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Ole Miss Chinese Language Program in Demand

The Chinese Language Flagship Program at the University of Mississippi is chipping away the barriers between two cultures on opposite ends of the earth, both literally and figuratively. Donald Hyer, an Ole Miss professor and co-coordinator for the program, said the idea for the Chinese Language program was born almost a decade ago. "We talked to a couple of government officials who came to campus and said they were looking at universities for a program that would encourage American students to learn another language," he said. "With (co-coordinator) Michael Metcalf's connections and a little luck, we thought we could build a program that is second to none."

Should children learn a second language?

Does being bilingual help children learn to prioritize information, provide a defense against some effects of Alzheimer's or just provide a great workout for the brain? All of the above, according to studies discussed Friday at the [2011 American Assn. for the Advancement of Science](#) meeting in Washington D.C., where a number of researchers presented on the benefits of being bilingual. Among the findings: that infants raised in bilingual households can tell unfamiliar foreign languages apart and that bilingual speakers who rapidly switch between languages are better mental multitaskers than their monolingual counterparts.

Colombia's indigenous languages 'disappearing'

More than 20 of Colombia's indigenous languages are in danger of disappearing, according to a report from the [Ministry of Culture released Monday](#). A study by the Ministry of Culture in conjunction with the [International Mother Language Day](#) states that five native languages are "nearly extinct because they have almost no speakers" and another nineteen are in "serious danger" of disappearing in Colombia. The five nearly extinct languages are Tinigua, Tonuya, Carijona, Totoro, and Pisamira. Each of these languages has fewer than 60 living speakers, and Tinigua has only one.

Forty one ethnic group languages under threat in China

Half of the world's languages are under the threat of extinction with China facing the loss of 41 ethnic group dialects, the China Radio International (CRI) reported on Monday. As Feb 21, 2011 marks the 11th International Mother Language Day, UNESCO, the cultural arm of the United Nations (UN) has created safeguarding and promoting languages as its theme, according to their website. Speaking of the 41 endangered ethnic group languages in China, Dr Bradley, a language professional, says we risk losing component of our history. "Every time a language disappears that indicates the entire cultural understanding of that folks disappears." He also says the factors that trigger the possible disappearance of ethnic languages around China include the wide use of Putonghua (Chinese mandarin).

Google, Yahoo! BabelFish use math principles to translate documents online

For decades, machine translation was mostly useful if you were trying to be funny. But in the last few years, as anyone using Google Translate, Babel Fish or many other translation Web sites can tell you, things have changed dramatically. And all because of an effort begun in the 1980s to remove humans from the equation. As the [late Frederick Jelinek](#), who pioneered work on speech recognition at IBM in the 1970s, is widely quoted as saying: "Every time I fire a linguist, my translation improves." (He later denied putting it so harshly.) Up to that point, researchers working on machine translation used linguistic models. Jelinek and his group at IBM argued that by using statistics and probability theory, instead of language rules, a computer could do a better job of converting one language into another.

[International Mother Language Day: February 21](#)

International Mother Language Day was proclaimed by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) in November 1999 ([30C/62](#)). On 16 May 2009 the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution [A/RES/61/266](#) called upon Member States "to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world". By the same resolution, the General Assembly proclaimed 2008 as the International Year of Languages, to promote unity in diversity and international understanding, through multilingualism and multiculturalism.

[UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger](#)

The online edition of the Atlas is complementary to the [print edition](#). It does not reproduce the regional and thematic chapters of the print version, but it offers additional information on the listed endangered languages. Via this interface, you can browse through them, using combinations of search criteria and/or zooming in the map below.

[PREVIOUS NEWS](#)

[Pentagon Goes for a Universal Translator. Again.](#)

Thus was born a scientific (and sci-fi) drive that's lasted 57 years, from *Star Trek* to [Babel Fish](#) to [Google Translate](#): instantaneous speech translation. But even though no one's mastered that yet, the Pentagon's out-there research branch is asking for even more with its Boundless Operational Language Translation, or BOLT. As outlined in Darpa's fiscal 2012 budget request. For the low, low starting cost of \$15 million, Congress can "enable communication regardless of medium (voice or text), and genre (conversation, chat, or messaging)."

[Female engagement teams trained to aid communication with Afghan women](#)

In an effort to maximize communication with the Afghan population and to honor their customs, coalition forces train female engagement teams to interface with local women. FET training teaches service members and civilians to communicate with Afghan women without offending their way of life. The five-day course consists of Pashto and Dari language training, Afghan religion training, Afghan cultural training and many other lessons to prepare the students for future engagements. The final test prior to graduation is an exercise that allows the students to utilize the skills they learned throughout the training on local Afghan women.

[What Malia and Sasha Obama's Parents Know About the Value of Language](#)

In a radio address earlier this month, President Obama focused on his desire to improve America's global competitiveness, stating, "our true measure of progress has to be... whether people in this country can still achieve the American Dream for themselves and their children." But what does language have to do with it? Quite simply, the success of the United States depends directly on its citizens' abilities to develop the skills required in today's global economy. The ability to communicate is chief among them.

[Being Bilingual: Beneficial Workout for the Brain](#)

Speaking two languages confers lifelong cognitive rewards that spread far beyond the improved ability to communicate, a series of scientific findings has shown. In the latest research, described Friday at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the onset of the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease was delayed by more than four years in elderly bilingual adults, even though they had identical brain damage compared with a group of adults in the study who spoke only one language. "It's not that being bilingual prevents Alzheimer's," said Ellen Bialystok, a professor of psychology at York University, in Toronto. "It's just that you are better able to cope."

[The American Translators Association Says Human Linguists Are Not in Jeopardy](#)

"Watson," the IBM computer that handily defeated two human trivia champions on the television game show Jeopardy!, has dazzled journalists and the general public with its language skills and revived the longstanding man-versus-machine debate. For the 11,000 members of the American Translators

Association, however, the question of language and computers is an everyday reality—and the focus of the next issue of The ATA Compass, an e-newsletter for translation buyers.

High school kids take Arabic

After just four months in the first Arabic-language class offered in a Hawaii high school, the teenagers are speaking, singing and even writing the swirling script of the Arab world, learning from each mistake along the way. With news from Egypt taking center stage, the students are able to make out some Arabic words on signs appearing in television reports. "It's like an 'Aha!' moment, when you see it in the media and you can read it," said senior Chale Turner. "You're less likely to assume things and be judgmental." Added sophomore Kayla Smallwood: "It's super-difficult in the beginning but it's like a hill. Once you get over it, you get so many rewards."

Bilingual students to get language help

Gerardo Pina-Rosales, director of the New York-based North American Academy of the Spanish Language, held an all-day workshop Friday directed at helping teachers to perfect their Spanish language skills to pass their knowledge to students, The Miami Herald reported Sunday. In an age when the English language is rarely spoken properly, similar problems are being encountered among Spanish-speaking students and those who are bilingual.

Stonington's Chinese classes under review

Four years ago the school system began teaching Mandarin Chinese to great fanfare. But now the Chinese program is in danger of being eliminated because of declining interest, scheduling problems and concerns over increasing foreign language requirements for graduation.

Bilingualism a failed and very costly experiment

There was a small article in newspapers concerning the French fact and language in Canada -- with a very enlightening aspect. Bilingualism is a 40-year-old, failed experiment, costing us billions of dollars. The vast majority of monies in the aspect go to the promulgation of French. Both federal and provincial governments contribute to this notion. Except in Quebec, there is little use for the French language. In B.C. -- approximately 2% of British Columbians are fluent in French, with not a much greater percentage able to effectively use the language.

Vienna brothers start language institute in China

Starting a successful business is a daunting task for anyone, especially for a 22-year-old American who wants to set up shop in China. But Vienna native Robbie Fried seems to have pulled it off. With moral support and financial guidance from parents, who helped gather investors, Robbie and Bradford Fried founded the Chinese Language Institute, an educational institution that offers short- and long-term intensive Mandarin training, as well as accredited study and research seminars throughout China. The institute serves anyone who wants to learn the Chinese language and culture.

Foreign language assistants blow for Scottish schools

More than half of all foreign language assistants in Scottish state schools are being axed following council budget cuts, BBC Scotland has learned. A survey of Scottish councils found at least 55 of the current 106 posts across the country are to go this year. The biggest reduction is in Glasgow, where the council is to cut all 35 of its assistants to save £300,000.

Chinese Lessons, Live From Beijing

A glimpse into the high school's foreign language department proves that the only thing moving faster than technology these days is the students' uncanny ability to adapt to it. Language students there have been videoconferencing with a Chinese instructor in Beijing, and also have the option of taking Regents level courses in Spanish, French, Latin, Italian, or American Sign Language. The Chinese 360 elective, a pass-fail course taken by a small but motivated group of students, is a pilot project that has pupils and teachers raving about the benefits.

When in Rome, Let Your Smartphone Do the Translating

You can use a smartphone to save a few dollars on an airline ticket, buy a [Starbucks](#) latte or gain the inside edge on draft news in fantasy sports leagues. With the Google Translate app for Android phones users speak English phrases into the phone and the app offers spoken translations. Or you can use it to save your skin in a place where no one speaks your language. It's fairly amazing stuff. Push a button, speak a query in one language and it displays a translation. Fifteen popular languages are covered by this feature. You must speak carefully for the app to recognize your query, but if Translate misconstrues a word, you can edit the query with the phone's keypad.

Two WVU students among first to participate in ROTC culture and language program

Anthony Jette volunteered at a health clinic in Peru; and James Godbout spent a few nights in the desert with the Moroccan military. Both West Virginia University juniors were among the first Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps students to participate in the Cadet Culture and Language Immersion Internship Program. The summer internship program, part of the Army ROTC's Cultural Understanding and Language Proficiency Strategy, is designed to help Army ROTC students become well-rounded officers in the military. "Culture and language immersion prepares these future leaders to make better decisions, not only in the best interest of the U.S. but also of the country they are operating in. The internships help eliminate stereotypes and build mutual respect," said Major Mark Hennigan, assistant professor of Military Science.