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## **DLO DAILY MEDIA UPDATE**

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### **CURRENT NEWS 20 JANUARY 2011**

#### **Challenging the limits of learning: Human mind vs. yardstick of a machine**

Although we're convinced that baby is brilliant when she mutters her first words, cognitive scientists have been conducting a decades-long debate about whether or not human beings actually "learn" language. Most theoretical linguists, including the noted researcher Noam Chomsky, argue that people have little more than a "language organ" -- an inherent capacity for language that's activated during early childhood. On the other hand, researchers like Dr. Roni Katzir of Tel Aviv University's Department of Linguistics insist that what humans can actually learn is still an open question -- and he has built a computer program to try and find an answer.

#### **Teaching Chinese in America**

More and more, Americans are learning a second language and Chinese is emerging as a language of choice. Terry McCarthy explores the latest linguistic trend.

#### **AFOSI Airman selected Language Professional of the Year**

An agent with the Air Force Office of Special Investigations was recently selected as the Air Force Language Professional of the Year. Special Agent Slava is being recognized by the LPOY program for his linguist work with Department of Defense missions overseas, where he advised senior DOD officials, supported force-protection efforts and conducted liaison activities with foreign officials. He is fluent in Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian and English. Due to the nature of his work as an AFOSI agent, a pseudonym is being used for his name. SA Slava was inspired to join the Air Force by his grandfather, who was a World War II pilot. SA Slava joined in 1998 and began exploring opportunities as a linguist in 2002.

#### **Bureaucrats Given 9 Years to Improve Foreign Language Skills**

The Russian government wants at least 20 percent of federal officials to be fluent in a foreign language by 2020, and is even prepared to send them abroad to study according to a report unveiled by the Economic Development Ministry on Dec. 31 and scheduled to be submitted to the government by late February, ministry spokesman Pavel Katkov said on Jan. 12.

#### **Australian students head overseas**

EXCITING adventures are in store for local students about to embark on Rotary exchange to destinations across the world. The youth exchange program allows students aged between 15 and 18 to travel to countries of their choice to promote peace and friendship, gain a broader view of the world, and develop a deeper understanding of themselves.

#### **Learn a new Language**

Those who tout the need for more foreign language education in the United States often point to its advantages for national security, or to how people who speak more than one language have advantages in the job market. These are vital reasons, but the most important reason to learn a new language is much simpler, and yet more personal and profound. It broadens horizons and deepens one's understanding of other people and cultures. Each language has its own history, connected to a unique culture and world view. Learn a language and you learn to see the world a little differently — a process that is both enriching and ennobling.

## [PREVIOUS NEWS](#)

### [Demand for Arabic teachers spurs MSU programs](#)

A rising demand for teachers of Arabic in the state considered the capital of Arab America has led [Michigan State University](#) to launch new undergraduate and graduate programs. About 300,000 people in southeastern Michigan trace their roots to the Arab world, and the East Lansing University said the moves will help fill a shortage of those who can teach the language.

### [Oakton Elementary Goes GLOBAL: Students participate in pilot program that combines regular curricula with foreign language lessons](#)

Many of Oakton's youngest residents are going to get an extra taste of Spanish in the coming months, thanks to a pilot program coming to [Oakton Elementary School](#) next month. Called [Global Language Benefiting All Learners \(GLOBAL\)](#), the program takes a new approach to language learning that enables students to develop basic communicative skills in one of three languages (Spanish, Korean or Chinese), while reinforcing the science, math and social studies curricula they're learning during regular school hours.

### [GOP introduces bill to make English Minnesota's official language](#)

Among the first bills introduced in the Minnesota House this session is one aimed at establishing English as the official language of the state. Republican Reps. Steve Drazkowski of Mazeppa, David Hancock of Bemidji, Sondra Erickson of Princeton, and Roger Crawford of Mora introduced the bill on Monday. HF 64 would make English the official language of Minnesota: "No law, ordinance, order, program, or policy of this state or any of its political subdivisions, shall require the use of any language other than English for any documents, regulations, orders, transactions, proceedings, meetings, programs, or publications, except as provided in subdivision 3."

### [EVSC looking to expand foreign language instruction](#)

The Evansville Vanderburgh School Corp. took a step Tuesday toward expanding foreign language instruction to more students, including those in elementary grades. Various EVSC middle and high schools currently have instruction in Spanish, German, French, Japanese and Latin. About 3,800 students now take those courses. Under a new contract between the school district and Rosetta Stone, a company that develops language-learning software, the EVSC will offer a pilot program for about 3,000 students.

### [Mandarin's gain can't offset lag in language classes](#)

Despite budget cuts to foreign language programs at many U.S. schools, the study of Mandarin has jumped by almost 200 percent in three years, according to a recent study funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Still, the study also found that just 32 percent of students in grades 6 to 12 nationwide are enrolled in a foreign language program, leaving the U.S. behind many countries. (In the European Union, for example, 94 percent of secondary level students study a language other than their native tongue.)

### [NECC Leads the Way in Language and Culture Awareness Training](#)

In response to the Secretary of Defense's Language Transformation Roadmap, the U.S. Navy began incorporating language and cultural awareness into the Fleet Response Training Plan in 2006. The goal was to align language skills, region expertise and cultural awareness with operational requirements to support joint and Navy missions. Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) implemented a comprehensive training plan in January 2007, which executed the Chief of Naval Operations Language, Regional Expertise and Culture (LREC) Strategy, ensuring deployable combat forces receive regional and cultural awareness training that will enable effective interaction with native populations, local and government officials and coalition partners.

### [Languages Needed, but No Plans to Learn](#)

Demand for U.S. workers who speak foreign languages—especially Spanish and Chinese—should continue to grow over the next decade, but very few workers plan to study them, according to a newly released study by the University of Phoenix Research Institute. The institute surveyed 511 workers and

419 employers last fall. Workers were asked what skills or degrees they already had or were planning to acquire; employers were asked what skills were in demand or would be in demand in 10 years. The result: 42% of employers expect business proficiency in Chinese to be in moderate or high demand in a decade; nearly 70% expect Spanish to be in demand.

### **Educators Lobby for Future of Foreign Language Studies**

A group of foreign language scholars met in Hauppauge last Friday to discuss the future of foreign language education in New York State. The [Foreign Language Association of Chairpersons and Supervisors](#) (FLACS) drew attention in late November after its leaders said they [would work to create foreign language proficiency exams](#) after the state axed all middle school exams and several Regents exams at the high school level.

### **The exaggerated decline of foreign languages**

The internationally-minded have long recognized the need for language instruction. Sprenger said that language is a key to understanding other cultures. Lew Cramer, president and CEO of World Trade Center Utah said that having language training is important for today's economy: "I just quote German poet Goethe: 'He who speaks only one language sees the world with only one eye.' In today's world we need all the eyes we can possibly have."

### **Parents push for foreign language in elementary schools**

School officials tout the district as a deciding factor for home buyers, but for some parents who "shopped around," the district might fall short of expectations. For Karen Christiansen, a Darien mother leading the charge to get foreign language incorporated into the elementary curriculum for four years, being bilingual is a must in today's global economy. "I've had every job I've had because I speak Italian," Christiansen, who taught at an international school in Italy and worked as director of international divisions for Tommy Hilfiger, Liz Claiborne and Donna Karan, said.

### **Why Chinese Mothers Are Superior**

Despite our squeamishness about cultural stereotypes, there are tons of studies out there showing marked and quantifiable differences between Chinese and Westerners when it comes to parenting. In one study of 50 Western American mothers and 48 Chinese immigrant mothers, almost 70% of the Western mothers said either that "stressing academic success is not good for children" or that "parents need to foster the idea that learning is fun." By contrast, roughly 0% of the Chinese mothers felt the same way. Instead, the vast majority of the Chinese mothers said that they believe their children can be "the best" students, that "academic achievement reflects successful parenting," and that if children did not excel at school then there was "a problem" and parents "were not doing their job." Other studies indicate that compared to Western parents, Chinese parents spend approximately 10 times as long every day drilling academic activities with their children. By contrast, Western kids are more likely to participate in sports teams.

### **Many employers 'seeking cultural and language skills'**

Employee skills relating to language and culture are both being sought by a number of firms at the moment, an expert has highlighted. According to Teresa Tinsley, director of planning, delivery and communications at CILT, the National Centre for Languages, job candidates might be able to single themselves out with the aid of language skills. She stated: "There is evidence that more and more employers want languages and cultural skills, and the international savvy that language learning brings."