
DLO DAILY MEDIA UPDATE

CURRENT NEWS 09 SEPTEMBER 2011

Why Some Languages Sound So Fast

(Time)...Jeffrey Kluger

It's an almost universal truth that any language you don't understand sounds like it's being spoken at 200 miles per hour - a storm of alien syllables almost impossible to tease apart. That, we tell ourselves, is simply because the words make no sense to us. Surely our spoken English sounds just as fast to a native speaker of Urdu. And yet it's equally true that some languages seem to zip by faster than others. Spanish blows the doors off French; Japanese leaves German in the dust - or at least that's how they sound. To investigate this puzzle, researchers from the Universite de Lyon recruited 59 male and female volunteers who were native speakers of one of seven common languages - English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin and Spanish - and one not so common one: Vietnamese. They instructed them all to read 20 different texts, including the one about the housecat and the locked door, into a recorder. All of the volunteers read all 20 passages in their native languages. Any silences that lasted longer than 150 milliseconds were edited out, but the recordings were left otherwise untouched. ([Read about the death of a language.](#))

David Boren to speak in D.C. today

(The Norman Transcript)

University of Oklahoma President David Boren will be in Washington, D.C., tonight to be honored at a reception that will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the National Security Education Program. Boren was a U.S. senator who chaired the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence when he authored the bill that created the language and overseas study program.

UK will not 'outsource' foreign policy, says William Hague

(Guardian)...Nicholas Watt

Britain will not "outsource" parts of its [foreign policy](#) to the EU external action service, [William Hague](#) declared on Thursday as he outlined steps to boost the role of the Foreign Office. A new language school for diplomats will open at the Foreign Office. In a dig at the last government, he said: "We saw the much lamented axing of the Foreign Office language school and reduced investment in language skills, which led to fewer people being trained languages, for shorter periods and in scattered locations, without the esprit de corps that comes from our diplomats studying languages together."

Fewer people abroad learn German

(The Local)

Around 15 million people are learning German as a foreign language overseas, five million fewer than just ten years ago, according to new statistics from the Goethe Institute.

PREVIOUS NEWS

Federal Government Paying For Kindergarteners to Learn Chinese

(Fox News)...Richard Irwin

To accomplish this, it has given Walnut Valley Unified a \$1.2 million *Foreign Language Assistance Program* grant. The government saw a need for more language instruction, especially in critical languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Japanese and Korean," Walnut program specialist Jenny Kwan-Hata said. "So it decided to give school districts money to develop new language programs."

Swiss Effort to Save a Language Opens a Rift

(Wall Street Journal)...Deborah Ball

As kids return to school in Val Müstair, high in the eastern tip of the Swiss Alps, they are also entering the front lines of a bitter battle: the fight over the future of a centuries-old Latin dialect. The municipality (population 1,600) is a stronghold of Romansh, a language imported by Roman occupiers 2,000 years ago and still spoken by most locals. Today, its villagers are up in arms over authorities' attempt to push a sort of Romansh Esperanto on locals—one that officials defend as the only chance to save one of the last living relics of the Latin language.

Digital Diplomacy

(TIME)...Sam Gustin

For decades, U.S. diplomacy was conducted behind closed doors along the corridors of power. That was before Facebook, Twitter and YouTube — and Alec Ross, senior adviser for innovation to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Over the past two years, Ross, 39, has been incorporating those digital platforms into the daily lives of U.S. diplomats. Dozens of U.S. ambassadors around the world now use Facebook and Twitter, and the State Department boasts nine foreign-language Twitter accounts. These technologies, Ross argues, give the U.S. a new suite of tools for exerting "smart power" to advance its interests.

DLI chief was moved into action after 9/11

(Monterey County Herald)...Larry Parsons

Army Col. Danial Pick recalls his immediate thought as he watched smoke billow from the damaged Pentagon after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. "My first thought was, 'We need to get off foreign oil.' Don't ask me why. I remember it as clear as if it were today," said Pick, commandant of the Defense Language Institute and Foreign Language Center in Monterey. Pick, a Middle East specialist and 1996 Arabic language graduate of DLI, had to wait until the start of the Iraq war to get into battle. But he put his language skills — he also speaks Farsi, Dari and Assyrian — to more immediate use, translating materials captured by U.S. forces fighting the Taliban after the invasion of Afghanistan.

Exchange to aid Italian-language students

(NorthJersey.com)...Merry Firschein

Twenty-five Italian high school students who study English will become part of the student body this autumn as part of a new weeklong student exchange program. Twenty Pascack Valley Italian-language students will visit their counterparts in May. The program is the brainchild of world languages instructor Barbara Borghi, who teaches Italian. Through the exchange, district administrators and educators believe district students will improve their spoken-language skills and more easily understand Italian in different dialects, Borghi said. Borghi also said she hopes her students will gain "a more global perspective on the world at large."

Mandarin Charter School Pushes Educational Boundaries

(Free Times)...Trevor Baratko

If China is among South Carolina's top five export markets, shouldn't the state's youth be trained in communicating with business leaders in that market? Enter East Point Academy in Cayce, a preschool-through-2nd grade Chinese-immersion public charter school that started its inaugural school year in August. As part of the South Carolina Public Charter School District, East Point was approved and funded by the state, according to SCPCD Superintendent Wayne Brazell. "Language immersion provides students with the opportunity to learn another language with proficiency while also mastering content in English," Matthews says.

Verbling is like a Chatroulette for learning languages

(VentureBeat)...Jolie O'Dell

Verbling has something better in mind: Learning a *foreign language* by chatting with native speakers who also want to learn the language you speak.

Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Community Birthday Message

(Navy.mil)

On 05 September 2011, we commemorate the fifth anniversary of the establishment of navy's foreign area officer community. Please join me in extending heartiest congratulations and best birthday wishes to our service's youngest community. The FAO designator, 1710, established navy FAO as a separate, independent community. since then, it has grown to over 240 officers and is on track to reach 400 officers by 2015. in 2010, rear admiral Douglas J. Venlet, currently serving as the defense attaché to Russia, was chosen as navy's first FAO Flag Officer.

Does lack of language skills threaten UK influence in Europe?

(*Public Service Europe*)...Justin Stares

Britain risks losing influence in the European Union if the nosedive in foreign language skills is not redressed, according to the European Commission. The prediction follows news that the number of British pupils gaining a basic GCSE qualification in any foreign language has dropped by 45 per cent over the last decade. There will be fewer qualified British applicants for institutions such as the European Commission, says Dennis Abbott, commission spokesman for multilingualism. "It will be more difficult to get jobs in the EU," Abbott told *PublicServiceEurope.com*. "For Britain this will mean a loss of influence". The commission requires all candidates to have a "thorough knowledge" of one of the EU's 23 official languages plus a "satisfactory knowledge" of a second. After recruitment, officials are supposed to demonstrate competence in a third language before they can be considered for their first promotion.

9/11 legacy: Middle East studies

(*Wake Forest News*)...Cheryl Walker

When political science professor Michaelle Browsers joined the Wake Forest faculty in 2000, Arabic was not taught at the University and the Middle East and South Asia Program did not yet exist. But, on Sept. 11, 2001, the terrorist attacks focused the world's attention on the Middle East. As the nation sought to understand the origins of such violence, college students looked for more opportunities to study the politics, culture and language of the region. "9/11 put the region on the radar of many students," said Browsers, who co-directs the Middle East and South Asia Program (MESA) with Professor of Political Science Charles H. Kennedy. "The war in Afghanistan, the war on terrorism, and the war in Iraq served to further heighten and extend that interest. While in some respects, 9/11 reinforced stereotypes, it also presented an opportunity in the form of great numbers of students who wanted to know more."

ACTFL: Your Help is Urgently Needed to Prevent Cuts to Language Education Funding

(ACTFL)

FLAP is in trouble. In early August, Congress passed the Budget Control Act, which raised the nation's debt limit while simultaneously mandating cuts in federal spending. This budget agreement between Congress and the Administration cut \$7 billion and could result in significant reductions to education programs. Despite the many benefits of language learning to our nation's economic growth and security as well as to a student's ability to excel in school, funding for foreign language programs has come under attack. **Already, higher education spending for foreign languages (Title VI) has been cut by \$50 million, a 40 percent reduction from the previous year.** The Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP), the only source of federal funding for K-12 foreign language programs, is slated to be cut or eliminated in congressional budget proposals. **Act now and tell Congress how important language learning is in your community!**