

National Language Needs and Capacities: A Recommendation for Action

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Abstract

The federal government, through Title VI of the Higher Education Act, has played a vital role in supporting language study in the United States, especially the less commonly taught languages (LCTLs).¹ While this legislation has subsidized to a large extent the bulk of the training, particularly in the least-commonly taught of the LCTLs, it also has played a critical role in building and maintaining the expertise base of all the LCTL fields.

In the past decade, the situation in the world and on the nation's campuses has changed considerably, and these changes have significant consequences for this nation's language needs and capacities.

- The new political, economic, and social conditions in this world now require more citizens to be competent in more languages for more applications than ever before;
- For the foreseeable future, financial pressures on institutions of higher education now make language expertise and program maintenance, let alone expansion, extremely difficult.

Given this situation, more needs to be done within higher education to expand the availability and improve the quality of instruction in the increased number and broader range of languages demanded by the new circumstances in the world. The national need for linguistically competent citizens, tied as it is to the nation's security, is a federal responsibility, and Title VI is positioned to continue to play a leading role in this regard.

The recommendations of this report focus on building infrastructure, particularly for the languages of greatest need and weakest capacity, in order to support directly institutions wishing to initiate or enhance current offerings in the LCTLs and to maintain an otherwise precarious national expertise base.

1. The term "less commonly taught language" (LCTL) in this country traditionally has referred to all languages except French, German, and Spanish. While the enrollment patterns of students at the secondary and tertiary levels is changing dramatically, there is reason to continue the designation with some additional distinctions to be discussed below.

Introduction

The National Foreign Language Center (NFLC), a privately funded language policy “think tank” located at the School for Advanced International Studies of Johns Hopkins University, was awarded a grant from the United States Department of Education (Center for International Education) in 1995 to assess the language component of Title VI of the HEA. This present report on the state of language needs and capacities in Title VI and in the nation as a whole relies upon the preliminary results of that study as well as on the accumulated experience of the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL) and the NFLC. The latter organization has amassed a significant body of research and policy formulation on our nation’s language needs and capacities.

Background

Since World War II, the United States has been almost alone among countries of the world in defining its need for foreign language competence to include the languages of practically every country and even of many ethnic regions within countries. The Soviet Union’s surprising capability in nuclear weapons development and launching and the jolt to our national confidence that those technical developments produced provided the impetus for the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), including a specific title (Title VI) addressing a clearly perceived enhanced national need for language competence. Through that legislation Congress acknowledged the global language needs of the country by directing significant funding for languages that were not “generally available in the United States.” It also clearly confirmed the important role of universities in building and maintaining the required capacity in language. Since that time Title VI support has continued to assist universities to train and maintain the expertise required by this global language mandate as well as to provide significant amounts of on-site language instruction. In short, Title VI of the NDEA and HEA has been a confirmation of the federal mandate to address national language needs on a global scale as well as to assign

a major role to the campuses to help meet those national needs.²

Title VI and the National Language Capacity

It is not an exaggeration to say that many, if not most, of the LCTLs in this country would not or could not be taught if it were not for Title VI. This assertion is supported by interviews with language specialists as well as with university administrators around the country. It also follows from a comparison of the enrollment statistics for languages in Title VI and non-Title VI institutions. An analysis of the MLA survey of language enrollments in two- and four-year colleges and universities throughout the country in the fall of 1995 reveals that only sixty-four institutions in the United States have language programs supported by Title VI (leaving aside Canadian and International Studies). Based on the following statistics, one can assert that this small group of institutions constitutes the essence of this nation’s capacity to teach the LCTLs at the university level.

- Outside of French, German, Italian, and Spanish, the Title VI–supported programs in these institutions account for 22.5% of undergraduate language enrollments and 59% of graduate enrollments. Clearly, these sixty-four institutions are carrying a hugely disproportionate burden for instruction in the LCTLs, particularly given the fact that they represent 2.66% of the 2,399 colleges and universities in this country offering language instruction in the United States.³
- If one focuses on the least-commonly taught languages, i.e. omitting the ten with the most enrollment (Arabic, Chinese, French,

2. In recognition of this global language need, in the postwar period various federal agencies established language training facilities, including the Defense Language Institute, the Foreign Service Institute, as well as the language training facilities at CIA and NSA. These facilities are charged with meeting the immediate language needs of the federal government as they arise.

3. The impact of these numbers is only slightly mitigated by the fact that these sixty-four institutions are among our nation’s largest.

German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish), the sixty-four Title VI–supported institutions account for 51% of the undergraduate and 81% of the graduate language enrollments!

The contribution of Title VI–supported institutions goes well beyond language instruction. As the graduate student enrollment numbers above make clear, the nation’s future experts are receiving their language training overwhelmingly in these institutions. In addition, there are other indicators that Title VI support has been instrumental in building and maintaining the expertise base of language fields, again particularly in the LCTLs:⁴

- From 1988 to 1995, Title VI NRCs have supplied more than a quarter of the Ph.D.s in the LCTLs. (These do not include dissertations in literature or area studies.) In many LCTLs, the percentage of Ph.D.s produced at Title VI–supported institutions is even higher: 40% in Chinese and Japanese, and even higher for many of the least-commonly taught languages. And this percentage has risen significantly over the past decade: 1982–87, 15.2%; 1988–92, 35.6%; and 1993–95, 44.7%⁵
- A sampling of the research published on Second Language Acquisition in the LCTLs from 1992 to 1995 shows that Title VI National Resource Centers contributed almost half of all published research. (This sample of twenty-five LCTLs includes sociol-

inguistics, description linguistics, and language policy.) This contribution increases to more than 60% of the research published on the Least Commonly Taught Languages.⁶

These figures point unambiguously to the Title VI legislation and the institutions it supports as the foundation of this nation’s capacity in the LCTLs. However effective Title VI may have been in the past in sustaining the LCTLs, there are clear indications that needs are changing and expanding rapidly.

The New Context

In the past few years, the situation in the world and on the nation’s campuses has altered considerably, and these changes have significant consequences for this nation’s language needs and capacities.

Our Changed World and Consequences for Language Learning

The astonishing developments of the past decade have resulted in new political, economic, and social orders as well as produced a revolution in communication, all of which has had a significant effect on the language needs of our society:

- **Political.** The new world order presents challenges to governmental and NGO activities in the political arena, as more peoples around the world assert their independent identity and all too frequently come into conflict with newly created indigenous minorities or with neighboring countries engaged

4. French, German, and Spanish, in the main, have been supported by school systems and higher educational institutions in this country, although the role of Title VI even with these languages has not been insignificant.

5. Data on dissertations on foreign language was gathered through a search of the Dissertations Online database for the following: all dissertations in foreign languages (but not literature or area studies); all dissertations in the LCTLs; all language dissertations at Title VI centers; and all LCTL dissertations at Title VI centers. The search was limited to the period 1982–95. Italian, German, Spanish, and French were excluded from the initial search. Subsequently, Western European LCTLs were removed from the data as well in order to determine their contribution to the overall number of doctoral degrees earned in the LCTLs.

6. A search for publications on research in SLA and related topics (including sociolinguistics, descriptive linguistics, and language policy) was performed on the Languages Learning and Behavior Abstracts (LLBA) bibliographic database. Twenty-five LCTLs, representing all categories of LCTLs, were sampled. The abstracts sampled included abstracts of journal articles, review articles, books, textbooks, chapters in books, and dissertations. Book reviews were excluded from the sample. The LLBA on-line bibliographic database was chosen because it provides as part of each citation the home institution of the first-listed author of the publication.

with similar territorial and cultural problems. Naturally enough, language plays a major role in this self-identification, when local as well as national ethnic groups insist as never before on communication in their own language. For example, *Linguae francae*—such as Russian, Serbo-Croatian, and Afrikaans—now are replaced by Belarus, Kazakh, Slovenian, and Zulu, to name only a few, just as the notion of “Chinese” has given way to distinctions such as Mandarin, Cantonese, and Taiwanese.

- **Economic.** International trade, specifically exports, which constituted a small fraction of the U.S. economy in the early 1960s, now represents a major driving force.⁷ The NAFTA and WTO are now in place, and American participation in other agreements for the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific Rim is being pursued (FTAA and APEC). This new world economic order entails intensely expanded interactions among representatives of diverse cultures on a day-to-day basis on behalf of large corporations and medium and small businesses. This is particularly true as America attempts to export its services to the world (Brecht and Walton 1995). In addition to the increases in numbers, the kinds of cultures with which Americans must interact is shifting radically. The cultural “safe havens” for Americans of Western Europe are being rapidly replaced in economic impact by the truly foreign cultures of Asia, where Americans are much less comfortable linguistically and culturally.
- **Social.** Governments and NGOs around the world are cooperating on social issues as never before. Environmental protection, law enforcement, disease control, humanitarian aid, and a host of other issues are now being addressed globally literally by hundreds of nations.
- **Communications.** Transportation and communication have expanded to the point where the traditional physical restrictions of time and space are less and less a factor in

people’s ability to interact. The clearest example is perhaps the Internet, through which tens of millions of people communicate, approximately half of whom live outside of the United States. In this context more people from more cultures than ever before in history are interacting directly with one other, and the potential for expansion is virtually without limit.

Such a litany of changed circumstances impinging on intercultural communication and language use easily could be expanded, but this list is offered merely as a broad perspective on the following discussion. The conclusion, though, is inescapable: these changes entail a major expansion in the educational mission of government, private, and academic institutions in the language (and culture) area. To prepare citizens for this new global environment, our education and training institutions must offer more languages (and more difficult languages), for more purposes, to a more diverse clientele than ever before.

A New Campus Environment

Just as one can point to the rising need to expand language and cross-cultural communication education on campus and beyond, so too can the realities of steady or even shrinking resources be assumed as a permanent aspect of most if not all educational institutional planning. The maintenance of expertise and of programs, let alone the expansion envisioned here, will thus require an infusion of new resources or at least a reorganization of existing ones.

The problem of shrinking resources is exacerbated on campus by the almost insignificant enrollments in languages other than Spanish, French, and German, as student demand more and more drives educational investment.⁸ In addition, efforts at expanding investment in language face resistance born of the general negative attitude toward language study on the part of many students, faculty, and administrators, which is reflective of the American society as a whole. All too often, there is a general sense that, on the one hand, something is broken in

7. “From 1985 to 1994, exports rose from 7.2 percent to 10.2 percent of the nation’s gross domestic product...” Such numbers provoke judgments such as “...trade specialists say, foreign growth is the best hope to animate the United States economy.”

8. The enrollment data for two- and four-year institutions are now available from the Modern Language Association for Fall 1995.

the way languages are taught because few seem to graduate with usable skills; and on the other, there is a suspicion that maintaining a number of language programs has to be wasteful on some level. This general attitude toward language, unfortunately, is based more on intuition than it is on real evidence or even explicit argumentation. It is fed by a number of considerations, including the high cost of such a labor-intensive enterprise as language teaching. Nevertheless, the result of these factors on campuses across the country is a general erosion of support for language, accompanied by pressure for downsizing or elimination of all but the largest enrolled languages. It is, thus, no coincidence that, as the MLA statistics cited above make clear, many of the least-commonly taught languages are taught only at Title VI-supported institutions.

Finally, costs for attaining functional competence in language have increased significantly with the shift in focus in the national imperative to non-European languages, especially the languages of Asia. Russian takes approximately twice as long to acquire as French; Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, as much as three to four times as long. If one adds to this the small class size characteristic of instruction in many of the LCTLs, then it is clear that the cost of producing functional competence in these languages is much higher than for the European cognate languages.

Capacity and Needs

An overall framework against which to assess national needs and capacities can be summarized as follows:

Tactical level	Demand	Supply
Strategic level	Needs	Capacity

We define these terms as follows:

- *Demand*: the specific tasks for which language competence is actually being used;
- *Supply*: the availability of language competencies and modes of sourcing and housing;

- *Needs*: the perceived or latent conditions (harmful or beneficial) that can be improved or exploited by language competence;
- *Capacity*: the ability to produce linguistic competence designed to meet demands which are driven by real or potential need.

In terms of this framework, it is logical to assume that Needs provoke real Demand, for which an immediate Supply is generated, which in turn depends upon an institutionalized system characterizable as Capacity. This enriched market-oriented framework is called for by studies such as *Russian in the United States: A Case Study of National Language Needs and Capacities*, which concluded that a simple “supply and demand” view of language has serious flaws when it comes to strategic national needs, and that significantly more attention has to be paid to defining national needs and insuring underlying capacity, particularly in times of uncertain market forces.

The NFLC further has defined our national capacity to provide instruction in a language as a function of the strength of a language “field” in the U.S. (Brecht and Walton 1993). The strength of a field in turn depends on the existence (and quality) of a strong “architecture,” which can be understood to consist of base structures, infrastructure, and flagship programs. Very simply, effective instructional programs depend on the existence of a field infrastructure supporting materials development, teacher training, study abroad programming, testing and assessment systems, data collection, and information-sharing networks, among other things. Based on this characterization of strength, languages such as French, German, and Spanish can be seen not only to be popular among students at the secondary and tertiary levels, but to have at their disposal a strong supporting infrastructure. The LCTLs, on the other hand, are generally much weaker in this regard and, accordingly, that much more handicapped in expanding and/or improving instruction across the board.

The National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL) comprises sixteen national language teachers’ organizations, including African, Arabic, Cantonese, Chinese, Hebrew, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Slavic, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Turkic.⁹ At its inception in 1987, the members of the NCOLCTL stated clearly that their greatest common needs were for teaching mate-

rials and teacher training. However, in spite of this general consensus, in the LCTLs the range of variation among languages with regard to infrastructure strength and weakness is significant. For some languages, Russian for example, teaching materials are plentiful and excellent, but standardized testing instruments are not available; for many other of the least-commonly taught languages, the availability of a basic textbook, or even a dictionary or up-to-date grammar, is problematic.

Given the basic fact that our national capacity to mount programs producing proficient users of a language depends on the existence of materials, teacher training programs, study abroad programs, etc., it is imperative to focus on strengthening these infrastructure elements. In so doing, all programs across the nation can be enhanced simultaneously, and students in all institutions can receive the benefit of the improvement.

Needs

In order to determine the strengths and weaknesses of our national language capacity and the real and specific needs of the languages taught in the United States, in particular the LCTLs, the NFLC has worked with NCOLCTL and their individual fieldwide organizations, visited dozens of campuses across the country, conducted fieldwide studies in the principal LCTLs (Brecht, Caemmerer, and Walton 1995; Jordan and Lambert 1991; Moore, Walton, and Lambert 1992) and is at present in the process of surveying all existing fieldwide organizations specifically for this purpose. This experience has produced the following taxonomy of LCTLs and a list of specific needs.

Classification of Languages

The wide variation of strengths and weaknesses among the LCTLs makes some kind of rough taxonomy necessary (Brecht and Walton, 1993). There are at least three relevant criteria

for this classification: enrollments, institutional availability, and strength of field architecture. What follows is an updated classification of the LCTLs, which is based on the Fall 1995 MLA enrollment data as well as on a very tentative assessment of field strength. It should be understood more as illustrative of the differences involved rather than as a rigorous specification of where a language stands in the United States. Indeed, although scholars may argue over where a given language belongs, the relevant issue is still the diversity of the LCTLs.

- **Group One: The Principal LCTLs (Chinese, Japanese, and Russian).** These languages, studied by tens of thousands of students every semester, mirror, although on a much reduced scale, the commonly taught languages in being generally available in schools and universities around the country. Compared to the other LCTLs, they can be seen to have significant strength in their field architecture, although with important weaknesses. The principal problem with these languages, though, is their degree of difficulty, which makes it virtually impossible for students to reach even a minimal functional ability without extensive immersion study in-country. Finally, although the national demand for all three of these languages currently is expanding rapidly, at the school and university levels this growth is reflected in student enrollments only for Chinese and Japanese, while Russian enrollments are declining at an alarming rate (Brecht, Caemmerer, and Walton 1995).
- **Group Two: The Less Commonly Taught LCTLs.** In this category belong the languages that are studied only by several thousand students every semester nationwide: Arabic, Hawaiian, Hebrew, Korean, Portuguese, Swahili, and perhaps a few others. These languages present a very mixed picture with regard to difficulty: Arabic and Korean are Category Four languages, which in the State Department's classification refers to those languages requiring the most time to learn. Other differences among these languages include institutional availability and strength of architecture. They seem to share, however, at least to date, the common fate of not being able to extend their enroll-

9. This is the first organization in this country dedicated to the improvement of our national capacity specifically in the LCTLs. For almost a decade it has received support from the Ford Foundation.

ments, as Chinese and Japanese have done in the past decade.

- **Group Three: The Much Less Commonly Taught Languages.** There are approximately twenty non-West European/non-North American languages taught in the United States, each of which has undergraduate and graduate enrollments across the country ranging in the hundreds (again, as per MLA Fall 1995 statistics). Most importantly, for these languages, instruction is consistently available only in a handful of institutions in the United States. These languages include Armenian, Czech, Hindi, Indonesian, Mongolian, Persian, Polish, Serbian/Croatian, Tagalog, Thai, Turkish, Vietnamese, and Yoruba, among others.
- **Group Four: The Least Commonly Taught Languages.** In addition to the languages above, the formal educational system in the United States offers approximately eighty other “least commonly taught” languages, whose total national enrollments range from dozens to the single digits. These languages, even more than the preceding group, occupy a very marginal position in the educational system, being offered often only at one or two institutions across the United States in a given year, often on an “on-demand,” individualized learning basis, and supported by very meager learning and teaching resources. Here belong Bengali, Burmese, Cantonese, Hausa, Punjab, Shona, Slovak, Slovenian, Ukrainian, Uzbek, Wolof, and Zulu.
- **Group Five: The Rarely (or Never) Taught Languages.** Finally, there are many other of the world’s several thousand languages which can be viewed as important to our national interest and which are rarely or never taught in the United States. For some of these languages, there is linguistic and anthropological expertise available; for many others, sufficient basic expertise is totally lacking. In this class of languages belong all the Chinese languages (except Mandarin and Cantonese), all nonstandard Arabic, the Central Asian languages, most of the languages of Africa, and many others such as Lao, Georgian, Malay, Sinhala (Dwyer and Wiley 1980).

Specific Needs of the LCTLs

The needs that all these languages share, although in varying degrees, include:

Teaching Materials. Many, if not most, LCTLs are in desperate need of teaching materials, including basic texts as well as customized learning modules, both in the traditional text format as well as in more technologically enhanced modes. The existence of good materials is particularly important for the LCTL fields, where much of the learning takes place with untrained native-speaking tutors, or often students are completely on their own. Materials are particularly valuable as well for these fields where teacher training programs are rare or nonexistent—as they are for most of the LCTLs.

Even where materials exist, say for Russian, the rapidly changing world of the former Soviet Union makes updating, particularly of cultural materials, a necessity. (For example, with hyperinflation rates in Russia the unit of currency known as the “kopeck” has simply gone out of use, and the value of the ruble makes facility with very large numbers now needed as never before.)

While materials are desperately needed, a process must be found that will guarantee that resources invested in producing them will be effective: that good materials will be developed and that they will be used broadly by teachers around the country. A prerequisite for this is a fieldwide consensus on a standardized learning framework, the specific purpose of which is to guide materials development as well as curricular design and teacher training.¹⁰ Such a framework would represent the collective wisdom of a field and serve as a guide, or a mandate, as programs nationwide seek to meet the needs of their students each in its own unique local context. The consensus a framework such as this represents can ensure that the traditional fatal flaw of idiosyncratic materials development will be

10. The National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages, funded by the Ford Foundation and headquartered at the National Foreign Language Center, held a conference January 26–27, 1996, in Washington, DC, to present and discuss the Language Learning Frameworks (LLFs) for the LCTLs that have been developed by the council’s member organizations over the last three years.

avoided, and that potential investors will once again have confidence in the enterprise.

Teacher Training. Professional development is a national priority uniformly across the language teaching profession.¹¹ This is becoming especially important now that theoretical and applied research in language acquisition is beginning to produce results that are directly beneficial to the learning and teaching experience. If any benefit to the student is to be realized, however, the research results have to be made available and accessible to the classroom teachers in ways that they understand and that they can use. This requires a continuing and expanded investment in faculty development programs, which for the LCTLs are too rarely offered due to cost and the dearth of trainer expertise.

Expertise Base Strengthening. Materials development and teacher training do not exhaust the principal needs of many of the LCTLs. Any production of textbooks and the like have to be preceded by research on the language itself and the development of even the most basic tools, such as dictionaries and grammars. Many languages simply never have had good dictionaries and grammars at their disposal; for other languages, dictionaries and grammars are often completely out of date, having been developed decades ago often by amateur linguists. With the expansion in the number of languages demanded today, this need has become even more acute.

Study Abroad Programs. The new imperative for language includes the “truly foreign languages” (Walton and Jordan 1987) of the Pacific Century; and, as a result, the time needed to attain functional proficiency in these languages has risen significantly. As mentioned above, Russian, Arabic, Chinese, and Korean take two to four times as long to acquire as do Spanish and French! This exponential demand on time and resources is best accommodated by placing students in-country, where the “time-on-task” is essentially a student’s entire waking hours. However, the design and management of effective in-country immersion programs are extremely complex and require significant exper-

tise and resources. Fields need assistance, particularly where the resources are limited and the in-country cultures are “truly foreign” for the American student.

Networking Facilities. Finally, all the LCTL fields have teachers and researchers, as well as learners, who are operating alone or in very small numbers and who are geographically widely dispersed. To assist these practitioners and learners, mechanisms are needed to gather and disseminate information and data, as well as to build strong learning and teaching communities. Ties also have to be made and sustained with the *heritage language communities in this country, which constitute perhaps our nation’s greatest resource in the LCTLs.*

In concluding this list of the immediate needs of the LCTL fields, one must reiterate that each language has its own specific needs. Accordingly, only field experts can properly assess and target priority needs. For example, while a national decision to fund the development of testing instruments for a given language may constitute a valuable contribution to a field, the actual practitioners might well make the case that for them basic textbooks are a more pressing need.

Strategic Recommendation

More needs to be done to expand the availability and improve the quality of instruction in the broader swath of languages demanded by the new political, economic, and social conditions in the world. Strategies should be targeted that will provide direct and relevant assistance to nascent, established, and threatened language programs on our nation’s campuses. Given the range of languages needed and the diversity of needs of the fields involved, we recommend a general strategy to focus on building field architecture, which is particularly important for the languages of greatest need and weakest capacity. This strategy is aimed specifically at enabling language fields to provide direct support to institutions across the country that wish to initiate or enhance current offerings in these languages.

Accordingly, we recommend the establishment of “national language field resource centers” (NLFRCs), whose principal mission is to serve the nation as its principal source of infor-

11. AATF, AATG, and ACTFL for example, have been involved in this endeavor for a number of years.

mation, communication, and the products and services supporting the teaching and learning of the languages in their world area. Each center, in cooperation with existing professional organizations and enterprises, will assume general responsibility for field development: for assessing the field's needs, for meeting those needs, and particularly for providing direct assistance to institutions to establish new or improve existing language programs. To put it succinctly and concretely, anyone anywhere who is interested in a specific language will know that there is a number to call or a URL to address, where high-quality information and assistance is available on-demand.

In order to address this fieldwide mission, these NLFRCs should meet the following qualifications:

1. Each center should be language field oriented. It should serve a specific language or group of languages. Therefore, the center has to have at its disposal nationally recognized experts in these languages and particularly in the acquisition of these specific languages.
2. Each center should be fieldwide. It should draw expertise from across the field, wherever it resides: in this country or abroad, in colleges and universities or in associations or research institutes; in the academic, private, government, heritage, and overseas sectors. The center should have a working relationship with the leading field associations and institutes. Finally, the center should be linked by the Internet to institutions and individual scholars and teachers around the country.
3. The center should have the capability to collect relevant data, materials, and services wherever they exist and disseminate them on-demand to institutions and individuals. This presumes a web-based site responsible for the collection and dissemination of expertise and resources.
4. The center's focus should be on applied as well as basic research, so that it can bring the results of the latest research to bear directly on the design and management of products and services needed for language teaching and learning.

Each NLFRC's responsibilities would include:

1. Model curriculum and program design;
2. Materials design and production, including technologically enhanced (interactive, multimedia, web-deliverable) materials and learning environments;
3. Intensive summer language-training institutes for students as well as teachers;
4. Teacher training;
5. fieldwide networking and information sharing;
6. Data collection and dissemination;
7. In-country immersion language program support;
8. Facilitation of fieldwide consensus on standards and learning framework to guide materials development, teacher training, and curricular design; and
9. Networking among the academic, heritage, government, private, and overseas sectors.

These centers should not concentrate and control all the field's resources; the notion of "letting a thousand blossoms bloom" makes more sense in the development of language instruction in a variety of institutions across the country. However, these blossoms are not blooming; most of the nation's programs in the LCTLs need more expertise and resources. In order to meet these needs most effectively, the fields need a mechanism, owned by its established experts, which carefully husbands its scarce resources and accepts responsibility to provide the safety net under its instructional programs nationwide.

Conclusion

Title VI of the NDEA and now of the HEA has been the principal motivator and the major contributor—along with a relatively small set of universities—in maintaining LCTL programs on our nation's campuses. Without Title VI, many of the LCTL programs would simply disappear.

The language needs of this country, however, are greater than ever before in its history, even if the demand in many sectors is latent, i.e. not reflective of the true national need. Since these needs are national, they should continue to be, at least in part, the proper responsibility of the federal government.

With this expanded need, campus programs require more and better materials, teacher training, and many other supporting structures

and services. This assistance can be provided by the language field, if the field itself has sufficient infrastructure. While the federal support provided by Title VI has been critically important, not enough has been done in the past to build the LCTL fields, which are generally not strong enough to provide direct assistance to campuses in meeting their expanded language needs.

A way must be found to continue to sustain the LCTLs while expanding their number on campus and improving the quality of instruction. This must be done within highly restricted budget constraints. Accordingly, a recommendation aimed directly at strengthening infrastructure by establishing National Language Field Resource Centers is the most cost-effective, efficient, and quality-assured strategy to accomplish this end. This is particularly important for the language with the fewest resources and for those whose difficulty makes the cost of instruction two or three times that of the more accessible languages.

The proposed centers form a safety net responsible for ensuring that the national interests are served across the board in a particular language or group of languages. They should exist to serve programs, teachers, and learners directly, effectively, and with maximum cost-efficiency. Such a network of centers would guarantee a baseline level of expertise and resources to sustain threatened programs and to assist in program proliferation, as the national need is more and more matched by real demand for language competence and student enrollment in our schools and in higher education begins to reflect

real demand. In sum, a mechanism is proposed whose function is to build and support the infrastructure of a given language field, which in turn sustains and enhances all the nation's institutions, rich and poor, in offering the broad range of languages the United States needs.

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