



# The Language & Culture Weekly

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## [CURRENT NEWS 12 APRIL 2012](#)

### **DLSNEO HIGHLIGHT**

#### [NLSC Membership Surpasses 3,300](#)

*(NLSC)*

The National Language Service Corps was originally chartered to establish an organization to recruit and enroll 1,000 Members to augment the surge language requirements of federal agencies. Today, the NLSC membership has surpassed 3,300 Members (over three times the original target) in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and 25 countries - and increased its language capacity beyond the original ten pilot languages to 242 languages.

### **DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**

#### [Wraps come off special operations Afghan war plan](#)

*(Fox News)...Associated Press*

Adm. Bill McRaven, the head of U.S. special operations, is mapping out a potential Afghanistan war plan that would replace thousands of U.S. troops with small special operations teams paired with Afghans to help an inexperienced Afghan force withstand a Taliban onslaught as U.S. troops withdraw. The commanders building the new team also would draw heavily from the group known as "Afghan Pakistan hands," the 700-plus force of troops and civilians given months of extra language training in Pashtu, Dari or Urdu, the three main languages of Afghanistan and Pakistan, officials say. Around 50 of the "hands" are deployed to the Village Stability Operations to serve as translators, both of language and culture, between special operations troops, Afghan government officials and local villagers.

### **STUDIES**

#### [Professor Discusses Babies' Language Skills](#)

*(The Harvard Crimson)...Joe B. Lerer*

Babies are able to differentiate minute sound distinctions that would otherwise be lost to adults, University of Washington professor of speech and hearing sciences Patricia K. Kuhl said on Tuesday. In the first talk of a two-part lecture series organized by the Human, Mind, Brain and Behavior Interfaculty Initiative, Kuhl discussed babies' ability to learn vowel patterns quickly.

"Seven-year-old children are geniuses at learning languages, but with every two- or three-year advancement in age, their ability to learn languages declines dramatically," Kuhl said. "After puberty, it becomes increasingly more difficult to



learn languages at such a fast rate."

### **DOMESTIC/U.S. FOREIGN POLICY**

#### [The United States and Brazil: An Education Partnership for the 21st Century](#)

*(State Department)*

Presidents Obama and Rousseff share a commitment to an innovative U.S.-Brazil education partnership that addresses the needs of a 21st-century workforce. The Department of State, in partnership with the Government of Brazil, is expanding the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program to promote the study of Portuguese language and culture in the United States and to encourage American students to study in Brazil. Brazilian educators serve as native Portuguese language resources in the classroom and in cultural activities as they pursue their own non-degree studies in pedagogy, curriculum development, and English language at accredited post-secondary U.S. educational institutions.

### **INTERNATIONAL**

#### [Language skills key to export success says BCC](#)

*(GrowthBusiness.co.uk)*

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) is



calling on UK companies to place more emphasis on foreign language training to maximise the benefits of exporting. In a survey of 8,000 businesses, the BCC finds that while exporting activity continues to rise, more exposure to international companies would encourage a greater number of them to export. The research shows that 61 per cent of non-exporters, which are likely to consider trading overseas, see a lack of language skills as a barrier to entry.

### [Select immigrant workers to face mandatory language testing: ministers](#)

*(Edmonton Journal)*...Jason Warick



Thousands of new immigrants in Canada will require basic language skills, federal Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Minister Jason Kenney announced in Wednesday in Saskatoon. Kenney said low- and medium-skilled workers applying under the Provincial Nominee Program will be subject to mandatory English or French language testing, and will be required to meet a minimum standard for speaking, reading, writing and listening in one of Canada's two official languages.

### [Science Weekly podcast: Daniel Everett on language](#)

*(The Guardian)*...Alok Jha

Linguist Daniel Everett discusses his book *Language: The Cultural Tool*. Daniel discusses his thesis that language is not innate, which is central to the theory of universal grammar most associated with his fellow linguist Noam Chomsky. Rather, he believes that language is like a bow and arrow, a tool to solve a human problem.

## **OPINION**

### [Language skills are being lost in translation](#)

*(The Telegraph)*...Ambassador Charles Crawford  
Diplomats who are not fluent in the local tongue risk doing

their country a disservice. Amazing as it may seem, not all foreigners speak English – or want to do so. How then to explain the last government's

puffing up of “multiculturalism” while they hacked



away at the most vital of all inter-cultural skills, the discipline of learning foreign languages?