

Issues in Prioritizing the Teaching of Languages of Central Asia and Azerbaijan

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The following report focuses on teaching the languages of Central Asia and Azerbaijan in the U.S. It adopts the four-level categorization suggested by David Wiley in the “Proposed New Criteria for Prioritizing African Languages for Instruction in the United States and Identification of the Priority Languages.” In this classification scheme, based on six criteria, languages in Category 1 are of highest priority and those in Category 4 of lowest.¹

Before proceeding, it is appropriate to provide a few words about the rationale for the particular scope of this report, as well as explain some terminology used in it. Among the world areas for which Title VI has traditionally provided funding, one is “Inner Asia and Uralic.” Unlike most “world areas,” “Inner Asia and Uralic” is a mixture of two sorts of categories—the first geographic (Inner Asia) and the second linguistic (Uralic). In terms of numbers of speakers, the major Uralic languages are Hungarian, Estonian, and Finnish. Providing instruction in these LCTLs has much more in common with teaching other West European LCTLs than with most languages of “Inner Asia.” Moreover, the priority for teaching the major Uralic languages is being addressed in reports of Russian/East European and Western European centers.

The “minor” Uralic languages are not treated here either, first of all, because they will be covered in reports of Russian/East European centers. They also are excluded because they are clearly a low priority for study in the U.S. Beyond Hungarian, Estonian, and Finnish, the largest native-speaker populations of other Uralic languages (Udmurt, Mari, and Erzya [Mordvin]) number only in the hundreds of thousands. Besides their small number of speakers, their domains of use are quite limited. This, in turn, is related both to their low official status and to the fact that the vast majority of their speakers have been educated in Russian. None of these languages is currently taught on a regular basis in the U.S., and there seem to be no prospects for introducing them in the foreseeable future. In any case, none of the “minor” Uralic languages fall into the top two categories of the four-level “African” classification scheme.

¹. The six criteria underlying this prioritization scheme of the *e-LCTL Initiative* are 1) How many people speak the language? 2) What is the national status of a language? Is the language a ‘national language’ or multinational, i.e., the primary language or lingua franca for a nation, or a region? 3) What is the current usage of the language in each particular society? Is the language used widely in educational institutions, broadcast and/or print media, markets and neighborhoods, government agencies, and literatures of the peoples? 4) What is the importance of the language for scholars working in archives? Are large amounts of archival materials in that language important for various disciplines and other users? 5) How important is the language in politics, society, and culture of the country? Is the language important because of its usage or significance politically, culturally, and socially? and 6) How important is the language for broad U.S. national interests? Is the language important for U.S. national interests such as for scholarly research and use by business, media, and government programs of economic assistance, security affairs, and foreign policy?

“Inner Asia,” as defined for purposes of the only Title VI “Inner Asian” National Resource Center, includes Turkey, Azerbaijan, Mongolia, Tibet, and formerly Soviet Central Asia. In terms of the *e-LCTL Initiative*, Turkish will be covered in the report of Middle Eastern centers and so is not included here. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized here that Turkish is clearly a “Priority 1 language,” and that its instruction is closely related to issues of teaching other Turkic languages. Fortunately, teaching materials and accessibility of materials is better for Turkish than the other Turkic languages. However, many issues regarding teaching of Turkish are inseparable from those of teaching the other Turkic languages. (See below, for example, the issue of providing instruction for students who already know one Turkic language and want to learn a second.)

Mongolian and Tibetan, which will be covered in the East Asian e-LCTL report, are not included here. However, the problems of teaching these languages are very similar to those of teaching the major languages of Central Asia and Azerbaijan discussed below. Moreover, these languages are quite important for study in the U.S. Depending on the relative weight assigned to the various components used in determining the African four-level scheme, both Mongolian and Tibetan are at least in the second level priority, if not the top one.

“Soviet Central Asia” as used below refers to five former republics of the USSR (now independent countries): Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Somewhat broader, “Central Asia” is used here to refer to all of “Soviet Central Asia,” plus Xinjiang (Xinjiang Autonomous Region of the People’s Republic of China). This specific use of these terms (and even the term “Inner Asia” as defined here) is, of course, an oversimplification, perhaps even misleading. Nevertheless, these categories provide convenient handles that are useful in the present discussion of prioritization.

Writing a report reflecting broad consensus on priorities for language instruction for either “Inner Asia” or “Central Asia” is both easier and more difficult than for any other Title VI region. Much of “the ease” is due to the fact that there is only one NRC whose primary focus is Inner or Central Asia, Indiana University’s *Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center* (IAUNRC). There is therefore no group of Inner Asian/Central Asian NRC directors who must be gathered to consult on issues affecting them collectively. Indeed, Indiana University is home not only to the IAUNRC, but also to the Center for the Languages of the Central Asian Region (CeLCAR), the only LRC whose primary focus is Central Asia.²

In addition to the fact that there is only one “Inner Asian” center, it would also seem easy to achieve consensus on Inner Asian language instruction because, with the possible exception of Azerbaijan, there are relatively few standardized languages to prioritize. As will be discussed below, aside from Uyghur, Mongol, Tibetan, and the titular languages of the relevant former Soviet republics, very few minority languages of Inner Asia might warrant institutionalized study in the U.S..

² . In addition to the languages of “Central Asia” as defined for this report, CeLCAR’s domain also includes Azerbaijan and Afghanistan.

Paradoxically, though, establishing a consensus on priorities is also extraordinarily difficult in the case of Inner Asia or Central Asia. Although there is only one “Inner Asian” center, the languages are studied at a number of other universities beyond Indiana and through a number of other NRCs; at these various other institutions the “Inner Asian languages” are handled through several categories of NRC’s (in particular, Russian/East Europe, Middle East, East Asian, and the IAUNRC). Furthermore, the academic home departments of the individuals who are involved in their instruction varies from university to university. True, departments and programs have operated for a long time at a few universities with Central Asia or Inner Asia as their focus (e.g., Indiana, Harvard, University of Washington); international organizations such as the *Permanent International Altaistic Conference* (PIAC) also have been around for a long time; moreover, professional organizations devoted to Central Asia have existed for decades. Nevertheless, by and large, until fairly recently, scholars who worked on Inner/Central Asia from very different disciplines did not work together, nor did a large proportion of them generally gather at the same conferences. Historians and linguists might meet at gatherings of the *American Oriental Society*, but social scientists would not be there; the latter would be more likely to attend meetings of the *American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies* (AAASS), or perhaps *Middle East Studies Association* (MESA). In some ways Central Asia/Inner Asia is not unique, since in the case of other world areas too, scholars from very different disciplines also attend their individual respective professional meetings (e.g., for political scientists, historians, linguists). However, the Latin Americanists or the East Asianists or specialists on other world areas were more likely than Central Asianists (let alone “Inner Asianists”) to exchange views at meetings of scholars from different disciplines but all sharing the same area focus. This has been changing, but meetings of the *Central Eurasian Studies Society* have not yet become institutionalized in the way of organizations with a longer history such as AAASS or MESA.

Academic units in institutions with Inner Asian or Central Asian studies programs traditionally also have failed to provide forums for scholars working on the same region to discuss such issues as language study prioritization. Scholars in individual universities who share an interest in “Central Asia” or “Inner Asia” generally are scattered among different disciplines and therefore different departments. Even if they are part of an area studies program or center, it usually is as part of a much broader area, such as Slavic and East European Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, or East Asian Studies. True, Central or Inner Asia within one of these broader groupings is not the “exotic fringe” that it was two or three decades ago; however, it is not the focus of most members of these programs / centers, most of which have very limited or no opportunity to offer Inner or Central Asian languages. This is likely one reason why these Centers have paid relatively little attention to questions of prioritizing the study of Inner Asian or Central Asian languages.

BEYOND SELECTING “LANGUAGES”

Although it is critical to select the languages that most need to be taught, it is equally important to determine the types of language skills that students need and to consider this

in determining the kinds of courses that should be offered and materials developed/ used for them. In the case of Inner Asian languages, the emphasis has long been on reading skills. This is understandable from several perspectives: although we long had access to printed materials, until the late 1980s limited opportunities existed for contact with people from most of the region. Thus, speaking and listening skills were less needed and very difficult to achieve. Moreover, the few instructors available to teach these languages tended to be linguists who were most equipped to present grammar-based courses. As a consequence, although there have been materials (and in some cases courses) devoted to Inner Asian languages for a long time, until fairly recently many or most of them have been devoted largely to the written language and built around teaching grammar. This is perhaps also true of languages in certain other world areas, but political factors were critical in limiting access to such places as Soviet Central Asia or Xinjiang. There has obviously been a radical change with regard to access in the last 15 years, and this has major implications for national needs in terms of language study.

Related to this is the fact that there are substantial dialect variations within some Central Asian “languages.” This is a far less important issue in teaching students to read and write. However, for students who need to develop speaking and listening skills, this is of great importance. Thus, for example, teaching the standard Uzbek language and its pronunciation will not prepare the student who needs excellent skills for communications with “Uzbek” speakers of Khorezm or even of the capital city, Tashkent. The problem is even more complex because the “Uzbek” of Afghanistan also is very different in a variety of dimensions; moreover, unlike the writing system for the Uzbek literary language in Uzbekistan, which today is shifting from Cyrillic to Latin letters, Afghan Uzbek is written in the Arabic/Persian script. The problems are less severe, perhaps, in a language like Kazakh, with less dialect variation. Nevertheless, as we prioritize language instruction, it is important that we not focus too heavily on developing reading skills in the “standard” form. We must keep in mind that students today also may need more active skills, both in writing and speaking, and that they may require passive listening skills in dialects that differ greatly from the official norm.

For the same kinds of reasons—the complexity of language needs and the ways in which languages traditionally have been taught—we should not place too much importance in lists of courses in university course bulletins, the numbers of students enrolled in classes, or the existence of textbooks: all of these are important, but they are not adequate criteria for measuring how well we are meeting needs. For example, some current courses and instructional materials are not suitable for many of today’s students who have much greater first-hand access to most parts of Central Asia than was conceivable a decade or two ago, and who in addition to reading skills also need to be able to write, speak, and understand the languages of Inner Asia.

CENTRAL ASIA

The *Center for the Languages of the Central Asian Region* began operation at Indiana University in fall 2002. Its establishment, along with several other new LRC’s, was a direct response to 9/11, after which the Department of Education announced that it was

accepting applications for such centers. This built on the already existing *Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center* (IAUNRC) at IU. Although IAUNRC had served as a hub for academic year and (especially) summer language instruction, it did not focus on development of language instruction materials, nor did it have resources to undertake this except in piecemeal ways.

There has been almost no cross-institutional coordination in prioritizing Central Asian language instruction, in part because so few universities offered *any* Central Asian languages in their academic year programs; if one was offered, it was almost always either Uzbek or Kazakh. Occasionally, students from one institution studied one of these languages at another university, thanks to a Boren or other individual grant. A kind of *de facto* coordination took place for summer courses, inasmuch as the major source for funding for most Central Asian languages was the *Social Science Research Council* (SSRC). With very limited Title VIII funds, SSRC's choice of institution or programs served as a kind of *de facto* coordination for summer instruction.

This report will almost entirely ignore two of the most widely spoken languages of Central Asia—Russian and Chinese.³ This is *not* because these languages are unimportant for the study of Central Asia, but because instruction in these languages in U.S. educational institutions will certainly be determined by their significance *outside* the region. For analogous reasons, languages of most Central Asian relatively small diaspora communities—e.g., Ukrainian, Armenian, German, and Korean—also will not be discussed here. A somewhat stronger case might be made for including the study of Kurdish or Chechen in this report, but because they are both much more numerous outside of Central or Inner Asia as defined by Title VI center borders, they also are excluded. The traditional homeland of “Volga Tatars,” like Kurds and Chechens, also lies beyond Central Asia.

The exclusion of the “other” Central Asian languages is not a sign that it is not important or fruitful to study them or their speakers specifically in the Central Asian setting. Indeed, such a study as, for example, the evolution of the Chechen or Korean language in Kazakhstan might provide unique and very valuable insights into them. Nevertheless, despite these potentially very interesting areas of study, they seem highly unlikely to affect whether these languages will be taught in the U.S., and so they will not be treated in this report.

What “Central Asian” languages remain to be discussed? The major ones are those spoken by the titular ethnic group in each of the Central Asian republics, along with Uyghur and Azeri. For the five former Soviet republics east of the Caspian Sea, the other indigenous languages that are still spoken today are Karakakpak, Bukharan Jewish, and Dungan.

Applying the criteria developed for African languages to Central Asia, Uyghur and all of the titular languages of the former Soviet Central Asian republics warrant ranking in the first of the four-category classification. As for the titular languages of the former Soviet

³ . The only exception to this is “Dungan,” mentioned briefly below.

republics, each has at least several million native speakers and is widely (and increasingly) used in educational institutions, mass media, and government. The region is critical to U.S. national interests, in part due to the instability in the wake of the Soviet collapse of 15 years ago and its salience to problems of energy resources and drug and weapons trafficking. The importance of these countries for U.S. security has grown dramatically due to events in Afghanistan and the broader context of U.S. relations with the Middle East. Thus, these languages satisfy five of the six criteria for ranking. The only one remaining is importance for scholars working in archives. Scholars in many fields needing to explore the Soviet or pre-Soviet period will find more records in Russian than in the local language; but this situation is changing in favor of the local languages—albeit at a different pace in each country. Nevertheless, even in light of this less than full meeting of one of the six criteria, there is no doubt that all belong in the first category.

The Chinese government currently is seeking to reduce the status of minority languages in the PRC, including Uyghur. Nevertheless, Uyghur is spoken by approximately 8 million people, and is widely used in educational institutions and mass media; the region is clearly critical to U.S. national interests and without Uyghur it is impossible to understand the politics, society and culture of this region. It may be of limited use in archives likely to be available to U.S. scholars, but this does not diminish the need to teach this language in this country.

The remaining “Central Asian” languages include Karakalpak, Dungan, and Bukharan Jewish (in Central Asia proper). In terms of official status, Karakalpak is the official language of an “autonomous republic” within Uzbekistan, but the number of speakers of Karakalpak is rather small (perhaps a half million), and in fact the *Karakalpak Autonomous Republic* has little autonomy. Although it has its own standardized orthography, it is certainly of less importance according to almost all of the language priority indicators used here, and so it belongs either in a low Category 2 or even Category 3. Moreover, because it is extremely similar to Kazakh, and because it is unlikely to be taught in the U.S., the best solution for American students needing to learn the language is probably to start with a Kazakh course. Dungan and Bukharan Jewish, though potentially very useful for anthropologists or linguists studying these specific societies, must be still lower, somewhere at the bottom of Category 3 or even in Category 4.

AZERBAIJAN

In the case of Azerbaijan, it is clear (for the same reasons listed above for Central Asia) that Azerbaijani, the state language, is a Category 1 priority. In addition to Azerbaijani, however, Azerbaijan has a number of other languages spoken by peoples who have lived in the Caucasus region for centuries. With the exception of Lezgin and Talysh, however, either the large majority of speakers live outside of Azerbaijan (e.g., Avar), and/or the number of speakers is so small that these languages are certainly not in a priority group for study in the U.S. (e.g., Judeo-Tat, Muslim-Tat, Udin). Thus, most of the minority languages of Azerbaijan belong to Category 4—e.g., Udin, Judeo-Tat, Muslim-Tat,

Tsakhur, Khinalugh, Budukh, Kryts, and Kurmanji. Lezgi and Talysh, though they have larger populations of speakers—in the hundreds of thousands—have low formal status and are not widely used in media or in education. They may have somewhat greater importance for U.S. security and for study than the numbers suggest because of their locations near Azerbaijan's borders. However, they likely belong in Category 3, or perhaps at the bottom of Category 2.

MAJOR PROBLEMS IN TEACHING LANGUAGES OF CENTRAL ASIA AND AZERBAIJAN

One of the major barriers to teaching languages of Central Asia and Azerbaijan is the serious lack of high quality instructional and language maintenance materials. Although the situation has improved in recent years, this applies to all languages of the region, even for those in Category 1. Many of the existing materials (including some of the new ones) are based on a traditional grammar approach and focus on teaching reading skills and grammar. (One of the types of exceptions here is manuals produced to provide very basic skills for Peace Corps volunteers.) On the whole, however, available materials focus on reading and do not meet needs of students who also need to write, speak, and understand the spoken language.

Most available instructional materials for these languages are for the beginning level. Teachers in Intermediate and Advanced courses generally have less in the way of prepared materials to use in the classroom. There are some exceptions such as the on-line materials (primarily for listening practice) created through the Cenasianet project. In general, though, very little is available for the student beyond the beginning level. The lack of good textbooks in most cases is compounded by the lack of necessary bilingual dictionaries, especially for learners who do not know Russian (or Chinese).

Each of the countries that emerged from the Soviet Union has created some instructional materials for the minority populations who live there. In some cases these can be tapped for needs of American students. However, except in Kazakhstan (and, perhaps, to some degree Azerbaijan), the work of producing textbooks for the minorities is very slow. They are also of variable quality, and the needs of American learners are generally different from those of the local minority population. Much the same problem exists for Uyghur. (The University of Washington published a textbook in 1991; however, this can be considered only a first step towards meeting the needs of U.S. students.)

Authentic language materials for these languages that might be easily tapped by innovative teachers or learners are relatively scarce. The Internet has relieved but not resolved this difficulty. This is especially problematic in the case of language maintenance: many students of these languages study them at intensive summer courses, after which they have limited opportunity for contact with the language.

Although the rapidly developing technology that is opening up new options for delivery of language instruction to remote learners is a blessing, it also challenges us to go beyond techniques currently used. It is possible to produce better materials than those with the

“talking heads” that have been available in the past. Today, we can produce distance language web-based materials that allow much greater student autonomy and targeting of particular learner needs. We face great opportunities, but there are important choices to be made about how to use the available resources in the wisest and most efficient way to meet our needs.

A second major barrier that is closely related to the first is the lack of qualified teachers of these languages in the United States. Although the number has grown in recent years, in the case of most Central Asian languages there are very few speakers, let alone individuals among them who know how to teach them. Most potential instructors, even if they are invited to the U.S. or already here to teach courses, are unfamiliar with the demands of language pedagogy in an American classroom. They also are often resistant to suggestions by pedagogy specialists. Some U.S. universities have offered courses taught by native speakers who work jointly with non-native faculty at U.S. institutions from a variety of fields. The results are very mixed.

As is likely the case with any LCTL, part of the problem of teacher shortage is that class enrollments are small or intermittent, and so educational institutions offering these languages cannot afford to hire anyone, let alone a teacher in a tenure-track position or with other long-term arrangements. This further aggravates the shortage of teachers with necessary qualifications. There is little time to train teachers who are on short assignments, not to mention scarce resources and low incentive to do so. Often the native speakers who are available to help teach the language are in the U.S. for one-time assignments. The individual who becomes the native informant in the following year must start at the very beginning.

A third barrier, also related to the first two, is the lack of accepted standards (including testing) for the Central Asian languages. This is perhaps a less serious problem than the above two issues; it must also be recognized that not every learner has the same goals in language study. Moreover, students beginning the study of one of the languages of the region often have vastly different backgrounds: it is common even in a small beginning level class to have a native speaker of a Turkic language (often Turkish), a student who has studied another Turkic language, and other students who have never studied any Turkic language. This kind of situation may offer opportunities (and not just problems) to creative teachers. However, given the low level of teaching skill of many language teachers, this is more often a problem than an opportunity. Moreover, the lack of standards and similar approaches in teaching the languages at the beginning level compounds problems at the intermediate level, where students who have all completed “Beginning X-language” possess very different skills in that language.

A fourth barrier is the political situation in the countries where the languages are spoken, and stricter U.S. visa regulations. Alone and in combination, these factors aggravate the problems discussed above. Access to Uyghur materials from Xinjiang, for instance, is limited by political controls in China. In the case of Turkmenistan, despite persistent attempts by SCOLA, Indiana University and American Councils for International Education - a union of the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR) and

American Council for Collaboration in Education and Language Study (ACCELS) -, it proved impossible to obtain permission to broadcast Turkmen television programs through the SCOLA network. In some countries, political factors also shape opportunities for potential instructors to travel abroad to teach courses or develop materials.

The situation with teachers traveling to the U.S. from these countries is further complicated by the fact that in some cases, potential teachers apply for a visa to enter the U.S. only after having received exit permission from their home country. There also may be rules which make it impossible to purchase an airline ticket before the visa is issued. The extended lead time before arrival in the U.S. means that it is necessary to commit to hiring a teacher very far in advance, sometimes even before it is clear whether there will be the minimum number of students to hold a course. In addition to this, there are serious problems in getting visas for teachers or other individuals to work on language materials development. (CeLCAR, for example, hired a Tajik materials developer to come to Indiana for three years. However, it appeared for a while that IU might lose the developer after one year because his family initially was denied a visa to enter the U.S..)

Current mechanisms for collaborative planning

The main type of collaboration among Title VI centers with regard to Central Asian language instruction has been in the funding of summer courses. At present, approximately 25 NRCs contribute money from their Title VI grants to the Central Asian language courses at IU. (This includes 13 Russia/Eastern Europe/Central Asia centers, 11 East Asia Centers, and one Middle East center.) Despite this collaboration among Title VI centers in the funding of Central Asian summer, as noted above, there has been almost no formal collaboration in the planning process among Title VI institutions for Central Asian languages. That said, with the exception of Kyrgyz, all Priority 1 languages of Central Asia and Azerbaijan are being offered at the Summer Workshop in Slavic, East European and Central Asian Languages (SWSEEL) at IU, at both Introductory and Intermediate levels.⁴ SWSEEL has emerged as the major summer program where Central Asian languages are studied. Given current demand, in the case of most Central Asian languages, one or two summer programs is all that is needed. Approximately one-third of SWSEEL students enrolled in Central Asian language courses are from IU, but two-thirds come from other universities and from outside academia.

Currently, there is no broad, formal collaboration in Central Asian language instruction during the academic year. Interest in Central Asia has grown considerably in the last decade, and today there is a substantial cohort of students pursuing studies with a focus on the region. Understandably, some universities which have such students (especially

⁴ . Summer 2004 is the first time that Intermediate Uyghur was offered. Intermediate Turkmen, after being offered twice, was not offered in 2004 because of lack of demand. IU has not sought funding for Kyrgyz in the past because of anticipated limited demand, because the language is fairly close to Kazakh (and might draw away from Kazakh enrollments which in recent years up until 2004 were only about four or five students, and because it was felt that a request to SSRC to support Kyrgyz instruction could reduce the amount of money available for other courses.

graduate students) attempted to accommodate these students by offering opportunities to study a Central Asian language. However, local resources at most universities do not include experienced language teachers for Central Asian languages. This in turn has a negative effect on the quality of instruction.

Thanks to a National Security Education Program (NSEP) grant, Indiana University has begun to experiment with teaching Central Asian languages to several Big 10 universities using interactive distance technology. In the 2003-2004 academic year, IU's Beginning Uzbek instructor taught a daily class in which some students were present in Bloomington, but others were at Ohio State University (OSU) in Columbus, Ohio. In fall 2004, this experiment was expanded. Besides Uzbek at OSU, Beginning Kazakh has been taught by an IU instructor through distance technology to students at Michigan State University and the University of Michigan.

The results of this experiment to date are promising, but it remains to be seen whether this kind of language instruction can be done in a cost-effective way on a sustained basis. There is little or no charge for use of the interactive video; however, there are other substantial costs, including payment to a native language informant at the remote campus, occasional travel by the teacher to the remote campus(es), additional administrative costs, and communication (fax, phone). Moreover, an instructor preparing to teach a this kind of class needs special training.

The same NSEP grant to IU that has supported the interactive course allowed establishment of an in-country advanced level course for Uzbek in Samarkand and Kazakh in Almaty in 2003 and 2004. It still is not clear whether this course will be offered in 2005. Over the longer term, these kinds of courses might be supported through a Fulbright Group Projects Abroad (GPA) program. The numbers of students who have the necessary preparation to attend an advanced program in these LCTLs is very small, which, despite the low in-country costs, makes the per student costs of these programs very high. Moreover, because students come to these programs from a variety of institutions (and the list of institutions itself changes from year to year), educational institutions are not willing to invest in these programs. (The 11 students who participated in these programs during the two years of NSEP funding represent six different U.S. universities.) For this reason, Fulbright GPA funding would fill a very great need. Analogous programs for other Central Asian languages would be extremely useful. However, these are even more problematic because enrollments in the other languages are even smaller, and/or because political and security issues complicate their creation.

The capabilities of emerging technology may offer some attractive options to meet the specific needs and problems of Central Asian language instruction. Despite their greater importance for American students and relatively strong enrollments at the present time, the LCTLs of Central Asia will almost certainly remain just that, i.e., *less* commonly taught languages. Few institutions will be able to afford to hire well-qualified instructors to teach even one of these languages, let alone two or three. Moreover, as noted above, students today are approaching the study of these languages with a greater variety of goals and background. Effective use of new technology might make it possible to exploit

high-quality learning materials in new ways. With such materials, a team of a LCTL language pedagogy specialists working with a student and native speaker might be able to developed specialized courses that even could be offered to learners across institutions. A legion of logistical problems would need to be addressed to make this possible, but the result would likely be preferable to students being unable to access the courses at their home institutions, or, in the best case, work with native speakers who are not teaching within a framework that assures high quality of instruction.

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