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An Interview with Brig. General Tony Rock

A lot has been said and written about U.S. efforts to rebuild Iraq. That work includes rebuilding the military and personnel from Alabama are playing a key role. Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery is home to programs like the War College and the Air Force Culture and Language Center. One recent graduate is Brigadier General Tony Rock who completed culture and language training at Maxwell. He'll be on a plane Sunday (January 2, 2011) to take over as Director of the Iraqi Training and Advising Mission for the Air Force. The General discussed how he found common ground during his last trip to Iraq.

Babies' Brains Process Words in an Adult Way

Babies process words using the same brain structures as adults, and in the same amount of time, according to a study by the University of California, San Diego. They are also able to understand words as more than simple sounds and comprehend the meanings of many of the words they hear. Although lesions in two brain areas — Broca's and Wernicke's — have long been associated with loss of language skills in adults, these areas seem to have little impact on language development in early childhood. Some scientists have addressed this anomaly by theorizing that the right hemisphere and inferior frontal regions are vital for childhood language development, and that the other language areas of adulthood become dominant only when language development has matured.

Sudan needs English to build bridges between North and South

The question that Sudan has been asking itself is, when faced with massive political upheaval, poverty and a shortage of basic services, can English really make a difference? The answer, in short, is "yes". English language training is not a "quick fix" for Sudan's problems but it can encourage development, is relatively cheap and most importantly, sustainable, underpinning other capacity building projects. This is recognised at all levels of Sudanese society but is especially important in the South where the government views English as an important tool for development and future nation building. In the North, Arabic is and will remain the primary language, coexisting with English as the international language of the internet, trade and international engagement. In 2007 the government of South Sudan took English as their official language. English, however, provides a way for the North and South to communicate when Arabic is still viewed with suspicion by the South. If the country is to hold on to the fragile peace that has held for the last five years, it is supremely important that these communication channels stay open.

Focusing on Languages (Mainly Mandarin)

Before she left the building, Ms. Black, New York City schools chancellor, peppered the principal, Tanya John, with questions about college preparedness and the school's curriculum. Then, she revealed what is starting to look like an obsession. "I'm pushing for Mandarin Chinese," she said. She was laughing, but foreign-language instruction seems to be serious business for Ms. Black — and Mandarin, the new Spanish. Last month, before she traded a job running one of the world's largest magazine publishing companies for a job running the nation's largest public school system, Ms. Black was already making noise about the importance of learning Mandarin. And the noise only amplified on her first day on the job.

The Web of Babel

In late fall of 2009, Briana Leaman, a student at the University of South Carolina, uttered what is probably a rare sentence in the history of the French language: *Je vais aller à Clemson aujourd'hui avec le fanfare pour le match! Allez les Gamecocks!* In English ("I'm going to Clemson today with the band for the game! Go Gamecocks!"), the sentence is normal enough. But American college students rarely have cause to make such casual exclamations in a foreign tongue. Except, of course, if forced to do so in class or when

studying abroad. That was what Lara Lomicka, a professor of French at the university, had in mind three semesters ago when she set up a hash tag on Twitter with an English class at a university outside of Paris, then required the students in her intermediate French class to post on the popular micro-blogging site at least three times a week — once in English, and twice in French. “I don’t think technology will ever replace immersion, but it certainly can help to move us further in that direction without actually having to travel and be there,” she says.

Literature and language scholars feel the pinch

As 8,000 literature and language professors and scholars gathered in Los Angeles for their annual convention this week, a lot of metaphors were tossed about to describe what many feel is the besieged state of their careers and classrooms during the recession. Rosemary Feal, executive director of the Modern Language Assn. of America, likened the job market for humanities faculty and students to a "low plateau" and said those in the field face crowded classrooms, program reductions and work furloughs at the nation's cash-strapped colleges and universities. The problem, she said, may be partly the result of a misconception that English and foreign language studies do not prepare students for a range of careers. "Humanities are just as practical as any other majors," Feal said, especially during hard times when people need to be nimble about switching jobs.

PREVIOUS NEWS

Closing Achievement Gap Is Education Committee Priority

Closing the achievement gap and raising overall student performance within tight budget constraints are among the top priorities the legislature's education committee set for itself Monday during its first meeting. Despite the looming \$3.5 billion budget deficit, committee co-chairman Rep. Andrew Fleischmann, D-West Hartford, said he opposes delaying the implementation of the high school reforms the legislature approved last year. The reforms, which call for schools to increase course requirements in math, science and foreign language, among other changes, would not take effect until fall 2014. But many school systems want to begin planning and training teachers and staff in preparation for the changes. Fleischmann estimates the reforms will cost the state about \$25 million.

Education issues top Wyoming legislative agendas

National debates and a heated election for state superintendent pushed education to the top of legislative agendas. Competitive federal grant programs drove major changes in other states, but Wyoming lawmakers are determined to put their own stamp on school reform. **Hathaway success curriculum, HB13:** This bill would add performing arts and career and vocational courses as an option to the foreign language requirement for the Hathaway Scholarship program.

Chinese to start in kindergarten

Kindergartners in District 54 can start learning Mandarin Chinese in the fall, giving themselves the best shot at acquiring language skills and aiding their overall development. Francis Campanelli Elementary School will offer a Chinese Immersion Program that will add a grade each year. At the end of their time in elementary school, students will be able to use English and Chinese comfortably, according to district officials.

Report criticises languages tuition

The report, Modern languages - Achievement and challenge 2007-10, released by Ofsted, recognises the significant efforts made to support languages - especially in primary schools - since the watchdog's last languages report in 2008. But it also highlights a number of weaknesses in the way secondary students are taught. The report states: "In many of the secondary schools visited, opportunities for students to listen to and communicate in the target language were often limited by many teachers' unpreparedness to use it. "Too often, students were not taught how to respond to everyday requests and thus routine work in the target language and opportunities to use it spontaneously were too few."

Google Waves Goodbye to Language Barriers

Travelers and tourists longing to communicate better with locals may be in luck very soon. Google's prototype language translator, Conversation Mode, uses Android phones to record spoken words and then play them back in a different language. Conversation Mode combines the technology of [Google Voice](#) and [Google Translate](#) (which only works for text) to translate over fifty languages via a speech interface on a smartphone. While similar translation programs exist, most of them are text-based and those that do translate speech-to-speech only work for a limited number of languages.

Scripps National Spelling Bee and K12 Form Partnership to Greatly Enhance Local Spelling Bees

Beginning this month, school spelling bee champions will be awarded the *K12 Prize for School Champions* – a foreign language course from K12's award-winning and innovative powerspeaK12 world language program. This prize gives students the opportunity to study a foreign language at the level of their choice. Used by students around the world, K12's powerspeaK12 world language courses are revolutionizing the way students learn languages. PowerspeaK12 courses include highly interactive Web-based lessons that incorporate fun games and engaging visuals designed specifically for young minds. It is a proven and highly effective way for students of all ages to learn new languages. PowerspeaK12 offers multiple level courses in Latin, Spanish, French, German and Chinese.

Airmen build foundation of Iraqi Air Force

To attend some advanced technical training, students must complete the school's English language training, which also satisfies the Iraqi Air Force's fourth core value, English language. The ELT at the Iraqi Air Force Training School is based on the Defense Language Institutes' program for teaching the English language. The program consists of 36 books and can take up to 12 months to complete. The school's commandant and Col. Nickell agree on the importance for all Iraqi airmen to learn English. "English is the international language for aviation," said Col. Nickell. "Mastering the English language is a key to the future success of Iraqi Air Force operations."

Young Elementary Joins International Program

A Louisville elementary school has become the first in Kentucky to receive a prestigious international designation. The achievement was celebrated Friday at Whitney Young Elementary. Students showed off their French language skills during a morning assembly at Young Elementary, which has been authorized as an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School by the IB organization in Geneva, Switzerland.

St. Paul schools hoping to tap into Chinese language boom with Mandarin immersion program

Buried in the fine print of St. Paul's newly published school application materials is a new kindergarten option likely to create some buzz among parents at Saturday's school-choice fair: Chinese immersion. Instruction in Chinese is growing faster than any other language in Minnesota and is on the rise nationally. And a popular charter school offering Chinese immersion — in which students receive instruction in all subjects in Chinese — recently left St. Paul for Minneapolis, creating an opportunity. Superintendent Valeria Silva has set a goal of adding about 5,000 kids to St. Paul schools in the next five years, and officials hope the new immersion program — which will also have a focus on science and math — will draw in families not currently enrolled in a St. Paul district school.

State must keep merit curriculum strong

The state must stand by its Michigan Merit Curriculum for high school diplomas, even as some worry that certain students may struggle in the face of higher expectations. Michigan can't continue to fall behind by not setting higher standards for its public schools. The merit curriculum is rigorous. Students earning a high school diploma this spring have been under its rules since 2006, including four years of math and English, three years of science, including biology and either physics or chemistry, and an online learning experience. A foreign language requirement is being phased in.

Language teachers reject jobs

Poor pay and a lack of regulation is ensuring the vast majority of people capable of teaching Chinese as a foreign language are not doing so. Delegates at a seminar held by the Beijing Language and Culture

University (BLCU) recently heard that more than 40 percent of graduates nationwide who majored in teaching Chinese as a foreign language end up taking government jobs. Another 40 percent choose to start postgraduate studies. And most of the remaining students end up working, mainly as translators or in the banking and media sectors.

Learning languages makes us global citizens

“When we know many foreign languages we become citizens of the world; we become integrated and more involved in the affairs of the world,” Lemieux said as he told the students about the importance of learning other languages. “The way we learn a new language potentially changes the way we think and the way we look at our lives,” said Lemieux. In the process of studying another language one cannot help but also learn something about the culture and traditions of the people who use that language, Lemieux stated, adding that it is an advantage when someone is exposed to those who speak a different language at an early age.

Kids Acquire Languages, They Don't Learn Better Than Adults

If a child were adopted by a Vietnamese family and I were also adopted by a Vietnamese family and the kid and I both lived with our respective Vietnamese families and attended primary school, in theory, the child would learn faster than me; in fact I could never match his accent. Because this is how we acquire language. The reality, however, is that as an adult, I will most likely not be adopted into a Vietnamese family. And in the [history of](#) the world, very few foreign children were ever adopted by and raised in a Vietnamese family. Barring this eventuality, the only way to learn the language is to study. In which case, adults learn faster.