LANGUAGES DEBATED

SCEP Poll Results In Discussion

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"If you have any gripes, gripe," commented Jim Radford to open an informal discussion among students and faculty members on "Languages at Rice" held on March 7 in the Brown College commons.

The debate was occasioned by the recently published results of a poll conducted by the Student Committee on Educational Policy concerning the third year language requirement for academic students at Rice.

Discussion, which was not limited to consideration of the third year language courses alone, was led by SCEP members, Richard Juhnke and Jim Radford.

The Other Side
The University position was represented by professors Kahn, Topazio, and Castaneda, heads of the German, French, and Spanish Departments respectively, and other members of their staffs.

Four major questions seemed to be emphasized in the discussion. Why cannot the first two years of language instruction be intensified to prepare students for a third year?

Questions
What exactly is the aim of the third year course? What are the most effective methods of teaching and learning a language? Would homogeneous grouping in relation to majors and non-majors or gifted and non-gifted students be advisable?

Richard Juhnke, President of SCEP, commented that the questionnaires concerning the third year requirement indicated that students favored a more intensified first and second year by a vote of two to one.

Effective Classes
Both faculty members and students seemed to agree that a more efficient use of class time, not more homework, was necessary. Requests were made by several students for more conversation in class in order to prepare the student for 300-

level lectures and discussions held in the language.

Disagreement as to whether reading or conversation should be emphasized in the third year led to an examination of these upper level courses as idea-courses or language-tool-courses. Faculty opinion seemed to be that this conflict was resolved by the wide variety of upper level courses available.

Carpentry Course
Agreement was reached on the fact that, as Dr. Castaneda

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(Continued from Page 1) put it, “A first year language course is closer to carpentry than it is to philosophy,” or that the first year should be devoted to acquiring skills.

However, Dr. Topazio advocated a more analytical study of the language through such methods as conjugation of verbs, whereas Dr. Castaneda stressed the teaching of “grammar when grammar problems arise” in conversation.

One common student complaint was that low motivation students and non-language majors often held classes back. The departments hope to resolve this problem in the future by giving placement tests.