



## **What is CLAC?**

The longstanding Languages Across the Curriculum (LAC) movement is built upon a simple primary concept: Students should have multiple opportunities to apply their knowledge of languages in a variety of curricular contexts beyond the traditional language classroom. Cultures and Languages Across the Curriculum (CLAC) builds upon this basic idea: Knowledge exists within and is shaped by culture and, therefore, just as materials in many languages can and should be incorporated into all parts of the curriculum, intercultural perspectives can and should inform the teaching of academic content in many curricular contexts. LAC and CLAC strive to make translingual and transcultural competence a reality for all students, not simply for those who major in a language or participate in immersive study abroad programs. Similarly, educators across disciplines and languages are encouraged to cooperate and transcend curricular/co-curricular divides, in order to incorporate international inquiry and discovery into all aspects of a student's educational experience.

CLAC is not synonymous with Content-Based Instruction. While CBI puts content at the service of language learning, CLAC engages languages and intercultural perspectives to achieve a better and more multi-faceted understanding of content. It is also not just another call to bring culture into the language classroom. While CLAC practitioners applaud the move away from the traditional literature-focused approach to language learning, CLAC focuses less on bringing disciplinary content or culture into the language classroom ("the curriculum across the languages," if you will) than on assimilating languages and cultures into instruction and research across a wide range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts.

## **What are the Origins of LAC and CLAC?**

LAC shares a philosophical and pedagogical foundation with Writing Across the Curriculum and other "across the curriculum" movements that gained popularity in the 1970s-1980s, in that it emphasizes a means of communication in the creative and active understanding of course content. In 1989, Richard Lambert, then director of the National

### **What does CLAC look like?**

In practice, CLAC takes a wide variety of forms, including—but not limited to—the following:

- 1) Linked language and content courses or content courses with specially designed language modules;
- 2) Content courses taught entirely or partially in languages other than English;
- 3) Co-taught courses, in which content is infused with an international perspective;
- 4) Large lecture courses with break-out or discussion sessions that are conducted in and include the use of materials in a variety of languages, facilitated by graduate or advanced undergraduate native speakers;
- 5) Discussion sections that are conducted in English but actively incorporate intercultural perspectives (perhaps through the use of English language materials produced in non-English speaking countries);
- 6) Study abroad programs that actively and reflectively link together linguistic and cultural experiences from the classroom, the home-stay, and all parts of daily life in the host country.

CLAC is not a one-size-fits-all method. Each institution must develop a CLAC program that is relevant and applicable to its own institutional strengths, limitations, and goals.

Foreign Language Center, argued that language instruction in the U.S. was too often seen as a goal in itself: “This argument resembles that used for universal science education aimed at producing scientific literacy, not the ability to ‘do’ science” (Opening Keynote Address, *CALICO* 1989, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs<sup>i</sup>). The challenge of helping students “do” languages was picked up by others in the 1990s, as evidenced by the FIPSE-funded ACE project “Net Gain” (1996)<sup>ii</sup> and ACE’s “Next Steps for Languages Across the Curriculum” (1998)<sup>iii</sup>, as well as by the development

of LAC programs at institutions including Earlham College, St. Olaf College, the University of Rhode Island, and Binghamton University.

Culture has increasingly emerged as an important focus for LAC practitioners within the past ten years. The 2001 conference “Internationalizing the Curriculum: Content and Language,” hosted by Binghamton University, led to a follow-up conference in 2004 entitled “Languages and Cultures Across the Curriculum: a Post-9/11 Imperative.” Two additional conferences, at the University of Iowa in 2005 (“Cultures and Languages Across the Curriculum: Responding to a National Need”) and at Portland State University in 2006 (“Cultures and Languages Across the Curriculum: Building New Connections”), further explored the culture theme and gave birth to the acronym CLAC.

## Selected Publications on LAC

American Council on Education. [Spreading the Word II: Promising Developments for Undergraduate Foreign Language Instruction](#). Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education Publications SW II, 1996.

Fichera, Virginia M., and H. Stephen Straight, Eds. [Using Languages Across the Curriculum: Diverse Disciplinary Perspectives \(Translation Perspectives X\)](#). Binghamton: Center for Research in Translation, 1997.

Kecht, Maria-Regina, and Katharina von Hammerstein, eds. [Languages Across the Curriculum: Interdisciplinary Structures and Internalized Education](#). Columbus, OH: National East Asian Languages Resource Center, 2000.

Krueger, Merle, and Frank Ryan, eds. [Language and Content: Discipline- and Content-Based Approaches to Language Study](#). Lexington, MA: DC Heath, 1993.

Shoenberg, Robert E. and Barbara Turlington, Eds. [Next Steps for Languages Across the Curriculum: Prospects, Problems, and Promise](#). Washington, DC: American Council on Education, 1998.

Straight, H. Stephen, ed. [Languages Across the Curriculum: Invited Essays on the Use of Foreign Languages Throughout the Postsecondary Curriculum \(Translation Perspectives VII\)](#). Binghamton: Center for Research in Translation, 1994.

## What is the CLAC Consortium?

The co-organizers of the Iowa conference (The University of Iowa, Binghamton University, Baldwin-Wallace College, and Portland State University), with strong support from ACE, established a national CLAC Consortium, which was further developed at the Portland State conference. The Consortium (comprised of the original group of four, now joined by Drake University, UNC-Chapel Hill, and the University of Richmond) has created a website (<http://www.CLACconsortium.org>) to disseminate information about the CLAC mission and philosophy, as well as highlight best practices. Consortium members are also committed to promoting the goals of CLAC and supporting fellow practitioners by hosting national conferences, including CLAC 2008 at UNC-Chapel Hill and

2009, to be at Baldwin-Wallace College. Future Consortium projects may include the pursuit of collaborative grants, the development and publication of CLAC teaching materials and resources, and the establishment of a mentor network in support of new and nascent CLAC programs. All attendees at this year’s conference are strongly encouraged to consider becoming members of the CLAC Consortium.

<sup>i</sup> *CALICO (Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium) Journal*. Vol. 6, No. 4 (June 1989): 7-22.

<sup>ii</sup> See grants P116B960308 and P116P950030 in the FIPSE (U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education) Grant Database, located at <http://www.fipse.aed.org/index.cfm>.

---

<sup>iii</sup> See *Foreign Language Education: Funded Projects FY91 to FY95: November 1995* (Washington: NEH, 1995), as well as the ACE (American Council on Education) website at: <http://www.acenet.edu>.