Building the Foreign Language Capacity We Need: Toward a Comprehensive Strategy for a National Language Framework[1]

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Purpose of this Paper

There is a critical national requirement for skilled speakers of languages other than English. The need is not new. It has been recognized and documented for more than fifty years in reports of high-level commissions, published analytical studies, and testimony by government and private figures before both houses of Congress, reports in national and local news media, and in a major presidential initiative. As a result of 21st century economic globalization and international terrorism, it has never been more urgent to develop American citizens who fully understand and can communicate effectively with people of other cultures. Although several steps are being taken to begin to address this need, they are isolated and lack central coordination and accountability; to meet the need requires a comprehensive long-term national strategy. The purpose of this paper is to recommend the necessary components of such a strategy.

Part I. National Requirements for Language Capacity

The need for people with high-level knowledge of foreign languages and cultures—especially in certain critical languages—is an old one. It was recognized during the Second World War, when the American Council of Learned Societies was asked by the U.S. government to develop programs to teach several less commonly taught languages. These programs became the precursors of the Army Language School (now Defense Language Institute) and, indirectly, the State Department's Foreign Service Institute (Clifford and Fischer 1990). The need was re-emphasized in the aftermath of the USSR's launching of Sputnik in 1956 (Parker 1961) and again later at the height of the Cold War in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Perkins et al. 1979). At each such occasion, studies were conducted, recommendations made and initiatives begun to address America's foreign language requirements. For example, the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 (Public Law 85-864) was designed to address urgent national needs in science, technology, and foreign languages.

Subsequently, as the immediate urgency of this need and the provision of resources to address them waned (and then waxed again), new studies have pointed again to the importance of expanding national language competence capacity. Among these have been the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies (Perkins et al. 1979); the late Senator Paul Simon's book, *The*

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[1] The impetus for this paper was a meeting convened in April 2008 by Professor Heidi Byrnes of Georgetown University with the aim of developing a professional field consensus for national language education policy (Byrnes 2008). The authors are greatly indebted to several people for their comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of the paper: Marty Abbott, Heidi Byrnes, Donna Christian, J. David Edwards, Catherine Ingold, Dora Johnson, Michael Lemmon, Bret Lovejoy, Scott McGinnis, and Helene Zimmer-Lowe. Richard Schmidt suggested the term "National Language Framework." The suggestions of these scholars have been critical in the formulation and completion of this paper. In addition, we thank Gisela Grañena of the University of Maryland and Yen-Tzu Chang, Jessica Hoover and Victoria Nier of the Center for Applied Linguistics for their many valuable contributions. The responsibility for any errors of fact or interpretation remains our own.

Tongue-Tied American; and Richard Brecht and William Rivers' analysis of *Language and National Security in the 21st Century*. More recently, the events of September 11, 2001, and their analysis after the fact have led to the *Call to Action* of the 2004 National Language Conference; the Committee for Economic Development's *Education for Global Leadership: The Importance of International Studies and Foreign Language Education for U.S. Economic and National Security;* and the Association of American Universities' *National Defense Education and Innovation Initiative: Meeting America's Economic and Security Challenges in the 21st Century*. From the higher education community, the recent report prepared for the Modern Language Association by an ad hoc committee chaired by Professor Mary Louise Pratt of New York University, titled "Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World" addresses closely related issues.

An especially important recent study is the National Research Council *Report on Foreign Languages and International* Education (O'Connell and Norwood 2007), which focuses on the effectiveness of federal Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs in International Education. The findings of this report are discussed later in this paper.

The Nature of the National Requirement for Foreign Language Capacity

Increased Capacity for National Security and Diplomacy

The most urgent requirements for high-level cultural knowledge and language ability (a level commensurate with the ability to communicate in professional settings (Malone et al. 2004)) clearly derive from national security concerns (Ruther 2003; Freedman 2004; Birckbichler 2007; Brecht 2007). Following the events of September 11, 2001, federal agencies charged with protecting national security sent out urgent calls to recruit Americans who were fluent in such languages as Arabic, Persian, Pashto, Dari, and Korean (Peters 2002). Their skills were (and still are) required to translate documents, including digital materials on world-wide-websites; to monitor Internet communications; to interpret spoken language; and to represent American interests in public and private forums. At the same time, the Department of Defense, recognizing that the ability to understand and to communicate effectively at high linguistic and cultural levels is essential for successful counter-insurgency efforts, began a review process that led to the adoption of the *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap*, which mandates that all military officers must become proficient in a foreign language and that even the smallest field unit must include at least one soldier with cultural competence and some functional language ability (Department of Defense 2005; McGinn 2008).

For more than 50 years, American policy-makers have proclaimed that the federal government needs many more individuals with high levels of proficiency in many foreign languages. In 1959, this was identified as a particular problem of lack of expertise in Arabic, Chinese, Hindi-Urdu, Japanese, and Russian (U.S. Office of Education Policy Bulletin). Fifty years later, addressing the continued lack of sufficient skill in these languages, together with the more recent additions of Korean, Persian, Turkish, and languages of Central Asia, is still identified as critical to national security. The September 26, 2001 report of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence stated that language ability was "the single greatest need in the intelligence community."

A wide range of purposes have to be served by individuals with language competence. Language and cultural proficiency is important not only to protect the U.S. from its enemies but also to cultivate relations. Diplomats, soldiers, and security agents must be able to interact with native speakers to establish effective working relationships, explain complex ideas, provide suggestions (and direction), elicit information, and simply to understand the concerns and values of the interlocutor. This may happen in a tavern or police station, in a rural village, or at a formal reception. Some officials may need to communicate with a wider audience, including utilizing the mass media. To do all of this well requires

exceptional knowledge of language and culture, which takes many years to develop. Other individuals with very high levels of language proficiency are needed to serve as translators and interpreters, where it is essential to capture and communicate all of the meaning of a message, including nuances and unstated implications. Other national security responsibilities that require strong professional language ability include intelligence analysis, law enforcement, homeland security and counter-insurgency. A 1998 study conducted under the auspices of the federal Interagency Language Roundtable, the National Foreign Language Center, and the American Translators Association found that there were more than 80 federal agencies that required translators and/or interpreters in 104 different languages (Crump 2000). The requirements are almost certainly greater now.

Increased Capacity for International Commerce and Economic Development

While national security is crucial, skilled foreign language abilities are just as necessary elsewhere. Three years ago, the National Committee for Economic Development issued a major report entitled *Education for Global Leadership: The Importance of International Studies and Foreign Language Education for U.S. Economic and National Security* (Committee for Economic Development 2006). In testimony to Congress about the report, the Vice President and Director of Business and Government Relations and Chief of Staff for the Committee on Economic Development stated,

> *"To confront … twenty-first century challenges to our economy and national security, our education system must be strengthened to increase the foreign language skills and cultural awareness of our students. America's continued global leadership will depend on our students' abilities to interact with the world community both inside and outside our borders…. The educated American of the twenty-first century will need to be conversant with at least one language in addition to his or her native language, and knowledgeable about other countries, other cultures, and the international dimensions of issues critical to the lives of all Americans"* (Petro 2007).

Some languages that have been identified as critical in part because of global economic competition include Chinese, Japanese, Hindi-Urdu, Russian, and Portuguese.

Increased Global Perspectives and Knowledge for All Americans

Beyond specific security and economic requirements at national and local levels, language abilities are an essential characteristic of a well-educated citizenry that understands global perspectives so that all can prosper in the global community. As Thomas Friedman reported in *The World is Flat* (2005), trans-global communication and commerce are no longer carried out solely or even primarily by governments or large multinational corporations. Increasingly, it is part of the regular daily work of small businesses and individual entrepreneurs. Even at the local level, the clientele of a great number of businesses, shops and small restaurants is typically multilingual. Businesses that are able to interact with customers in their own languages build strong ties to their communities as well as loyalty among their customers. To continue to compete successfully in this environment, all Americans should have basic functional knowledge of a foreign language and culture. It is also very important for all Americans to have much better understanding of international geography, history, and current events (cf. Stoltman 2001).

Increased Capacity to Meet the Needs of an Increasingly Diverse U.S. Citizenry

The 2000 U.S. census reported that the United States is becoming increasingly diverse. Together with English, more than 380 languages are spoken in communities across the country (MLA Language Map, http://www.mla.org/map_data&dcwindow=same). This diversity affects the abilities of community service providers, such as medical emergency room staff, police, and other first responders, to serve those who need help. As more languages are used in the United States, it is critical that we be able to

communicate with our residents across domains, including medicine, business, education, science and technology, and law enforcement and the law, where one of the fastest growing professions is court interpreting.

The United States must cultivate and strengthen the language skills of legal immigrants and their children. Together with helping immigrants to learn English, the provision of support to help them and their descendants maintain and develop their heritage languages can develop a pool of fluent and literate bi- and multi-lingual individuals to strengthen the nation's language capacity.

Increased Capacity for Scholarship and Research

Research depends on the scholar's ability to locate, understand, and explain information from many sources. Although English remains the most important international language, rich information about science, technology, economics, medicine, history, linguistics, and many other topics exists in other languages.

Even as their knowledge and experience become increasingly crucial, a great number of the senior generation of language and area studies scholars on American university campuses has recently retired or is preparing to retire. Many of them first began work in their fields with support provided by the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and the associated National Defense Foreign Language fellowships. The positions once held by many of these outstanding areal and linguistic experts are typically not being filled by replacements with the same area concentrations. Partly as a result of this shift, the numbers of graduate students possessing the language ability and specialized cultural knowledge to conduct in-depth research in many languages in such fields as political science, history, public health, community development, engineering, literature, computer science and linguistics are shrinking. This, in turn, contributes to a weakening of the knowledge base in these fields, which may affect the ability of American academic institutions to continue at the leading edge of knowledge production and dissemination and to prepare a truly educated citizenry for the 21st century and beyond.

Benefits to the Individual of Studying a Second Language

Empirical research has identified broader benefits of developing functional proficiency in another language. As reported by the Center for Applied Linguistics and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=4524), learning a second language in school:

- Has a positive effect on intellectual growth and enriches and enhances a child's mental development, as shown by results in other coursework and on standardized tests;
- Leaves students with more flexibility in thinking, greater sensitivity to language, and a better ear for listening;
- Improves a child's understanding of his or her native language;
- Improves a child's ability to learn another foreign language;
- Opens the door to other cultures and helps a child understand and appreciate people from other countries; and
- Increases job opportunities in careers where knowing another language is an asset.

However, developing professional language expertise requires many years for even skilled learners, particularly in such languages as those currently identified as critical, which are linguistically and culturally very different from English. Plainly stated, the American educational system produces very

few individuals with this degree of knowledge and ability in any language, let alone the critical languages. The Modern Language Association reported that in 2006 only 8.6% of all American college students were enrolled in any language, and that only 3% of those enrollments were in Chinese and 1.5% in Arabic; in other words, less than 0.3% of all college enrollees study Chinese, and 0.1% study Arabic. Enrollments in the other critical languages were still smaller, and only a fraction of the few university students who had studied any of these languages continued their study over the several semesters required to develop serious competence (Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin, 2007). Carroll reported in 1967 that the median proficiency attained by college foreign language majors in the Western European languages by the end of their study was a level termed "Limited Working Proficiency" (ILR-2+) on the government proficiency scale, below a minimum professional level. (See Appendix for a description of the scale.) A recent report by Swender (2003) suggests that the situation has changed little since then, if at all.

After September 2001, when faced with the urgent requirement to find potential employees with competence in critical languages, government agencies identified four alternative paths: (1) expand or initiate training of their own employees in the languages, which would require a minimum of two years of full-time intensive study of most of these critical languages to achieve minimum professional competency; (2) train employees in only short-term familiarization with the language and culture, and orient them to working with interpreters, who would themselves need to be hired and trained; (3) hire speakers of the languages in the respective countries to serve as interpreters and translators (with the attendant security risks); or (4) recruit American citizens with heritage backgrounds in the language and culture, few of whom possessed the required advanced competence in the language, because they had had little or no schooling in that language. In the event, all of the four alternatives have been used, but none is satisfying the need.

National Research Council Report on Foreign Languages and International Education

In 2007, the National Research Council (O'Connell and Norwood 2007) published the results of an in-depth Congressionally-mandated study and evaluation of the Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs in international education and foreign languages, which was based on the premise that "Knowledge of foreign languages and cultures is increasingly critical for the nation's security and its ability to compete in the global marketplace. Language skills and cultural expertise are needed for federal service, for business, for such professions as law, health care, and social work, and for an informed citizenry." The NRC report's summary of the national requirements and its recommendations for addressing them are summarized in Figure 1 on the following page.

Figure 1. National needs identified and proposed recommendations in the National Research Council's study, *International Education and Foreign Languages: Keys to Securing America's Future* (O'Connell and Norwood 2007)

(1) Need for capacity in a broad range of languages

Recent federal funding priorities have focused on the teaching of a limited number of "critical" languages, defined in the National Security Language Initiative as Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Russian, and the Indic, Iranian, and Turkic language families. However, the committee concluded that it would be more prudent to maintain a national capacity in a broader range of both commonly taught (e.g., Spanish, French) and less commonly taught languages. Such a broad capacity, the report argued, is needed to prepare the United States for unforeseen challenges that may emerge in various world regions, and maintain competitiveness across the globe. The report noted that such a policy would also reflect the nation's diversity.

(2) Extensive time is required for language learning

Mastering a foreign language takes extensive study and practice, which suggests that language learning should begin with young children. For example, to develop general professional-level proficiency, State Department employees are enrolled in highly intensive daily instruction for almost 6 months (600 class hours) in a Western European language (e.g., French, Dutch or Spanish), about 10 months (1100 class hours) for a so-called "hard" language (e.g., Russian, Hindi or Thai), and 2 years for the most challenging languages (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Korean). In higher education, where instruction is almost always much less intense, developing general professional proficiency takes much longer.

(3) Need to increase K-12 language offerings and enrollments

Although the long time required to develop fluency in a second language strongly suggests that language instruction should begin with young children, such early teaching rarely occurs. According to recent studies, in 2000, only 23 percent of K-12 students were enrolled in foreign language classes. Moreover, most of those were studying Spanish and French, with less than 1 percent learning more difficult languages, including Russian, Japanese, Arabic, and Chinese. Critically, even where there are elementary school language programs, they are rarely continued in a systematically articulated approach at the middle and high school levels.

(4) Need to increase the number of trained teachers and learning resources

For students to learn foreign languages and cultures, trained teachers and high-quality instructional materials and assessments are critical. The National Research Council committee concluded that the lack of teachers with foreign language and international expertise is one of the major hurdles in improving the current situation, and that a greater number of state assessment and certification systems are needed to guide colleges of education in developing specialized curriculum to prepare future language teachers. The committee recommended that greater collaboration among schools of education and language, international, and area studies departments would also contribute to better-trained teachers. The quality of texts, on-line courseware, and other materials for geography, culture, and language instruction was difficult to judge for the committee, who found that "there are no uniform scholarly standards for instructional materials. Although there are widely accepted 'best practice' approaches to materials development that are disseminated by professional associations and journals, many teachers and curriculum developers lack the time and resources to make use of them."

(5) Requirement for appropriate assessment procedures and instruments

The NRC report observed that tests to assess language ability are needed that are "appropriate for their specific uses, measure what students have been taught, and otherwise conform to accepted technical standards." Such tools are often not available for foreign language assessment. Some assessments used to measure language skills have not been evaluated for alignment with professional testing standards. In addition, there is no commonly accepted metric for language assessment that can be used nationally for K-12 education. Assessments are not even available in some languages, particularly at the K-12 level.

The NRC report concludes with the following recommendation: "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 the Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs, the Foreign Language Assistance Program, and other Department programs related to foreign language and international education. *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*." [Emphasis added.]

To implement the committee's recommendations, the NRC report urges the Department of Education to create an executive-level position requiring presidential appointment and confirmation by the Senate, with responsibilities to oversee all international education and foreign language programs in grades K-12 and college, provide strategic direction, and consult and coordinate with other federal agencies (O'Connell and Norwood 2007).[2]

Part II: Current Government-Led Foreign Language Initiatives

To address the national requirement for significantly better American language capabilities, agencies of the U.S. government have undertaken a number of different initiatives. These include the Department of Defense *Language Transformation Roadmap* (Department of Defense 2005), the Department of State's "Language Continuum" to provide career guidance to Foreign Service Officers (Department of State 2004), the funding of fifteen national Language Resource Centers at major universities (http://nflrc.msu.edu/), and the establishment of the Center for Advanced Study of Language at the University of Maryland to conduct basic and applied research into questions of interest to government agencies and, in many cases, to other researchers (http://www.casl.umd.edu/).

One of the most recent and important of these national initiatives is the 2006 presidential National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), which includes activities funded by the Departments of Defense, Education, and State, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (http://exchanges.state.gov/NSLI/). Among the core NSLI activities are short-term STARTALK programs that provide nationwide intensive summer instruction in Arabic, Chinese, Hindi-Urdu, Persian, Swahili, and Turkish for middle and high school language students and professional development workshops in communicative language teaching for teachers of those languages. Also included in NSLI are Foreign Language Assistance Program grants for innovative critical language programs in grades K-12, and State Department support for more than 1,000 American high school students, teachers, and undergraduate and graduate students in all 50 states to study critical languages abroad (http://exchanges.state.gov/NSLI/progs1.htm#school).

The largest initiative under NSLI is the Flagship Program of the National Security Education Program (NSEP) (http://www.thelanguageflagship.org/index.html), which provides support for universities to develop instructional programs that help students enroll in advanced study of non-Western languages and attain demonstrated professional levels of proficiency in them. Although primarily focused on college level students, NSEP also supports articulated K-16 programs in Arabic, Hindi-Urdu, Persian, and

[2] Although Congress' recent reauthorization of the Higher Education Act establishes a Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Education in the Office of Postsecondary Education, that new position does not respond to the NRC report's recommendation, which envisioned oversight and coordination of *all* segments of foreign language education, from kindergarten through graduate school. (See Public Law No. 110-315. 2008)

Chinese. Also under NSEP is the recently established pilot National Language Service Corps, which recruits and registers individuals with expertise in languages critical to the security and welfare of the nation (http://www.nlscorps.org/). Preliminary results of these initiatives have been very positive (Hart, p.c. 2008 regarding STARTALK; http://www.thelanguageflagship.org/Chinese.html regarding NSEP).

At the same time, as shown in Table 1 below, Congress has passed important bills supporting foreign language and international education. The recent reauthorization of Title VI of the Higher Education Act (2008) provides for significantly increased support for both graduate and undergraduate students in a wide range of disciplines to study foreign languages, loan forgiveness after graduation for foreign language specialists and teachers, development of resources for university teachers of critical languages and the establishment of a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Foreign Language and International Education in the Office of Postsecondary Education. Also, the recent Act "America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science" expands critical foreign language programs in elementary and secondary schools in order to increase the number of students studying and becoming proficient in these languages.

However, these several praiseworthy efforts have not been coordinated and articulated under a common strategic framework, and their results have not been systematically shared with the field.

Needed: A Comprehensive National Strategy

Strategic Goals

Over the last half-century, the numerous published reports and analyses that have addressed foreign language requirements in the United States—whether government, academic, or private sector—have been consistent in making recommendations that are very similar to those of the National Research Council's report. Together, the reports recommend that a comprehensive long-term national strategy include the following goals, from earliest levels of schooling through graduate education:

- Foreign Language must be a "core" subject, like mathematics, science, and social studies; all school children should study and become functionally proficient in at least one other language in addition to English;
- Language study should ideally begin in elementary school, and must, in any case, extend over several years, continuing in articulated fashion, without breaks, into secondary school, where courses would also articulate with college level offerings;
- Language instruction and direction must be provided at advanced proficiency levels in the relevant language(s);
- Higher education must provide instruction in a wide range of languages, including all languages identified as "critical" to the nation;
- Language instruction should include opportunities for extended study in a country where the language is spoken natively;
- Language teachers at all levels must have strong proficiency in the language and knowledge of the culture and professional teaching skills;
- Regular assessment of student outcomes must be carried out with reliable, valid, and nationally available standard assessment instruments; and
- Language teaching must build upon learners' previous experiences, including any knowledge of a heritage language. For example, when language learners elect to take on the challenge of a new language, learning sequences must capitalize on previously learned strategies.

Table 1: Recent Public Laws, House Resolutions, and Senate Bills regarding foreign language[3]

Public Law/Resolution/Bill Name	Summary of Highlights
Enacted: Public Law No. 110-315. 2008. Higher Education Opportunity Act: Expanding College Access, Strengthening Our Future	Establishes Deputy Assistant Secretary for International and Foreign Language Education *Establishes debt-forgiveness for foreign language teachers of critical languages *Expands Foreign Language Area Studies grants to undergraduates
Enacted: Public Law No. 110-84. 2007. The College Cost and Reduction and Access Act	*Provides student loan-forgiveness to borrowers who serve in areas of national need, including foreign language specialists
Enacted: Public Law No. 110-69. 2007. America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science Act	*Expands critical foreign language programs in elementary and secondary schools in order to increase the number of students studying and becoming proficient in these languages
Proposed: House Resolution H.R. 5179. 2008. International Leadership Act of 2008	*Would establish Assistant Secretary for International and Foreign Language Education, requiring presidential appointment and Senate confirmation
Proposed: House Resolution H.R. 2111. 2008. Foreign Language Education Partnership Act	Would fund K-12 foreign language programs, including technical assistance, teacher development, recruiting, materials, assessment, and enhanced learning environments for students
Proposed: House Resolution H.R. 747. 2007. National Foreign Language Coordination Act. Also Senate Bill S. 451. 2007. National Foreign Language Coordination Act	*Would establish a National Foreign Language Coordination Council to: (1) oversee and implement the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI); and (2) develop and implement a national foreign language strategy. Appoint a National Language Director to lead the effort and coordinate with states
Proposed: House Resolution H.R. 1469. 2007. Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act	*Would establish a public-private partnership to increase overall and minority participation in study-abroad and to diversify study-abroad locations
Proposed: Senate Bill S. 1294. 2007. Homeland Security Education Act	Would amend terms of International Flagship Language Initiative to include Department of Homeland Security and Department of State among the agencies where service may be rendered, fund IHE/LEA partnerships around critical languages, award scholarships to teacher trainees in critical languages, and create student loan repayment pilot for federal employees with critical STEM and Foreign Language skills

[3] Information in this table is adapted from the Joint National Committee on Languages website (http://www.languagepolicy.org.) An asterisk (*) indicates recommendations expressed in the public reports cited in this paper.

In addition, while every report has recognized the importance of teachers and teaching methods, of good instructional materials, and of valid and reliable assessment, most have focused particular attention on improving the overall ***delivery system*** of foreign language education. Lambert (1990b: 5) described the problem in this way:

> *"[M]any if not most of the problems of foreign language instruction are not the result of poor classroom instructional techniques—a topic to which the profession devotes almost all of its attention—but of ambiguities and inefficiencies in the organization of foreign language instruction and unanswered questions about its purpose that limit the effectiveness of even the most gifted teacher, using the most effective teaching technology, teaching the brightest students. The problems arise not so much in individual classrooms, but in the way the parts fit together and what language instruction is all about."*

Achieving the Strategic Goals

It will not be possible to achieve the goal identified by Lambert (1990b) and others of having the different components of foreign language education "fit together" properly without centralized guidance and coordination, provided by sustained central leadership (Perkins et al 1979; National Language Conference 2005; O'Connell and Norwood 2007). This leadership would require the authority to provide direction to federal, state, and local education bodies; and would be able to provide adequate funds (or withhold them) where and when they are needed. The leadership would require regular and frequent counsel from an advisory body with representatives from among professional language educators as well as federal agencies and private organizations that are stakeholders in the requirement for significantly strengthened national language capacity.

As observed earlier, the NRC report recommends that the national language coordinator should be appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate, and should report to Congress regularly on progress toward achieving national goals. This recommendation is repeated in the proposed International Leadership Act of 2008 (House Resolution H.R. 5179. 2008) and is strongly seconded in this paper. Achieving the desired goals must ultimately involve every school district and school in the United States, and that will not be possible without national coordination and oversight.

Part III. Evidence Regarding U.S. Foreign Language Programs and Their Outcomes

Three essential prerequisites of effective language education are (1) knowledge of the current situation, (2) assessment of its effectiveness, and (3) a system of instructional delivery that is based on empirical evidence.

Survey Data about Foreign Language Program Enrollments and Achievements.

Postsecondary Foreign Language Enrollments

Since 1961, the Modern Language Association (MLA) has conducted regular surveys and analyses of foreign language enrollments in institutions of higher education across the United States. Survey data for fall, 2006 (Furman et al. 2007) and fall, 2002 (Welles 2002) summarize overall trends in foreign language enrollments, including enrollments in those less commonly taught languages identified as critical.

While modern language enrollments have risen by 12.9% in numbers in the past ten years, it is still the case that only 8.6% of all students in higher education were enrolled in foreign language classes at the time of the 2006 survey. Despite a slight increase from 2002, when 8.1% of students were enrolled, the

2006 enrollment is only a little over half the rate of foreign language enrollments in 1960 (16.1%) and 1965 (16.5%), when the surveys occurred during the first implementation of the National Defense Education Act. Indeed, since 1977, enrollments have remained at roughly 8% of registered students (with a dip to 7.3% in 1980), which means that approximately 92% of college students at all levels are not taking any foreign language.

More than half of those college students who were studying language in 2006 were enrolled in Spanish, with only about 11% of them enrolled in all of the critical languages combined (66% of those were enrolled in Japanese or Chinese). When compared to the estimated total college enrollments of 17,648,000, the percentage of enrollments in all the critical languages at all levels combined was barely 1%.

Of those students who enrolled in a critical language, relatively few study it for more than two years, which is not sufficient time for most students to develop even a modest level of functional proficiency in these languages. For example, only 11% of the 23,921 students enrolled in Arabic were in a non-"introductory" course, with similar ratios for other critical languages.

Although the data show an increase in foreign language enrollments after the events of 2001, especially in Chinese, Japanese and Arabic, the actual numbers remain comparatively small for the critical languages, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Higher education language enrollments in some critical languages: 2002 and 2006. (Adapted from Furman et al. 2007)

Language	2002 enrollments	2006 enrollments
Arabic	10,584	23,974
Chinese	34,153	51,582
Japanese	52,238	66,605
Korean	5,211	7,145
Russian	23,921	24,845
Hindi-Urdu	2,009	2,683
Bengali	54	94
Punjabi	99	103
Sinhalese	1	4
Tamil	114	100
Persian	1,117	2,037
Dari	41	104
Pashto	14	103
Kurdish (Kurmanji & Sorani)	0	30
Turkish	314	624
Turkic	21	29
Kazakh	16	8
Uzbek	23	45
Georgian	2	8

Thus, while the United States' need for citizens with high levels of proficiency in languages is great, enrollments at the higher education level are too few and the amount of study put into learning the languages much too short to develop the level of ability needed, especially in the critical languages.

K-12 Foreign Language Enrollments

Regular national surveys of foreign language study in elementary and secondary schools have been conducted under Title VI International Research and Studies grants by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) to gain insight into current patterns in enrollments, the number of schools offering foreign language classes, the types of foreign language offerings, foreign language curricula and methodologies, teacher qualifications and training, among other issues. These data can then be compared with those from earlier surveys. CAL is currently completing its third survey, which will enable analysis of trends in elementary and secondary foreign language education at three points in time (1987, 1997, and 2007). Very preliminary data from the 2007 survey indicate that the number of American elementary schools offering foreign language courses to their students has unexpectedly dropped by 6% since 1997, with increases in offered courses in Arabic, Chinese, Spanish and Latin, but decreases in offerings of French and German. The existence of a critical shortage of qualified teachers also is indicated from the survey results, with "some schools turning to non-traditional sources to find language teachers: for example, agencies that provide teachers from other countries, commercial language schools, and foreign governments" (Center for Applied Linguistics 2008).

Among the findings reported in the 2000 ACTFL study of U.S. secondary school enrollments were the following (Draper and Hicks 2002):

- Approximately 33.8% of students in grades 7-12 of American public schools were enrolled in language study; the percentage of only high school students was 43.8%.[4]
- Language enrollments in middle school or junior high school were at 14.7%, a decrease from the previous survey conducted in 1994.
- More than 70% of the secondary school language enrollments were in Spanish, with French at 18.3%, German at 4.8%, Italian 1.2%, Latin 2.7%, and the only three critical languages listed—Japanese, Russian, and Chinese—at 0.8%, 0.2%, and 0.1%, respectively.

The CAL study of elementary and secondary school enrollments from 1997 had included the following additional points (Rhodes and Branaman 1999):

- In 1997, 31% of all elementary schools (but only 25% in 2006) and 86% of all secondary schools in the U.S. offered at least one foreign language.
- Approximately 15% of elementary school students (grades K-6) were enrolled in a language course, but almost 80% of those courses were "exploratory" in nature, rather than aiming at functional proficiency. In fact, the number of proficiency-oriented Foreign Language in Elementary School programs (FLES) had decreased from the previous survey ten years before.
- Of the 31% of elementary schools that provided language instruction, 79% taught Spanish and 27% taught French—a substantial increase over the previous study in the case of Spanish but a 40% decrease for French. Other languages taught included Japanese (3%) and Italian (2%).

Critically, Rhodes and Branaman (1999) reported, "**only a quarter** of the elementary schools with foreign language programs reported that their students are placed in middle school or high school *classes where the course content and objectives are designed specifically to provide continuity from their previous*

[4] The CAL survey in 1997 had reported high school enrollments of 51% of all students. There is no obvious explanation for this apparent discrepancy.

level." [Emphasis added.] In other words, about 75% of the schools that did teach a foreign language nonetheless had no systematic process to ensure articulation from one level of instruction to the next.

Such data about student enrollments, languages taught, teacher qualifications, and courses offered in American public schools have proven extremely difficult to obtain for both surveys. Some states keep the information centrally, some at the county or school district level, and others at the individual schools, if they collect it at all. Even where two states appear to collect the same information, the collection procedure often differs in substantive ways. As a result, despite strenuous efforts by CAL and ACTFL to put together comparable data, there are significant holes in both reports. Draper and Hicks (2002) write the following about this concern:

> *"We are still unable to determine how many students are switching languages, study more than one language simultaneously, or are taking one language continuously throughout their pre-college education. We also have no way of knowing what students are actually capable of doing* [in the language] *as a result of their language study… The increasing difficulty in gathering foreign language enrollment data at the state level makes it more and more difficult to garner anything but cursory information on the status of foreign language education in this country…. In order to expand and improve the teaching of foreign languages in the United States, enrollment statistics must be made available to enable the U.S. Department of Education, state departments of education, local boards of education, and policy makers to appropriate funds and resources accordingly."*

For example, in ACTFL's last published survey (Draper and Hicks 2002), some of the most important enrollment data could be reported for only 19 states. There is no standardized procedure for collecting enrollment or other data and no central mandate to do so. For informed decision-making, central oversight and coordination will be critical to enable the data to be obtained to inform effective policies.

Articulation between Secondary School and College

Under a Title VI International Research and Studies grant in 2001-2004, the University of Connecticut conducted a four-year study focusing on the articulation of study between secondary school and college (Gosselin 2004). The survey covered 40 institutions nationwide and included telephone interview data over the four years from language students, teachers, and administrators regarding languages studied, length of study, continuity and articulation from middle school to high school to college, and teacher awareness of articulation efforts. Regarding continuity and articulation at the secondary level, 37% of the high school students who had studied language before entering high school reported that they had still been placed in Level One or exploratory courses in high school, starting again in classes together with true beginners. In corroborating this claim, almost 86% of secondary school administrators reported that students were not placed in courses where content and objectives were designed to provide continuity from their previous study. Looking ahead, more than half (56%) of the 11th grade language students planned to take no language study in senior year—a problem in trying to establish articulation between secondary and post-secondary language programs. Nearly 80% of the high school teachers were not familiar with any high school to college articulation efforts and more than 90% were not involved in such efforts, although almost all indicated they would be beneficial.

Regarding continuity and articulation at the college level, almost three-quarters (72%) of students in the survey who had studied a language in high school declined to enroll in any foreign language in college. Of the 28% who enrolled in a language in fall term of college, only two-thirds continued with the language in the spring. Somewhat more encouragingly, about half (52%) of the 28% of students who continued FL study in college were placed in intermediate (second-year) classes and 10% were placed in an advanced course (third-year or higher), positive evidence of both the quality of their secondary school preparation and their college's consideration of that preparation in placement. Almost 90% of

the students who continued study said their college course was at the right level, although 75% said they had to repeat some material from high school, and 40% reported that they were expected to know material that they had not learned. Interestingly, while students consistently reported they felt very well prepared for college classes, the majority of the college instructors stated that high school programs had not adequately prepared the students. 48% of college-level teachers were familiar with HS-to-college coordination and articulation efforts, and 27% had participated.

With regard to length of language study by high school and college students, 75% of the high school students that had studied a language studied it for three years or less. The 12th grade language students who were surveyed were studying in levels one (9%), two (24%), three (15%), four (23%), five (12%), or fluent speakers (1%). 19% of them were enrolled in AP courses, presumably at the fourth or fifth year.

Of the 28% of college students who studied a language during the first year of college, most studied Spanish (54%), French (20%), or German; while a few (4%) studied Japanese. Three percent of students studied all other languages combined, including the critical languages.

While these results are not generalizable across all schools and institutions, they do highlight the lack of articulation and unrealistic expectations in language learning between middle school and high school and between many secondary schools and colleges, and they serve as a case study of the difficulties of implementing programs to systematically develop proficient learners of a language, and especially of the critical languages.

Assessment of Language Ability and Progress Nationally

There is a distinct lack of national information on the outcomes of foreign language study, compared with data from other curricular areas. As a case in point, the inaugural National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for Foreign Languages was designed for administration in 2004 to assess the Spanish ability of American twelfth-grade students who had learned Spanish in a variety of ways and for different lengths of time. A successful pilot test was conducted in the fall of 2003, but on March 6, 2004, the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) directed that the planned 2004 administration be postponed, and the NAEP-FL has never been administered.

The assessment instrument is based on the *Framework for the 2004 Foreign Language National Assessment of Educational Progress* (Pre-Publication Edition, PDF File 231 KB), developed by the NAGB. In this framework, the students could be assessed for listening, speaking, reading, and writing within three modes of communication: interpersonal (involving two-way interactive communication); interpretive (reflecting understanding of spoken or written language); and presentational (involving creation of spoken or written communication). Because the NAEP-FL was never operationalized, no data are available to document and compare at a national level actual outcomes in foreign language learners of Spanish or any other foreign language. Addressing this lack of information, too, cries out for central coordination and oversight.

Importance of Assessment

The Director of the Office of Academic Standards at the New Jersey Department of Education, Janis Jensen, has observed that without regular assessment against standards, there is no accountability among programs and so it is not possible to identify and implement necessary changes (Jensen 2007). Regular assessment is necessary as well for coordinating programs from one year to the next in a systematic way. This observation holds true for nearly all foreign language programs in the United States, from pre-school immersion through high school and college. Systematic, appropriately designed assessment is essential to enable programs to meet their goals.

There is a critical need for up-to-date information about the nation's proficiency in both commonly taught and less commonly taught languages. Only then will it be possible to evaluate the investments already made and improve the current system. Despite this need, however, the current state of language learning in the U.S. is poorly documented. While a number of small studies have looked at the proficiency levels of high school or college students (Cramer & Terrio 1985; ETS 1979; Hirsch 1985; Kaplan 1984; Magnan 1986; Norris 2006a;Thompson 1996; Tschirner 1996; Tschirner & Heilenman 1998; Wing & Mayewski 1984), the only major study aimed at measuring foreign language proficiency levels was conducted over 40 years ago (Carroll 1967).

Carroll investigated the reading and listening proficiencies of college seniors who had majored in French, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish at institutions across the U.S.; he also conducted a subsidiary study of the oral proficiency of some French, Spanish, German, and Russian learners. Carroll's main study included a large sample (N=2,784), but only the participants in the subsidiary study (N=127) were given the FSI oral interview test to assess their oral proficiency. In that smaller study of speaking proficiency, Carroll found that graduating foreign language majors received a median rating of 2+ on the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale (Advanced-High on the ACTFL scale*)* in French, Spanish, and German, but only a 1+ (Intermediate-High) in Russian (Carroll 1967).

A more recent report examined the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (ACTFL OPI) ratings for 501 foreign language majors in seven languages in their junior or senior year of college (Swender 2003). Across all the languages, average student ratings were between ACTFL Intermediate-High and Advanced-Low or 1+/2- on the ILR scale. Findings of this report are suggestive about the language proficiency of U.S. college language majors, although not generalizable, due to both the small number of participants and because participants were not randomly sampled.[5]

There is also a need to develop and validate new instruments for assessing language ability, appropriate for different grade levels, different levels of proficiency, and different languages. Norris (2006b), in a review of research articles published between 1984 and 2002, found that only between 5 and 14 percent of the studies focused on foreign language assessment, less than 8 percent on foreign language assessment of college students, and the majority of these only in terms of one type of assessment: the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (1986, 1999), which are not designed to reflect fine distinctions. Norris asserts that research should incorporate the development of sensitive assessment instruments at all proficiency levels. Norris (2006b) and DeKeyser (2007) have shown that current assessment instruments are more sensitive to beginners' than to advanced learners' improvements and reflect only gross changes after Intermediate-High levels.

What Research and Best Practices Say about Optimizing Language Program Effectiveness

Recent research and the analysis of language programs recognized as excellent have revealed a number of widely accepted, important facts about learning second languages in school contexts. These facts inform understanding of how foreign language learning occurs.

Most of the research that is cited here was published since 1999 or else was previously summarized in Norris and Ortega's (2000) exhaustive synthesis of research through 1999 on the effectiveness of second

[5] Norris and Pfeiffer (2003), reporting on 128 certified Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview ratings from students across the first four curricular levels of the German program at Georgetown University, show that learners in this program attained a median rating of Intermediate-High (ILR-1+) after 18 semester hours, or a total of about 215 50-minute periods of instruction, a time period less than what is expected of college majors.

language instruction. Likewise, most examples of "best practices" cited are recent, but not all. Beginning at least as early as the World War II language programs of the Army Language School (ultimately the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center--DLI) and the post-war School of Language Studies at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), American language educators have been closely involved in and observant of language programs where the learning results surpassed those observed for other more typical programs (Clifford 1987, 1995).

Excellent language programs have been developed in different institutions and communities, in different languages, at different levels, and for different purposes. Some, such as the DLI and FSI, are institutional programs that address clearly identified functional work-related requirements, but others are often the product of the vision, knowledge, and extraordinary work of a single individual or group of individuals. Among such programs are those of the school districts of Glastonbury, Connecticut; Chartiers Valley in Pennsylvania; Fairfax County, Virginia; and Montgomery County, Maryland; and innovative statewide programs launched in such states as Ohio, Wyoming, and New Jersey. Dual-language immersion programs in elementary schools serve students from heritage, native-English and immigrant communities and support the development of language skills in both English and the heritage language. They have often emerged partly as the result of a passionate commitment from both parents and the community, and have provided important language learning opportunities in an increasing number of communities across the country, such as Key Elementary School in Arlington, Virginia.

At the postsecondary level, among the many noteworthy programs are the 100%-immersion programs of Middlebury College in Vermont; the intensive Summer Institutes for Southeast Asian and South Asian languages at the University of Wisconsin and the Institute for African Languages that is held at different universities; the university programs for Latin American Studies at New York University, German at Georgetown University and Chinese at the Ohio State University; the Lauder Institute of Management and International Studies at the University of Pennsylvania; the extended in-country immersion program in Russian conducted for more than 30 years by the American Council of Teachers of Russian; and the ground-breaking new programs of the National Security Education Program Flagship institutions. Hulstrand (2008) describes these as well as several other outstanding programs.

The successes of these and other programs, together with the cited empirical research, inform the list of recognized ways to optimize language-learning outcomes shown in Figure 2 on the following pages.

Figure 2. Optimizing Language Program Effectiveness (1)

1. ***Development of functional communicative ability in a foreign language requires extended uninterrupted study*** (Adair-Hauck & Pierce, 1998; Carroll 1967; Clifford 1995; Donato et al, 2000; Donato & Terry 1995; Durocher, 2007; Fall, Adair-Hauck, & Glisan, 2007; Jackson & Kaplan 2003; Rifkin 2005). One, two, or even three years of part-time language study in college does not yield a professional level of proficiency. At best, in such a short time, motivated learners can achieve basic functional ability corresponding to Intermediate-Mid on the ACTFL proficiency scale, or ILR-1+ (Rifkin 2005). Carroll (1967) showed that the median foreign language major in a Western European language, with extended study abroad experience, could develop close to the minimum language proficiency needed for general professional work, and a recent report by Swender (2003) has shown comparable results. However, few students reach even this level, and non-cognate languages require up to triple the study time of Western European languages (Malone, Rifkin, Christian, & Johnson 2005; Makin 1996; Omaggio 2001). The following findings provide additional corroboration for the importance of extended study.

- *Adult learners at full-time intensive government language schools require from 600 to 2200 hours of instruction plus self-study, depending on the language, to achieve professional levels or close to such levels (Jackson and Kaplan 2003). By comparison, college majors who typically take ten courses in the language rarely exceed 450 hours of study.*
- *English language learners in the United States and Australia typically require 5-7 years of almost complete immersion to fully understand and communicate effectively in content classes in English (Goldenberg 2008; Makin 1996). Learning a foreign language when you are not in the country where it is spoken and with little access to native speakers takes longer.*
- *Students in Europe and most of Asia study their second language for 8-10 years or more before college (and their third language for 4-5 years). (Pufahl, Rhodes, and Christian 2000.)*

2. ***Extended time learning in a complete immersion environment contributes greatly and may be essential for very high-level language and culture learning*** (Davidson 2007; Engle & Engle, 2004; Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey 2004; Rifkin 2005; Segalowitz et al. 2004). Several months in a complete immersion environment, especially where regular intensive language instruction is also provided, appear to be beneficial for reaching professional levels of proficiency.

3. ***Languages (and cultures) that are very different from English take longer to learn for English speakers than do Western European languages.*** This is so regardless of the teaching method used. The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and Defense Language Institute (DLI) have learned during fifty-plus years of instruction that, for example, a native English speaker will require almost four times as long in intensive study to learn to speak and read Korean as she or he would in studying, for example, Spanish (Makin 1996; Malone, Rifkin, Christian, & Johnson 2005). The languages that take the longest to learn for English speakers are Arabic, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese (Jackson and Kaplan 2003). This means that expectations of program outcomes should account for the considerable time needed to attain a functional level of proficiency.

4. ***Effective language learning depends on a continuous, articulated program of study and must build upon previous language learning experiences*** (Curtain & Pesola Dahlberg, 2000; Gilzow & Branaman 2000; Norris and Pfieffer 2003; Tucker & Donato, 2001). Each part of the program must build upon and reinforce what the students have already learned to do in the language rather than start over from the beginning or begin in some arbitrary place. In addition, learners new to a language who have previously studied another language may be able to build upon their established language learning strategies.

Figure 2. Optimizing Language Program Effectiveness (2)

5. ***The single most important factor in whether language is learned or not is the competence and skill of the teacher***. (Australian Language & Literacy Council 1996; Britzman 1991; Cooper 2004; Curtain & Pesola Dahlberg 2000; Drew, Oostdam, and van Toorenburg 2007; Freeman 2002; Jessner 2008; Met 2006; Schulz, 2000; Wilbur, 2007). Teacher competence crucially includes both proficiency in the language and culture and professional knowledge and ability as a language teacher.

6. ***Small class size is an important factor in enabling efficient language learning*** (Blatchford et al., 2002; Clifford 1995; Finn & Achilles, 1999; Haughey, Snart, & da Costa 2001; Jackson & Kaplan 2003; LoCastro 2001; Molnar et al., 1999; Blatchford et al. 2003). Students need to be able to participate in frequent, meaningful, interpersonal interactions in the language and receive and employ frequent targeted feedback on their use of the language for communication. Such interactions, feedback, and natural use are difficult to achieve in a class of 25 or more students, a frequent class size in public education. In addition, research has shown that teachers use a much larger repertoire of techniques in smaller classes and are far more flexible in responding to learner needs (Haughey, Snart & da Costa 2001; LoCastro 2001).

7. ***Successful program articulation depends on systematic assessment and maintenance of comparable records*** (Jensen 2007; Norris 2006b, 2007; Ruther 2003). Such assessment provides learners, teachers, and program administrators with clear feedback on how they are doing and what needs to be improved. This also provides critical information for placement into a new class, enabling students to enter and exit language programs appropriately at different points in time, depending on their needs.

8. ***A competency-oriented language curriculum needs to incorporate learning opportunities that focus on language and cultural content and functional ability at all levels, from beginning to the most advanced*** (Modern Language Association 2007; Byrnes and Maxim 2004; Byrnes et al. 2006; Leaver 2003).

9. ***Heritage language learners have quite different needs and skills from learners who have not previously been exposed to the language and culture***, and the curriculum and learning environment need to recognize this difference (Sohn & Shin 2007; Valdés 1995, 2005).

10. ***Computer-assisted language learning is very useful to learners as an adjunct to more traditional materials and as self-study materials.*** Such materials can provide additional exposure and create a learning environment where language forms become more salient, allowing greater attention and practice by learners. Technology is especially important for the learning of less commonly taught languages. (Blake 2007; Chapelle, 2007; Doughty and Long 2003; Payne & Whitney 2002; Sauro, 2007; Shekary & Tahririan 2006; Thorne and Black 2007; Van den Berk, Klein Gunnewiek, and De Graaff 2002; Yilmaz & Yuksel 2008; Van Gelderen, 2003).

Part IV. Summary and Conclusions

The final section summarizes the conclusions drawn in the first three parts of the paper and then presents specific recommendations. These recommendations focus on necessary steps for the United States to establish a long-term coherent national language education framework for all American children to learn basic functional language ability and for a significant proportion of them to achieve very advanced language proficiency and cultural understanding. The recommendations include both immediate actions and long-term support for language teaching and learning. They describe steps that

must be taken by the federal government to enable coordination of foreign language education from pK-16 and resources necessary to implement these actions; they also state specific actions needed from the professional field of foreign language education.

This paper has described the United States' need to build and maintain foreign language capacity and has identified basic principles for a national foreign language framework. While the national need is particularly urgent with respect to security and diplomacy, it is also acute in commerce, law, trade, research and healthcare, as well as other sectors. All stakeholders must be prepared to respond to the challenges of globalization in a multicultural world and must position themselves to take advantage of its opportunities.

American language educators know how to design effective curricula that reflect communicative goals, and they have developed effective state-of-the-art language teaching methods (cf. Ellis 2008; Doughty and Long 2003). Not yet solved, however, are critical aspects of the overall system of foreign language education, including class size, intensity, years of study, and articulated continuity of study across educational levels.

At present, reflecting over fifty years of largely piecemeal attempts to establish effective language programs, the United States has a foreign language education establishment that consists of a wide range of different and often competing constituencies. Although there are examples of effective cooperation and collaboration in many places, such initiatives are sporadic, often *ad hoc,* and typically temporary. In this context, the general lack of progress in foreign language education is not surprising, but it is alarming in the light of the current critical situation. In chorus with other recent analyses, this paper has shown that policy makers and foreign language education experts must now challenge themselves to think broadly and outside the current foreign language education establishment and structure in order to help assure the capacity in foreign languages, cultures, and international knowledge that the United States requires for the 21st century

As examples, the foreign language education field should commit to the following:

- *Base educational practice on research on language learning and teaching;*
- *Identify clients and potential learners well beyond the traditional ones, including those studying a language for special vocational purposes and those requiring language ability at the highest level for such sophisticated work as translation, interpretation, public speaking or negotiation;*
- *Include state departments of education and teacher education programs in planning, as well as university language departments, programs of applied linguistics and government language programs;*
- *Envision the end-goal as more than foreign language education, including cultural and international studies in order to assure the development of global competence;*
- *Think more broadly than university and federal programs and explicitly include pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 education;*
- *Reform curricula to ensure continuity and articulation at all levels, from early childhood through adulthood*
- *Develop intensive teacher education and expedited certification programs to develop skilled teachers who have advanced proficiency in the language and culture of instruction, including the less commonly taught languages;*
- *Base policy practices and planning on reliable enrollment and programmatic information, assessment and educational research; and*

- *Create a national framework and infrastructure for foreign language education and international studies that effectively integrates and coordinates the efforts of various stakeholder groups, is flexible, provides learning opportunity and continuity for all interested learners, and is sustainable*

As more Americans develop higher levels of language proficiency, efforts must expand to add professional education programs in such high-level language and culture skill areas as translation and interpretation and cross-cultural negotiation and conflict resolution.

While national and local policy and coordination are necessary, they are not themselves sufficient to fully realize national goals. Individual educators must also scrutinize their own efforts and determine how their work contributes to and fits in with small and large national efforts. These tasks and challenges require that efforts must be leveraged at all levels of education, across agencies and within and throughout constituencies for comprehensive coordination and reliable funding and support.

Recommendations for the Foundation of a National Language Learning Framework

1. **Reaffirm that Foreign Language is a "core" subject in K-12 education and mandate systematic record-collection of language program courses, levels and enrollments in U.S. educational institutions for grades K-20, including community schools.**

   The first recommendation is to re-emphasize officially the critical role of foreign language education for the United States. Surveys of language enrollment data by the Modern Language Association, Center for Applied Linguistics, and American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages that are currently conducted every five or ten years and that have had to compete each time for Title VI grant funding should be put on a regular non-competed schedule. The data are essential to national and local planning. At the same time, Congress should also require regular surveys of the number of foreign language teachers for every language. It is clear from the NRC Report (O'Connell and Norwood 2007) and the preliminary data from the CAL survey of K-12 foreign language education (2008) that there is a significant and increasing shortage of qualified teachers, in some languages more than others. This data collection could, for example, be integrated into data collected by the National Center for Educational Statistics.

   Other critical actions related to this recommitment should include significantly expanded funding for Title VI of the Higher Education Act and the National Security Language Initiative, with particular focus on:

   - **Foreign language Area Studies Grants.** Expand undergraduate and graduate student Foreign Language Area Studies fellowships and Flagship fellowships to provide further incentives for advanced language study;
   - **International Research and Studies Grants.** Increase both the base funding for and number of grants funded for learning materials and course development and for research into second language learning and teaching;
   - **National Resource Centers.** Provide increased funding for existing National Resource Centers and require them to provide a minimum of four years of instruction for relevant less commonly taught languages;
   - **National Language Resource Centers.** Increase the amount of funding for current and new initiatives of the existing language resource centers, and provide additional funds to

establish new centers that respond to critical regional and functional requirements not otherwise met[6];

- **NSLI Programs.** Continue to support the effective programs begun under the National Security Language Initiative, including the NSEP Flagship and pipeline programs, STARTALK programs for teachers and students of critical languages in grades 7-12, Fulbright grants for overseas study and an expanded Foreign Language Assistance Program in support of innovative K-12 language programs that reflect established principles of language education.

2. **Congress should pass House Resolution H.R. 5179. International Leadership Act of 2008 to establish an Assistant Secretary for Foreign Language and International Education so as to provide centralized national leadership and coordination.**

   Appointed by the President with Senate confirmation, this national language coordinator would appoint an advisory council of leaders in the field of language education and knowledgeable representatives of U.S. agencies and business and other stakeholders, all tasked with focusing on national needs and on ensuring that all parties have public access to information necessary to design programs to meet those needs.
   As recommended in the report of the National Research Council (O'Connell and Norwood, 2007), the coordinator would oversee both K-12 and Higher Education in close coordination with states and school districts. The coordinator would report publicly to Congress once a year on progress toward achieving national goals.

3. **Fund the establishment and maintenance of a national program of assessment of second language ability.**

   The National Assessment of Educational Progress in Foreign Language, which was originally prepared for administration in 2004, should be administered as soon as possible to provide a baseline description of student attainment. Currently existing assessment tools should be used as appropriate, and suitable new ones developed as required for different purposes and requirements.

4. **Establish new teacher development programs and support existing ones.**

   Such new programs should allow for fast-tracking of teacher education and certification for recruited individuals with demonstrated high-level language and culture capability (e.g., native speakers, heritage speakers, NSEP graduates, returned Peace Corps volunteers, retired language professionals). At the same time, teacher preparation programs have to foster understanding of and responsiveness to the very different needs of the different groups of learners, including children and adults, learners with a heritage background in the language and those with no prior experience with it.

   Such programs should enable language teachers to establish a minimum language competency of Advanced (ILR-2) in the target language. Principled use of new primarily Internet-delivered technology can extend the benefits of tax dollars by supporting language maintenance and strengthening, and in enabling online assessment of language ability.

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[6] At the time of this writing, for example, there is no regional language resource center for languages of Southeast Asia or Eastern Europe, and none of the existing centers supports the critical needs for translation and interpretation skills.

> In addition, teacher education programs should provide existing teachers with regular and frequent opportunities for continuing growth in their profession, through inservice teacher development, professional interaction both online and in-person with teaching peers in different educational environments and participation in extended immersion experiences abroad.

The path to a successful language framework is clear and well documented in the research and practitioner literature. It is now time to launch a new comprehensive national effort at building language capacity. The last serious national effort in that regard, the National Defense Education Act of 1958, responded to a world sharply divided by the Cold War. Focused on postsecondary students and the major European languages, the NDEA helped to create an entire generation of outstanding area specialists who have provided distinguished service to the country in government, commerce, and academia. Similarly, the present effort must respond to the dynamic challenges of a globalized world that can be both hostile and full of opportunities. It must include students at all levels of education, use to greatest advantage the country's linguistic heritage, and assure competence in a range of global languages. As these learners join public life in the U.S. and eventually on the world stage, we will have enabled them to contribute to the country's security, economic prosperity, and leadership in a dynamic world full of challenges. In line with the report's recommendations it is time to act in the country's best interests.

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APPENDIX

U.S. Government Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) and ACTFL Language Proficiency Ratings

ILR Rating	ACTFL Proficiency Levels	Description
0-0+	Novice-Low Novice-Mid Novice-High	***No Functional Proficiency*** ***Memorized Proficiency***
1-1+	Intermediate-Low Intermediate-Mid Intermediate-High	***Elementary Proficiency:*** Able to satisfy routine courtesy and travel needs and to read common signs and simple sentences and phrases.
2-2+	Advanced-Low Advanced-Mid Advanced-High	***Limited Working Proficiency:*** Able to satisfy routine social and limited office needs and to read short typewritten or printed straightforward texts.
3-3+	Superior	***General Professional Proficiency:*** Able to speak accurately and with enough vocabulary to handle social representation and professional discussions within special fields of knowledge; able to read most materials found in daily newspapers.
4	Distinguished	***Advanced Professional Proficiency:*** Able to speak and read the language fluently and accurately on all levels pertinent to professional needs.
S/R-5	(N/A)	Functionally Equivalent to an Educated Native Speaker