Language Centers: Mandates and Structures

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THE term *language center* refers to a number of quite different entities. First, and probably the most widely known, is the group of nine federally funded National Foreign Language Resource Centers, which have national mandates to serve language education. Each one has a variety of projects and focuses its funding on providing resources and training to different segments of the United States language world.[1] Second, the privately funded National Foreign Language Center, housed at the University of Maryland (formerly at the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC), undertakes policy studies and research; it is also the headquarters for the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL).[2] Third, at some institutions the language labs are referred to as language centers, and fourth, some state education departments maintain technological or pedagogical resource centers for the language teachers in all the schools in their K–12 system, and these resources are also called language centers.

My topic, however, is a fifth kind of language center, one established by postsecondary institutions to coordinate and strengthen the language instruction on their own campuses. Institutions with a single department of foreign languages typically have no need for such a center, but most larger research institutions have multiple language departments as well as a number of language programs offered through other units (e.g., departments of linguistics or area studies councils). Because of an increasing emphasis on the internationalization of curricula and growing student interest in the study of languages for purposes relatively new to liberal arts education, many institutions are becoming more concerned to address long-standing problems stemming from the fragmentation and marginalization of language study. As director of the Yale Center for Language Study, I am often asked about such centers when I am at other campuses. Typically, however, before I can begin to answer, the questioner will add, almost as a disclaimer of any substantive interest or wish, "Of course at my institution it would never be possible to separate languages from literature study." Such a separation seems to be taken for granted as the basis for the very concept of a language center, although very few of the centers already in place are structured to accomplish this separation.

A Colloquium on Language Centers

Recognizing both the growing concern at many campuses about the problems that language centers have been established to address and the confusion about how centers function, in March 2000 I hosted at Yale a colloquium on language centers,[3] to bring together the directors of the eight centers then in place: Berkeley, Brigham Young, Brown, Columbia, Penn, Rice, Stanford, and Yale. (A similar center has since been established at Emory.) The major purpose of the colloquium was to lay out the range of mandates that language centers are expected to fulfill, the challenges they face, the solutions they adopt, and the implications that they present for foreign language education at the postsecondary level and, in so doing, to demonstrate the wide variety among these centers. The audience at the colloquium consisted of administrators and language faculty members from institutions that are considering establishing a center, who need information as to the advantages and disadvantages of different models. It was not the purpose of the colloquium to argue that institutions should have language centers, nor was it to present any one kind of center as an ideal. The intention was only to offer information about the range of possibilities, so that institutions might usefully deliberate about options in their own context. Secondarily, of course, the eight directors all felt that we could learn a great deal from hearing more detail about one another's operations. Finally, we hoped that a public forum on the topic would develop into an information resource that could later be used by other institutions considering the same issues.[4]

Original Motivations for the Establishment of the Centers

Rice and Stanford reported that external reviews calling for substantial improvements in their language programs had prompted administrators to consider establishing centers. A special need for managing a large number of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) was the principal basis for the development of the centers at Brigham Young and Penn. Other internal pressures motivated the centers at Brown, Columbia, Rice, Berkeley, and Yale. The centers at Berkeley and Brown were developed from long, slow grass-roots efforts by faculty members, and began with few resources, though significant resources were later allocated as the value of the centers became apparent. At Yale, Rice, and Columbia, reports by communities of administrators and faculty members (from departments of language and related fields with language needs) elicited substantive response from the higher administrations, which then created (or attracted from the outside) funding to establish a larger-scale initiative from the outset. At Stanford the center had been designed and the search already begun for a director when the faculty senate changed the foreign language requirement to a proficiency-based one, so that implementing this new requirement gave additional impetus for the center. At Columbia the center grew from a unit originally focused on technological support and training for language faculty members but it took on expanded mandates.

Mandates

As Peter Patrikis, director of the Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning, said in his opening remarks at the colloquium, these institutionally mandated centers are "centers that provide new opportunities for revitalizing the curriculum, build upon the achievements of individual language programs and share them with others, and most important, provide a focus and a forum for discussing the central issues." All the centers include most of the following purposes among their mandates, though they allocate their resources of time and money differently.

- To provide an intellectual home for language teaching, in some cases also for second language acquisition (SLA) theory and research.
- To validate language teaching and learning across the entire curriculum; to raise the general campus awareness of the complexity and value of language study in a genuinely international curriculum.
- To provide new resources and expertise for the support of language programs in departments and programs where the senior faculty members may not have the necessary professional focus.

- To provide a resource for the professionalization of nonladder language faculty and to improve their status and working conditions where necessary.
- To provide substantive education in pedagogy, technology, and so on for graduate students, especially recognizing the need for such education in today's job market.
- To improve language teaching and learning; where the campus perception is that language teaching is below par, the center may be explicitly or implicitly charged with professionalizing the teaching, making staffing more efficient, and improving assessment in order to hold language programs accountable for outcomes.
- To support the integration of technology into language learning and teaching.
- To provide new language-learning opportunities for special constituencies. At Brigham Young returning missionaries need advanced work in the LCTLs of their missions in order to consolidate their language for academic purposes. At both Yale and Columbia there is a heavy demand for language courses among graduate students and students in professional schools who cannot allocate the time to enroll in the five-day-a-week undergraduate courses. Centers may be asked to see that students going abroad get both substantive orientation beforehand and special advanced-level opportunities on their return. At Penn special offerings in LCTLs and in language courses for special purposes such as business demand a separate structure.
- To collect data on how language education is handled across the institution as a basis for recommendations for parity among members of the language faculty, coherence of policy, and professional standards.
- To coordinate and rationalize assessment at all levels and for all curricular purposes—the foreign language requirement, placement, advanced achievement and certification, fellowships, or professional certification.
- To broaden campus awareness of the rapidly increasing diversity of the languages that students want to learn and the purposes for which they intend to use them.
- To manage more efficiently the administration of programs in the small-enrollment LCTLs (and in some cases English as a second language) that have no logical departmental home. (This mandate may include effecting savings in these areas.)
- To provide a central forum for language teaching and learning as a way of resisting the balkanization of language teachers in separate programs.
- To handle summer courses for special needs or to relieve bottlenecks in required courses.
- To write grant proposals for continued funding for the center.

Perhaps the most direct expression of the overarching mandate of all the centers was made by Richard Levin, the president of Yale, shortly after the Yale center came into being: "Your mandate is to see that language teach-

ing is as excellent, and language teachers as respected, as those in any other area at this institution."

Relation to Departments and Administration

The relation of a language center to the traditional departments of languages and literatures cannot help being both complex and delicate. It varies greatly across the eight centers that were represented at the colloquium, and the advantages and disadvantages of each arrangement will be different for any institution that develops a center of its own. The relation includes the following factors.

1. The particular languages over which the center has any jurisdiction must be established. At Penn and Columbia, for example, any language in which there is a major or a minor is likely to be the responsibility of a department if the language is perceived to be central to the mission of the department. Otherwise, there is the possibility that even a language for which literature or culture courses are offered might be offered through the center instead. At Yale, by contrast, all languages have their formal homes either in a department or in the Yale Center for International and Area Studies, the unit that coordinates all the area studies councils and programs; the language center is not "the department" for any language or group of languages and is equally concerned with the commonly and the less commonly taught languages.

2. Responsibility must be allocated for the hiring, supervision, evaluation, promotion, and retention of language teachers, including decisions about section size and number of sections, since these influence hiring practices. Where the center has this responsibility (for those languages over which it has jurisdiction), the budget for the language programs is also located in the center; this is the case at Stanford and Rice. Part of the motivation for vesting this responsibility in the center is often an administration's recognition of the need for parity: at many institutions the salaries, working conditions, and criteria for raises or promotion of language-teaching faculty members vary widely across departments and the language center is seen as the logical unit to address the problems of discrepancies. However, at institutions where the faculty (or the nonladder faculty) is unionized, as at Berkeley, the center cannot play any role in these matters. Other centers, such as Yale's, have no direct authority over decisions about the appointments of language teachers but are responsible for compiling comprehensive data on the practices of all language departments and programs (and, where relevant, comparable data from peer institutions) as a basis for making recommendations to the administration.

3. Typically the responsibility for each language program's curriculum remains in the department, and the amount of influence exerted by the center's director varies according to what has been established with individual departments. Sometimes this changes over time, since new department chairs may feel differently than their predecessors about the language curriculum itself or about the appropriate role for the center. Placement testing tends to be handled differently across departments because the demands of elementary and intermediate courses in different languages range so widely, but most centers take some initiative to ensure that a coherent institutional philosophy guides the placement testing across all programs. Centers commonly become the home for the methodology course for graduate student teaching assistants, except where it is taught entirely in the language (as in the Spanish department at Yale). In some cases the center teaches the methodology course; in others it coordinates the rotation of its teaching among the departments.

4. When an institution adopts a proficiency-based foreign language exit requirement, as Penn, Stanford, and Rice have done, the center is typically charged with running the training program for the administration of the oral proficiency interview. (In some cases the center also administers parts of or all the actual proficiency test.) Adopting a proficiency-based requirement will affect placement testing as well. The institutional policy governing the foreign language requirement may be influenced by the research data compiled by the center on the correlation between successful completion and the way students have chosen to fulfill the requirement or between the levels of language achievement and the proficiency actually attained.

5. The relation between the center and the upper-division courses and senior faculty members of language departments is sometimes established by the center's governance. At Brown the members of the center come from all instructional ranks, and at Berkeley the executive committee includes representatives from the foreign language lecturers, graduate student instructors, and technical departments with whom the center is actively engaged on a daily basis.

At Yale the relation is not uniform; some department chairs are in regular communication with the center, asking for input on their language programs and on the articulation between lower-division and upper-division curricula, whereas others almost never communicate or respond to the director's communications except to oppose initiatives that they see as treading on their turf. Each department has a director of undergraduate studies and a director of graduate studies, almost always ladder faculty members, and these directors also vary widely in the degree of their interest in working with the center.

At Rice the Language Steering Committee is not the steering committee of the center; it is an official forum, established by the dean, for discussion of and decision making on language-related issues. It consists of the chairs of the language area studies departments, linguistics, and the center director. Recently it has been expanded do include the director of the Language Resource Center, the center's associate director, and the second language acquisition

specialists from some of the language departments. At first the departments were a bit taken aback by the initiatives of the center they had voted into place but they came to see the benefits of a forum for discussing the possibilities of establishing a previously unrealized intellectual continuum by integrating their curricula in new ways.

6. Each center has an advisory, executive, or steering committee, in some cases several of these, either as their administrative superior or as their liaison with other campus units. At Columbia the advisory committee consists almost entirely of administrators (deans, chairs, institute directors), although attempts are being made to include language teachers. At Yale the advisory committee (which is technically the advisory committee to the provost but which serves in practice to advise the center director) includes administrators from the provost's office (for the university as a whole), Yale College (the undergraduate unit), Information Technology Services, the Center for International and Area Studies, senior faculty members from language departments and from those nonlanguage departments that have a large stake in language education, and nonladder language teachers. At Penn the center was originally under the administrative supervision of the unit that managed continuing education because many of its courses focus on language for special purposes (i.e., business, medicine, etc.), but it now reports to an academic dean. In some cases the committee sees itself as the watchdog group to ensure that the center does not compete with the departments, and that its activities are limited to providing resources to the departments.

Relation to Other Units

The decision to establish a language center must take into account the presence on campus of many other units whose responsibilities will complement or overlap the center's. For example, a department of linguistics, especially if its curriculum includes courses in applied linguistics or second language acquisition, is likely to wonder how the activities of a center will complement or compete with its own programs. If the campus also has a "center for teaching and learning," it needs to be consulted in the process of establishing a language center and defining its responsibilities, and the two units will certainly interact on a regular basis. Institutions vary widely in the formal reporting structure of area studies councils and the role of language study within their interdisciplinary purview. Although the learning of LCTLs is often an important feature of area studies, the affiliated senior faculty members come for the most part from disciplines like political science, anthropology, economics, and the like, among whom language learning may not be held in high regard. At Yale the pedagogical supervision of council-based languages is part of the responsibility of the center director. (The relation with technology units—a language lab, academic computing, etc.—is discussed below.) Connections must also be established with the library and with units teaching English as a second language (which may be a department or an independent institute), as well as with the campus office of institutional research and with the existing advising structures that help students choose how to fulfill any institutional distribution requirements. If the language center has any fund-raising agenda or a mandate to undertake major materials-development projects or second language acquisition research, it will need to be in close touch with those who manage grants and development.

The Director's Position

The decision as to whether a director should be appointed from within or after a national search must be made in the context of the particular institution. At Brown and Berkeley, where the establishment of the centers was grounded in a long gradual process of discussion among faculty members, directors from within were obvious choices; at Brigham Young, the center is so closely linked to the very specific needs of a unique constituency that an inside choice was also appropriate. The directors of the other five centers were chosen after national searches; the primary rationale for this method is usually that senior faculty members in the departments are almost invariably scholars and teachers of literature and have neither the necessary expertise in language pedagogy, second language acquisition, and technology nor the necessary national professional status in these areas to lead an initiative so challenging, innovative, and controversial.

Some directors are tenured; some are not. The rank of the director position depends on the campus culture and on the requirements of the individual candidates. At Rice the director was brought in from the outside, granted tenure in a language department, and will after a specified term step down from the directorship to be in that department, at which point a tenured faculty member from another department will rotate into the directorship. In some cases a center may start up with a relatively limited mandate, perhaps even with a part-time director, but will later develop a more comprehensive agenda for which a full-time and/or outside director may be needed.

It is desirable that whenever possible the institution's language teachers are represented on the search committee for the center director, especially when the successful applicant will be charged with responsibility for their hiring, supervision, and promotion.

In any case, it must be openly acknowledged that internal or external, tenured or no, the director's position is inevitably ambiguous. Is the director to act first and foremost as the advocate, resource, and spokesperson of the language teachers, who in many institutions have nonladder appointments and are thus widely regarded as second-class academic citizens? (I was told by one of the

most senior of the language teachers at Yale, before I had even begun, that many of his colleagues were looking to the center director as "a kind of messiah"—a daunting prospect.) Or is the director expected to act principally as an agent of the administration? The not uncommon reference to a "language czar" has this connotation, and when the full budgetary and appointment authority for language programs is vested in the center, the director will almost certainly be seen primarily in this light. Even where authority is indirect, as in those instances where the director is only one of several sources of information drawn on in the process of hiring, evaluating, or promoting the members of the language faculty, it is sometimes awkward to maintain that the primary role is advocacy and support. And indeed, it may not be, if the center's mandate is to improve teaching by implementing new or more rigorous evaluation measures for programs and personnel. The initial structuring of directors' responsibilities will to a certain extent predetermine the campus perception of their loyalties—and an institution considering a center will do well to anticipate this carefully—but the individual director's personality and operating style are major factors too in establishing the perception.

The specific mandates of a center also determine the level of administration to which the director reports, rankings that vary greatly across institutions. In all the centers under discussion, with the exception of Yale, the directors report to a dean or a group of deans. At Yale the center is under the provost's office because one of its mandates is to expand and improve the language-learning opportunities of graduate students and those at the ten professional schools (medicine, nursing, business, law, drama, divinity, art, architecture, music, forestry-environmental science). These all report at the provostial level, whereas the decanal level of administration refers almost exclusively to the undergraduate college.

The Less Commonly Taught Languages

The question of how a less commonly taught language is defined for the purpose of deciding where it is to be governed was touched on above under Relation to Other Units, but there are many variations in governance structure and many campus traditions that influence the role a center can play. At some institutions, only a unit that has its own ladder faculty can award credit or make faculty appointments. At Yale this used to mean that language programs could not be formally housed in area studies councils (this has now changed). Sometimes there is no clear policy, and decisions are made on the basis of enrollment numbers; when these shift, turf struggles can occur. It may be considered unwise to house some language programs in departments and some in a center, lest one group should be privileged or disadvantaged by differences in governance. Regardless of the administrative

responsibility, though, centers are very often responsible for the pedagogical supervision of LCTL programs that are not in departments with senior faculty members or—as in the case of languages sponsored by area studies units—where the senior faculty members come from other disciplines and are no more experienced in language pedagogy than are senior faculty members in language-literature departments.

The particular language-learning goals of students in the LCTLs vary greatly. Although fulfilling the foreign language requirement is one motivation, others are more common. In some languages, enrollments are dominated by "heritage learners" who may already have considerable listening and even speaking proficiency but who lack the literacy to manage upper-level courses.[5] Classes combining heritage learners with complete beginners in the language are extremely difficult to teach and often unsatisfactory for both groups, but where enrollments are small (i.e., in any language except Spanish) it may be impossible to staff separate sections. Graduate students in the liberal arts often have foreign language reading requirements, and when these are in LCTLs, appropriate materials may be very hard to find. Some students in professional areas (medicine, nursing, law, music-opera) may need language to conduct their work but not for basic survival or foreign travel. Conversely, some may need general communicative competence in order to live abroad even though they will be conducting their professional lives in English (e.g., business, internationally funded environmental science projects). Very few conventional language departments are in a position to support more than the usual four-skills elementary and intermediate courses in a LCTL, but a center—even one not expressly designed to serve LCTLs—may be able to do so quite efficiently. For example, centers can organize a self-instructional language program (SILP) in LCTLs that they cannot staff, along the model set out by NASILP (the national association of institutions running such programs).[6] A coordinator fields requests from students, recommends textbooks, audiotapes, and software (when available), sets up regular meetings among students (individually or in small groups) and native speaker conversation partners, and arranges for testing at semester's end. Yale's version of this, DILS (Directed Independent Language Study), also allows graduate students to do a reading version of DILS, with reading partners instead of conversation partners, and it even allows graduate and professional students to use the DILS program for a language taught at Yale if they cannot fit the five-day-a-week undergraduate course into their schedules or need a special-purpose focus.

A center may also play a role in deciding which LCTLs should be staffed and which offered through a SILP. This is often only a matter of how great the demand is and/or whether outside funding is available, but at many institutions substantive curricular factors are taken into consideration.[7] It is sometimes argued that students typically

take LCTLs only for "service" functions, and that without upper-division literature courses the study of such languages has little intellectual value because the curriculum is designed quite differently from the liberal arts standard. This rather narrow stance is eroding at many campuses as a result of pressures for a broader view of cultural studies and a more sophisticated perspective on international curricula. Even language for special purposes (LSP) courses can offer far more than lists of discipline- or profession-specific vocabulary: a course in "legal Spanish" should provide an in-depth understanding of the philosophy and cultural traditions that underlie Hispanic legal systems and a consideration of how and why they differ from the English-based code our students take for granted. Although it is possible to address these concerns within departments, usually only Spanish has enough enrollments to allow for such specialization. A center can efficiently broaden the opportunities.

Technology

The relation of the language center to the typically much older language lab or language media center varies widely. The reporting structure may place the lab on a completely different branch of the administrative tree, or conversely the lab may be the ur-unit out of which the center grows. On some campuses the language lab has mandates to serve units beyond the language departments—perhaps English as a second language (ESL) or all humanities departments—and for this or other reasons, it remains administratively separate from the language center. At Penn and Stanford, the language centers do not include the language labs, but the centers have developed their own faculty development lab to train language faculty members in using technology and to support specific materials development projects. At Berkeley, Brown, and Columbia the language labs have been an integral part of the centers from the outset. The lab budgets provided all or much of the start-up budget for the centers at Berkeley and Columbia, though not at Brown. At Rice the Language Resource Center, which antedates the center, remains administratively separate, but its budget is included in that of the center and its staff is hired through the center. At Yale the center started as a separate unit but the language lab was integrated into the center after the first year, as had been planned from the outset.

The relation between a language center and the campus academic computing (AC) unit can be problematic, but AC can also be one of the center's most powerful allies. At Berkeley there was an initiative to combine all campus technology-related units under AC, but the center successfully resisted this because campus-wide units had to be open to students who wanted to use them for work in any discipline, whereas the design and equipment of their facility was specific to language learning, and because their

center had a substantial pedagogical mandate (i.e., to teach teachers how to integrate technology specifically into language pedagogy and curricula), which was not characteristic of ordinary computer labs and could not be abandoned. Subsequently Berkeley's AC has been using the language center as a model in its reorganization of AC and media services into a center for teaching and technology. (Similarly, at Smith, the director of the language technology center was appointed director of instructional computing and asked to model other campus structures on the one he had so successfully implemented for languages.) At Yale, the director of AC has been on the center's advisory committee from the outset and was involved in both the establishment of the center and the search for a director, because the center's mandate included a very strong charge to bring language technology up to date and integrate it substantively into all its other initiatives. Much of the discussion about technology at the March 2000 colloquium focused on questions that are relevant to language labs generally and not just to the technology component of language centers. Topics included:

- physical space versus a virtual language-learning environment for language-specific technology
- the advantages and disadvantages of going digital
- the extent to which technology changes the process of language learning or the shape of language pedagogy
- funding and teacher training initiatives for materials development projects
- the kinds of pedagogical and second language acquisition research that can be carried out on the computer
- other sources of information on these issues[8]

Beyond these topics, a larger concern may dictate centers' engagement with realizing efficiencies in the cost of the institution's language programs, and technology is typically seen as the primary means to this end. At Stanford, for example, where language courses meet five days a week, the center has developed a project to move some instructional functions out of the classroom and onto the computer (grammar drills and routine quizzes) so that a higher proportion of class time can be devoted to the communicative activities that make better use of the teacher's presence. Several centers are moving to develop Web-based placement tests that students can take during the summer from off-campus to relieve the pressure on the first days of the semester. Collaborative projects in materials development based on center-developed templates for the most common technology uses (with center-trained students as assistants) allow for more efficient use of actual class time.

Several centers have been grappling with campus pressures to develop online language courses, especially in the LCTLs, sometimes in the hope—a hope that some center directors consider unrealistic—that these will prove to be moneymakers for the campus. The idea poses a dilemma: if

tuition for such courses is to be equal to that paid by on-campus students, it will be far too high to attract off-campus learners, but if it is set lower, on-campus students (or their parents) are likely to object. One possible justification for a tuition disparity is that on-campus students pay for the teacher's presence and for the entire panoply of on-campus advantages, so that it's fair to charge less for off-campus tuition. There are as yet few instances of online language courses nationally, and debate continues as to appropriate pedagogical models and technologies. A more feasible initiative for language centers is the exchange of LCTL courses by whatever technologies are available—video conferencing, Internet tutorials, chat rooms, servers streaming audio and video materials, distributed CD-ROM- or DVD-based modules, or even via Amtrak when an LCTL teacher can travel to a distant campus several days a week. No one maintains that online courses are really as good as or better than teacher-led courses, but in the case of LCTLs that will otherwise be unavailable, such courses can, with careful planning, well-designed materials, and expert pedagogy, be much better than nothing.

At Yale the technological infrastructure is basic to a number of the center's mandates. Not all the needs of graduate students and students in the professional schools can be met by special courses; it is often impossible to hire teachers for the small number of students with any particular need, and scheduling difficulties often make regular courses impossible for these students anyway. Web-based models for independent study combined with one weekly meeting with a teacher and other students offer more flexibility. Such modules could also be the basis for DILS work and eventually for online courses; they could be used by faculty members or students planning to go abroad and needing refresher work in a language. They could be the basis for advanced work in LCTLs typically offered only at elementary and intermediate levels and would thus relieve teachers of multiple independent tutorials.

However, a campus's capability for multilingual computing is often inadequate for the fulfillment of the center's mandates. Ideally it should be possible for students and faculty members to do word processing, print, e-mail, and Web-browse in every language it offers (either in regular courses or through SILP or DILS), on every platform the campus supports, from all computer labs, dorm rooms, faculty offices, and the language center, with full Web-based documentation available everywhere. Especially at those institutions that offer as many as forty or sixty languages, many of them using non-roman orthographies, this is an extraordinary goal and, as far as I know, one not yet attained by any campus. (Yale's language center and academic computing have jointly hired staff to work on this, one group of languages at a time.) Unfortunately, not all campuses have academic computing staff expert enough in "funny fonts"—or committed enough to serving language programs—to begin to address the problems; this is a major opportunity for language centers.

Budget Issues

The start-up funding for centers sometimes comes from the outside. Yale and Columbia received Mellon Foundation grants and the universities committed themselves to continue funding at the grants' end. At the other centers the funding came out of new lines put in place by the administration or was reallocated from other sources, in some instances from the budget for language labs that were merged with the centers.

One of the reasons for establishing some (but not all) of the centers was to save money or to "realize efficiencies," as the current euphemism has it. Several centers accept the assumption that the integration of technology will serve this purpose; others reject it. One difficulty in realizing savings is that institutions seldom have a very clear idea, aside from the verifiable salaries of language teachers, what language teaching really costs, and establishing a valid basis for tracking expenses is often one of the center's mandates. What does the language lab or language technology infrastructure cost? What departmental administrative expenses are incurred by the language programs? What unit on campus pays for the acquisition of language-teaching materials (videos, music CDs, reference books for faculty members, software for student use, or tools for faculty materials-development projects)? Do language teachers get funding for professional development—travel to conferences and workshops, summer stipends for projects, and so on—and if they do, from whom? At many campuses decisions about funding these expenditures are inconsistent and ad hoc.

The charge to realize efficiencies is typically based on the widespread assumption that language instruction is inordinately expensive because it cannot be handled in large lecture courses. This assumption is untenable: language sections in elementary and intermediate courses typically enroll between fifteen and twenty-five students (depending on institutional guidelines) and are taught by the lowest-paid faculty members (lecturers, adjuncts, part-timers, and graduate students). The senior faculty members teaching literature courses typically earn far higher salaries than language teachers and have not only lighter teaching loads but also much smaller enrollments, so that the per capita costs of the upper-division courses are enormously higher. The data on which administrations can understand the relative costs of the various parts of the departmental efforts are typically not available from individual departments, and it is often not until a center is established that anyone gets these data from the university research office and analyzes them. Another way of realizing efficiencies is to increase the quality of language learning in relation to the per capita cost of courses, perhaps by increasing "time on task" by adding technology-based work to the classroom contact hours. To prove that this kind of initiative works, however, requires a system of evaluating results, which few campuses currently have

in place. Those institutions that use proficiency testing as a basis for the foreign language requirement can use proficiency data to support claims of increased productivity.

Establishing SILP and DILS initiatives is sometimes proposed as a solution to the expense of hiring a teacher for a low-enrollment LCTL. If a center creates such programs for languages not previously offered, the institution may be able to expand its offerings very efficiently. However, firing the single teacher of an LCTL and making the language available only through SILP is counterproductive; center directors who accept this charge will lose the trust of nonladder faculty members in all programs, not only the LCTLs. Those directors with full authority to hire and fire language teachers may be able to realize efficiencies by reducing staffing in departments that have retained more nonladder faculty members than current enrollments warrant.

Centers can apply for outside grants as a way of generating funding for specific projects supporting language programs, but they are not likely to receive ongoing funding for general program costs. Funding for research on second language acquisition or on the use of technology, particularly in LCTLs, is often available. Most language teachers, however, have little expertise in writing grant proposals (in fact, they are often hired with the explicit assumption that they will not be doing any research). A center director may be the only possible principal investigator on such grants.

Major grants for large-scale materials development projects are not only harder to win but also bring with them problems in the areas of copyright (especially with video and audio projects) and campus policy on ownership of teaching materials and intellectual property generally. A center can act as the clearinghouse for such problems, but its success will depend heavily on the willingness of the campus legal office to deal with the special situations that arise in obtaining copyright permission to use materials from around the world. Online courses raise still further intellectual property complications, of course.

Other Issues

Tenure

Participants in the March 2000 colloquium raised issues outside the topics defined for the occasion. By far the most compelling was the question of whether centers can or should press for tenure lines for language teachers at institutions where they typically do not have them, for instance, where departments hire lecturers (at Yale nonladder language faculty members are designated lectors) or adjuncts to staff the lower-division courses. In some institutions faculty members at every rank are involved in teaching these courses and only a few extra nonladder hires are needed to cover unexpected enrollment surges. Every center (except Berkeley, where lecturers are unionized) had as

one of its principal charges improving the professional status of nonladder faculty members, but opinions were divided as to whether it is always in these teachers' best interest to push for tenure-track positions. No one disagreed with the argument that in an ideal academic world, faculty members with a professional specialization in language should be as eligible for tenure as their departmental colleagues focusing on literature, linguistics, or cultural studies. But it is still the case that at many institutions tenure is awarded only on the basis of certain kinds of research, in which language pedagogy is not counted; the discipline of second language acquisition is recognized at very few, and often ladder faculty members in literature have no understanding of that field or of the nature of either theory or research in it, so that departments are incapable of evaluating such work. Unless an institution has a well-established and clearly articulated policy of counting work in language pedagogy and second language acquisition for tenure, language teachers may in fact be more secure if they are lecturers or the equivalent. Last year at Yale, a search for someone to fill a tenure-track position that required teaching the linguistics of a language and being a language program director elicited several inquiries from would-be applicants who preferred that the position be offered at the senior lector rank; in fact, the original search was canceled and reposted that way. By contrast, Brigham Young has, in addition to the traditional professorial track, a professional track in which lecturers have parallel opportunities for tenure, advancement, and departmental responsibilities but do not have the same research and publication expectations as those in the conventional track.

Nontenure Appointment Structures

Some institutions already have structures in place for parallel tracks that provide all nonladder faculty members with well-articulated criteria for promotion and different kinds of security. Wesleyan University, for example, has an adjunct track with equivalents to all the ladder ranks in which adjunct faculty members are eligible for travel funds, sabbaticals, released time, and similar benefits although at somewhat different levels than their tenure-track colleagues. The University of California used to have "Security of Employment" for long-term well-established lecturers. Harvard and a few other universities have a designation known as Professor of the Practice, which has actual or de facto tenure. A number of universities have established nonladder appointment structures for nonladder faculty members with three ranks rather than the conventional two—lecturer, senior lecturer, and university, college, or principal lecturer—with longer appointments and great security at the upper ranks. Several language centers have played an active role in developing recommendations for such a structure for members of the language faculty. Concomitant with new ranks, centers have articulated the criteria for hiring, evaluating, and

promoting to each rank, and—even more important—have provided substantive support to help teachers become eligible for higher rank: funding for travel to conferences and workshops, training programs and professional development seminars, released time and summer stipends for projects (not only materials development).

Research

Related to the issues of rank and professional growth is the issue of research. Nonladder language teachers are typically hired with the assumption that their professional activities will be limited to teaching and service, but this assumption is often based on the notion that research specifically means scholarship in literature, linguistics, or cultural studies. Research in language pedagogy or second language acquisition is either denigrated or not understood. Individual language teachers balkanized in separate departments typically have no basis for countering departmental misunderstanding. Here a center with a research agenda can play a major role. Not only can it support faculty members' research along these lines with internal funding; it can also develop collaborative research initiatives, either between the center and an individual teacher or among teachers from several departments. Funding agencies often deny grants to nonladder faculty members because they are seen as temporary employees of the institution, but this is an unwarranted discrimination against long-term nonladder teachers who may well be among the institution's most productive and most student-involved staff. If center directors have either tenure or long-term appointments at high rank, they can serve as principal investigators on grants involving nonladder faculty members that can support nationally prestigious research projects. Penn is appointing a research director for its center to handle these issues.

Concerns about Negative Aspects of Centers

Although all the center directors at the colloquium were convinced that their units were working in positive and productive ways to support language teaching and learning, participants had a number of concerns and questions.

• Does a language center increase the divide between language and literature programs, even when the language programs are not taken over by the center? Do the language teachers now have a divided loyalty? Is there a chance that the language center will come to be seen as a kind of ghetto for the least-respected members of the faculty or as simply a source of extra funds so that the departments don't have to use their own resources to support their language programs?

At Rice these concerns have not materialized. Literature faculty members are now thinking and talking far more than they had before about integrating the curriculum, about ways in which language can continue to be taught at upper levels and literature taught at even the beginning levels, about the functions and implications of proficiency testing, and about many other issues. It is true that at Rice a good number of literature faculty members also teach language courses and that in the weekly meetings of the Language Steering Committee the department chairs and the center directors have regular opportunities to talk. This positive development may not be easy to implement at larger research universities where the teaching responsibilities are dichotomized and chairs are less involved. But many of the center directors testified that the increased campuswide discussion about language issues has raised the visibility of language faculty members and respect for their professional expertise.

Ghettoization is less likely when an institutionally visible and prestigious center exists in which language teaching is respected. When teachers find that their professional growth is supported they gain confidence in their contribution to their departments and the institution. The governance structure is important, however; centers reporting to continuing education are less likely to be perceived as academically substantive than those that report to a dean or provost.

• Does the center enable administrators to ignore language program issues because they can transfer responsibility to it?

None of the center directors experienced this at their campuses. In almost every case, the university administration views the center—even when the departments hadn't pressed for it—as a way to address sharply felt concerns, and administrative support and interest remain high.

• Centers are supposed to validate language teaching and improve the lot of language teachers, but they are often also charged with developing "alternative modes of delivering instruction," that is, with finding ways to use technology to extend or supplant teachers. Isn't this a catch-22?

All the directors agreed that this could become a problem if the cost-savings mandate of the center is dominant. Administrators considering a center need to be realistic about the many functions that language faculty members perform outside the classroom; for example, it is well known that language teachers are asked for a disproportionately large number of letters of recommendation because students often feel that these teachers know them better than their other teachers. Teachers of the LCTLs are typically responsible not only for delivering instruction but also for program building, for developing curricular connections with other disciplines on campus, and for extracurricular activities. Too heavy an emphasis on realizing efficiencies can undercut these contributions.

• Does the existence of a center increase the workloads of language teachers in that it pressures them to be

involved in center activities over and above their departmental commitments?

The directors acknowledge that this situation needs to be guarded against. One way to prevent it is to survey workloads across departments and make recommendations for making them equitable. Another is to use center funds for summer stipends, so that teachers can earn extra for taking on projects, and for student assistance, to minimize the time spent on projects. Most felt, though, that a good percentage of the teachers are enthusiastic about the opportunities and support provided by the center and are eager to be involved.

• Is participation by language department graduate students contested by their departments?

Often senior faculty teachers and advisers recommend that graduate students devote themselves intensively to their courses and spend minimal time on activities associated with their teaching assistantships, including center activities. "Time to degree" is one of the factors in national rankings of departments, and this standard has an unfortunate effect on preparing for teaching careers. Not only are graduate students discouraged from taking advantage of the professional development opportunities offered by language centers (or teaching-learning centers), but they often also get so little teaching experience (and generally only at the elementary language level) that they are disadvantaged on the job market. (This situation is particularly true at elite institutions with ample fellowship funding.) However, students themselves are often far more aware of the realities of employment than their advisers and they eagerly avail themselves of the center's resources, even in the face of their mentors' indifference.

There was broad agreement that all these concerns are valid; they represent topics that must be explored in depth by campuses that are considering a center and be kept constantly in mind at already established centers.

Centerlike Initiatives without Center Structures

A number of colloquium participants, especially those from public universities with more limited funding than most of the institutions represented by the directors, asked what initiatives, typically undertaken by centers, could be promoted without actually having one.

One recommendation is linked to the language lab; if it is a modern one, with state-of-the-art equipment and adequate staff, it can support substantive teacher training and materials development projects. However, language lab directors often have little campus recognition. Furthermore, serious materials development is dependent on funding for released time or summer stipends for faculty and for student assistance.

Northwestern University reported an extremely successful language faculty forum, the Council on Language Instruction (CLI), which serves the functions of morale building, experience sharing, and collaborative project development that lie at the heart of centers.[9] The members of the CLI are the coordinators of all the language programs and the director of the multimedia center; other interested language instructors may apply for associate membership. It organizes workshops and talks, oversees the administration of the foreign language requirement, and has an annual budget of $15,000 from the college for speakers, professional travel, and project development. (It has also received institutional grants for special equipment purchases.) Many at the colloquium saw this council as an admirable step toward a full center.

One of the most important functions of a center is collecting and analyzing data and this task could be carried out by an administrator or a lecturer given some released time or summer support and a special mandate from the administration. Data on workloads; salaries; criteria and processes for appointment, evaluation, and promotion; proficiency outcomes; and curriculum design—to name only a few possible headings—could be compiled across departments and programs and submitted to administrators as a basis for further initiatives.

The colloquium Web site is at http://www.yale.edu/cls/centerscolloquium/surveyresponses.html. All the information about the eight centers in place at the time of the meeting is available there, and as new centers come into being they will be added. The directors and participants are now enrolled in a common e-mail group to continue to discuss the issues and inform one another about the approaches to the issues being taken at one campus or another. All the directors welcome inquiries about their centers, and it is hoped that the Web site will be a useful resource for teachers and administrators who are considering the establishment of a center at their own institutions.

In many institutional contexts language centers can successfully address a number of the issues that are recognized as widely problematic in foreign language education at the postsecondary level. As the particular problems and the seriousness of their effect on language programs vary from one school to another, so do centers and their structures; the colloquium on language centers made it clear to all participants that there can be no one-size-fits-all model. At some institutions many of these problems can be addressed within departments or by implementing other governance and funding solutions, and when that is possible the need for a center might be reduced. Nonetheless, the information shared at the colloquium about the potential role of centers strongly suggests that the need for a serious commitment to the professionalization of language teaching, the validation

of the practice and the practitioners, is one that is seldom adequately met without some such structure.

Notes

[1] The nine federally funded National Foreign Language Resource Centers are:

Duke: Slavic and East European Language Resource Center at Duke and UNC-CH <http://seelrc.org/>

University of Wisconsin: National African Language Resource Center <http://african.lss.wisc.edu/nalrc/>

National Capital Language Resource Center: Georgetown University, Center for Applied Linguistics, and the George Washington University <http://www.cal.org/nclrc/>

Iowa State University: National K–12 Foreign Language Resource Center <http://www.educ.iastate.edu/nflrc/>

Michigan State University: Center for Language Education and Research <http://clear.msu.edu/>

Ohio State University: National East Asian Languages Resource Center <http://flc.ohio-state.edu/nflrc/>

San Diego State University: Language Acquisition Resource Center <http://larcdma.sdsu.edu/larcnet/home.html>

University of Hawai'i, Manōa: National Foreign Language Resource Center <http://www.lll.hawaii.edu.nflrc/>

University of Minnesota: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition <http://carla.acad.umn.edu/>

[2] National Foreign Language Center (at the University of Maryland) <http://www.nflc.org>.

[3] The colloquium on language centers was funded by the Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning.

[4] Any errors in facts about specific centers are the author's responsibility. The generalizations made do not always apply to every center represented at the colloquium and may not be characteristic of other centers that were not represented.

[5] The National Foreign Language Center and the American Association of Colleges and Universities sponsored the Language Mission Project (1995–97) to allow sixteen postsecondary institutions to explore the perceptions on the part of administrators, students, and language faculty members as to the "mission for language learning" at their campuses. The four missions that evolved from the discussions were, first, the general education mission, which underlies foreign language requirements and rests on claims that language learning is an essential part of a liberal arts education; second, the professional mission, which sees language learning as the foundation for careers in language teaching, translation or interpretation, and so on; third, the applied mission, which sees language learning as an important skill in the service of work in some other field; and fourth, the heritage mission, which provides learners who have grown up in homes and communities where another language is routinely spoken with an academic grounding in that language and culture. The wry finding at most campuses is that administrators are most committed to the general education mission, the faculty members to the professional mission, and the students to the applied mission—and that no one knows what to do about the heritage mission.

[6] National Association for Self Instructional Language Programs (at the University of Arizona) <http://www.nasilp.org>.

[7] The Yale Center for Language Study is developing a set of criteria by which to evaluate requests for establishing courses in new languages; the curricular context is heavily weighted. By curricular context we mean the nonlanguage courses or research initiatives for which knowledge of this language is essential or highly advantageous.

[8] There are two professional organizations for those interested in integrating technology into language learning and teaching: the International Association for Language Learning Technology (IALL [the acronym is without the T] <http://www.iall.net>, and the Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO) <http://www.calico.org>. IALL was originally the professional organization for language lab directors and it publishes a great deal of information on how to build, organize, update, and manage language technology facilities for teaching, learning, and research; it also sponsors LLTI, the electronic discussion list for language technology questions and answers. CALICO began as an organization of language faculty members developing software to use in their own courses. Each runs international conferences where technological and pedagogical issues are discussed and new applications shown.

[9] Council on Language Instruction at Northwestern (<http://www.cli.nwu.edu>).