Civilian Language Education in America

How the Air Force and Academia Can Thrive Together

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Higher education is primarily a long-term supplier of general and specialized talent for government and other sectors. It is an aquifer not a spigot. While it can respond quickly for "comet" needs of government, its strength is in maintaining "a constellation" of resources.

—Nancy L. Ruther
Yale University

The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) of 2006 first proposed that Department of Defense (DOD) language planners focus on preaccession language education instead of spending time and treasure to teach foreign languages to recruits and second-termers, a proposal echoed in the QDR of 2010.[1] Since "preaccession language education" almost always connotes formal college and university coursework, it appears that the last two QDRs seek to strengthen the linguistic skills of the officer corps. However, a lack of both direction for and understanding of what this nation's language education system can provide continues to hamstring efforts to expand preaccession language training.

We are still feeling the effects of changes in foreign language education in America that occurred in the World War I era. The decades prior to that war saw robust enrollment in foreign language courses, in both high schools and colleges, reflecting the country's strong immigrant heritage.[2] The

study of German had acquired "prestige" status as America's public schools embraced Germany's model of instruction. Many people considered German the language of the educated person; consequently, it comprised about 24 percent of all language instruction in public high schools in 1915.[3] Only the traditional study of Latin boasted a higher enrollment (37.3 percent). Moreover, one-third of all US universities required applicants to have studied German or French for two to four years, and fully 85 percent demanded that prospective students pass a foreign language competency test prior to matriculation.[4]

Upon America's entry into the war in 1917, German virtually disappeared from every high school curriculum in a wave of anti-German sentiment, attracting less than 2 percent of all language students.[5] Enrollment in French and Spanish rose, but neither reached German's earlier numbers. Latin remained strong, but the decline in German offerings prompted some students simply not to take a foreign language at all.[6] With German marginalized, French became the new prestige language, in time morphing into language instruction only for individuals seeking postsecondary education.[7] This trend became codified in the college preparatory track as a requirement for higher education—to the virtual exclusion of the vocational track. Consequently, enrollment in foreign language, once nearly universal across the American educational spectrum, continued to diminish in the decades after World War I.[8]

But a more ominous trend emerged: by 1920, 22 states had prohibited the teaching of foreign languages, some of them outlawing any such instruction below eighth grade.[9] Underpinning this linguistic xenophobia—fueled initially by anti-German feelings during World War I—was the idea that citizens could neither understand nor appreciate American ideals without learning them in English. Thus, the teaching of foreign languages became "un-American" or "unpatriotic."[10] Learning another language exposed students to other cultures and thus divided their loyalties, as expressed by a Nebraska statute of that era: "To allow the children of foreigners, who had emigrated here, to be taught from early childhood the language of the country of their parents was to rear them with that language as their mother tongue. It was to educate them so that they must always think in that language, and, as a consequence, naturally inculcate in them the ideas and sentiments foreign to the best interests of this country."[11]

It took no less than a Supreme Court ruling in 1923 to overturn such laws.[12] By then the damage was done, however. Foreign language education in the elementary grades virtually disappeared for the next four decades; initial language education was relegated to high schools; and the rise of isolationism in America kept the study of foreign languages on the ragged edge of patriotism.[13]

Thus, this country had truncated a basic tenet of language education theory—that mastery of a foreign language took a long time and should begin early. In 1940 a national report on what high schools should teach recommended the elimination of foreign language instruction, among other subjects, because the "overly academic" curriculum in high schools caused too many students to fail.[14]

Today that legacy continues. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 emphasizes the testing of students in reading and mathematics to the exclusion of many other subjects, including foreign languages.[15] Panelists at a Senate subcommittee hearing on federal foreign language strategy in 2007 specifically criticized the act, noting that such standardized testing impeded the addition of foreign language instruction to cur-

riculums. "Foreign languages are being left out due to No Child Left Behind," one of them bluntly declared.[16] A recent survey by the Center for Applied Linguistics reported that this legislation has negatively affected approximately one-third of public elementary and secondary schools with language programs, adding that it has diverted resources from foreign language instruction to "accountable" courses in mathematics and reading.[17]

Language Study as a Sequence

Why should the Air Force care about foreign language courses taught in elementary schools and high schools? A study conducted in 2002 points to elementary-level foreign language education as the "sequence starting point" for studying a second language in nearly every country except the United States, which tries to produce competent students of foreign languages in the unrealistically short span of two to four years of high school or two to four semesters of college.[18] The study's author echoes what many other linguistic scholars propose: acquiring any proficiency in a second language requires an extended sequence of study. In short, the sooner one begins language studies, the better.

Former White House chief of staff (and current director of the Central Intelligence Agency) Leon Panetta has described our current system of instruction in foreign languages as "discontinuous," with "considerable slippage" in language study between high school and college.[19] In 2000—the most recent year for which data on language enrollment in secondary schools are available—approximately 5.9 million students took language classes in high school.[20] Two years later, only about 1.4 million students took them in college.[21]

One explanation—that many high school students don't attend college—would account for some of this disparity. However, the enrollment in 2006 of only 1.58 million college students in language courses (of over 17 million college students nationwide) suggests some continuing apathy on the part of the students, colleges, or both.[22] Most colleges do not require a foreign language for graduation; in fact, many doctoral programs require no language, much less demonstrated proficiency in two languages for graduation.[23] Of the four-year institutions that responded to the Modern Language Association's (MLA) survey in 2006, 7.8 percent reported teaching no language courses at all.[24]

Moreover, most of these college language students enroll at the introductory level (first and second year), less than 20 percent of them going any further.[25] Given the gulf in language study between high school and college and the paucity of language students advancing beyond the basic four semesters of college, it is painfully obvious that college language instruction offers no easy solution to the Air Force's needs.

A Brief Quantitative Assessment of Language Education

How well does college-level language instruction prepare individuals to meet the military's needs? Does a correlation exist between classroom hours and DOD test scores? On the one hand, some scholars claim that no formula can accurately determine the length of time necessary to attain various levels of language proficiency because of the unquantifiable nature of motivation and aptitude. On the other hand, various other language authorities have attempted to quantify the abovementioned correlation.

The International Language Roundtable (ILR) defines a listening/reading level of 1/1 as "elementary proficiency." In the listening category, level 1 denotes comprehension of utterances that meet basic needs for survival, courtesy, and travel. A score of 1 in reading indicates sufficient comprehension to read simple connected sentences.[26] The International Center for Language Studies calculates that 150 hours of class-

room instruction can produce a score of 1/1 in the Romance and Germanic languages, considered the easiest to master.[27] At the other end of the scale, Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and Korean—some of the most difficult languages for English speakers to learn—demand more than twice that figure (350), equivalent to nearly eight semesters of college instruction (assuming that four semesters of a college language course equate to about 180 hours of classroom instruction).[28] In most colleges and universities, eight semesters would certainly qualify a student for a minor concentration in a language. (See table 1 for the ILR's breakdown of hours required for various levels of proficiency. Note that any level beyond 3 calls for immersion studies in that language's native setting. In other words, classroom instruction will carry a student only so far.)

Furthermore, because college instruction in languages usually occurs at a relatively leisurely pace and is not as intense and goal-directed as classes at the Defense Language Institute (DLI) or Foreign Service Institute, students would probably have to take more classroom hours to attain the same results on the Defense Language Proficiency Test.[29] According to an interview with the DLI's acting chancellor in 2005, the institute's French students "burn through a typical college French textbook in about six weeks."[30] Lastly, the number of hours devoted to reaching proficiency rises exponentially, not linearly—a fact that substantially affects those who wish to increase their language skills but have limited time for language study. Basic language acquisition requires considerable time, and upper–level study even more, creating a problem in any Air Force work setting not directly tied to language proficiency. For example, medical personnel who participate in the International Health Service's language program would have to take increasingly more time away from clinical work (and their continuing education requirements as medical professionals) to score higher on the Defense Language Proficiency Test.

Table 1. Classroom hours required for proficiency levels by language difficulty

ILR Levels from S/L/R[a] 0 to:	*S/L/R 1*	*S/L/R 2*	*S/L/R 3*	*S/L/R 4*
Romance and Germanic Languages (French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Romanian, German, Afrikaans, Danish, Dutch, Norwegian, Swedish)	150 hours	400 hours	650 hours	[b]
Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Korean	350 hours	1,100 hours	2,200 hours	[b]
All Others (e.g., East European, African, and Asian Languages)	250 hours	600 hours	1,100 hours	[b]

Adapted from International Center for Language Studies, "Classroom Hours to Achieve Proficiency Levels by Language Difficulty," International Center for Language Studies, Washington, DC, http://www.icls.com/FLD/ILRlevels.htm.

Note: Reaching these goals assumes that the student will supplement every five hours of classroom study with a minimum of two to three hours of preparation.

This table, an adaptation of the expected levels of speaking proficiency for various lengths of training according to the US State Department's Foreign Service Institute, is intended to meet the needs of private-sector students.

These equations vary slightly: the Foreign Service Institute estimates that students will need 575–600 hours of its classroom instruction in the Romance languages to reach level 3/3. See Mary Ellen O'Connell and Janet L. Norwood, eds., *International Education and Foreign Languages: Keys to Securing America's Future* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2007), 45. For the most difficult languages (Chinese, Arabic, etc.), the Foreign Service Institute mandates that students spend the second year of their 88-week course in the target country.

[a] S = speaking proficiency, L = listening proficiency, R = reading proficiency

[b] Generally, classroom instruction cannot attain level 4 because such proficiency demands extensive use of language in a native setting.

Such a time-management problem could force an Airman to choose between professional duties and the pursuit of improved language skills.

Producing Officers Proficient in Foreign Languages

As the QDRs of 2006 and 2010 point out, the military should emphasize preaccession language training to meet most of its needs instead of relying on postaccession language study.[31] The intensive training nature of the first year of an officer's career, featuring Undergraduate Pilot Training, Undergraduate Navigator Training, or a host of other technical courses, seriously inhibits language training after commissioning.

One must also address a broader issue. With few exceptions, line officers in the US Air Force receive their commissions via three distinct routes: the US Air Force Academy (USAFA), Officer Training School (OTS), and Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC). Although each produces some language-capable members, each has its own language drawbacks.

Given the finite number of USAFA graduates each year, only a few will have majored or minored in foreign languages. Moreover, even though the academy has increased its language offerings, they cannot possibly match the number found on civilian campuses across America (approximately 219 in 2006).[32]

At this writing, OTS admits only technical majors—engineers, biologists, and the like—so language majors who wait until after graduation for commissioning cannot pursue this route.[33] Native-speaker candidates for OTS more often reflect a happy circumstance than targeted recruitment; hence, only a small number of Air Force officers with native language ability obtain their commissions through OTS.

Consequently, America's colleges and universities represent the greatest "aquifer" of foreign language studies in the country. Opportunities for language majors to receive AFROTC scholarships have soared recently—an impressive number of such students could merit these awards.[34] In addition, senior ROTC cadets are taking advantage of a provision in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2009 that authorizes a bonus for completing coursework in a number of foreign languages, even if their studies do not lead to a degree.[35] The Air Force anticipates that the numbers of participants in the program will grow to nearly 1,000 in the 2010–11 academic year.[36]

However, as noted above, the American educational system has its own problems providing what the Air Force needs: about half of the US colleges and universities that host AFROTC detachments offer only French, German, and Spanish (the "Big Three"), and 15 percent of those campuses have no language programs at all.[37] If the Air Force truly desires preaccession instruction in the rest of the languages of the world, it will either have to place AFROTC detachments at civilian institutions that offer them or push for curriculum changes at existing AFROTC locations.[38]

Section 529 of Public Law 111-288 (which places into law the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010) takes this concept a step further, authorizing the secretary of defense "to establish language training centers at accredited universities, senior military colleges, or other similar institutions of higher education" to accelerate "foundational expertise in critical and strategic languages." It authorizes a sweeping language education program tied to the nation's colleges and available for all military and civilian members of the DOD. The law also pays particular attention to incorporating these programs into ROTC.[39] Although it is too early to determine the implementation of this law, it does highlight the important role that colleges and universities will play in language education.

However, despite any wholesale push for less commonly taught language (LCTL) classes for AFROTC cadets, the differences between academia's language goals and those of the military are striking. The con-

cept of knowledge for knowledge's sake sets academia apart from the DLI or even the USAFA insofar as universities have no mandate to produce two dozen Dari linguists in six months. Rather, in academe, it is enough to explore Dari as a language. Colleges and universities have no imperative to create Urdu linguists at the 3/3 level, teaching any course in the Urdu language almost by happenstance and assuming that it *should* rather than *must* be offered.

Even if colleges offer niche language courses, they face the continuing issue of funding them. According to Dr. Gilbert Merkx, vice-provost for international affairs at Duke University, the language edifice at America's colleges is "pretty impressive but nonetheless fragile." He believes that many of the LCTL courses might possibly "disappear" unless sustained by federal funds.[40]

Moreover, the military now emphasizes speaking another language instead of just reading and listening to it.[41] A strong speaking requirement, however, runs contrary to the traditional academic approach to language study, which emphasizes grammar and literature, particularly in the foundational courses. Admittedly, schools offer classes in conversation, but they occur later in the academic process and build on acquired grammar and vocabulary skills. One finds this approach across all of academia: a heavy literary focus in foreign language studies instead of a flexible, student-oriented set of courses.[42] Some people view this situation as a clash between the "instrumentalist" approach used by "freestanding language schools" to meet their students' needs and the college/university foreign language department's "constitutive" approach, which focuses on the relationship between cultural and literary traditions, cognitive structures, and cultural knowledge.[43] An MLA white paper published in 2009 further emphasizes the constitutive approach: "language and literature need to remain at the center of what departments of English and languages other than English do. . . . The role of literature needs to be emphasized. . . . The study of language should be integral to the study of literature."[44] Even though this traditional approach remains in the best tradition of the liberal arts, one MLA committee does address the need to develop courses in translation and interpretation, citing a great "unmet demand."[45]

Congress has recommended targeting ROTC language and culture grants toward the largest "feeder schools, particularly the five senior military colleges," to develop programs in critical languages.[46] However, these five—the Citadel, Virginia Military Institute, North Georgia College and State University, Norwich University, and Texas A&M University—have varied lists of language offerings beyond the Big Three, courses in Arabic and Chinese being the most common. Virginia Military Institute and Texas A&M offer the most advanced classes, but all five adhere to the same literature-centric approach that characterizes language study at the postsecondary level.[47]

A defining factor regarding the difference between the academic and directed approaches to language training involves the relatively leisurely pace of the former and the intensity of the latter. The DLI turns out Arabic linguists in a year or so, equivalent to a four-year college curriculum with summers off or maybe one overseas immersion. Many language experts believe that anything less than majoring in a language won't produce an adequate linguist.[48]

Finally, language majors have few incentives to become officers in the Air Force. The service offers no officer Air Force Specialty Codes for linguists, translators, or the like, and no real opportunities for them to serve. AFROTC currently does not require a foreign language for commissioning, and officers have few opportunities to use language skills immediately upon commissioning.[49]

Language Enrollments

Language enrollments continue to rise in both two- and four-year colleges, up al-

most 13 percent between 2002 and 2006 (table 2). The raw numbers for 2006 (1.58 million students enrolled) represent real growth of 160 percent over enrollments in 1960 (608,749). However, the 2006 numbers represent only 8.9 percent of total college and university enrollments of 17.65 million. That ratio is roughly half of the 1960 ratio of 16.1 percent.[50]

Spanish, the language most widely taught in college since 1970, boasted 822,985 students in 2006, eclipsing the total enrollment of all other languages combined (approximately 755,000), a trend that has persisted since 1995. French is a distant second (206,426), and German third (94,264). Surprisingly, the fourth most widely taught language in American colleges and universities, with 78,829 enrollments, is American Sign Language. These four make up over 76 percent of all college language enrollments for 2006. However, Spanish, German, and French are considered abundant in the Air Force, although one can make a case for needing French in Africa Command's area of responsibility. American Sign Language has no practical military use at all.[51]

Some explanations and caveats to the totals in this table are in order. These data reflect raw numbers and do not indicate whether students take more than one language course at a time, which would lower the aggregate totals. If one excludes two-year colleges from the data, introductory language classes account for over 78 percent (approximately 915,000) of these enrollments, with advanced classes making up the remaining 22 percent (approximately 255,000), for a ratio of 7:2.[52]

Moreover, these data do not identify the number of classes in conversation, presumably in the advanced-class category. Since 198,598 of the enrollments in advanced classes are in Spanish, French, and German (198,598 of a total of 255,105 advanced enrollments—nearly 78 percent), it suggests that colleges and universities teach relatively few other languages above the introductory level.[53]

Nevertheless, one sees an increasing trend toward students earning degrees in

Table 2. Fall 2002 and 2006 language course enrollments in US institutions of higher education (languages in descending order of 2006 totals)

	2002	2006	% Change
Spanish	746,267	822,985	10.3
French	201,979	206,426	2.2
German	91,100	94,264	3.5
American Sign Language	60,781	78,829	29.7
Italian	63,899	78,368	22.6
Japanese	52,238	66,605	27.5
Chinese	34,153	51,582	51.0
Latin	29,841	32,191	7.9
Russian	23,921	24,845	3.9
Arabic	10,584	23,974	126.5
Greek, Ancient	20,376	22,849	12.1
Hebrew, Biblical	14,183	14,140	−0.3
Portuguese	8,385	10,267	22.4
Hebrew, Modern	8,619	9,612	11.5
Korean	5,211	7,145	37.1
Other languages	25,716	33,728	31.2
Total	1,397,253	1,577,810	12.9

Reprinted from Nelly Furman, David Goldberg, and Natalia Lusin, *Enrollments in Languages other than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2006* (New York: Modern Language Association, 13 November 2007), 13, table 1a, http://www.mla.org/pdf/06enrollmentsurvey_final.pdf.

other languages. According to graduation data compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics, US colleges and universities awarded 17,866 bachelor's degrees in foreign languages and literatures in 2007–8, almost 72 percent of them in Spanish (9,278), French (2,432), and German (1,085).[54] This still leaves a substantial cohort of 5,071 students with bachelor's degrees in other languages (including 289 in Chinese and another 57 in Arabic), possibly representing a fertile source of recruitment.[55]

The Rise of Less Commonly Taught Languages

Other than Biblical Hebrew, enrollments in the rest of the top 15 languages show sustained growth and, happily, the Air Force needs most of them. Among those languages, Arabic (Modern Standard) and Chinese (Mandarin) have seen the greatest increases in the number of students (126 percent and 51 percent, respectively) since 2002 and in the number of institutions offering classes.[56]

Both of these languages fall into that linguistic grouping commonly referred to as LCTLs. Although the phrase "less commonly taught languages" seems self-explanatory, the concept itself requires some clarification. In reality, LCTLs include all languages other than the Big Three. Some, such as Igbo, are used by small population groups. Most of the others suffer from the paucity of courses available throughout academe—something particularly true of African languages such as Hausa and Yoruba, as well as tongues from the Pacific Rim such as Malay and Indonesian.[57]

Instruction in these and many other LCTLs is available across the country but usually only at larger universities, some of which have formal centers for such languages. Classes are generally small and in some cases taught not by permanent faculty members but by native speakers in the United States on Fulbright scholarships. Characteristically, universities may offer coursework in an LCTL one year but not the next; textbooks may not be readily available; and the quality of instruction may vary widely.[58] Though commonly thought difficult to learn, LCTLs run the gamut from no more problematic than French or Spanish (languages such as Portuguese and Swahili) to extremely difficult (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Arabic).[59] Not surprisingly, the Air Force and the other services have great interest in drawing many LCTLs from the aquifer of academia.

A "Social Demand Theory" of Language Education

Perhaps in America one really doesn't perceive a lack of speakers of foreign languages so much as lack of a formal *demand* for them—a view described as a "social demand model." Such a model involves a gap between the need (in this case, language experts in numerous, albeit less commonly taught, languages) and the actual product (language majors in Spanish, French, and German—all of them abundant in the Air Force, as mentioned previously).[60] To portray the social demand model accurately, its disciples point out the necessity of detailed information on the need. That is, if you don't know exactly what you need, you can't demand it. Therefore, in the absence of specific demand, you get what's available.

Despite a DOD-wide review of the department's language requirements, little has emerged that amounts to a clear call for offering specific languages in academia. The substantial rise in college enrollments in Arabic and Chinese, as noted above, is encouraging, but the interest in Arabic most likely stems from the events of 11 September 2001 and from military activity in Iraq. Increases in Chinese enrollment may proceed from the realization that China will become a near-peer competitor in the coming decades or, perhaps, from a second-generation Chinese-American population that seeks to better understand and appreci-

ate its ethnic heritage. These reasons seem much more likely explanations than a clarion call from the DOD. On the other hand, the simultaneous, substantial rise in the number of students taking American Sign Language, and with nearly the same intensity, fits neither pattern. Unless and until a clear connection exists between the specific language needs of the DOD and the language aquifer that is America's colleges and universities, both will pursue divergent paths, crossing only by happenstance.

The Junior College Solution

Among the most ravenous consumers of raw talent in America, college football coaches project their needs—an outside linebacker here, a punter there—years in advance of the prospects' playing days, cull the best qualified from the high school ranks, and then pursue them with a zeal that often runs afoul of good sense as well as National Collegiate Athletic Association rules. Not surprisingly, these master recruiters often find proven—emphasis on the word *proven*—talent within the ranks of junior colleges. Although these players lack four years of playing eligibility, they have two more years of experience than high school seniors, and coaches can carefully select them to fill a particular need. If college football coaches can recruit the best players from junior colleges, so can language managers of the Air Force and AFROTC recruit the best language students.

The nation's two-year colleges have seen strong growth in language courses during the past decade, especially in Chinese, Arabic, and Japanese.[61] Granted, two years of instruction does not yield proficiency, especially in the more difficult languages such as Arabic and Chinese, but it is a start. More importantly, such enrollment demonstrates the student's interest and intent. Simple online research can identify colleges that teach languages of interest to the DOD, many of them located near communities of native speakers that feed into the school system. For example, it is no coincidence that most two-year colleges teaching Mandarin Chinese are on the US West Coast.

One must note, however, that, given the small number of students and the scarcity of instructors, specific course offerings at two-year colleges may wax and wane. Nevertheless, the available courses can offer a practical, affordable way to identify potential linguists with the right skills and aptitudes, thus reducing training time and costs. To illustrate, the Air Force could recruit junior college graduates with four semesters of a desired language into its senior ROTC programs at four-year universities to complete their degrees as language majors. Clearly, Air Force recruiters as well as AFROTC detachment "coaches" should pursue this avenue.

Final Observations

The DLI's Foreign Language Center routinely produces competent linguists in difficult languages, but one cannot expect it to provide all of the languages for all of the services all of the time. Civilian language education in America can serve as an additional source of talented linguists for the US Air Force and its sister services.

AFROTC is already making inroads into foreign language curricula insofar as it recruits and compensates majors in specific languages. However, because this is not a requirements-driven, proactive approach between AFROTC and university language departments, it lacks focus at the collegiate administrative level.

The DOD's process for determining its language requirements remains incomplete, and the part available lacks service-specific granularity. This vacuum has led the Air Force to believe it has few specific language requirements, but that belief may prove incorrect, causing the service to fall behind in language emphasis. This attitude also overlooks the joint nature of modern military operations as well as the deployment of over 10,000 Airmen in joint expeditionary

training billets every year—essentially "boots on the ground" assignments with their Army and Marine counterparts. If we fight alongside these Soldiers and Marines, who value language training, then shouldn't we value it as well? And what of the growing demand to speak the language, not just read and understand it? How will we train and test this skill?

Finally, in light of the current emphasis on preaccession language training, what do we do with all of these officers who have newly acquired, very fragile language skills? Do we acknowledge their hard work with a bonus for proficiency in a foreign language? Do we have assignments that take advantage of their skills? On a much more practical level, do we acknowledge their linguistic capabilities and sustain them throughout a career?

Where Do We Go From Here? Recommendations

Although the following recommendations for improving language skills in the Air Force by using America's colleges and universities apply to our service, they have equal relevance to our sister services and to the DOD.

First, the Air Force should lift its embargo on nontechnical majors, allowing college graduates who majored in languages to attend OTS. Many college students and graduates choose a military career only after testing the civilian job market. According to a study commissioned by the MLA, government service does not appear as a "job category" in a national survey of college graduates whose first bachelor's degree is in foreign languages. Although it may be buried in the 6.3 percent listed as "other occupations," government service of any type—including the military—does not appear as a career of choice for the vast majority of language graduates.[62] If the prohibition of nontechnical majors appears to violate OTS policy, then the Air Force should regard the acquisition of fluency in a foreign language as a "technical" major.

Following this same theme, critical language skills must become a recruiting priority. Even in the face of this "newfound" desire for linguistic competency in officers, the strong need for enlisted language specialists continues unabated.[63] Although that aspect of the issue falls outside the scope of this article, recruiting for this cohort must also become a priority.

Following the Army's successes in this area, the Air Force Recruiting Service should explore America's many foreign-language-speaking communities to target specific languages.[64] An easy and accurate tool, the MLA language map pinpoints those areas of potential recruits.[65] However, recruiters should be advised that most of these "heritage speakers" will need additional training in order to become militarily effective.

The Air Force should take the lead in implementing new congressional legislation to establish language research centers at colleges and universities. In selecting suitable sites, it should look at colleges that host AFROTC detachments and those near Air Force bases. Additionally, the Air Force could build on the curricula at many colleges' existing critical language centers to meet its language needs. For example, Texas A&M University—one of the five "military colleges" highlighted in a congressional study and in the 2010 QDR—not only has an outstanding corps of cadets but also a large, diverse faculty and student body. Its capacity for growth and diversity lends itself to such an undertaking.

We should also use the social demand theory for discussing curriculum development with college and university language departments, stressing the need for making available more introductory conversational courses to the entire AFROTC corps of cadets as a method of encouraging language education throughout the corps. To add leverage, AFROTC detachments should team with the other ROTC programs on campus

to present a consolidated statement of need for specific language classes.

At the high school level, we should encourage Air Force Junior ROTC (AFJROTC) cadets to enroll in available language programs, a move that would cost the Air Force nothing, help extend the sequence of language education down to the high school level, increase the "demand" for language courses in secondary education (not a bad thing), and help instill a sense of the "global" nature of the Air Force in AFJROTC cadets. Such high school programs could also promote competition for senior ROTC language scholarships across a wider base of students. Other incentives within AFJROTC could include language competitions among schools (similar to drill competitions) and the awarding of ribbons for students with exceptional grades in foreign languages.[66] Given the narrow range of languages available in most American high schools, enrollment in any language—even Latin—would be a plus.

To complete this sequence, the Air Force should encourage its language professionals who wish to teach to become AFJROTC instructors or—better still—return to school and become language teachers under the DOD's "Troops to Teachers" program. To show the military utility of languages, we should encourage those who have "been there and done that" to become mentors and role models. Finally, but most importantly, we cannot allow the current DOD and Air Force emphasis on foreign language education to fade from view, as it has so many times before.

By definition, attaining language proficiency is a long sequence, best begun early and continued unabated throughout the educational system—a fact particularly true of the more difficult (to Western students) languages that the DOD desires. We must keep the language aquifer flowing. ✪

Notes

1. *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 6 February 2006), 17, http://www.comw.org/qdr/qdr2006.pdf; and *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, February 2010), 54, http://www.defense.gov/qdr/QDR%20as%20of%2029JAN10%201600.pdf.

2. Paul Simon, *The Tongue-Tied American: Confronting the Foreign Language Crisis* (New York: Continuum Press, 1980), 3. Mr. Simon is a former US senator. See also Deborah M. Herman, " 'Our Patriotic Duty': Insights from Professional History, 1890–1920," in *The Future of Foreign Language Education in the United States*, ed. Terry A. Osborn (Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 2002), 12, table 1.1, "Public High School Students Studying Foreign Language." In 1900 "at least 600,000 elementary students [were receiving] some part of their education in German." "Timeline: The Bilingual Education Controversy," in *School: The Story of American Public Education*, 2001, Public Broadcasting System, http://www.pbs.org/kcet/publicschool/roots_in_history/bilingual_timeline2.html.

3. Jamie B. Draper and June H. Hicks, *Foreign Language Enrollments in Public Secondary Schools, Fall 2000*, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, US Department of Education Grant no. PO17A000017-01, May 2002, [5], table 1, http://www.actfl.org/files/public/Enroll2000.pdf. Although 73 percent of high school students studied a foreign language in 1915, that ratio would fall to 43.8 percent by 2000. In 1915 Spanish comprised only 2.7 percent of total enrollments in high school, a ratio that would rise to 30.2 percent by 2000. Ibid., 1, 5.

4. Simon, *Tongue-Tied American*, 3.

5. Iowa had the dubious distinction of being the first state to ban the speaking of German in public: in churches, on trains, and even on the telephone. See Herman, " 'Our Patriotic Duty,' " 11.

6. Ibid., 12.

7. Ibid., 17.

8. Enrollments hit their all-time low in 1948 (21.7 percent) but have since enjoyed a slow but steady rise. Draper and Hicks, *Foreign Language Enrollments*, [5], table 1.

9. "This prohibition did not extend to the 'Ancient or dead' languages—Latin, Greek, Hebrew." Elizabeth Mertz, *Language and Mind: A Whorfian Folk Theory in United States Language Law*, Sociolinguistics Working Paper no. 93 (Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, July 1982), http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~haroldfs/540/theory/mertz1.html.

10. Herman, "'Our Patriotic Duty,'" 12.

11. *An Act Related to the Teaching of Foreign Languages in the State of Nebraska*, 9 April 1919, quoted in Meyer v. State of Nebraska, 262 US 390 (1923), decided 4 June 1923, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes dissenting.

12. Even then, the court's ruling was predicated on the 14th Amendment (i.e., "No state . . . shall deprive any person of life, liberty or property without the due process of law") rather than the 1st Amendment (freedom of speech, etc.). Ironically, a survey by the US Department of Education in 2000 showed *zero* Nebraska seventh and eighth graders enrolled in foreign language classes, against a national average of 14.69 percent. However, the same survey showed Nebraska leading the nation in the percentage of high schoolers enrolled in language studies (78.49). Draper and Hicks, *Foreign Language Enrollments*, [6], table 2.

13. Numerous studies in the 1920s concluded that bilingual education was harmful to children. Most of these studies targeted socioeconomically disadvantaged children, testing them in their weakest language—English. See Harold F. Schiffman, *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy* (London: Routledge, 1996), 315.

14. Dr. Ray Clifford, chancellor, Defense Language Institute—Foreign Language Center (remarks at the National Briefing on Language and National Security, National Press Club, Washington, DC, 16 January 2002), http://www.nflc.org/policy_and_strategy/language_and_national_security/nflc_briefing_january_2002/full_transcript.

15. James Campbell, "The Fixes 'No Child' Needs," *Baltimore Sun*, 6 December 2006, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2009-12-06/news/0912070036_1_minority-students-state-takeover-yearly-progress.

16. "Impediments to U.S. Push on Languages," *Inside Higher Ed*, 26 January 2007, http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/01/26/languages. The *Baltimore Sun* reported on a survey by the Center on Education Policy which revealed that "71 percent of the nation's 15,000 school districts had reduced the hours of instructional time [in] . . . other subjects [including foreign languages] to make more time for math and reading." Campbell, "Fixes 'No Child' Needs."

17. Nancy C. Rhodes and Ingrid Pufahl, *Foreign Language Teaching in U.S. Schools: Results of a National Survey* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, November 2009), "Executive Summary," 6, http://www.cal.org/flsurvey.

18. Herman, "'Our Patriotic Duty,'" 18.

19. Leon E. Panetta, "Foreign Language Education: If 'Scandalous' in the 20th Century, What Will It Be in the 21st Century?" Stanford University Conference Paper, n.d., 5, https://www.stanford.edu/dept/lc/language/about/conferencepapers/panettapaper.pdf.

20. Draper and Hicks, *Foreign Language Enrollments*, [6], table 2.

21. Nelly Furman, David Goldberg, and Natalia Lusin, *Enrollments in Languages other than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2006* (New York: Modern Language Association, 13 November 2007), 13, tables 1a and 1b, http://www.mla.org/pdf/06enrollmentsurvey_final.pdf. These numbers represent all modern languages and include Latin and "Greek, Ancient."

22. Ibid.

23. MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, *Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World* (New York: Modern Language Association, May 2007), 5, http://www.mla.org/foreign_languages_an.

24. Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin, *Enrollments in Languages other than English*, 2. Moreover, 9.1 percent of the nation's two-year colleges offered no foreign language classes. Ibid.

25. Panetta, "Foreign Language Education,"5; and Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin, *Enrollments in Languages other than English*, 4.

26. "Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Proficiency Levels," http://www.icls.com/FLD/ILR.pdf.

27. International Center for Language Studies, "Classroom Hours to Achieve Proficiency Levels by Language Difficulty," International Center for Language Studies, Washington, DC, http://www.icls.com/FLD/ILRlevels.htm. Generally speaking, these ILR levels measure linguistic proficiency via the Defense Language Proficiency Test.

28. Margaret E. Malone et al., "Attaining Higher Levels of Proficiency: Challenges for Foreign Language Education in the United States" (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, 2005), http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/attain.html.

29. According to an interview with the DLI's commander, "graduates of a six-month Spanish course at DLI will typically speak better than a graduating Spanish major at a four-year university." Tim

Kilbride, "Language Emerges as Element of National Security," American Forces Press Service, 31 March 2009, http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id = 53726.

30. Katherine McIntire Peters, "At a Loss for Words," *Government Executive*, 15 June 2005, http://www.govexec.com/features/0605-15/0605-15s3.htm.

31. *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, 2006, 79. "We will continue our emphasis on enhancing these skills in general purpose force officers during pre-accession training." *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, 2010, 54.

32. Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin, *Enrollments in Languages other than English*, 5. In addition to the top 15 listed in the table, the MLA reported 204 less commonly taught languages offered at America's colleges and universities.

33. OTS can add or subtract from its acceptance demographic, based on the needs of the Air Force.

34. See "In-College Scholarships," US Air Force ROTC, http://www.afrotc.com/scholarships/in-college/foreign-language-majors/.

35. "Foreign Language Incentive Pay For Precommissioning Programs," 37 *USC*, chap. 5, sec. 316a.

36. "Air Force Officials Developing Cross-Culturally Competent Officer," Air Force News Service, 11 December 2009, http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id = 123181940.

37. Briefing, AFROTC, subject: In Contact—Incorporating Language Training and Cultural/Regional Education into Officer Force Development Plans, August 2005, slide: "Military-Affiliated Collegiate Foreign Language Programs." This is a DOD-wide problem as well as an Air Force problem. Undersecretary of Defense Michael Dominguez points out that 1,321 colleges host ROTC detachments (of all services) and that 1,148 of them have foreign language programs. However, he also states that the vast majority of them rarely teach more than Spanish, French, and German; less than 40 percent teach Chinese or Arabic; and less than 10 percent teach Farsi. Though admittedly an improvement over the percentages reported for AFROTC-affiliated schools in 2005, these are still low for the languages that the Air Force needs. Senate, *Statement of the Honorable Michael L. Dominguez, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, "Lost in Translation: A Review of the Federal Government's Efforts to Develop a Foreign Language Strategy,"* 110th Cong., 1st sess., 25 January 2007, 8, 9, http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction = Files.View&FileStore_id = 7ce18437-63be-44ea-8f56-87ebbbdc186d.

38. The University of Minnesota's Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition is an outstanding resource for determining where languages are taught and a good starting place to research the issue. Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA), University of Minnesota, http://carla.umn.edu/. For details of schools and language offerings, see also a listing of the 15 national foreign language resource centers. "Foreign Language Resource Centers," Michigan State University, http://nflrc.msu.edu/index-1.php.

39. *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010*, Public Law 111-288, 111th Cong., 1st sess. (7 October 2009), sec. 529, pars. (a), (b) (4), http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname = 111_cong_reports&docid = f:hr288.111.pdf.

40. Dr. Gilbert Merkx, "National Briefing on Language and National Security" (remarks at the National Press Club, Washington, DC, 16 January 2002), http://www.nflc.org/policy_and_strategy/language_and_national_security/nflc_briefing_january_2002/full_transcript.

41. Briefing, Iris Bulls, deputy director, Defense Language Office, subject: Distance Learning: Preparing the 21st Century Total Force, 15 March 2007. This observation was based on early returns from the combatant commanders' language requirements survey.

42. Gaylord George Candler, "Linguistic Diglossia and Parochialism in American Public Administration: The Missing Half of Guerreiro Ramos's Redução Sociológica," *Administrative Theory and Praxis* 28, no. 4 (2006): 553.

43. MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, *Foreign Languages and Higher Education*, 2.

44. Modern Language Association, *Report to the Teagle Foundation on the Undergraduate Major in Language and Literature* (New York: Modern Language Association, February 2009), 3, 6, http://www.mla.org/pdf/2008_mla_whitepaper.pdf.

45. MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, *Foreign Languages and Higher Education*, 9.

46. House, *Building Language Skills and Cultural Competencies in the Military: DOD's Challenge in Today's Educational Environment, Report of the US House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations*, 110th Cong., 2d sess., November 2008, Committee Print 110-12, 36–37, http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/Reports/LanguageCultureReportNov08.pdf.

47. See "Department of European and Classical Languages and Cultures," Texas A&M University, http://euro.tamu.edu/; "Modern Languages and

Cultures," Virginia Military Institute, http://www.vmi.edu/show.aspx?tid=37083&id=100; "Undergraduate Programs," Norwich University, http://www.norwich.edu/academics/undergrad.html; "Majors and Minors," Citadel, http://www.citadel.edu/main/academics/majorsminors.html; and "Academic Majors," North Georgia College and State University, http://www.ngcsu.edu/LandingPages/Default.aspx?id=4373.

48. Stephanie van Reigersberg, "National Briefing on Language and National Security" (remarks at the National Press Club, Washington, DC, 16 January 2002), http://www.nflc.org/policy_and_strategy/language_and_national_security/nflc_briefing_january_2002/full_transcript. Even so, a 2008 MLA report observed that even "four-year language majors often graduate with disappointingly low levels of linguistic ability." MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, *Foreign Languages and Higher Education*, 7. Everette Jordan of the Department of Defense takes this argument even further, believing that even a language major needs an additional three to five years to gain the experience level needed to perform his job. Everette Jordan, "National Briefing on Language and National Security" (remarks at the National Press Club, Washington, DC, 16 January 2002), http://www.nflc.org/policy_and_strategy/language_and_national_security/nflc_briefing_january_2002/full_transcript.

49. Briefing, Air Force Manpower and Personnel Center, Randolph AFB, TX, spring 2005, subject: Intelligence Careers, slide: "Save Languages for a Second Tour."

50. Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin, *Enrollments in Languages other than English*, 18, table 4.

51. Classes in American Sign Language have had a meteoric rise, from less than 0.1 percent of total enrollments in 1990 to 5 percent in 2006. Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin, *Enrollments in Languages other than English*, 3. For the purposes of this study, we must discount this language because it probably does not have applications outside the United States. According to the Deaf Resource Library, no universal sign language exists. See Karen Nakamura, "About American Sign Language," Deaf Resource Library, http://www.deaflibrary.org/asl.html.

52. Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin, *Enrollments in Languages other than English*, 21, table 7b.

53. For Arabic the introductory to advanced ratio is 7:1; for Chinese, 7:2. These ratios are surprisingly strong, but Korean surpasses them at 3:1. Ibid.

54. "Table 308. Degrees in modern foreign languages and literatures conferred by degree-granting institutions, by level of degree and sex of student: selected years 1949–50 through 2007–08," *Digest of Education Statistics, 2009*, National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_308.asp?referrer=list; and "Table 309. Degrees in French, German, Italian, and Spanish conferred by degree-granting institutions, by level of degree: selected years, 1949–50 through 2007–08," idem. In the same year, colleges and universities also awarded 2,650 master's degrees (1,522 in the Big Three) and 773 doctorates (346 in the Big Three). See tables 308 and 309.

55. "Table 310. Degrees in Arabic, Chinese, Korean, and Russian conferred by degree-granting institutions, by level of degree: 1969–70 through 2007–08," *Digest of Education Statistics, 2009*, National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_310.asp?referrer=list.

56. Four hundred sixty-six institutions offered Arabic in 2006, up from 264 in 2002. Six hundred sixty-one offered instruction in Chinese in 2006, up from 543 in 2002. Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin, *Enrollments in Languages other than English*, 3.

57. Timothy Reagan, "Toward a Political Economy of the Less Commonly Taught Languages in American Public Schools," in *The Future of Foreign Language Education in the United States*, 125. Reagan has created a hierarchy of LCTLs based not on linguistic factors but on the likelihood that they will be taught in public school. They include the following:

> Level 1: Commonly Taught Languages (French, German, Spanish)
>
> Level 2: Most Commonly Taught LCTLs (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian)
>
> Level 3: Rarely Taught LCTLs (Portuguese, Italian, Norwegian, etc.)
>
> Level 4: Never/Virtually Never Taught LCTLs (all African languages; most Asian and Oceanic languages)
>
> Level 5: Nonlanguages (American Sign Language, Esperanto)

See ibid., 130–32.

58. Ibid., 131.

59. "Less Commonly Taught Languages," Department of Classical and Modern Languages and Literatures, Texas Tech University, http://www.depts.ttu.edu/classic_modern/undrgrad/lctl/lctl.php.

60. Mary Ellen O'Connell and Janet L. Norwood, eds., *International Education and Foreign Languages: Keys to Securing America's Future* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2007), 37. The authors tend to focus on teaching vacancies to the exclusion of any real military application.

61. Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin, *Enrollments in Languages other than English*, 16, table 2b. In 1980 one-fifth of junior colleges offered no foreign language courses. Simon, *Tongue-Tied American*, 3.

62. Modern Language Association, *Report to the Teagle Foundation*, 32. The Air Force might profitably recruit at elementary and secondary schools, where many (about 25 percent) language majors are employed. The same survey identifies 2.2 percent of those graduating with a bachelor's degree in a foreign language as employed in "food preparation and services." Ibid. The State Department's Stephanie van Reigersberg may have pinpointed the reason that more language majors don't enter government service in any capacity, much less the armed services: money. "Language knowledge is not rewarded financially at all," she contends. "How do you convince people . . . who can go and work in [an] international banking environment to work for government if the government wants them to be GS-9s?" Van Reigersberg, "National Briefing on Language and National Security."

63. *Newfound* is a relative term. One can trace calls for linguistic skills in officers back almost 50 years. "Officer Foreign Language Study," a Headquarters USAF/AFPDP report of November 1962, cites a letter of 24 August 1961 about officers' language training which announced the goal that "all Air Force officers be proficient in at least one foreign language" (p. 21).

64. Since 2003 the Army has actively recruited native speakers (primarily Arabic) through its 09L Interpreter/Translator Program. According to Gail McGinn, the DOD's senior language authority, it is a "particularly successful program." House, *Statement of Mrs. Gail H. McGinn, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Plans and the Department of Defense Senior Language Authority, before the House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations*, 110th Cong., 2d sess., 10 September 2008, http://www.dod.gov/dodgc/olc/docs/testMcGinn080910.pdf. According to its latest posture statement, the Army plans to expand this program beyond the Central Command area of responsibility into Pacific Command and Africa Command. "Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy (ACFLS)," *2010 Army Posture Statement*, https://secureweb2.hqda.pentagon.mil/vdas_armyposturestatement/2010/information_papers/Army_Culture_and_Foreign_Language_Strategy_(ACFLS).asp.

65. "The Modern Language Association Language Map: A Map of Languages in the United States," Modern Language Association, http://www.mla.org/map_main.

66. The Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Agency's annual "Sensor Olympics" language competition would be an excellent resource for establishing such a program. For a review of the original program, "Comfy Olympics," by its innovator, see Maj Gen Doyle E. Larson, USAF, Retired, "ESC Commander Starts Comfy Olympics," *Spokesman Magazine*, December 2004, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0QUY/is_2004_Dec/ai_n15622859/?tag=content;col1. For a more current view of information about Sensor Olympics, see 1st Lt Karoline Scott, "Sensor Olympics XXIX Honors AF ISR Agency's Enlisted Airmen," Air Force ISR Agency Public Affairs, 10 November 2008, http://www.afisr.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123123472.

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