Rationale for the LS&A Language Requirement

Excerpt from the Report on Second Language Instruction in the College of Literature, Science & Arts produced by the LS&A Joint Faculty-Student Policy Committee, Fall 1996 (page 4)

The Committee identified three broad rationales as they read earlier college reports and spoke with language instructors and other faculty about the rationale for language study and the language requirement.

1. Intellectual and Analytical Development

"Language incarnates, organizes, stores and expresses the cultural reality of a society and the intellectual constructs of its people. Language learning forces us to abandon our own deeply ingrained structures -grammatical, semantic, psychological, and cultural -- and cross over into new ones. Expressing oneself in a foreign language and reading the unmediated expressions of natives in that language are unique expressions that are mainstays of liberal education .... In four terms of intensive language study, most students will come to grips with a new language on its own terms; most students will be meaningfully transformed and broadened in their range of thinking skills." ("Report of the Coordinating Committee on the Undergraduate Experience: Language in the Undergraduate Experience")

2. Cross-Cultural Understanding and Awareness

"Natural languages are not abstract or arbitrary constructs but the central and defining media of specific peoples and cultures. The process of learning them as a non-native adult begins with memorization, drill, and repetition, but the goal of learning them is genuine personal practice in lessons on openness, flexibility, diversity, and tolerance. As in the study of piano, the mechanical basics become the vehicles to the art. . . . The awareness of difference and acquisition of another culture through language are the only platforms from which we are able to gain a remote perspective on ourselves and our own culture and language. When we think of foreign travel, we think of foreign language. We should always be mindful that foreign language study, even at home, is travel in cultural and intellectual space." ("Report of the Coordinating Committee on the Undergraduate Experience: Language in the Undergraduate Experience")
3. Personal and Professional Opportunities

Language study enables students to travel, live and communicate more easily in non-English speaking countries. It allows students to communicate with their parents and grandparents in their first language or in the language of their ethnic background. Language study prepares students for graduate study and research in many fields. Language study prepares students for international business opportunities, and it increases employment opportunities for students in all professions in a global economy.

LS&A Language Requirements which apply to all Slavic languages taught at the Slavic Department

- Students with previous experience in the language they plan to use to meet the language requirement must take a language placement test.
- Students must earn a grade of C- or better in the prerequisite language course to proceed to the subsequent course. Any exception to this rule must be granted by a designated faculty representative in the department.
- The final course in an elementary language sequence used to satisfy the Language Requirement must be elected on a graded basis.
- The language requirement cannot be satisfied by out-of-residence credit which is elected after the student has begun degree enrollment in LS&A unless the appropriate language department has approved that plan in advance.
- A student whose first language is not English and who attended a high school where English was not the language of instruction is considered to have met the requirement.

- All students in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, as well as students in the Residential College, Honors Program, or the Comprehensive Studies Program are required to take the language placement exam, regardless of previous credit received.

- School of Music students are not required to take a language placement exam.

- College of Engineering students are not required to take a language, but can receive academic credit if they score highly on the placement exam.

Slavic Language Placement Examination

- Placement Exam in Russian is administered by the Office of Evaluations and examinations during orientation sessions at the beginning of each academic term for incoming students (freshmen, transfer)

- University of Michigan students may take placement exams for the following Slavic languages by emailing slavic@umich.edu:
Albanian (fee); Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian; Czech/Slovak; and Polish

- University of Michigan students may take the placement exam for Russian or Ukrainian during the academic year by scheduling an appointment with Svitlana Rogovyk

Based on the results of the placement exam the instructor will recommend the most appropriate course level to continue in Slavic language studies.

Heritage students of Russian (students partially raised in Russian language-speaking environment and/or attended any school with Russian language instructions) are required to contact the Slavic Language Program Coordinator Svitlana Rogovyk (srogovyk@umich.edu) prior to enrolling in any Slavic language classes.

**Slavic Language Proficiency Examination**

PROFICIENCY, n. [from L. proficiens, from proficio, to advance forward; pro and facio, to make.] Advance in the acquisition of any art, science or knowledge; improvement; progression in knowledge.

**Purpose of the Proficiency Exam**

To certify that students have met the designated levels in Slavic Language Studies and to facilitate the process of articulating expectations of student performance in target Slavic language.

**Articulating Expectations**

The minimal proficiency level of Intermediate-Low level on the scale developed by the American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) consider to be as a reasonable benchmark for Slavic language students completing one year of language study at the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures.

**Features of the Proficiency Exam**

The Proficiency Exams in Slavic Languages have been developed to assess proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in Russian, Polish, Czech, BSC, and Ukrainian. The contextualized tasks in these assessment instruments place test takers in realistic situations where they need to use the target language.

**ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines**

http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/LANGUAGELEARNING/OtherResources/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines/contents.htm