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The Softer Side of War: Exploring the Influence of Culture on Military Doctrine

When U.S. forces invaded Iraq in 2003, the U.S. military was not particularly concerned about the impact of culture on its operations. U.S. leaders believed that the assault would play out as a high-tech conventional conflict and would be followed by a stabilization effort only slightly more difficult than the one U.S. troops had encountered in Kosovo a few years before. As the commander of the U.S. Army's First Brigade, First Armored Division, in Baghdad during the first crucial year after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, I quickly discovered not only that this assumption was incorrect but also that sectarian and ethnic identities, the role of tribes in Iraqi society, and the U.S. Army's own internal culture would weigh heavily on the course of the conflict, influence our approach to waging the war, and impact our interactions with our coalition allies.

Fayette schools ramp up foreign language studies in earliest grades

It's before the long holiday break, and Miko Momozono is charming a difficult-to-captivate class of second-graders at Picadome Elementary, not with a story or a movie, but with the simple act of counting. In Japanese. Since they were in kindergarten, they've been taking 20 minutes a day of Japanese as part of Fayette County's growing foreign language programs. It's grown so much that children in 21 elementary schools now have foreign language instruction of some kind. It's part of the district's emphasis on getting languages to children when it's easiest for them to learn.

Chinese Charter School Set for East Bay

Weighing the public education options for his two children, El Cerrito doctor Michael Jugo felt the East Bay fell short. He wanted them to have an advantage he didn't have growing up: learning Chinese at school. Or so he thought. Instead, Mr. Jugo chose an even more difficult path—creating a Chinese-language public charter school in his own county. After a year of planning, Mr. Jugo and a group of four other families in November received unanimous approval from Alameda County to launch a Mandarin Chinese immersion charter school, the first of its kind in the state.

Amid cuts, language studies falter School districts pursue alternatives that are less labor-intensive

The push to teach foreign languages in New Jersey's elementary schools appears to be faltering as schools cope with budget cuts. Several districts this year dropped elementary world language teachers from their roster and instead have opted for less labor-intensive alternatives. Some have asked regular classroom teachers to take over, and others are resorting to videos and computer programs to pick up the slack. In [Bloomingdale](#), trustees are mulling a plan to solicit volunteers to help with instruction. "It's a matter of what you can prioritize and what you can afford," said James Montesano, superintendent of schools in [Paramus](#), which uses Muzzy, the BBC interactive language instruction video program, in the elementary schools. The state mandate – introduced in 1996 – calls for districts to introduce world language study in the early grades, but does not call for full-blown language programs such as those required in high school.

Elementary School Spanish Program In Jeopardy

A multi-dimensional program installed in both Snow Hill and Pocomoke Elementary Schools is teaching young students Spanish as a second language, along with associated cultural, historical, geographical and even scientific lessons associated with the content. The initiative, part of the ELL Language Infusion Push into the Classroom, is in its second year as a fully grant-funded program, but is at risk of being discontinued when the current grants expire. Through the program, pre-K to 5th grade students are

learning Spanish as a second language, while Spanish-speaking students are learning English at the same time, explained Coordinator of Instruction Diane Stulz.

Chinese To Be Most Popular Language On Internet

We take it for granted that the most popular language on the [Internet](#) is English, since, after all, [the Internet was an American creation](#). But thanks to the huge number of Internet users that China is adding each year, English will soon be replaced by Chinese as the most popular language on the Internet. (Just to clarify: People in China speak Mandarin, Cantonese, Wu, Min and an abundance of dialects, but the written language across the board is Chinese). Last year, China added 36 million Internet users, bringing their total to 440 million users. The United States [only has](#) 220 million Internet users, but English is spoken in more countries than China, and so more websites are published in that language.

PREVIOUS NEWS

US Marines Being Trained for Cultural Sensitivity Before Deployment

The U.S. military is expected to withdraw from Afghanistan by 2014. But thousands of U.S. Marines will still deploy there within the next year to support the war. To prepare them, the Defense Department has introduced culture training programs at several military bases around the United States. One such program is being conducted at the Quantico Marine Base in Virginia - about 58 kilometers from Washington.

W&M part of national trend for foreign language studies

There are more students enrolled in [foreign language](#) courses than any other department within the [Arts & Sciences](#) at William & Mary, making the College a leader in a nationwide trend that's sweeping across higher education in America. According to the recent report, "Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2009," released by the Modern Language Association (MLA), enrollments in languages other than English at U.S. colleges and universities have continued to grow over the past decade.

Departments fight merger

Faced with a proposal to combine their departments into one, the deans of six foreign language departments sent a letter to the humanities division opposing the decision. The proposed consolidation would merge the current departments of French and Francophone studies, Spanish and Portuguese, Slavic languages and literatures, Scandinavian, Italian and Germanic languages into one overarching European languages and cultures department. However, department chairs feel the change would reduce the quality of UCLA's language program, said Maarten Van Delden, chair of the Spanish and Portuguese department.

Spanish for Spanish Speakers meets at South

Walking into Juan Bujosa's literature class at Nashua High School South is like walking into a foreign country. While the laughing, chattering students appear like those in any other classroom, there is one key difference: They are all speaking Spanish. The class – Spanish for Spanish Speakers – was created about two years ago by Bujosa and other members of South's World Languages Department to give native Spanish-speaking students an opportunity to improve their language skills.

Living a foreign language

NOBODY PRETENDS it is easy for an Irish teenager plonked in a boarding school in a foreign country where nobody is speaking English. He enrolled as a weekly boarder and spent the weekends in Paris with the family of another boy at the school. The daily regime involved lessons – all through French – from 8.30am to 5pm and then at least two hours of evening study before going to the dorms at 9pm and lights out at 10.30pm. Barbara persuaded Michael John to persevere and, sure enough, after four weeks, he found the French began to click. "You start to understand what they say." At that point he reckoned he could stick it until Christmas – "but when Christmas came I thought, 'I am fine here'," says Michael John,

who is now in sixth year back home at Rockwell College in Co Tipperary. "At the start it was tough," he adds, "it got better as it went along and looking back, I had a great time!"

Rosetta Stone Announces ESL Classroom Innovators Contest

Rosetta Stone Inc., a leading provider of technology-based language-learning solutions, announced today the creation of the Rosetta Stone® English as a Second Language (ESL) Classroom Innovators Contest, recognizing ESL teachers who have introduced forward-thinking practices and technology into their curriculum. Principals and school administrators are encouraged to nominate an ESL teacher in their school by describing in 500 words or less how the teacher innovated in the classroom with technology.

Language Training Detachment Stands Up in Europe

With defense leaders emphasizing the importance of language and cultural training to support military operations worldwide, the Defense Language Institute has stood up a new detachment in Germany to provide follow-on sustainment training for military linguists based in Europe. The language training detachment, at Patch Barracks in Stuttgart, Germany, will provide "substantive and direct support" to linguists assigned to both U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command and their subordinate elements, Dan Rugelbrugge, who oversees the effort, said in an interview posted yesterday on the "EUCOMversations" video blog.

DODEA teachers step into war zone to teach English to Afghans

Tucker's Mobile Training Team — including four other DODEA teachers and nine Defense Language Institute employees — is augmented by about 50 Afghan instructors. They run language courses at five sites across the country — including Kabul and Kandahar — and are looking to add three additional sites in the near future. The team is part of the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan's Education Division, tasked with providing English instruction to Afghan security forces with a 70 percent rate of illiteracy.

Spreading the love of language

Capt. Sylvia Kim speaks fluent French, one of the official languages of Djibouti and a dominant language throughout the African continent. Realizing her skill could benefit Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, Captain Kim volunteered for her current position as medical planner for the Joint Operations Directorate with CJTF-HOA. "The knowledge of the language has been essential (while deployed to CJTF-HOA)," Captain Kim said. "French and Arabic are the official languages in Djibouti, French being the operational language. It's been essential in communicating and networking with the local Djiboutians and the camp staff and also imperative with correspondence with the Djiboutian government."

BILL TO END EARLY FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES STALLS

A proposal to end state-mandated early foreign language instruction has stalled. The Wyoming Tribune Eagle reports that the Legislature's Joint Education Interim Committee failed to sponsor the measure in a 7-7 tie vote recently. A state law passed in 1999 requires schools to teach foreign language in kindergarten through second grade.

Children learning sign language before they can talk

Now babies and toddlers are benefiting from new classes which are designed to teach them communication skills before they can talk. Babies and parents learn eight signs each week through Dexter, a signing puppet and [classes](#) are based around themes of music, songs, rhymes and games. TalkFirst classes are held by Rachel Downs, a 37-year-old mother of Sophie, three, and Millie, one, from Chester-le-Street, County Durham. She said: "The concept was researched and developed by Dr Joseph Garcia - an American child development expert. His research study showed that the hearing children of deaf parents learned sign language very quickly and easily."

Counterinsurgency as a Cultural System

After early setbacks in Iraq and the failure to close the deal in Afghanistan, military strategists began to consider alternatives to the conventional „kill-the-enemy-first“ tactics they were employing to target terrorists. Through the efforts of General Petraeus and others, "kinetic" counter-terrorism had ceded pride of place to „secure-the-population first“ counterinsurgency (COIN): effective COIN depended on protecting local populations and gaining their support; this, in turn, required that the military be sufficiently

knowledgeable about local cultural concerns and values and attentive to the needs of the people in the areas where they were operating. The category of people who specialize in acquiring this knowledge, more than any other, is that of anthropologist, and this seemed to be an area where anthropologists could not only assist the military avoid situations where force was required, but – just possibly – provide crucial assistance in changing the way the military conceived of its mission and how they went about doing their job.