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Abstracts

This article gives a brief overview of German programs at Canadian universities. Who studies German at Canadian universities, and what do the programs offered by the universities look like? Specifically, the discussion of those questions will focus on the language-content interface, reflecting on scenarios of actual and potential language-content interfaces. How much content could be integrated into language courses? How much should language be the focus in content courses? Which content is, could, and should be covered, and to what ends?

Der Beitrag gibt einen Überblick über Studiengänge der Germanistik bzw. German Studies an kanadischen Universitäten. Im Mittelpunkt stehen zunächst die Fragen, wer Deutsch studiert und mit welchem Ziel, sowie eine kurze Darstellung der curricularen Ausrichtung der Studiengänge. Im Anschluss wird die traditionelle curriculare Trennung von Sprache und Inhalt problematisiert, die sich in der Mehrzahl der universitären Kursangebote in Kanada ebenso wie den USA abzeichnet. Das Verhältnis von Sprach- und Inhaltskursen wir genauer erörtert, wobei vor allem folgende Fragen im Vordergrund stehen: Wie viel Inhalt kann in Sprachkursen integriert werden? In welchem Maße kann Sprache auch in Inhaltskursen (meist mit literarischer Ausrichtung) im Fokus stehen? Welche Inhalte werden aktuell bzw. könnten oder sollten in Germanistikprogrammen überhaupt behandelt werden?

Cet article se propose de faire un survol des programmes d’études allemandes dans les universités canadiennes. Qui étudie l’allemand dans les universités canadiennes et à quoi ressemble les programmes offerts ? Plus précisément, notre analyse abordera la question du point de contact entre langue et matière, considérant des scénarios réels ou possibles de cet échange. Combien de matière devrait être incorporée dans un cours de langue ? Jusqu’à quel point la langue devrait-elle être présente dans les cours de matière ? Quel contenu pourrait ou devrait figurer dans un cours, et à quelle fin ?

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Introduction
The relationship between language and content lies at the heart of many recent debates in and about Canadian and, by extension, North American language program developments. The most salient questions raised centre on the traditional divide between language courses and content courses. There is a general concern that the two-tiered curriculum that separates language and contents must be thoroughly revised so as to refocus higher language education. Most notably, the ideal of the intercultural speaker has been launched to replace the former ideal of the native speaker in language education (Byram 1997, Kramsch 1998, MLA 2007), in order to educate intercultural speakers who are able to operate “on the border between several languages or language varieties, maneuvering his/her way through the troubled waters of cross-cultural misunderstandings” (Kramsch 1998: 27). The topic of this special issue, bilingual seminar, therefore pertains to one of the crucial questions that have emerged in the context of these recent debates; namely, the role and relationship of language and contents in third level foreign language (FL) programs. According to a recent report by the Modern Language Association (MLA 2007), the teaching of language and culture should be integrated in collegiate FL curricula, so as to overcome the traditional bifurcation between language and literature in university language education. This aim, however, involves a serious challenge for language departments.

This article gives a brief overview of traditional tertiary level curricula of German as a foreign language (GFL) in North America. Specifically, it focuses on the traditional language-contents divide which typically arises at curricular, structural, and organizational levels. Subsequently, the article discusses some questions and challenges emerging in the context of attempts to integrate language and contents in tertiary level German programs in Canada.

Traditions in teaching German at tertiary level: from language to (literary) content
Tertiary level curricula and language programs at North American institutions usually follow the traditional sequence from language to content courses. They offer language courses for beginners and intermediate learners of German, followed by courses that focus on contents rather than on language. The annual survey of university courses offered at Canadian universities shows that the content courses cover mostly literary topics (Batts 1998, Plews 2007). The study of German in Canada, one can conclude, follows a path from language to literature – a finding that has recently triggered some concern among scholars who find it rather “curious that, despite the many forms, uses, users, and contexts of language and culture, one form of language and one kind of text, namely the language of specifically literary texts, holds such an extensive command over the goals of the GFL curriculum. On the surface, GFL in Canada currently comprises of a content-oriented rather than a learning-oriented curriculum […] where that content is singular in nature” (Plews 2007: 13). Plews adds that this pattern has been historically consistent in Canada in the 18th and 19th centuries, and it also parallels the development of GFL in the United States.

The dominant language-literature trajectory in North American GFL programs has also been questioned with respect to today’s university students and their actual or potential interests in language programs. It has become evident that even though there are many reasons why students may wish to study German, university curricula do not cater for too many of their interests or wishes and continue to offer traditional programs for potential future literary scholars. This curricular focus, however, appears somewhat outdated and one-dimensional, as “the thinking that underlies the curriculum for German in Canada neglects the numerous (i.e. multiple) other literary or non-literary forms of cultural expression and their disciplinary, professional, technical, environmental, or behavior- and task-specific varieties of language” (Plews 2007: 21). Plews concludes that one of the unwanted side-effects of this curricular focus is that it is at odds with what many students would prefer to study. The language-literature trajectory may indeed...
be a reason for students not to study German but to major in a different subject that is more in line with their interests. Given the immediate danger of shutting down German programs in North America, this argument must be taken very seriously.

Meanwhile, some institutions have begun to offer courses in additional fields such as film or applied linguistics so as to complement literature and to broaden the contents that are offered to advanced learners of German. The recent surveys of German at Canadian universities show that film courses have become a part of most tertiary level programs (Rollmann 2009).

An additional difficulty becomes visible when we take into consideration who actually takes those courses. For language courses are mostly taken by students who do not wish to continue the study of German beyond beginners’ level. Many universities offer programs that require the successful completion of a language course (the so-called language requirement). Typically, a large majority of students in beginner level German courses at North American universities do not intend to major in German – their aim is to get credit for the course. In 2007-8, for example, there were 7,545 registrations in first year language courses at Canadian universities compared to 143 undergraduate degrees in German (= 0,2%) that were awarded (Rollmann 2009). The majority of students of German never proceed to contents courses; their experience of studying German is limited to language, regardless of what is offered to advanced learners of German.

A closer look at the language-content divide 1: Which language? Which contents?

A related issue pertains to the actual contents of language courses, as well as to the language of content courses. It has been mentioned before (Maxim 2000) that because most students in North American German language courses never proceed to upper-level courses, they should be offered at least some “content” – yet what kind of content is it that should be offered to them, and which contents are actually offered?

A brief look at textbooks used in Canada, for example, reveals that most universities choose American textbooks, all of which are based on the Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century (1999) developed by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The contents advocated in the Standards are clearly spelled out: Students are to study culture in addition and in relation to language. “Through the study of other languages, students gain a knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language; in fact, students cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs” (Standards 1999: 31; emphasis added).

Arguably, “mastering” culture is a problematic notion in itself (and may appear very provocative especially to European language educators); at the very least it suggests the idea that students have to somehow “study culture” in ways that enable them to master it just like they are to master grammatical forms and word choices. It is therefore not surprising that teaching culture often involves traditional Landeskunde elements like cultural facts and figures, often presented in information boxes. Culture is undoubtedly a very difficult terrain, and it is not surprising that the actual cultural topics covered in North American textbooks comprise little more than generalized information about life in Germany and German-speaking countries; e.g., Begrüßungen, food and meals in Germany, Ausländer in Deutschland, weather and landscapes, family relationships and friendship, the Alps, Austria and Switzerland, housing and furniture in Germany, sometimes the Nazi past, unification and the Berlin Wall, etc. Topics such as these give students an idea and some images as to what German-speaking countries and people may look like and a glimpse of selected topics speakers of German may be concerned with. Yet apart from the fact that brief introductory information sections on such topics are likely to reinforce stereotypes about Germany and the German-speaking world, it is evident that the contents offered remain rather shallow (Schmenk & Hamann 2007, Schulz et al. 2005). One cannot but realize that the “language” pole of the continuum clearly outweighs the “contents” covered in textbooks used. This becomes even more
obvious when looking at the test banks that complement the textbooks – culture is usually not mentioned at all. The message communicated to students and instructors is often thus: “culture” is an addendum rather than an integral part of language. From the beginning, the language-content continuum is therefore one result of a largely contents-free language curriculum, or a language program that involves only very superficial and complementary instances of cultural contents.

At the other end of the continuum the question about the role of “language” in content courses emerges. Here, we can often see two tendencies, both of which can reinforce the language-content bifurcation: There are a number of content courses, mostly with a literary focus, taught exclusively in German. More recently, there have also emerged an increasing number of courses offered in English, often with a focus on film or cultural studies (Plews 2007, Rollman 2009). Both sets of courses may reinforce the gap between language and contents because they do not attempt to integrate both more systematically. As a result, students do not learn to navigate between their languages and to deal with the intercultural experiences and contents they are faced with in their classes (see also Fandrych 2010, this issue). They are often frustrated because they feel that literature courses are too demanding and targeted at students with native-like competencies; or they opt to study contents courses that do not require German language skills at all – so as to enable them to discuss and reflect on contents at a level they would not be able to reach in the foreign language (– at least in the eyes of those who offer those courses in English\textsuperscript{1}).

Clearly, it is important to try to balance the language-content continuum, and to develop ways of integrating both from the outset. Yet there is another issue that relates to the gap experienced by learners, namely the question who teaches literature, and who teaches culture.

A closer look at the language-content divide 2: Who teaches language? Who teaches contents?

The answer to these questions is twofold. At universities or colleges which offer German as an undergraduate option and subject only, faculty members tend to teach language and content classes alike. This provides faculty with an opportunity to integrate language and contents, regardless of whether they opt for an integrative approach. At universities that offer graduate programs in German, however, the teaching duties are distributed differently. Mostly, graduate students and sessional instructors teach language, while full time faculty teach upper level and content courses. This adds to the bifurcation between language and content considerably. Not only does it reinforce the divide between the two, it also adds a new dimension to the bifurcation: content courses are taught by faculty that are higher in the departmental hierarchy, language courses are taught by students and/or by lesser paid individuals whose position in the university hierarchy is considerably lower. As a result, many depreciate language teaching, while teaching content courses is both valued much higher and becomes detached from language teaching even further. Pfeiffer’s (2008: 296) observation is thus very important when looking at the language-contents divide:

While the bifurcation between lower and upper division courses and the respective faculty members plays a role in just about all language departments, it is most pronounced in those granting graduate – and, in particular, Ph.D. – degrees. This is of vital importance because these are precisely the departments where the future faculty is trained and socialized into a mode of professional thinking that will have repercussions long after the current professoriate has retired. Any rethinking of undergraduate curricula will therefore have an immediate effect on the education and professional training of graduate students.

\textsuperscript{1} The reasons for offering GFL courses in English are manifold. One of the most important reasons is that English courses attract a considerably higher number of students – which ensures an acceptable number of students and therefore legitimizes the course offer. Offering courses in English therefore literally pays off for language departments.
The situation in many departments with a full Graduate program may very well resemble the following scenario: Many faculty members never teach language, and the graduate students who are educated to become professors one day have to teach language only in graduate school – if they are later hired by universities that offer graduate studies they may at some point not need to teach language any more, but they will then be allowed to teach content courses. Hence, the divide between language and content continues to be reproduced in language departments. Content courses are considerably privileged over language courses, and one can imagine that many professors do not include language in their content courses at all – unless it is the kind of linguistic reflection that (in the eyes of the professors) does not resemble foreign language course work.

It is probably this power/privilege divide associated with the language-content bifurcation that must be considered the most stubborn obstacle when it comes to imagining and putting into practice alternative curricula that seek to integrate language and contents more systematically. It remains open whether or not more faculty members at North American universities will open up towards integrating language and contents more systematically in the future – and whether more full-time faculty will be interested in getting more involved in language programming and in reconsidering what language teaching could and should entail.

**Developing more integrative curricula: Suggestions and reflections**

In the 1990s, Claire Kramsch (1993, 1995) argued that the language-content divide needs bridging and rethinking, and that learners as intercultural speakers need to be focused on more explicitly by curriculum and program developers. She observed four major shifts which led her to call for a revised curriculum and major changes in language education at universities:

1. The first shift is ideological [...]. The ideological certainties that had fuelled the intellectual debates of the modern period since the days of the Enlightenment have been severely challenged by a more cautiously realistic postmodern view of the world. Truths have become contingent on perspective and point of view, on one’s historical and social position. Self-reflexivity is in order […].
2. The second shift is demographic. The increasingly multicultural composition of our society has put in question the canonical knowledge of yesteryear. It requires a totally different type of education because students no longer attach a common purpose, a common value, even a common discourse to what they are learning […].
3. The third shift is disciplinary. The growing influence of the social and cognitive sciences over such traditional human sciences as philosophy and literature is making accessible to language teachers a variety of research areas that are all relevant to their endeavor: social psychology, anthropology, ethnography, cultural studies, psycho- and sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, second language acquisition, pragmatics […].
4. The fourth shift is technological. (Kramsch 1995: xiv f.)

Arguably, all those shifts have by now hit language departments worldwide, and they continue to be very influential. But the ability of departments to deal with these shifts has yet to improve. Kramsch herself suggested that the four shifts “constitute major upheavals that are shaking at the foundations of the old idea of the university. Naturally, they create inconsistencies and dilemmas” (Kramsch 1995: xv). Those dilemmas, she elaborates, typically pertain to the role and responsibilities of language instructors: They are asked to “keep the curricular status quo in their departments while departmental boundaries are put in question. They are expected to teach ‘only’ language while the boundaries between literature, language, and culture are more blurred than ever.” This development, Kramsch points out, results in yet another problem, namely a downright language-contents paradox: “TAs are asked to teach stable meanings and assertable truths about the target language and culture in their language classes, while
they themselves write their graduate term papers on the language dilemmas and the epistemological uncertainties of the postmodern era’” (ibid.). This paradoxical bifurcation can only be resolved if language educators were to be “encouraged to participate in the current questionings; indeed they have much to contribute to the debate, for they are often faced in their classrooms with the cross-cultural, cross-language concerns of a postmodern age” (Kramsch 1995: xv f.). However, at present (and hence fifteen years after Kramsch’s thoughts were published) it is still very rare that language instructors are more systematically integrated in scholarly debates on contents.

This problem is yet to be faced by many language programs, and it will probably pose an ongoing challenge to future generations of curriculum developers as well, who will continue to keep content and theory as well as teaching practices balanced so as to provide an appropriate language education that integrates a focus on contents as well as on language.

In recent years, however, additional voices have emerged arguing in favor of curriculum changes, most of which take the language-content divide as a starting point. In 2007 the Modern Language Association published its report on the state of foreign language education in the United States, maintaining that the “two-tiered configuration has outlived its usefulness and needs to evolve. The critical moment in which language departments find themselves is therefore also an opportunity. Many factors in the world today make advanced study of languages and cultures appealing to students and vital to society” (MLA 2007: 3).

These words clearly mark a shift in public and institutional discourse, and even though they remain rather general, their importance should not be underrated. Apparently, we have reached a point at which there is overwhelming evidence that the language-contents divide has outlived itself, where the future of language programs depends more and more on the ability of curriculum developers to bridge the gap between the two poles so as to attract as many potential students as possible. The MLA report states this plainly in one paragraph:

Replacing the two-tiered language-literature structure with a broader and more coherent curriculum in which language, culture, and literature are taught as a continuous whole, supported by alliances with other departments and expressed through interdisciplinary courses, will reinvigorate language departments as valuable academic units central to the humanities and to the missions of institutions of higher learning. In our view, foreign language departments, if they are to be meaningful players in higher education – or, indeed, if they are to thrive as autonomous units – must transform their programs and structure. This idea builds directly on a transformation that has already taken place in the profession. In their individual scholarly pursuits and in their pedagogical practices, foreign language faculty members have been working in creative ways to cross disciplinary boundaries, incorporate the study of all kinds of material in addition to the strictly literary, and promote wide cultural understanding through research and teaching. It is time for all language programs in all institutions to reflect this transformation. (MLA 2007: 3)

The alternative that is advocated by the MLA Ad Hoc Committee relates to the ideal of the intercultural speaker as mentioned above. The goal of native-like performance in language, and the focus on literary studies as the core field of expertise is therefore replaced by a new ideal. Students are to develop translingual and transcultural competence which, according to the committee,

places value on the multilingual ability to operate between languages. Students are educated to function as informed and capable interlocutors with educated native speakers in the target language. They also learn to reflect on the world and themselves through another language and culture. They comprehend speakers of the target language as members of foreign societies and grasp themselves as Americans, that is, as members of a society that is foreign to others. They learn to relate to fellow members of their own society who speak languages other than English” (Pratt et al. 2008: 289).
Beyond the language–literature trajectory: Integrating language and contents

The recent shifts and challenges North American FL programs are faced with have led to a number of changes and will likely continue to do so in the future. One example of reforming the entire GFL curriculum that is widely known in North America is the German Department at Georgetown University whose members sought to change the entire German curriculum. Their new curriculum is focused on the development of advanced literacy development in undergraduate students through a genre-based curriculum (e.g. Byrnes 2002, 2005, Maxim 2000).

Other examples of more integrative programs involve the inclusion of new contents in language programs. Film studies, for instance, have become an important field that may be established in North American German programs – even though it is mostly offered in English. Another emerging possibility is the focus on SLA and applied linguistics. While German departments are normally not involved in teacher education programs at North American universities (neither in Canada nor in the United States), language departments have only recently begun to hire specialists in applied linguistics and language pedagogy, mostly because they feel that specialists in those fields can co-ordinate their language programs and train the teaching assistants. Yet there are several examples that show that specialists in SLA and applied linguistics may have to offer something for the “contents” side of the continuum as well. Students choose upper level courses in applied linguistics because they complement (and in some cases offer an alternative to) literature courses. Many of them feel that applied linguistics topics are in tune with their own experiences as learners of German.

At the University of Waterloo in Ontario/Canada, for instance, the following courses are offered (see University of Waterloo 2010):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language courses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GER 101 Elementary German I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 102 Elementary German II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 201 Intermediate German I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 202 Intermediate German II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 203 Written Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 204 Integrative Language Seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 303 German through Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 304 Reading and Translating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 250/350 Performance German</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior Seminars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 305 German for professional purposes I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 306 German for professional purposes II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 331 Studies in Genre (Linguistic Analysis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 332 Studies in Genre (Prose and Poetry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 333 Studies in Genre (Theatre and Film)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Seminars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 431 (Topics in Literature/Linguistics/Film)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 420 Language Pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 261/262 Introduction to Linguistics (in Engl.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 271/272 German Thought and Culture (in Engl.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 359 Topics in German Film (in Engl.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 383 Culture in the Third Reich: Racism, Resistance, Legacy (in Engl.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey of Canadian university course offerings show that the field of applied linguistics, and specifically a focus on SLA and language teaching/learning are clearly prioritized over linguistics (which is seldom offered, and if so, it is taught in conjunction with English and/or other languages).
The course structure outlined reveals that students who choose to learn German have to take language courses before they can take content courses taught in German. The only content courses available for beginners of German (or students of other subjects) are GER 261/2 and 271/2 as well as GER 383 and 359, all of which are taught in English. Courses which integrate language and contents more systematically are only offered to students with fairly advanced language skills. The courses labeled Junior Seminars aim to help students gain more refined and specific academic language skills so as to facilitate the study of German literature, film, and applied linguistics. Finally, Senior Seminars are courses on selected topics in literature, film, or applied linguistics which are taught in German.

This curriculum therefore does include bilingual “genre” courses that aim to facilitate the transition from language to content learning and that do to some extent integrate both. Nevertheless it is largely based on the belief that learning the language is a prerequisite for dealing with contents such as literature, linguistics, or film. The genre-courses may help bridge the language-contents gap; yet they do not abolish the divide itself.

Examples such as these show that offering more and diverse courses with contents other than literature can be one way of reforming traditional GFL curricula in Canada and in the United States, and of catering to more individual interests among the diverse student population. Clearly, they are a start to overcome the traditional language-literature trajectory. But they are only a start, and the ability to move beyond this tentative change in direction will be influenced by many factors: the financial constraints on programs with traditionally lower enrolments than most other BA programs; the training and academic socialization of graduate students who will be replacing at least some of the academics set to retire in the next five to ten years; the interests, abilities, and career plans of future undergraduates.

It is not difficult to identify the divide that hampers university GFL curricula. The greater difficulty lies in establishing methods to overcome that divide within the current structural, financial, and demographic contexts of post-secondary education in North America. Creative curricular experimentation coupled with pragmatic and extensive research analysis of those innovations is necessary, as is a willingness to rethink the nature and form of post-secondary language education itself.
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