

Modern Languages — A&M's Newest Trend

A&M's teaching activities have, as a result of the recent upsurge in taken on an international flavor as foreign language enrollment.



Language Lab Control Panel ... Dr. J. J. Woolket listens to students.

J. J. Woolket, head of the Department of Modern Languages, said the movement is nation-wide but is especially evident here because the school's large number of engineering and agriculture students are showing a surprising interest in foreign languages.

He said there were 433 students studying foreign languages in 1956. The current semester shows an enrollment of 817, representing 11 to 12 per cent of the college's total enrollment.

What's behind the trend? Woolket cites a number of reasons:

Students have become more interested in the study of foreign languages, not only in the high schools but also at technological schools.

More college graduates are seeking and getting employment in foreign countries.

More Americans are traveling abroad.

College graduates are facing military service overseas.

Americans have become more vitally involved in the over-all international situation.

Jack A. Dabbs, professor in the department, tells of one outstanding example of this trend.

"When the first Sputnik went up, our Russian language enrollment went up, too," he said.

Dabbs added that government encouragement and the activities of the Modern Language Association of America have had much to do with the upswing in language studies.

Woolket said he anticipates that language courses will continue to grow in popularity. He said A&M is considering programs that will better prepare its graduates for foreign service assignments by giving them training in foreign languages.

The department offers four years of Spanish, three years of Russian, three years of German, two years of French, and an intensive course in Bengali for special groups going to East Pakistan on government missions. Eight teachers comprise the faculty, speaking more than a dozen tongues.

Spanish is the most popular language taught here, Woolket said. Enrollment in Spanish classes this semester is 402. The next most popular is German, with 195 students; third, French, 115 students; and fourth, Russian, with 91 students.

The department head said it would be difficult to say which of the top four languages is the hardest. It's largely a matter of individual ability and attitude, he said.

"Many students take Spanish because they have already been exposed to it. This is of great help to them when they begin their study of foreign languages in college," Woolket said.

Both Woolket and Dabbs said they have noted that a good background in Latin is helpful in learning almost any other language. And they have found that the study of any foreign language will improve the student's proficiency in English.



Modern Language Lab Session

The oral approach is emphasized in the Department of Modern Languages' fully equipped laboratory. There are 40 booths, each with its own dual-track type recorder and head set. Students listen to a master tape, speak the words into a microphone, and then hear a playback.

Afghanistan's black, red and green flag shows a mosque, reflecting the nation's Islamic character.



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