

# LANGUAGE & CULTURE WEEKLY

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## Foreign Policy: 10 Things Future Wonks Should Know

(NPR)...Stephen M. Walt

It's August, which means that students in America (and plenty of other places) are heading off to college for the first time. Some of them are undoubtedly thinking about preparing for careers in international affairs. As a public service to those eager future Secretaries of State (and the parents worrying about their college choices) here's my Top Ten Things that Future International Policy Wonks Should Learn.

**1. History.** Trying to understand international affairs without knowing history is like trying to cook without knowing the difference between flour and flounder. Not only does history provide the laboratory in which our basic theories must be tested, it shapes the narratives different peoples tell them-

selves about how they came to their present circumstances and how they regard their relationship to others.

**2. Statistics.** Most high schoolers have to learn a certain amount of



math, but unless you're going into a technical field, a lot of it won't be directly relevant to a career in international affairs. But statistics is part of the language of policy discourse, and if you don't understand the basics, you won't be a discerning consumer of quantitative information and others will be able to daz-

zle you with data that may not be right. You can avoid this fate with a little study.

**3. Foreign Language.** If you grew up outside the United States and are headed for college, you probably already speak more than one language. If you're an American, alas, you probably don't. You should. I know that everyone is learning English these days, but learning at least one foreign language provides a window into another culture that you can't get any other way, and also provides a sense of mastery and insight that is hard to achieve otherwise. I'm not particularly good at languages, but I'd gladly trade my mediocre abilities in French and German for real fluency in one of them (or many others). Don't make my mistake: get to the language lab and acquire some real skills.

## CAMPBELL GIS LEARN AFGHAN LANGUAGE, CULTURE

(Army Times)...Kristin M. Hall  
Fort Campbell soldiers who are training for new advisory roles in Afghanistan celebrated the Islamic holiday Eid al-Fitr (ayd ahl-FIH'-tur) on Wednesday by sharing a meal, conversing in Afghan lan-

guages and learning traditional dances and games.  
Thousands of troops from the Tennessee-Kentucky state line will be returning to Afghanistan this year, but their roles will be shifting from combat skills to advising and assisting

Afghanistan troops and police. Hundreds of soldiers were selected to go through a 12-week language immersion program at Fort Campbell and they gathered to try out their skills during the holiday celebrated at the end of Ramadan.



## AMERICA'S FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEFICIT

(Forbes)...David Skorton and Glenn Altschuler

When elementary and secondary schools and colleges around the country open for the fall semester, millions of students will not be studying a foreign language. necessarily for lack of interest. won't be able to.

In a shrinking world this reality constitutes a threat to our national security. "To prosper economically and to improve relations with other countries," U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan declared in 2010, "Americans need to read, speak and under-

stand other languages." , Duncan pointed out, only 18% of Americans report speaking a language other than English, while 53% of Europeans (and increasing numbers in other parts of the world) can converse in a second language.

## SPEAKING TWO LANGUAGES ALSO BENEFITS LOW-INCOME CHILDREN

(Medical Xpress)

In a study forthcoming in *Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, psychological scientist Pascale Engel de Abreu of the University of Luxembourg and colleagues examine the effects of speaking two languages on the executive functioning of low-income children. "Low-income children

represent a vulnerable population," says Engel de Abreu. "Studying cognitive processes in this population is of great societal importance and represents a significant advancement in our understanding of childhood development."

Existing research, conducted with older bilingual children and bilingual adults from middle class backgrounds, suggests that knowing two

languages may have different effects on different aspects of executive functioning: while being bilingual seems to have a positive influence on the ability to direct and focus attention (control), researchers have found no such benefit for how people encode and structure knowledge in memory (representation).

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## U.S. WILL MAKE BROADER GLOBAL SKILLS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS A NEW PRIORITY

(The Chronicle of Higher Education)...Karin Fischer

The U.S. Department of Education wants to ensure that more American students have the skills to compete in a global workplace, and not just build up "deep, deep expertise" among a smaller group of graduates

in foreign languages or cultures, the agency's top official for international education says.

In a recent interview with *The Chronicle*, Maureen McLaughlin, the department's director of international affairs, said it was trying to be more deliberate

and intentional in its international efforts. "We didn't previously have a strategic framework for the things we would engage in and those that we weren't going to internationally," said Ms. McLaughlin, who has led an internal working group to develop a global plan.

## **MORE AREA SCHOOLS EMBRACE CHINESE-IMMERSION**

*(Wall Street Journal)*...Ben Worthen

When kindergartners arrive at the Presidio Knolls School next week for their first day of class, they will be allowed to speak English only on the playground and at a few other times. Most classes will be taught in Chinese.

"There's a real demand for

this kind of learning," says Alfonso Orsini, the head of the school, which is adding a kindergarten after several years as a Chinese-language preschool. Construction crews are working to finish the school's campus, a former run-down church on 10th Street. The plan calls for eventually enrolling students through eighth grade.

The Bay Area is now home to 23 such Chinese-immersion schools, according to one count, many of which have opened in the last few years.



## **PROJECT GO RETURNS TO UT**

*(University of Texas at Austin)*

DLNSEO's Project GO (Global Officers), formerly known as the ROTC Language and Culture Project, is a collaborative initiative that promotes critical language education, study abroad, and intercultural dialogue opportunities for ROTC students. The Department of Middle Eastern

Studies joins the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies to reestablish Project GO at UT to support ROTC students studying Arabic, Russian, and Turkish. DMES previously held a grant to support the ROTC Language and Culture Project in Arabic and Persian from 2007 to 2010. Project GO at

UT will offer ROTC students flexible study options in these critical languages, entailing various combinations of academic-year and summer study to work within the limitations of the ROTC schedule. The project will fund a mentorship program for ROTC students in Arabic, Russian, and Turkish classes.

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## **WHAT TO DO — AND NOT DO — FOR GROWING NUMBER OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

*(Washington Post)*...Valerie Strauss

It's hard to find a school or district in this country that doesn't have an English learner population. For teachers in states like California, Texas, Florida, and New York it is sometimes hard to find a classroom without any English Language Learners (ELL). In fact, the U.S. Department of Education estimates that approximately 4.5

million English Learners are enrolled in public schools across the country, roughly 10% of all students enrolled in K-12 schools in the United States. The number of English Learners has increased by over 50% in the last decade, with some states, like South Carolina and Indiana, experiencing extremely rapid growth of English Learner populations (400-800% increases). Some demographers

predict that in 20 years the ratio of ELL students to English-only students could be one in four.

In light of these numbers, we'd like to suggest a few "Do's" and "Don'ts" — first for teachers with ELLs in their classrooms, and then for non-teacher policymakers who have substantial power over the resources and policies that affect those of us in the classroom.