Foreign Languages: Part of a New Apprenticeship for Living," *The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals*, January 1970 – a most pertinent analysis of changes needed in the FL approach to the modern world.