

LANGUAGES AND THE LIBERAL ARTS : FACTS ABOUT LANGUAGE
STUDY- A HUMANISTIC VIEWPOINT

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GOOD MORNING, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. I AM PLEASED TO HAVE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO BE WITH YOU. I WILL DIVIDE MY ADDRESS TODAY INTO TWO PARTS. FIRST, I WILL TRY TO EXPLAIN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LANGUAGE AS A VEHICLE OF COMMUNICATION, AND INDICATE HOW OUR PROFESSION BRINGS TOGETHER THE CONCERNS OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND OF VARIOUS NATIONS OF THE WORLD. SECONDLY, I WILL EXAMINE THE IMPORTANCE OF LEGISLATION, AS IT AFFECTS NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND POLICIES, ATTITUDES, MOTIVATION AND SUPPORT FOR LANGUAGE STUDY AND BILINGUALISM.

THE TITLE OF THIS PRESENTATION IS: "LANGUAGES AND THE LIBERAL ARTS : FACTS ABOUT LANGUAGE STUDY- A HUMANISTIC VIEWPOINT." BUT BEFORE FOCUSING ON THE MAIN THEME OF MY DISCUSSION, I WOULD LIKE TO STATE THAT IF ALL THE SOCIAL PROCESSES ESTABLISHED BY MANKIND EVERYWHERE, BY FAR THE MOST CRITICALLY IMPORTANT IS EDUCATION. AND WITHIN EDUCATION, THOSE BRANCHES OF EDUCATION THAT RELATE TO COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS—THAT IS, LANGUAGE EDUCATION, INCLUDING FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION—ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL.

TO MAKE THIS POINT CLEAR, LET ME EMPHASIZE THAT LANGUAGE STUDY IS NOT MERELY AN EFFORT TO ACQUIRE CERTAIN SKILLS: RATHER,

IT IS AN ATTEMPT TO ACHIEVE AN UNDERSTANDING AS COMPLETE AS POSSIBLE, BETWEEN PEOPLE OF DIVERSE LINGUISTIC BACKGROUNDS.

INDEED, IT HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED THAT LEARNING ANOTHER LANGUAGE IS A "LIBERALIZING" EXPERIENCE BECAUSE IT SERVES TO FREE ONE FROM THE SHACKLES, THE RESTRAINTS, AND BARRIERS IMPOSED BY SUCH LIMITATIONS AS CONFINEMENT TO A SINGLE LANGUAGE. WE CAN EVEN GO SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT EVEN THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE AS LANGUAGE IS A HUMANISTIC STUDY: THAT IS, ALL THE USES AND MANIFESTATIONS OF LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION, IN ALL THEIR PHILOSOPHIC, SOCIAL, GEOGRAPHIC, AND ETHNIC SPLENDOR, ARE THE BASIS OF A HUMANISTIC DISCIPLINE.

THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL OF LANGUAGE AS A MEANS OF BUILDING BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN PEOPLES OF DIVERSE LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND HAS BEEN DWELT UPON AT LENGTH BY A LARGE VARIETY OF LANGUAGE SCHOLARS. OUR OWN LINGUISTIC EXPERIENCES IN THE UNITED STATES OFFERS AMPLE REASON TO VIEW LANGUAGE TEACHING AS A MOST POWERFUL FORCE WHICH CAN HELP CREATE THE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING NECESSARY FOR PEOPLE TO FUNCTION CONSTRUCTIVELY, CREATIVELY, AND BENEFICIALLY IN AN INTERDEPENDENT WORLD. ONE OF THE CLASSIC STATEMENTS

ON THE HUMANISTIC FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE TEACHING IS THAT PROVIDED BY WILLIAM RILEY PARKER, RECOGNIZING THAT : "KNOWLEDGE OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE, WHETHER SLIGHT OR EXTENSIVE, BRINGS NO AUTOMATIC OR CERTAIN SYMPATHY WITH THE PEOPLE SPEAKING THAT LANGUAGE," NEVERTHELESS CONTENDS THAT: "FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY SPEEDS AND INCREASES UNDERSTANDING WHEN THE DESIRE TO UNDERSTAND IS THERE - - SPEEDS AND INCREASES SYMPATHY WHEN THE GERM IS PRESENT." ¹ HE STATES FURTHER THAT "FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY MAY, AND OFTEN DOES (ALTHOUGH THERE CAN BE NO GUARANTEE), CREATE THE DESIRE TO UNDERSTAND, THE GERM OF SYMPATHY. IT MAY, AND OFTEN DOES, PREVENT MISUNDERSTANDING. GIVEN GOOD WILL, FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY MAKES POSSIBLE THAT READY AND MORE NEARLY PERFECT COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PEOPLES UPON WHICH MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING DEPENDS. GIVEN INDIFFERENCE, FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY MAKES POSSIBLE, THROUGH BETTER COMMUNICATION, THE DISCOVERY OF GOOD WILL."²

IN THIS CONNECTION, IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO REFER TO WILGA RIVERS, WHO SUMS UP THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF LEARNING ANOTHER LANGUAGE AS FOLLOWS:
"THE UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION OF [SECOND] LANGUAGE STUDY THAT IS TRULY EDUCATION, IN THE SENSE THAT IT EXPANDS THE STUDENT'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF HIS ENVIRONMENT, AND TRULY HUMANISTIC IN THAT IT ADDS A NEW DIMENSION TO HIS THINKING, IS THE OPPORTUNITY IT PROVIDES FOR BREAKING THROUGH MONOLINGUAL AND MONOCULTURAL

BONDS. SUCH AN EXPERIENCE REVEALS TO THE STUDENT THAT THERE ARE OTHER WAYS OF SAYING THINGS, OTHER VALUES AND ATTITUDES THAN THOSE TO WHICH HIS NATIVE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE HAVE HABITUATED HIM. THROUGH THIS PROCESS, HE MAY DEVELOP NEW ATTITUDES OF IDEAS AND PEOPLES THAT WILL REDUCE HIS BONDAGE TO THE FAMILIAR AND THE LOCAL, WHILE INCREASING HIS SYMPATHY FOR PERSONS OF OTHER CULTURES AND LANGUAGES.”³

RAYMOND J. CORMIER PUTS IT EVEN MORE STRONGLY:

“... THE INDIVIDUAL WHO STUDIES [OTHER] LANGUAGES IS ENABLED TO TRANSCEND MONOLITHIC REALITY... LANGUAGE LEARNING IS, OR SHOULD BE, A MIND EXPANDING HALLUCINOGENIC EXPERIENCE BECAUSE IT RAISES ONE’S CONSCIOUSNESS, INCREASES AWARENESS OF OTHER CULTURES AND OFFERS DEEPER PERCEPTION OF ONE’S PLACE IN THE WORLD.”⁴

THUS, LANGUAGE LEARNING IS NOT ONLY MIND-STRETCHING, IT IS “MIND-BLOWING.”

JOHN CARROL, THE EMINENT PSYCHOLOGIST, WRITES:

“INSOFAR AS LANGUAGES DIFFER IN THE WAYS THEY ENCODE OBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE, LANGUAGE USERS TEND TO SORT OUT AND DISTINGUISH EXPERIENCES DIFFERENTLY ACCORDING TO THE CATEGORIES PROVIDED BY THEIR RESPECTIVE LANGUAGES. THESE ‘COGNITIONS’ WILL TEND TO HAVE CERTAIN EFFECTS ON BEHAVIOUR.”⁵ CARROLL USES SOME EXAMPLES TO ILLUSTRATE THE PROCESS; WHEN AN AMERICAN LEARNS GERMAN, HE POINTS OUT, HIS ATTENTION IS DRAWN

TO THE FACT THAT GERMAN-SPEAKING PEOPLE MUST SPECIFY THE MANNER OF TRANSPORTATION WHEN THEY TALK OF DISPLACING THEMSELVES. A GERMAN CANNOT JUST "GO" DOWNTOWN OR TO ANOTHER CITY: HE MUST EITHER WALK (GEHEN), USE A VEHICLE (FAHREN), RIDE ON HORSEBACK (REITEN), OR WHATEVER. IF AN AMERICAN IS TO COMMUNICATE IN GERMAN, HE MUST CHANGE HIS USUAL PERCEPTIONS OF "GOING" BY LEARNING CERTAIN DIFFERENTIATIONS HE FAILED TO MAKE BEFORE. SIMILARLY, AN AMERICAN LEARNING SPANISH MUST CONSCIOUSLY MAKE A DISTINCTION ABOUT THE CONCEPT "TO BE" (SER VERSUS ESTAR) WHICH HE NORMALLY DOESN'T THINK OF WHEN SPEAKING ENGLISH.

INDEED, LINGUISTS HAVE ALWAYS HELD THE VIEW THAT EACH LANGUAGE AND EACH CULTURE HAS A VALUE IN AND OF ITSELF AND IS WORTHY OF STUDY FOR ITS OWN SAKE. THE ATTITUDE CURRENTLY ADVOCATED IS BASED UPON THE PROPOSITION: MY LANGUAGE AND CULTURE ARE OK, YOUR LANGUAGE AND CULTURE ARE OK. THIS IS ONE OF THE MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL LINGUISTICS TO LANGUAGE STUDY. THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF ALL SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING IS, AND MUST BE, THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF BILINGUALISM AND BICULTURALISM, ALONG WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ATTITUDE OF LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL PLURALISM. THIS TWO-FOLD PURPOSE WILL LEAD TO AN 'I'M OK -YOU'RE OK' ATTITUDE AMONG ALL PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. THIS IS THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE OF LANGUAGE STUDY AS VIEWED BY THE LANGUAGE

PROFESSION. IT IS FURTHER FOSTERED BY THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL-LINGUISTIC ATTITUDE TOWARD LANGUAGE, WHICH IS HUMAN, HUMANE, AND HUMANISTIC.

- 1) I'M OK: YOU'RE OK - - REFLECTS A BELIEF IN THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN.
- 2) I AM IMPORTANT; YOU ARE IMPORTANT- -REFLECTS THE WORTH OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN LIFE.
- 3) MY LANGUAGE AND CULTURE ARE GOOD; YOUR LANGUAGE AND CULTURE ARE GOOD- -REFLECTS THE LINGUISTIC POINT OF VIEW, WHICH, INCIDENTALLY, IS ALSO APPLIED TO DIALECTS, I.E. MY DIALECT IS OK: YOUR DIALECT IS OK.

LINGUISTS AGREE THAT LANGUAGE IS ONE PART OF HUMAN NATURE THAT IS COMMON TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE SPECIES REGARDLESS OF THEIR RACE OR CLASS AND THEIR UNDOUBTED DIFFERENCES IN INTELLECT, PERSONALITY, AND PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES. THE PARALLEL BETWEEN LINGUISTICS AND MODERN POPULARIZATIONS OF PSYCHIATRY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS MAY BE SEEN IN THE FOLLOWING QUOTATION FROM THOMAS HARRIS, THE ORIGINATOR OF THE POPULARIZED TERMINOLOGY OF TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS AND THE AUTHOR OF THE BESTSELLER, I'M OK, YOU'RE OK. HE SAYS:

I AM A PERSON. YOU ARE A PERSON. WITHOUT YOU I AM NOT A PERSON, FOR ONLY THROUGH YOU IS LANGUAGE POSSIBLE. YOU HAVE MADE ME IMPORTANT. IF I DEVALUE YOU, I DEVALUE MYSELF. THIS IS THE RATIONALE OF THE POSITION I'M OK- -YOU'RE OK. THROUGH THIS POSITION ONLY ARE WE PERSONS INSTEAD OF THINGS. RETURNING MAN TO HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE OF PERSONHOOD IS THE THEME

OF REDEMPTION, OF RECONCILIATION, OF ENLIGHTENMENT, CENTRAL TO ALL THE GREAT WORLD RELIGIONS. THE REQUIREMENT OF THIS POSITION IS THAT WE ARE RESPONSIBLE TO AND FOR ONE ANOTHER, AND THIS RESPONSIBILITY IS THE ULTIMATE CLAIM, IMPOSED ON ALL MEN ALIKE.⁶

A PARALLEL BETWEEN LINGUISTICS AND PSYCHIATRY IS ALSO SUGGESTED BY THE WHORFIAN HYPOTHESIS. LINGUISTS LIKE WHORF BELIEVE THAT LANGUAGE IS THE ONE THING THAT SEPARATES MAN FROM THE LOWER ANIMALS; THEY CONSIDER LANGUAGE TO BE PARAMOUNT IN ALL INTELLECTUAL AND HUMAN ENDEAVORS. AS ONE SCHOLAR HAS WRITTEN, LINGUISTS BELIEVE THAT

“LANGUAGE IS PERHAPS THE MOST SPECIFICALLY HUMAN OF MANKIND’S FACULTIES...IN STRIVING TOWARDS THE UNDERSTANDING AND KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE, MAN HAS, THROUGHOUT HIS INTELLECTUAL HISTORY, BEEN SEEKING MORE FULLY TO ATTAIN SELF-KNOWLEDGE, AND TO OBEY THE INJUNCTION THAT FACES THE VISITOR TO APOLLO’S TEMPLE AT DELPHI, THE CENTER OF THE ANCIENT GREEK WORLD, WHERE OUR CIVILIZATION FINDS ITS SOURCE. THE INJUNCTION WAS: KNOW THYSELF.”⁷

IN SUPPORT OF THE WHORFIAN HYPOTHESIS OF LANGUAGE, WE HAVE THE FOLLOWING QUOTATION FROM GLEN H. FISHER, AUTHOR OF WHEN AMERICANS LIVE ABROAD:

THE AMERICAN WILL NEVER REALLY PENETRATE THE THINKING OF PEOPLE IN A NEW COUNTRY UNTIL HE HAS FIRST PENETRATED THE LANGUAGE WHICH CARRIES, REFLECTS, AND MOLDS THE THOUGHTS AND IDEAS OF THAT PEOPLE. ⁸

SEEN IN THIS LIGHT, LANGUAGE STUDY ASSUMES A FUNCTION THAT EXTENDS BEYOND ACADEMIC OBJECTIVES TO NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS. IT CAN BE CHARGED WITH THE TASK OF CONTRIBUTING TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE HUMAN CONDITION- - INDEED, EVEN TO THE SURVIVAL OF MANKIND. THE NEED FOR THE HUMANISTIC FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE STUDY CAN BE UNDERSTOOD ONLY IF WE REMIND OURSELVES OF THE ALARMING NATURE OF THE CROSS-CULTURAL PROBLEMS WHICH CONTINUE TO ABOUND BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE AMERICA.

LET US FIRST CONSIDER THIS POINT WITHINT THE FRAMEWORK OF OUR OWN SOCIETY. A SHORT GLANCE AT THE FOLLOWING STATISTICS REVEALS THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS ISSUE WITHIN THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM:

- 1) THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED 28 MILLION PERSONS (1 IN 8) IN THE UNITED STATES WHOSE NATIVE LANGUAGE IS NOT ENGLISH.
- 2) 10.6 MILLION HAVE SPANISH LANGUAGE BACKGROUND (THE UNITED STATES HAS THE 5TH LARGEST SPANISH-SPEAKING -POPULATION IN THE WORLD).
- 3) OVER 5 MILLION OF THE 28 MILLION PEOPLE ARE OF SCHOOL AGE, BETWEEN THE AGES OF 6 AND 19. (I.E. OVER 10% OF PERSONS IN THIS AGE GROUP).
- 4) THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED 2.4 MILLION PERSONS IN THE UNITED STATES WHO DO NOT SPEAK ENGLISH AT ALL.

- 5) FURTHER, CONTRARY TO GENERAL BELIEF, MOST OF THESE PERSONS (2 OUT OF 3, OR 18.5 MILLION) ARE NOT FOREIGN BUT NATIVE BORN.
- 6) IN ADDITION, THERE ARE OVER 250,000 FOREIGN STUDENTS IN UNITED STATES COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (1,000,000 BY 2000 A.D.?)

THESE STATISTICS ARE FROM 1976. ONE MUST ADD TO THESE STATISTICS THE NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS, REFUGEES, AND THOSE TERMED BY SOME, "UNDOCUMENTED ALIENS"—[BUT MY FRIEND, JOSUE GONZALEZ PREFERS TO THINK OF THEM AS "UNDOCUMENTED TAXPAYERS"]—WHO HAVE BEEN ARRIVING IN A STEADY FLOW SINCE THEN, AND SINCE THE NEW IMMIGRATION ACT. ACCORDING TO RECENT FINDINGS, THE FLOOD OF IMMIGRANTS IS BRINGING WELL OVER 1 MILLION NEWCOMERS A YEAR INTO THE UNITED STATES—THE HIGHEST LEVEL SINCE THE MASS MIGRATION OF EUROPEANS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY WHEN MY PARENTS CAME TO THE U.S. BY SOME ESTIMATES, *EL SALVADOR* ALONE HAS GENERATED AS MANY AS 500,000 U.S.-BOUND REFUGEES SINCE 1980. AMERICA TODAY IS ACCEPTING TWICE AS MANY IMMIGRANTS AS ALL OTHER NATIONS COMBINED.⁹

IT IS SAID THAT HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF. IT DOES NOT SEEM TOO MUCH TO SUGGEST THAT WE ARE EXPERIENCING A WAVE OF IMMIGRATION OF SIMILAR MAGNITUDE TO THAT WHICH TOOK PLACE AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY. GIVEN THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL SCENE, THE INFLUX IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME. "IF IMMIGRATION IS CONTINUED AT A HIGH LEVEL" WARNS SENATOR ALAN SIMPSON, CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION, "AND A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION DO NOT ASSIMILATE, THEY MAY CREATE SOME OF THE SAME SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS THAT EXIST IN

THE COUNTRIES FROM WHICH THEY COME.”¹⁰ LANGUAGE COMPETENCE IS CRUCIAL TO ASSIMILATION.

NOR IS THE INTERNATIONAL ASPECT OF THE SITUATION ANY LESS SIGNIFICANT. WE HAVE ALL BECOME AWARE OF THE DAZZLING DIVERSITY OF LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL EXPRESSION THAT EXISTS AROUND THE WORLD AND THE DRAMATICALLY INCREASED INTERDEPENDENCE BETWEEN VARIOUS NATIONS. THE THEME OF INTERDEPENDENCE HAS, OF COURSE, MANY VARIATIONS, BUT A SHORT GLANCE AT THE ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF OUR WORLD REVEALS THE FACT THAT THERE IS NO RADICAL INDEPENDENCE IN THE LIFE OF ANY MODERN NATION. LEONARD SILK IN AN OCTOBER 29, 1982 , NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE WROTE:

“THE GREATER INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE WORLD ECONOMY HAS MADE IT MORE DIFFICULT THAN EVER FOR A SINGLE NATION, EVEN THE UNITED STATES, TO ACT ALONE TO ATTACK ONE PROBLEM TO THE EXCLUSION OF THE OTHER. [THE USE OF] TIGHT MONEY AND HIGH INTEREST RATES TO STOP INFLATION CAUSES UNEMPLOYMENT TO RISE NOT ONLY AT HOME BUT ALSO ABROAD, AS OTHER NATIONS RAISE INTEREST RATES TO PROTECT THEIR CURRENCIES.

HIGH DOLLAR RATES IN THE UNITED STATES ALSO MADE THE DOLLAR SO DEAR AS TO HURT AMERICAN EXPORTS, ENGENDERING PRESSURES FOR PROTECTIONISM. HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT WORLD-WIDE ENDANGERS THE ENTIRE ECONOMIC AND MONETARY SYSTEM.

LIKEWISE, FOR A SINGLE NATION TO TRY TO ATTACK UNEMPLOYMENT SIMPLY BY STIMULATING INTERNAL DEMAND CAN ALSO BE PERILOUS, AS THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION FOUND IN 1979 AND THE MITERRAND GOVERNMENT IN FRANCE AND

TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT IN CANADA HAVE SINCE LEARNED.
SOLVING UNEMPLOYMENT AND INFLATION TOGETHER WILL
REQUIRE GREATER INTERNATIONAL POLICY COORDINATION.¹¹
THINK OF THE REPERCUSSIONS OF THIS QUOTATION SINCE THE DECLINE
OF THE DOLLAR.

INDEED, MANY AMERICAN CORPORATIONS REPORT THAT MORE THAN A
THIRD OF THEIR INCOMES NOW COME FROM EXPORTS OR FROM FOREIGN
INVESTMENTS: U.S. EXPORTS NOW EXCEED \$230 BILLION ANNUALLY AND
AMERICAN FIRMS HAVE INVESTED AN EQUAL AMOUNT ABROAD. WE
EXPORT ONE-THIRD OF OUR FARM PRODUCT. WE IMPORT NEARLY HALF
THE OIL WE CONSUME AND ARE FAR MORE DEPENDENT UPON OTHERS
FOR MANY MINERALS. FOREIGN INVESTMENT HAS BECOME THE BASIS
FOR ONE-FOURTH OF INCOME PRODUCED IN THE STATE OF SOUTH
CAROLINA. DIAGONALLY ACROSS THE U.S. THE STATE OF WASHINGTON,
HOME OF THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST IMPORT MANUFACTURER AND
SECOND-LARGEST CONTAINER PORT, EXPORTS THREE-FOURTHS OF ITS
WHEAT AND HALF ITS TIMBER-CUT. OVERSEAS LOANS BY U.S. BANKS
EXCEED \$300 BILLION.¹²

THE PRESENT INTERDEPENDENT STRUCTURE OF THE WORLD
REQUIRES THAT ALONG WITH OUR PRODUCTS WE SHOULD PROJECT OUR
VALUES, INTENTIONS AND POLICIES TO THE PEOPLE OF OTHER
COUNTRIES AND BE AWARE IN RETURN, OF THEIR VALUES, INTENTIONS
AND POLICIES. WE SHOULD, IN OTHER WORDS, ATTAIN INTERNATIONAL
UNDERSTANDING OF A MUCH DEEPER, MORE PROFOUND SORT. THERE IS
AMPLE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT IN THE ABSENCE OF SUCH AN
UNDERSTANDING THE CROSS-CULTUREAL CONFLICTS BETWEEN VARIOUS
NATIONS CAN READILY DRAW THE SUPERPOWERS INTO DANGEROUSLY

CONFRONTATIONAL POSITIONS. AT STAKE, THEREFORE, IS NOT JUST THE SECURITY OF A PARTICULAR COUNTRY BUT THE SURVIVAL OF MANKIND. A REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES PUTS IT THIS WAY:

“INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING AND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY HAVE BECOME ESSENTIAL IN AN INTERDEPENDENT WORLD, WHERE EACH COUNTRY’S SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON ITS ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND AND COOPERATE WITH OTHER NATIONS. ISSUES OF PEACE, ECONOMICS, AND GLOBAL HARMONY HINGE ON THE STRENGTHENING OF TIES AMONG PEOPLE OF DIVERSE CULTURES. INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND DOMESTIC EMPLOYMENT, ENERGY RESOURCES AND FOREIGN MARKETS, DIPLOMACY AND CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTIONS ALL REQUIRE GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW OTHER PEOPLE THINK AND LIVE. INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION BECOME AS PRAGMATIC AS REDRESSING THE BALANCE-OF-PAYMENTS DEFICIT, AS HUMANITARIAN AS DEALING WITH GLOBAL HUNGER AND DISEASE, AS CRUCIAL AS AVOIDING WAR, AND AS HUMANISTIC AS PROMOTING A WORLD OF FULLY-EDUCATED WOMEN AND MEN.”¹³

IT IS ALSO RELEVANT TO REFER IN THIS CONTEXT TO A SPECIAL ISSUE OF ONE OF AMERICA’S FOREMOST EDUCATIONAL JOURNALS, *CHANGE* MAGAZINE. THE SPECIAL ISSUE, ENTITLED “EDUCATION FOR THE WORLD VIEW” EXPANDED ON THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION, AND INTEREST SPARKED BY THE REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT’S COMMISSION ON FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES WHICH ELABORATED ON THE CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE

REQUIREMENTS OF AMERICA'S EXPERTISE IN LANGUAGE AND
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES.

NATURALLY, THE QUESTION CAN BE ARGUED AT LENGTH, AND I DO NOT INTEND HERE TO DEWELL ON THE DISCUSSIONS CONTAINED IN THE **CHANGE** SPECIAL ISSUE. WHAT IS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST IS THE INTERRELATION WHICH IS PRESUPPOSED BETWEEN (1) LANGUAGE STUDIES AND (2) INTERNATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL (a) EXCHANGE (b) UNDERSTANDING AND (c) COOPERATION. ONE OF THE CONTRIBUTORS TO THE ISSUE, HARLAN CLEVELAND, WROTE OF THIS INTERRELATION IN A MANNER WHICH IS ALL THE MORE INTERESTING TO US BECAUSE HE IS NEITHER A LINGUIST NOR A LANGUAGE TEACHER, BUT A POLITICAL SCIENTIST; HE SAYS:

“IT IS TRUE THAT I HAVE LONG BEEN SKEPTICAL OF THE TOO EASY ASSUMPTION THAT LINGUISTIC SKILL, CULTURAL EMPATHY, AND POLITICAL ACUMEN ARE LIKELY TO BE FOUND IN THE SAME PACKAGE... BUT WHILE LANGUAGE LEARNING IS NOT A SUFFICIENT CONDITION FOR CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING, IT IS A NECESSARY CONDITION OF GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE. IT IS ESPECIALLY USEFUL IF THE LANGUAGE LEARNING IS EMBEDDED IN A TOTAL EXPERIENCE, INCLUDING THE LEARNER'S IMMERSION IN A SITUATION WHERE EVERYBODY ELSE ALREADY SPEAKS THE LANGUAGE THE STUDENT IS TRYING TO LEARN. ¹⁴

THESE ARE NOT BUT A FEW FROM AMONG HUNDREDS OF EXAMPLES WHICH CLEARLY ILLUSTRATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING TO PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT AND TO THE CREATION GO

A GENUINE SPIRIT OF KINSHIP AMONG PEOPLES OF DIVERSE CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS.

FROM ALL THIS IT APPEARS THAT IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR US AS A GREAT NATION TO STRENGTHEN OUR LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE, WITH A FOCUS ON UNDERSTANDING HOW NATIONS, CULTURES, AND CIVILIZATIONS ARE ALL INTERCONNECTED. WE MUST TRY TO ACQUIRE MORE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR INTERDEPENDENT WORLD AND TO ENLARGE OUR AWARENESS OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN OUR SELF INTERESTS AND THE CONCERNS OF OTHER NATIONS.

TO CONCLUDE, MASTERY OF MORE THAN ONE LANGUAGE HAS LONG BEEN THE MARK OF A LIBERALLY-EDUCATED MAN, BECAUSE HE WHO IS CONFINED TO THE USE OF ONE LANGUAGE IS CUT-OFF FROM MANY OF THE WORLD'S CULTURAL RICHES. HE IS, MOREOVER, LIMITED IN HIS ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD IN WHICH HE LIVES - - A WORLD THAT IS CONSTANTLY CHANGING. CONTINENTS ONCE ISOLATED BY VAST OCEANS ARE NOT ONLY HOURS APART BY PLANE AND SECONDS APART BY MEANS OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION. DEVELOPED AND DEVELOING NATIONS ALIKE FIND THEMSELVES THRUST TOGETHER IN EFFORTS TO SOLVE OLD AND NEW PROBLEMS.

¹ W.R. Parker, The National Interest and Foreign Languages, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC, Dept of State, 1961), pp 100-01.

² Ibid

³ W. Rivers, Speaking in Many Tongues: Essays in Foreign Language Teaching (Rowley, Mass: Newbury House, 1972) p. 134

⁴ Raymond J. Cormier, "Foreign Languages and Liberal Arts," Bulletin of the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages, 6, 1 (1974), 23.

⁵ John Carroll, "Linguistic Relativity, Contrastive Linguistics, and Language Learning," International Review of Applied Linguistics, (1963), 12.

⁶ Thomas Harris, I'm OK—You're OK, (New York: Avon Books, 1967), p. 25.

⁷ R.H. Robins, A Short History of Linguistics, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1967), p. 23.

⁸ Op. Cit., p.25.

⁹ All this information is based on the data which appeared in the U.S. News and World Report, April 12, 1982, pp. 47-50.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Noted by Charles J. Ping, President of Ohio University in "The Search for International Community and Education for Interdependence," November 4, 1982.

¹² This information is borrowed from Steven Greenings "Beachhead in International Education," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Council of Education, Minneapolis, October 14, 1982, p. 4

¹³ Toward Education with a Global Perspective, a report of the National Assembly on Foreign Language and International Studies, p. 7.

¹⁴ Harlan Cleveland, quoted by James E. Alatis in "Interdisciplinary Approaches to Language Teaching," Rassegna Italiana Di Linguistica Applicata, Anno XIII, No. 3, 1981, p. 16.