

- There are practical and cultural advantages from one's knowledge of some languages of important nations.

## WHY A FOREIGN LANGUAGE?

Looked at purely as academic work, language opens the mind to a new way of thinking and constructing, makes the student more world-conscious, and gives him an awareness of a new and different history, literature, and culture. This can be a most broadening and valuable experience, for in no other language are thoughts expressed in just the same way as the student, up to this time, has experienced — his knowledge having been limited to his own language entirely.

While students may never have to use the language of their choice for performance or material gain, an understanding of languages other than our own is necessary for a well-balanced way of thinking in this complex world of ours, which so badly needs men and women of good will, compassion, and understanding. With each year our world is shrinking as trans-

portation and communication become more rapid. We all must grow in understanding and international thinking if this world is ever to become a better place in which to live.

The study of a foreign language should begin in the grade school or high school. To send a student to the university without this exposure to language is as distressing as it would be to ask him to work out some difficult problem in higher mathematics without first teaching him how to add, multiply, subtract, and divide! Too often this lack of exposure at an early age leads a college student to think, through ignorance and inexperience, that language is an easy subject. Knowing nothing whatsoever about what lies ahead of him, he often feels he can take it easy. By the time he wakes up to the fact that he is tackling a very difficult task, it is too late.

His first year's work may be wasted and he may have to repeat it the following year — a great waste of time and money, as well as a great deal of needless suffering on his part.

Just as a mind has not been properly rounded-out unless it has been exposed to English and Mathematics, so on mind is really well trained — educated in the truest sense of the word — without a good working knowledge of at least one modern foreign language. As James B. Conant, president emeritus of Harvard University, said recently: "Unless a person has acquired something approaching mastery of one foreign language, he has missed an educational experience of the first importance." Dr. Conant also stressed the fact that the most difficult areas of study were science, mathematics, and foreign language. This is seldom realized.

Understanding of English, also, is influenced and enhanced by the study of a foreign language. Not only are English constructions and vocabulary highlighted but the richness and beauty and worth of the language are also better understood and appreciated when one can feel all that has gone into its development.

Jawalharlal Nehru, the late prime minister of India, wrote what I think is one of the most sensitive explanations of the very essence of any great language:

"A language is infinitely more than grammar and philology — the science of the structure and development of language. It is the poetic testament of the genius of a race and a culture, and the living embodiment of the thoughts and fancies that have molded them." — *Anna B. Lous in The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin.*