Languages for students across the university

Anne Holmen, director CIP
CIP Symposium 7 November 2019
Three types of study programs with language content

• **Languages as core content**: integrating language, literature, culture, social studies, high level language proficiency

• **Area studies**: cultural competence, geo-history, language at macro level, language proficiency?

• **Language dimensions in non-language programs**: study skills, access to information and sources, field work, study abroad, add-on or Content-and-Language-Integrated-Learning (CLIL)?

They all depend on a carefully developed language focus
Integrating language, culture, social studies?

Cf. Modern Language Association 2008: How to reorient foreign language studies

- inner coherence, avoid too hard boundaries between dimensions
- targeting students’ translingual and transcultural competence
- language at the core

“To achieve such coherence, faculty teaching advanced courses will have to learn to make explicit the language-learning goals of their courses, rather than take the language for granted as they now often do. Students often report that they lose ground in the language when they enter literature courses because language learning is no longer an issue”

“Grasping the cultural narratives of a society not only requires enough proficiency in its language to converse with educated native speakers on a level that allows both linguistic and metalinguistic exchanges, but it also requires a knowledge of cultural archives … ” (MLJ, 2008: 92).
Student voice from the language profiles at RUC

The French bonus

Denmark is a very small country, and Danish is a very small language. Most Danes will early in life experience that Danish is not sufficient. We teach our kids English from early school. But English – is that enough?

• Bonus 1: Meaning is clearer in the original language
• Bonus 2: Access to knowledge not available in Danish and English
• But no bonus without hard work

(from Bojsen, 2018: 128)
Danish Government (2017): *Strategi for styrkelse af fremmedsprog i uddannelsessystemet*

Chapter 7: *Flere skal kombinere deres kernefaglighed med stærke sprogkompetencer*

- Building on basic language competence from primary and secondary school

- Develop language courses for non-language students and in-service training for the labour market

- Language as a supplementary competence:
  
  Combining core competencies with a strong language competence

- (Language as study skills and individual toning of qualifications)
## Top ten languages used in the web (2000-10/2019) (internetworldstats.com)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>hits: millions</th>
<th>increase</th>
<th>users 2019: millions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>281%</td>
<td>1105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>1277%</td>
<td>863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>743%</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>110%</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>989%</td>
<td>171</td>
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<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>173%</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>2501%</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>398%</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1825%</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>107%</td>
<td>169</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
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</table>
“More Languages for More Students” (2013-2018)

• Five-year research-supported project initiated by the University’s Rector

• New language activities (outside foreign language programs) aimed at
  ➢ improving the language skills of the students in English, Danish as L2, German, and French
  ➢ providing them with new relevant language skills in these languages plus in Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, Latin, Classical Greek

• Related to the internationalized labour market and study abroad, but also to study skills, access to sources, fieldwork

• Needs-based and tailor-made activities
"More Languages for More Students" (2013-2018)

Identify students’ language needs
- Surveys with students, academic faculty and advisory boards
- Dialogue with heads of departments, programmes (study boards) and curricular advisors

Develop (new) language support activities for students
- Pilot project development and evaluation

Improve the language skills of students across the university
- in multiple languages
  (English, Danish as a second language, German, French, Arabic, Spanish, etc.)
“More Languages for More Students” - Needs analyses

Based on dialogue with stakeholders, lecturers and students

- 45+ meetings with study boards, directors of study programs
- Meetings with international office, student councillors etc.
- 10 surveys with students and lecturers (response from over 6,000 students and 800 lecturers)
- 1 survey with PhD students (N = 1,213)

Relevance in the local context

- Language choice
- Add-on course or integrated into curriculum/program
- Thematic content: choice of domain
- Priority of language dimension(s) (oral-written, receptive-productive, genres)
"My limited French was a problem while I was on an exchange. Both academically and socially. It is problematic that the university seems to think that language competencies include English only. No one is impressed by the fact that a graduate student speaks English – we’re expected to. Foreign languages today goes beyond Danish and English...”

"In general, I feel that my access to a global labour market would be considerably better if I had had the opportunity of combining my professional knowledge (in political science) with language...”
Student voices: from the UCPH surveys

Language as a study skill

“I have HUGE problems with the many academic texts in English at Social Science. There is a lot I don’t understand and I simply don’t get. First of all, since the admission requirement is B level math, then there is NO connection between admission requirements and what is expected. The texts should therefore be in Danish. Otherwise, perhaps students should be required to spend some time abroad or complete a qualifying language test before embarking on their studies...”

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“I think you should expect of the students’ German language skills to be at a much higher level from the beginning, so that texts by Nietzsche and Luther are not handed out in English. As a Danish Lutheran theologian, it is my opinion that it’s a great loss not to have access to the German academic tradition...”
Examples of activities for language support

- Reading skills in German for students of Theology and Philosophy
- Legal French for students of EU Legislation
- Spoken/Written Arabic for students of Anthropology
- Spoken Spanish for Field Work
- Danish study skills for first year students
- Writing skills in English for medical reports

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Overview of project activities (2013-2018)

- 36 pilot projects, targeting more than 4,400 students
- All six faculties involved

  - 18 projects in academic English
  - 18 projects with other languages (Arabic, Spanish, Chinese, German, French, Italian, Latin, Ancient Greek, Danish as a second language)

  - 13 projects focus on reading comprehension
  - 11 projects on writing
  - 5 projects on oral interaction
  - 7 more than one skill
Summary of language needs and course design

• clear interest in acquiring relevant academic skills in a number of foreign languages among students at UCPH
• interest in UCPH providing language support in academic English and Danish – integrated in content classes or as an add-on
• interest in developing subject specific courses in other languages (e.g. reading skills in German and French, oral skills in Spanish and Arabic)
• some students are interested in toning their profile with language
• potential interest in new CLIL-like courses

BUT: There is a widespread scepticism towards using ECTS points on language-related activities within the curriculum.
Institutional challenges for a language strategy

During development and implementation:
• Identifying dynamic and complex language needs
  • In study programs
  • Among students

In the long run:
• Convince local stakeholders
• Develop intelligent ways of integrating language with content
• Develop awareness of language for quality studies (domestic and abroad)
• Develop new forms of assessment/exams
• Prioritize funding
Lessons learned for the future of language studies in Denmark

There is a need to reflect on and develop new models for language teaching

- in a multitude of languages
- combined with other content areas

Developing Content-and-Language-Integrated-Learning (CLIL) may stimulate interest and improve the general level of language competence among students

CLIL and other supplementary language dimensions cannot replace language study programs with a focus on appropriate, high-level proficiency
Thank you for listening

Questions and comments?

For more information about the project “More languages for more students”, please look at the CIP website: https://cip.ku.dk/english/strategicinitiatives/languagestrategy/