

Title: Learners' Goals and Curricular Design

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The MLA's 2008 report on foreign language education (<http://www.mla.org/flreport>) suggests that curricular design in the foreign languages may not necessarily match learners' goals for foreign language study or national needs for foreign language expertise. Brecht, Caemmerer and Walton (1995) proposed four different missions for language teaching, missions that can be correlated with assumed learners' goals:

- (a) the specialist mission: classes designed to prepare the next generation of teachers of language, linguistics, literature, and culture (learners' goal: to become a teacher of language, linguistics, culture);
- (b) the instrumental mission: classes designed to help students develop language skills to use in non-teaching jobs (learners' goals: to use language in positions as government analysts international attorneys, businessmen and -women, journalists, and so forth);
- (c) the liberal arts mission: classes designed to broaden students' intellectual horizons by teaching them about language, literature and culture (learners' goals: to learn about a world region, to better understand a different world perspective, to better understand English by contrast with a foreign language, to develop an ethic of tolerance and respect for cultural diversity, and so forth);
- (d) the heritage mission: classes designed to help students understand themselves and their own cultural and linguistic background (learners' goal: to better understand their own linguistic and cultural heritage).

In my presentation, I will describe the results of a survey of foreign language students at all levels of instruction that I am conducting on several college and university campuses in spring 2008 and fall 2008 (N > 500 at this writing), sharing data on how students describe their own learning goals for the study of a foreign language in accordance with the four missions described above. Of particular interest to Slavists, I will provide details on the analysis of student responses by language, noting if there are statistical differences between students of Slavic languages and students of other languages on this important question.

I will then analyze some patterns of curricular designs of undergraduate curricula in the Slavic field (neither identifying any institution by name nor arguing about the frequency of one or another curricular pattern). Lastly, I will conclude with thoughts about the degree to which certain kinds of curricular designs match learners' needs and discuss my project's implications for curricular renewal within budgetary and staffing constraints.