

Summary

"Representing Foreign Language Education
at the Federal Level in the United States"

American Association for Applied Linguistics

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HEIDI BYRNES

REQUIRED K-12 FL LEARNING – COMPREHENSIVELY PLANNED

K-12 AND HIGHER ED MUCH DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

OVERVIEW OF SPUTNIK ERA:

NATURAL SCIENCES CAPTURED IMAGINATION OF AMERICAN PUBLIC – GLOBALLY VALID

NOW, 50 YEARS LATER, MIGHT THE CURRENT CONTEXT ALLOW FOR FLL TO CAPTURE THE AMERICAN PUBLIC'S IMAGINATION? CAN LANGUAGE, CROSSCULTURAL AWARENESS, AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION BE VIEWED AS AN ACCOMPLISHMENT, A MATTER OF NATIONAL PRIDE?

THIS WOULD BE A CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE GLOBAL WORLD RATHER THAN A CONFRONTATIONAL ONE AS IN THE COLD WAR.

❖ MARY ELLEN O'CONNELL

Committee to Review the Title VI and FH International Education Programs

NRC committee charged by Congress with reviewing Title VI and FH programs at ED

Who committee was/why requested

Programs created almost 50 years ago, but mission expanded significantly over time – developed to train government specialists – now expanded to 10 Title VI programs – mission broadened to address variety of constituencies

NSLI initiative – focus on critical languages – more specific than Title VI – was this focus warranted or was Title VI and its broader focus preferable?

There was concern that Title VI was not effective and not transparent. Also, need to include K-12, and not to wait until higher ed. It was necessary to cast the net wider than just the Title VI programs.

Growing need for expertise in FL and cultures

- lack of knowledge
- need for global citizenry

Overview of effectiveness of the programs:

- established foundation for internationalization
- catalyzed university investment in language, particularly LCTL

- stimulated interdisciplinary discourse

Roles of programs in meeting national needs

- expanded mission without increase in staff
- small programs cannot address growing demand
- additional resources are needed

Why can't this approach be implemented in the U.S.?

- FL and culture is not a national priority
- no systematic system for assessing national needs
- resources have not kept pace with demands

Prompted committee to look at context beyond Title VI/FH

National security and language capacity across a range of languages are potentially competing issues. Even so, there is a need to do both. Often it is not clear to universities what national security needs are.

Language fluency is one of controversial issues. Because fluency requires early study it directed attention beyond Title VI/FH.

Other programs – federal, state, and local – need to be included along with federal leadership/strategic guidance.

Several recommendations focused specifically on Title VI/FH. Broad based recommendations include:

- ◆ The Department of Education should consolidate oversight of its international education and foreign language programs under an executive-level person who would also provide strategic direction, and consult and coordinate with other federal agencies. The position should be one that requires presidential appointment and Senate confirmation.
- ◆ Congress should require the Secretary of education, in consultation and coordination with the departments of State and Defense, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and other relevant agencies to submit a biennial report outlining national needs identified in foreign language, area, and international studies, plans for addressing these needs, and progress made. This report should be made available to the public.
- ◆ The Department of Education needs to develop and implement an integrated strategy for foreign language and international education involving both K-12 and higher education, and ideally additional resources. In carrying out this strategy, the department should work closely with its federal partners, state and local education officials, higher education, and national experts, and engage all of its relevant programs, including but not just the Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs. Such an integrated strategy is needed to enhance national security, help U.S. businesses compete in an increasingly global economy, and broadly educate and inform the nation's citizens.

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❖ **AMB MICHAEL LEMMON**

Committee to Review the Title VI and FH International Education Programs

Widespread concern among USG departments and agencies about insufficient foreign language, culture and regional expertise needed to do the job among employees;

Less needed are experts; more necessary is a broad base of globally competent students who can build up their abilities – those particular abilities can then be topped off by government agencies;

In-house training capabilities are limited and are more efficiently used to “top off” incoming employees with existing solid language/culture and areas skills; those can be honed in ways appropriate to the needs of the organization and range of missions;

Some collaboration among “national security” agencies underway to share information, programs and materials, but needs vary according to mission of particular government agency;

Need for expanded discussion with Dept of ED and broader education and academic communities regarding national needs and requirements for which foreign language, culture, and regional skills and expertise are needed; question of the level of abilities needed;

Recent DOD white paper recommended discussion to address gaps in abilities and programs;

Establishment of an Assistant Secretary for International Education and Foreign Language provides a needed central and authoritative Point Of Contact for State, Defense, IC and other USG agencies and the Hill and to oversee compilation of biennial report to Congress outlining national needs, plans for addressing those needs and the kind of progress being made;

This position could provide long-term strategic focus and facilitate contact with broader education and academic communities to give informed strategic guidance (not necessarily direction);

Particularly important to marry efforts at K-12 levels to those in higher education in a strategic, integrated, and articulated programmatic approach to foreign language and international education

Also important to note that the nation’s needs go beyond specific “national security” requirements and encompass a broad demand for “global professionals” to ensure US global competitiveness not only economically, but across the board;

Critical challenge is how to integrate regional, cultural, and language competencies amid all the other competencies needed by the 21st Century workforce;

Need to find additional ways to broaden partnerships among federal government, foundations, professional organizations, and the education and business communities, while simultaneously enhancing collaboration at the federal, state, and local levels;

Key questions are what modes such an approach might take and whether it might be assisted by building public-private partnerships encompassing a wide array of those stakeholders;

Another recommendation in the NRC Committee Report is that the USG contract for a new National Foreign Language Assessment and Technology Project initially to focus on R&D to design and implement technology-based methods to assess language proficiency and support language instruction via common platforms;

NRC/LRCs (and CIBERs) could infuse language/culture/area expertise across academic departments and professional schools and expand collaboration with schools/colleges of education in curriculum development, design of instructional materials and teacher education;

Public-private partnerships again could play a critical role in fostering collaboration and diffusion of information and innovation and finding partners among a broad array of interested stakeholders among governmental and non-governmental entities at the local, state and federal levels and among business and non-profit communities;

Whether a more senior or separate USG “coordinating mechanism” or “national language advisor” is required or desired to effect Coordination/ Collaboration/ Communication is a political question requiring Executive and Legislative Branch agreement and action;

Another possibility might be an NSF-type arrangement or a standing NAS “roundtable” that includes academics, government, education community, professional and business groups to monitor, assess, evaluate and discuss.

❖ **LYLE F. BACHMAN**

Foreign Language and International Education in America: Quo vademus?

- I. Some background (“déjà vu all over again”)
 - A. 1950’s (William Riley Parker, Sputnik, NDEA)
 - B. 1980’s (Dick Lambert, NFLRC)
 1. 1986 meeting at Aspen with reps from FL community – need for lg policy
 - C. 2000’s (Flagships, NSLI, numerous reports, including 2007 MLA report – “nation’s language deficit” – little value placed on becoming a global citizen)
 - D. What, if anything, have we learned?
 - Institutions change slowly
 - Periodic spasms of interest
 - Democratization of resources does not work
 - Structural reforms for greater efficiency get diluted so that everyone gets a piece of the pie. In other words, lots of cooks and rich ingredients don’t guarantee a satisfying and nutritious meal
- II. Need to think broadly and outside of the current FL&IE establishment/structure
 - A. more broadly than federally supported programs (e.g., DOE -T6, State - F-H, DOD - Flagships, Pipelines): → need to include state depts. of education, teacher education programs, business, legal community, health care
 - B. more broadly than FLEd. → need to include Intl Studies
 - C. more broadly than university and Fed language programs: → need to include preK-12
- III. Need to think about structures that are independent of any special interests, sources of funding, or government agencies, but which would work with all the major stakeholders – NRC, NFLRC, MLA, universities, etc.
- IV. New structures that would provide both research and implementation:
 - A. A policy and research “think tank”: Ideally, a standing committee at the National Academies.
 - B. A development and implementation center: (Title VI/ F-H Committee Report: need for “continuous improvement”, Recommendation 12.3) – umbrella agency, program, group that would work on continuous improvement – one of the recommendations from Title VI report. R&D focus

❖ **TOM O’DONNELL (CHIEF OF STAFF, OFFICE OF CONGRESSMAN RUSH HOLT)**

Holt is interested and invested in FLL

House passed new law to provide tuition assistance to teachers who teach critical languages in low-income areas. This is in addition to a previous law to support UG study of sciences and FL critical to nation

Fact of US education: decreasing seat time for low-income students learning FL;

Higher Ed Act: provision to support collaboration among high schools and universities;
Asst Secretary for Intl Ed in DoE as part of this act

❖ **DIANE JONES (ASST. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION, POST-SECONDARY)**

Similarities to Rep. Holt's approach to FL education. Which recommendations have been addressed:

- consolidate int'l programs at DoE in her office;
- FIPSE, Title VI, Teachers for Competence all meeting together
- making sure programs complement each other – bringing together different constituencies & drawing on different resources/funding opportunities
 - o early indicators that there is a lack of middle school programs – focus tends to be on elementary and secondary programs
- make access to all languages possible, not just critical languages
- added broader assessment of Title VI successes – not just counting people going into government service
- need to expand programs to serve students not just studying FL as majors – provide non-majors with options to study abroad or to develop fl abilities
- need to develop assessment models to cover broad range of languages and competencies
- make resource centers more accessible and linked
- teach grants = \$4,000 per year to students who teach high-need subjects in high-need areas
- smart grants = \$4,000 per year who major in STEM and critical FLs.
- university presidents are not talking about FL education when they come to DC to lobby
- employers are looking for FL but also with other disciplinary knowledge – prepare students appropriately for realities of job market

Panel discussion:

- Jones: advisory board/panel to support government agency – would bring in broader community;
- Lemmon: bring together broad array of stakeholders to advise government agencies without becoming overly bureaucratized – state, local, & national level;
- Bachman: focus efforts on specific projects rather than spreading resources too thinly;
- Jones: provide evaluation of existing programs – need for depth of focus – longer, sustained funding that will allow programs to assess their effectiveness. Congress often writes solicitations too narrowly; difficult to adjust to particular circumstances and needs;

- Lemmon: private-public partnerships → listen to the business community about their needs;
- Bachman: universities work with private language schools as revenue producers – private language schools are a big revenue producer;

Floor discussion:

- Kramsch: we have been looking for a national solution to a global problem; maybe we should look more globally for solutions
- Arens: accountability in education is needed so that we in FL are more than just FL users; partnerships are needed with other disciplines even in the humanities so that FL users can “do” other types of things
- Jones: language maintenance is needed
- Byrnes: language maintenance easier if level of ability is higher
- Brecht: technology takes up people’s time; so we should use it to develop languages; also, some states have begun dialogue between business, local educators, and state leaders to set up an agenda – a model to emulate
- Cohen: discrepancy between rhetoric and what gets budgeted; much of FL learning is FL “light” - Students are not getting to advanced levels of abilities. Budgets are limited and uniform at LRCs.
- Malone: NAEP is shelved but still available; lack of reasonable expectations for all languages and all levels; how long do we need to teach to get to requested levels of abilities?
- Harlig: constant anti-immigrant discourse in Washington and media needs to be addressed if we want the nation to be receptive to language learning
- Lemmon: need to comprehend narrative of the Other;
- Jones: benefit of foreign films to develop cultural awareness – low-budget solution
- retired national security officer: national FL needs and national security. Can’t solve national security with FL abilities. Not all positions need advanced abilities – often it is reading knowledge only. Who will teach the critical languages – we lack the expertise to teach the critical languages.
- Weigert: no consensus of what it means to be globally competent or how to teach it
- Bachman: globally competent = interculturally sensitive
- Brooks: FBI perspective: lack of training in language-related activities, such as translation and interpretation
- McInnis: commercial language schools are often neglected in discussions; but that’s where the critical languages are taught
- Jones: FIPSE program to transfer credits from commercial language schools because typically those credits are not transferable
- Bachman: we’ve been talking about instrumental uses of language use; most Americans will not travel overseas; therefore, focus needs to be on being aware and

sensitive. We don't have any language policy or planning; a think tank might address that lacuna

- Jones: which other/foreign languages should we learn in the US? For other nations that question can be answered easily; it is English
- Christian: leadership needed to coordinate what we have but also what we need – address other related areas that can affect FL education (e.g., Head Start, Small Business Community)
- Byrnes: cited Christine Brown who reported on the reduced role of world history in public schools
- Lemmon: research on flagship language schools to learn about their effectiveness – mentioned K-16+ Chinese language program in Oregon
- LoBianco – language planning specialist from Australia – process of language planning is missing – taking into account all the stakeholders; consider an ecological perspective to language use and language planning