

# Strategic Language Capacity in the US: the NSLI response

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# National Security, broadly defined:

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- Diplomacy/International Initiatives
- Trade and Localization (wherever we want to sell)
- US interests on every continent: Middle East, India/Pakistan, China, Indonesia, South America, Africa...
- Global Issues: warming, pollution, epidemics, energy supply, tsunamis...

# Current capacity: immigration-dependent

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- About 47 million American residents speak one or more languages besides English.
- More than 20 million of them also speak English “very well.”

The latter constitute our primary capability in professionally useful language skills, but that capacity is woefully insufficient.

# Where do our bi-literates come from?

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- Foreign-born who came to US as teenagers or young adults
- US-born to foreign-born parents
- English speakers who have lived, studied and/or worked overseas
- English speakers w/foreign-born spouses
- Foreign-born w/English-speaking spouses

# Why teach these languages as academic subjects?

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- Immigrant and accidental capacity is not sufficient for our needs.
- Immigration-based language capacity almost always diminishes sharply in Gen 2 and dies out completely in Gen 3. (e.g., German)
- US education policy strongly favors *suppression* of heritage language skills (“subtractive bilingual education”).

# Defining the need

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- “Professionally useful language proficiency” = ACTFL superior/ILR 3 in English and the other language.
- Many of the needed languages – but not all – are “category 3” or “category 4” languages (more difficult for English speakers than Romance or Germanic languages).
- Many language-dependent jobs require additional skills and knowledge as well.

# Implications:

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- Longer learning sequences: multiple years of study.
- Effective communicative teaching methods
- Current, well-designed materials
- Opportunities to interact extensively, usually including STUDY ABROAD with a meaningful language-learning component
- Attention to cultural component: pragmatic effectiveness

# Challenges inherent in the US education system

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- Language learning is not a priority in the US: we require less of it in K-12 than almost any developed nation. AND ...
- Languages don't count under NCLB.
- Relatively few universities have a language requirement outside of humanities fields.

# Challenges (2)

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- K-12 Education policy in the US resides at state and local levels.
  - Practical effect: language articulation and longer-sequence instruction are rendered VERY difficult.
  - Case for language instruction must be made state by state/district by district.
- Higher Education is a mix of public and private, largely tuition- and state-funded.
  - Practical effect: role of language in curriculum is largely market (demand) driven, institution by institution.

# Challenges (3): Attrition

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Without multi-year language requirements,

20 students in the first-year class...

10 students in the second-year class...

5 (or fewer) students in third year...

Higher levels seldom offered ... not economically viable.

# Make Longer Sequences Possible

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- Standardization: standards-based, consistent from grade to grade, across the US, and into college.
- Availability: too many elementary school immersions end at middle school. (Distance learning and use of technology are **ESSENTIAL** to assure availability.)
- Meaningful assessment of students, differentiation of instruction

# Continuing the sequence in higher education

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- Appropriate placement and crediting of prior work;
- Room in the professional curricula for language study (now strongly discouraged de facto)
- Opportunities for meaningful, language-intensive study abroad and internships
- Add substance to “internationalizing the curriculum.”

# Motivate students, parents

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- Career-boosting potential of knowing a critical language
- College admissions advantage: prestige of AP Chinese, IB programs
- College courses in the high schools:
  - Saves college tuition \$\$
  - May help college admission
- Make the programs effective and rewarding (TEACHER QUALITY)

# Assuring teacher quality

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- Recruit proficient speakers in US: provide a shorter path to teacher certification. (Some proficient speakers of critical languages already credentialed in ESL, French, German)
  - Language credit for schooling outside US!!
  - Communicative teaching methods
  - US school context: Standards, school culture and procedures
  - Classroom management
  - Chinese-specific methodology and structure
  - Curriculum, materials, lessons
  - Assessment tools

# National Security Language Initiative

<http://www.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/competitiveness/nsli/index.html>

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- NSEP
  - Flagships
  - Pipelines
- US Department of Education
  - Title VI (Resource Centers, organized by world region)
  - FLAP grants (35 Chinese and Arabic in 2006)
  - Teacher to Teacher

# National Security Language Initiative: New and continuing programs

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- Department of State
  - Teacher Exchange (Lebanon, China)
  - Study Abroad (teachers and students)
    - (also note Hanban effort)
- STARTALK
  - Summer, within the US
  - Teacher professional development
  - Language programs for students
  - Arabic and Chinese in 07, Farsi, Hindi in 08(?)

# STARTALK

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- Grants for new or expanded summer programs in US for teachers, learners
- This year's competition just closed
- Plan to make awards in late January
- Programs around the country will be announced, probably in February
- Collaborations planned with Education, State
- Future: web-shared materials, lessons, curricula, assessmentn tools

# Don't go it alone.

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- Asia Society
- STARTALK Project and other NSLI projects
- Hanban, State Department study abroad
- Visiting teachers from PRC
- Draw upon Flagship and NFLRC institutions
- Link teacher preparation programs to strong FL programs, here and elsewhere.
- Use distance learning and collaboration tools.

# State to State collaboration

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- Licensure reciprocity
- Create meaningful consortia
- Curricula: get beyond “search and replace”:  
borrow and share.
- Materials and assessment development: pool  
resources over the web.
- Teacher professional development: Use your  
summers; apply to STARTALK.

# Kansas Strengths...

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- Distance learning Infrastructure
- Successful DL Spanish programs
- Resource Centers
- Collaboration across institutions
- Kansas State critical languages

# Discussion...

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