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The National Imperative for Language Learning

Global competence is an area where most American classrooms are falling short. Consider a class of children entering kindergarten in the United States. While their classes may include students from around the world, global issues and cultures will not be regularly woven into their schoolwork. They will probably study only one language—English—until high school, even though they would learn a second language far more easily if they began in elementary school. Meanwhile, 20 out of 25 industrialized countries start teaching world languages in grades K-5, and 21 countries in the European Union require nine years of language study. International business leaders are warning that American graduates may be technically competent but are increasingly culturally deprived and linguistically illiterate compared with graduates from other countries competing for the same jobs. It is not simply the case that other nations' global competitiveness is enhanced by their workers' proficiency in a specific language, but rather that their young people gain a competitive and cognitive advantage by their access to the remarkable skill set that comes with being multilingual. Research and experience show convincingly that language learning makes students better in the basics—both math and literacy—and it is high time that Americans were no longer bound by their linguistic limits.

Alabama's Role In Building A More Language Capable Air Force

When the U.S. military isn't in combat, it's sometimes called upon for humanitarian efforts. One of the first obstacles to aid is the language barrier, and a program operating here in Alabama is trying to resolve that problem. Alabama Public Radio's Ryan Vasquez has more on the Language Enabled Airmen Program.

English Language Institute garden offers fresh-grown taste of home

The University of Delaware's [English Language Institute](#) (ELI) helps to improve the English language skills of scores of students each year, some who are seeking a U.S. degree, others who need English for jobs in their home countries. The institute's host families, International Culture Club and other programs work to alleviate culture shock.

MyPLT Awarded Contract to teach Languages for the United States Air Force

MyPLT is pleased to report good progress in its project to teach Languages to members of the United States Air Force. The USAF Students are generally Advanced level in the Language, many having completed an intensive residential course at the Defense Language Institute in Monterrey, California." Said David Talbot, CEO of MyPLT. "The concern is that after the residential course, the Students return to their Base, and may have nobody to practice with. The MyPLT instructional method - remote Tutors using Skype - is ideal for this situation. Students can connect with their native-speaking Tutors from anywhere."

Lansing schools' Chinese program goes beyond learning the language

Students are slowly picking up on the language's tone, characters and words, teacher Fan Yang said. "Most of the students are beginners," said Yang, who arrived in the U.S. from China for the first time last week. "Chinese is a completely different language and it's always hard to learn in the first few weeks." Yang teaches six Chinese classes, each with between 23 and 27 students, he said. The district currently also offers a Chinese immersion program at Post Oak Elementary School, and will expand classes through 12th grade in the next few years, officials said.

[PREVIOUS NEWS](#)

[CSAF cites importance of joint approach to enhancing language skills](#)

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz speaks at the Department of Defense Language and Culture Summit on Jan. 26, 2011, in Alexandria, Va. General Schwartz told the audience that the best way the U.S. armed forces will achieve the necessary level of language skills and cultural competencies is through a holistic joint and interagency approach.

[Ala. Leads the Effort to Train Generals in Culture and Language](#)

As the responsibilities of the United States military change, so do those of the many officers responsible for operations overseas. The Air Force Culture and Language Center at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery is leading this change in training. Alabama Public Radio's Ryan Vasquez tells us how a program in Alabama is helping generals become more culturally aware before they deploy.

[It's not about vocabulary: A foreign language helps people live another culture](#)

Though many people repeat the misconception that learning a language in adolescence is easier, it might simply be a different style of learning, said Kara Morgan-Short, professor of Spanish and linguistics at the University of Illinois-Chicago. Morgan-Short said that language learning mechanisms are currently being debated. Scientists are studying whether adults learn languages in the same way as children, or if adults must learn language as they learn other general skills, such as riding a bike.

[More on Foreign Language Decline in Schools](#)

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.)

[BBC World Service Foreign Language Services Slashed](#)

The BBC World Service will cut five full foreign language services and seven foreign language radio services to meet the tough settlement received in the UK Government Spending Review. In a statement today (January 26, 2011), the BBC confirmed the loss of more than 480 jobs at BBC World Service. The cuts will produce net savings of £46m by April 2014.

[Do baby DVDs help babies learn?](#)

A recent study says that young children do not actually learn from baby DVDs that market themselves as educational tools. The researchers also found that parents who liked the DVD tended to overestimate how much their children learned from it. The study was published recently in the journal *Psychological Science*. "We found that young children seem to learn not very much from being exposed to baby media," said Judy DeLoache, University of Virginia psychologist and study co-author.

[Native Language In Public School](#)

Learning a second language is not always about learning *foreign* language. It can also be about preserving what's been right here for generations, language at risk of being lost. In addition to offerings, such as French or Spanish, more northern Michigan public schools and colleges are offering students the chance to learn Anishinaabemowin, or Ojibwa. Suttons Bay lies just south of reservation land of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians. "I think it is important for us to recognize those elements and to make sure they're really firmly implanted in our local culture. We can't forget what gave rise to this area."

[First Lady Michelle Obama: "When You Study Abroad, You're Helping to Make America Stronger"](#)

She focused on the importance of studying abroad in support of the President's "[100,000 Strong Initiative](#)" – a program that aims to increase the number of Americans who have the opportunity to study in China. Mrs. Obama stated, "The fact is, with every friendship you make, and every bond of trust you establish, you are shaping the image of America projected to the rest of the world. That is so important. So when

you study abroad, you're actually helping to make America stronger. And these experiences also set the stage for young people all over the world to come together and work together to make our world stronger, because make no mistake about it, whether it's climate change or terrorism, economic recovery or the spread of nuclear weapons, for the U.S. and China, the defining challenges of our time are shared challenges. Neither of our countries can confront these alone. The only way forward, the only way to solve these problems, is by working together."

Sasha Obama speaking Mandarin to Chinese President

Brief video with MSNBC's Brian Williams discussing Sasha Obama's discussions in Mandarin with Chinese President Hu Jintao.

Beijing Helps US Students Learn Chinese

A visit to a Chicago high school was on the agenda as Chinese President Hu Jintao wrapped up his visit to the United States. Walter Payton College Preparatory High School is one of dozens in the U.S. that offers Chinese language and cultural instruction through a program called "Confucius Classrooms," which is partially funded by the Beijing government.

'Equip the children with language skills that will give them an edge'

In China, party hosts still have about two weeks to prepare for New Year celebrations, but students 9,000 miles across the globe in Eugene are already celebrating by singing a traditional New Year song in Mandarin. Oak Hill School in Eugene offers Mandarin immersion courses beginning in Kindergarten and ending in 8th grade. By the fifth grade, students like 10-year-old Maya Ordway can understand the building blocks of writing and speaking that will eventually allow them to become fluent.

Foreign language skills provide sharp edge in the job market

Job seekers with bilingual skills could look forward to a profusion of opportunities in the coming year, according to various reports and company hiring plans. With the globalization of businesses and populations growing increasingly cosmopolitan, the need for transactional knowledge of languages has become very important in both private and government sectors. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the employment of translators and interpreters in the country is expected to increase by 22 percent between 2008 and 2018. Another book on the employment scenario, *Closing America's Job Gap (W Business Books, January 2011)*, predicts that For those completely bilingual in Spanish and English, these highly marketable language skills open doors to new careers.

U.S. DOD Language Summit to Set Future Strategy

After a five-year effort to institute processes needed to gauge service members' foreign-language skills, the U.S. Defense Department will hold a summit this month to help in forging a systematic path forward, the director of the Defense Language Office said on Wednesday. The DOD Language and Culture Summit will occur on January 25-26. The 250 to 300 participants will include officials from DOD and other federal agencies, experts from academia, scientists, and people such as combatant commanders who have an interest in the topic.

Female Engagement Team breaks for training

Lance Cpl. Kathryn Mannion speaks to an Afghan woman while assigned to the Female Engagement team with Regimental Combat Team 7 in Marjah, Afghanistan, July 7, 2010. Mannion, originally a military policeman, volunteered to participate in the Marine Corps' newest program, designed to engage with Afghan women.