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INITIATIVE
A National
Project for
US/ED Title VI
Programs

National Planning for
the Teaching of the
Less Commonly
Taught Languages

# Collaborative Planning for Meeting National Needs in the Less Commonly Taught Languages: Defining Criteria for Priorities in the Languages of the World Regions

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## Introduction

The United States has perhaps the world's most highly developed foreign language and area studies programs in the 131 National Resource Centers (NRC) and Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Centers and the supporting 14 Language Resource Centers. Together, these centers offer more than 200 languages in support of high quality research for creating new knowledge about the many nations and cultures of the world and serving the broad national needs of the United States, including building cooperative partnerships with peoples abroad.

No other educational system in the world provides instruction in so many of the less commonly taught languages (LCTLs). This widespread instruction - in 55 universities in 27 states plus the District of Columbia - ensures the high quality of knowledge concerning the peoples, cultures, economies, polities, and current events of nations and peoples abroad. During the three academic years 2001-04, these NRCs taught students in 128 of these languages and made available another 98 languages if there was student demand. (38 of these are "historical languages" needed for interpreting ancient texts of languages no longer in contemporary use.)

In 2002-03, the NRC and FLAS centers awarded 1,632 academic year and summer Title VI FLAS Fellowships to graduate students to study 103 different LCTLs. Fifty-one percent of the FLAS Fellowships were for languages of Eastern Europe and Russia, the Middle East, Inner Asia, and South Asia. This includes: Arabic (185 fellowships - 11.3%), Russian (151 - 9.3%), Hindi (94 - 5.8%), Turkish (46 - 2.8%) and Persian (43 - 2.6%). Also, 141 FLAS Fellowships were awarded to students studying 22 African languages, 255 were awarded to students of 10 Latin American languages, and 267 were awarded to students of 13 East Asian and Southeast Asian languages.

We realize the unique resource that the NRCs have built when we note that these university centers are able to provide instruction in approximately two-and-a-half times as many contemporary LCTLs as the Defense Language Institute (DLI) and Foreign Service Institute (FSI), which together offer instruction in 75 different LCTLs. Only four languages are provided at DLI or FSI that are not available at any NRC - Pakistani Baluchi at DLI, Tausug and Tetun of Southeast Asia, and the Iraqi dialect of Arabic.

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A Project of the Michigan State University African Studies Center, Asian Studies Center, Center for Advanced Study of International Development with the Women & International Development Program, and Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, in cooperation with the Center for Language Education And Research and the Center for International Business Education and Research and in collaboration with the National Foreign Language Center and the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages.

This NRC system for offering LCTLs and area studies has its roots in legislation in the late 1950s creating Title VI of the National Defense Education Act, later re-titled the "Higher Education Act." This legislation was initiated in response to newly perceived needs of the nation for language training and area studies as tools to support its leadership in the world with better understanding of the rest of the world

In spite of this national excellence, deciding which languages should be offered has been left to individual universities and, sometimes, even, individual faculty. Now, as National Resource Centers, these faculties are tasked to provide the expertise needed by the nation in foreign language and area studies and not only for their own students. Frequently, they have responded to obvious needs for studies of the world region by offering the languages of the major regional powers, e.g. selecting contemporary Russian for study of all of the republics of the Soviet Union, Portuguese for Brazil, Mandarin for China, as well as Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, and Arabic. However, which languages should be offered beyond these obvious first choices has been less clear when faced with a multiplicity of languages. For example, the Russian and East European National Resource Centers can begin with Russian, but what else is appropriate? How can one choose among Bulgarian, Romanian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian, Chechen, Uzbeki, Tajiki, and the multiplicity of languages of the former Soviet republics of the Russian Far East and Central Asia? Even more difficult is the task for the South and Southeast Asianists and the Africanists who must choose among the hundreds of languages in their regions beyond the one or two obvious choices of Indonesian, Tagalog, Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati, Swahili, and Fula/Fulfulde. The choices are limited by a combination of funding, available instructors, teaching materials, and even the basic linguistic studies. They also are limited by "the market" of students interested to study these LCTL languages.

Several of the world regions – Africa and South and Southeast Asia – have settled on priorities for languages to be offered in their annual summer intensive languages institutes by responding to "the market" of current student demand for 4-12 major languages of the region. These choices ensure the offering of the most commonly taught languages of each region, but lack of funding prevents offering key second tier languages for which the demand is very small.

According to Richard Lambert (1994), "[o]ur eventual goal in foreign language planning should be the development of a comprehensive, integrated public policy on foreign language instruction and use" (p. 48). Part of that planning includes deciding which languages should be taught: "Surely, one of the first items in language planning in the United States should concern the development of a rational decision-making process as to which languages to teach and which languages particular kinds of students should learn" (p. 54).

This paper reviews the processes of developing priorities in language instruction among U.S. area studies and language experts. To accomplish this, we have initiated a conversation among the centers and language teaching communities about what should be our priorities in the investment of scarce federal and private grant funding and, indeed, the budgetarily constrained program and salary funds of our universities.

## The History of Priority and Criteria Setting in Foreign Area and Language Studies

### The Consequences of “Market Models” in Determining Language Offerings

“Global developments in recent years have forced policymakers in the United States to take a new look at ethnic conflict and economic competitiveness as well as such international concerns as international security, humanitarian assistance, human rights, and ecology. This new view directly mandates a national capability to train and maintain, at a minimum, a segment of the population with the world beyond the confines of Western Europe” (Brecht and Walton 1994:190). In the new millenium, an urgency was added as the U.S. sought additional language capacity in the many LCTLs of the Middle East, Newly Independent States, Central and South Asia, and especially Afghanistan and Iraq. Indeed, after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in September 2001, funding was added to the Title VI NRC budgets in 2002 to address more fully the language needs in the Middle East, Central and South Asia, and the NIS regions. In 2003, funding was added to build capacity in languages of the Muslim world in Africa and Southeast Asia.

### Priorities before Title VI Programs

The history of priority and criteria setting in foreign area and language studies is closely related to the historical development of a national interest in teaching and learning foreign languages.

Prior to World War I (WWI), national interest in foreign languages was limited. Until WWI, other than the classical Greek and Latin, French and German almost exclusively were the only foreign languages taught in American schools, excepting a few ethnic or religious enclaves that taught “the mother tongue.” The priorities were defined by the extant paradigm for the growth of modernization, moving from the classical languages of Greece and Rome and the powers of Europe, France and Germany. A few instructors interested in Spanish and Italian attempted to incorporate those languages into school curriculums as well; however, most curriculum planners retained a focus on French and German (Parker 1957:2).

After the end of World War I, instruction in German in U.S. public schools was ended and courses in Germanic studies virtually disappeared due to the anti-German sentiment in the country. Spanish took its place. In 1923, instructors organized the American Association of Teachers of Italian and courses in French, Spanish, and Italian became available in a number of schools. In addition to these three languages, several LCTLs, including Portuguese and Hebrew, vied for recognition, especially in the eastern states of the U.S.

It was not until during and after World War II (WWII), however, that Americans realized how ill-equipped they were to communicate with foreign nations and peoples (Fife and Nielsen 1961, Parker 1954). After the war, the study of Russian soared as the Cold War grew heated. After the wartime Intensive Language Program began, “25 languages, few of them ever offered before in an American college, were being taught in 18 institutions during the summer of 1948. Among them were Hausa, Arabic, modern Greek, Burmese, Malay, Thai, Japanese, and Chinese” (Parker 1954:2). With the rise of these language teaching efforts, academics and politicians began to ask how many languages the schools could afford to teach and how many the U.S. could afford *not* to learn (Parker 1954). It was at this time that Americans began to examine their foreign language needs and the question of how to prioritize language offerings.

In addition to a growing general national awareness of the need for foreign language training and some interest in languages to serve academic research needs, three specific constituencies within the U.S. became concerned with language instruction (Parker 1954): the armed forces, the federal government, and business. Each of the three areas had different needs for foreign languages. As those needs changed, so did the languages upon which they focused; therefore, the criteria for selecting languages was largely based on perceptions of particular U.S. needs and interests which altered with changing circumstances and international crises.

In 1943, the Army instituted a Foreign Area and Language Studies program in its military programs within colleges and universities. Although the program survived for a long period, it sparked the interest of many teachers and gave them “an idea for peacetime education” (Parker 1957:48). After WWII, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, language and area studies programs began to appear. The new area studies challenged the traditional departmental organization of universities and took on a variety of forms. For example, some area programs focused on undergraduate study and integrated courses, while others formed separate centers or institutions to address different world regions (Bigelow and Legters 1964:7-8). By October 1954, in this linguistic effervescence of the Cold War years, academics had initiated 62 programs concentrated in 30 universities, primarily the established major research universities. These programs included studies of Africa, Eastern Europe, Far East, Latin America, Near East, Russia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Western Europe (Parker 1957:48).

The rise of language and area studies was accompanied by an increased interest in the LCTLs. Despite the increase in and programs designed for the study of LCTLs, a serious weakness in the area approach was in language instruction. A scarcity of teachers and a lack of teaching materials resulted in poor language instruction and the omission of many important languages (Bigelow and Legters 1964:13-14). In spite of the official emphasis on language instruction, with the exception of African and Southeast Asian area studies, most area studies programs did not include instruction in LCTLs. As language and area studies developed, academics determined that such areas of study should not supplant traditional disciplines. They began to develop centers to specifically address area specialties (Bigelow and Legters 1964:15).

Regardless of the increased awareness of the importance of learning a foreign language, enrollments in college language courses dropped in the period 1947-1953. To spark an interest in foreign language enrollment, the U.S. Commissioner of Education’s, Earl J. McGrath, made a public announcement in 1952 concerning the importance of language training through formal education (Parker 1954:83). Later in 1952, the Rockefeller Foundation increased its involvement in and funding of global affairs. In 1953, colleges and universities began to restore some of their language programs, but only in the more commonly taught languages such as French, German, and Spanish. Although enrollments began to increase, it does not appear that universities set criteria for determining what languages should be offered.

## Title VI Priorities of the Late 1950s and Early 1960s

In 1952, the Rockefeller Foundation made a grant of $120,000 to the Modern Language Association (MLA) in support of a six-year foreign language program that concluded in August 1958 (Parker 1954:84; 1961:10). The next month, on September 2, 1958, President Eisenhower signed into law the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). Part of the NDEA was the Government's *Title VI Language Development Program* that was administered by staff from the MLA.

Title VI created two major foci on language development. *Part A, Centers and Research and Studies*, was designed to provide support for language and area studies centers, fellowships to students taking advanced language courses, and research and materials development for all modern foreign languages. *Part B, Language Institutes*, was designed to provide summer and academic year programs for elementary and secondary schoolteachers (Bigelow and Legters 1964:16-17). Within each of these areas, Title VI focused on the study of LCTLs (Parker 1961:15-16). In fact, a major goal of Title VI was "to support an aspect of language instruction that the government believes would otherwise not survive, the teaching of the less commonly taught languages" (Moore 1994:81). However, once the Commissioner of Education determined that foreign language instruction in the U.S. required attention, the Office of Education was faced with the task of determining "which of some 3,000 languages were 'critical languages'" (Bigelow and Legters 1964:19). Based on the results of a study conducted by the American Council of Learned Societies, the Commissioner developed three categories of critical languages: 1) the country's most needed languages (which included Arabic, Chinese, Hindustani, Japanese, Portuguese, and Russian); 2) less needed languages (which included the official languages of national states); and 3) languages not currently in great demand but that might grow in importance (Bigelow and Legters 1964:19-20).

Despite the Office of Education's attempt to prioritize languages, this task became difficult in relationship to LCTLs for two main reasons. First, the languages that the Office deemed important took a backseat to the languages that were actually being demanded to support research abroad and therefore taught in language and area studies centers. Second, new information about different languages and their function in different countries and new language needs of scholars and government shifted interest in those languages, regardless of the quality and quantity of materials or instructors for those languages (Bigelow and Legters 1964:20-21).

To complicate the matter of prioritization of languages, scholars within Title VI centers began to confer about how to organize centers and how to determine which languages they should offer. In March 1960, Georgetown University sponsored the National Conference on the Teaching of African Languages and Area Studies. At the conference, scholars focused on "flexibility" and decided not to create a "priority ranking of African Languages" (Welmers 1961:48). They determined that in the case of African languages, it would be best if they "provide instruction in any African language for which there is reasonable demand and for which a competent speaker can be found and adequate instructional materials developed" (Welmers 1961:48). They reasoned that because Africa has a large number of languages that are neither national nor official, the African continent required a more flexible set of criteria than other world regions. Despite their desire for flexibility and to avoid ranking African languages, members of the conference decided to approach African language instruction from both a geographical and a linguistically defined point of view. This would allow them to select some languages for concentration and leave others to be studied on a more ad hoc basis, without having to rank the languages (Welmer 1961:55). In terms of a geographic focus, the conference suggested six foci for African language programs: 1) West Africa; 2) Ghana-Nigeria; 3) Central Africa; 4) Southern Africa; 5) East Africa; and 6) Ethiopia and North Africa (Welmers 1961:59-67). Within each geographic area, the conference specified languages that deserve major emphases and languages that could be included in expanded language programs. This produced a list of 19 African languages that the conference suggested for major emphasis and 42 languages for expansion.

Shortly after that conference, in March of 1961, the MLA and the U.S. Office of Education sponsored the Conference on Neglected Languages. The purpose of the conference was to address specific problems of language development. The conference aimed at developing a long-term strategy of studying “neglected languages.” To achieve this goal, the conference focused on two elements: 1) developing criteria for the selection of languages “deemed worthy of development in the national interest or for development under other stated conditions”; and 2) formulating “a list of neglected languages deemed worthy of development in accordance with the criteria of (1) above” (Fife and Nielsen 1961:1). Unlike the *Conference on the Teaching of African Languages and Area Studies*, this conference attempted to develop national criteria to prioritize the teaching of neglected languages.

To develop a list of criteria for selecting which neglected languages should be studied, members of the conference were given a survey on priorities with a list of 16 criteria to consider: 1) enhancement of international understanding and cooperation; 2) enhancement of prestige abroad; 3) cultural significance; 4) cultural and/or ethnic affinity; 5) advancement of linguistic science; 6) number of speakers; 7) representation of a political entity; 8) geographic location; 9) fulfillment of U.S. obligations under treaties and alliances; 10) international commerce and trade; 11) exchange of scientific and technological information; 12) residence of U.S. nationals abroad; 13) philanthropic and religious operations; 14) residence of foreign nationals in the U.S.; 15) need of target language as a vehicle for teaching of English; and 16) political significance. After deliberation on these 16 criteria, the consensus of the conference was that three major criteria should determine what neglected languages students should learn: 1) all languages of a national political unit; 2) all languages other than national languages of major regional and cultural significance; and 3) languages of lesser regional and cultural significance (Fife and Nielsen 1961:4). In developing a list applying these three criteria, the conference also stated that the number of speakers should also be taken into account. They suggested that numbers between 20 and 65 million be a cut-off point for the list of highest priority languages. They also recommend that the list be periodically revised (Fife and Nielsen 1961:4-5). In developing a list of languages, they adopted the African language model and grouped the languages by region.
The conferences and the attempts by the Office of Education determined that developing a priority of needs – for the government, business, industry, and academic institutions in the U.S. - is difficult because “priorities vary with time and circumstance” (Bigelow and Legters 1964:68). For example, in examining enrollments in LCTLs 10 years after the Title VI was established, scholars began to cast doubt as to whether or not the languages that the Office of Education deemed important in the early 1960s still deserved special attention (Gage 1970).

In the meantime, the study of LCTL languages proliferated in the U.S. government. In the State Department, the Foreign Service Institute oversaw the language proficiency training and testing of Foreign Service Officers. The Peace Corps provided training in various LCTLs and commissioned new instructional tapes and texts for volunteers that also were used by the universities. And the Department of Defense created the Monterey Institute for the military's study of a limited number of LCTLs, primarily of Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. As the complexity of these multiple programs grew, a Government Foreign Language Roundtable was established to provide for coordination among the Departments of State, Defense, Education, CIA, and others, but the roundtable did not eventuate in determining government or other priorities in the allocation of funds for fellowships, language materials development, and support of instruction. It appeared that the model set during the Teaching of African Languages and Area Studies conference was more useful over the long-term because it set criteria based on the indigenous use and cultural and political significance of the languages themselves, rather than on "U.S. needs" alone.

## Varying government priorities among languages

The two current major government programs for teaching LCTLs are a) the *Foreign Service Institute* (FSI) which has prepared foreign service officers in diplomacy and foreign language skills, and b) the programs of the Department of Defense, principally the *Defense Foreign Language Program* (DFLP), which serves the language training needs of number of federal agencies. In addition, there are smaller programs internal to other government agencies such as the Central Intelligence and National Security Agencies that serve their own and their sometimes more specialized needs. The U.S. military reports a very large complement of language-proficient personnel: 11,500 military language specialists (not including 40,000 DOD civilian employees with language capacity, plus 170,000 military personnel with language expertise (Nordin, 2001). The FSI and DFLP centers of training cooperate through the government's *Interagency Language Roundtable* (ILR) in developing common standards and proficiency measurements. (Currently, the ILR includes these agencies plus the U.S. Department of Education (IEGPS), CIA, Defense Intelligence Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the National Security Agency.)

The combination of languages offered by the California and Washington, D.C. branches of the DFLP reveals a selection of 48 languages that are offered at multiple levels. The criteria for choosing these languages are not elucidated. In 2004, the FSI indicates offering 68 languages, which are not identified (see www.state.gov/m/fsi, 4/29/2003).

**African (5 languages)**: Afrikaans, Amharic, Lingala, Somali, Swahili

**Asian (17):** Afghan, Bengali, Burmese, Cambodian, Cantonese, Chinese Mandarin, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Lao, Malay, Singhalese, Tagalog, Thai, Urdu, Vietnamese

**Middle East and Central Asian (6):** Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, Persian-Farsi, Pashto, Turkish

**European and Latin American (22):** Albanian, Belarusian, Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian/Croatian, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, Swedish, Ukrainian

## The African Area Model in 1980

As the study of LCTLs grew in U.S. universities and government during the late 1970s, the major university African studies centers began a search for a system of selecting which languages to teach (Wiley and Dwyer 1980:1). With the increased focus on LCTLs, Africanists in the U.S. became "convinced that the African continent has not been assigned sufficient importance in the planning of United States foreign policy" (Wiley and Dwyer 1980:1). In a volume in 1975, the Center for Applied Linguistics (1975) had collected a number of regional language specialists to assess the needs for language materials development in the LCTLs, pointing to many lacunae in target reference grammars, dictionaries, various ancillary materials, and even the basic linguistics materials needed prior to constructing learning materials.

To address problems in African language instruction, area scholars and language teachers met for one day during the November 1978 African Studies Association Annual Meeting. To build on this initial discussion, the following year, linguists, area specialists, and five of the directors of the nine NDEA Title VI African language and area studies National Resource Centers met in March at Michigan State University's African Studies Center.

One of the main focuses of the consultation was to develop a system of prioritization "to delimit the number of languages which are required to meet user needs in a wide variety of nations" (Wiley and Dwyer 1980:2). The scholars argued that a focus only on the most common African languages does not provide enough languages to support adequately the broad needs of Africanist researchers over the more than 50 African nations and hundreds of languages. The Africanist conferees argued that a new system of prioritization was needed because the old system, developed by the MLA, prioritized only three African languages: Arabic, Swahili, and Hausa. The conferees argued that even though these languages "provide access to a larger area of Africa than other languages, knowledge of them will not permit any communication with more than half of the rest of the continent" (Wiley and Dwyer 1980:3).

The conferees also argued that prioritizing African languages is particularly important because unlike other world regions, most countries in Africa do not have one official language. In fact, "[t]he typical African pattern is one of numerous languages per nation, with no one language clearly dominant either in numbers of speakers or in the sociopolitical power of its speakers" (Wiley and Dwyer 1980:5). To accommodate this pattern, most African countries have retained the colonial language (i.e., French, English, or Portuguese) as the national language. However, because many Africans are not trained in colonial languages, to speak with most Africans foreigners need to learn local indigenous languages (Wiley and Dwyer 1980:6). Because of the unique nature of the African language situation, conferees felt the need to find some way of prioritizing the 750-1,500 different languages in Africa. (Numbers vary by which scholars are estimating and which criteria are utilized to separate "languages" from "dialects.")

To address the problem of African language instruction, the conferees developed a set of criteria to create a categorization of African languages into four priority levels. These four levels "suggest the relative significance of these languages in so far as language teaching and materials development are concerned" for instruction in the U.S. (Wiley and Dwyer 1980:6). Because no one criterion can be used to prioritize languages, the conferees agreed upon three major criteria. The first criterion is the number of speakers. This includes people who speak the language as their first language and as an additional language. The second criterion is the political, cultural, and social importance of the language. This includes whether the language is the official language, if it extends across national boundaries, how widely it is used as a lingua franca, if it is used in educational systems, if it has a recognized oral or written literature, if it is used in mass media, and whether speakers or national agencies are promoting its use and literacy. The third criterion is the importance for "U.S. national interests." This includes concerns such as economic ties between the nation(s) where the language is spoken and the U.S., "political relations with the nation(s), strategic location of the nation(s) and/or language, and cultural and technological exchange programs" (Wiley and Dwyer 1980:7). While not always the case, typically most languages that rank high by the last two of the criteria will also have a large number of speakers. Similarly, languages with a large number of speakers generally will rank high utilizing criteria 2 and 3 (Wiley and Dwyer 1980:7).

Wiley and Dwyer (1980) warn that "[w]hile all the criteria must be weighed against each other in establishing priorities, those in #3 (national interests) are particularly subject to change for any given language because of shifting political and economic trends" (p. 7). Thus, as other LCTL scholars have noted (Bigelow and Legters 1964; Parker 1954), relying heavily on U.S. national interests as a criterion for prioritizing languages results in frequent changes in what languages are defined as of high priority; therefore, language institutes and centers should periodically review the languages they offer to see if they still meet the designated criteria (Wiley and Dwyer 1980:7).

As Africanists had observed during the 1961 *National Conference on the Teaching of African Languages and Area Studies*, because there are so many African languages, it is best to group them (Welmers 1961). However, rather than grouping languages by region as Africanists did in 1961, the Africanists in the 1979 conference determined it was best to group the languages by whether or not the languages meet all or some of the criteria. Therefore, they developed four groups of languages as follows: 1) Group A consists of languages that meet criteria 1 and at least some of criteria 2 and 3; 2) Group B consists of the remaining languages that have more than one million speakers; 3) Group C includes languages with less than one million speakers but that scholars feel are of special local importance or key to primary research; and 4) Group 4 includes all the remaining languages. According to this grouping scheme, Africanists prioritized 23 languages in Group A, 30 languages in Group B, 29 in Group C, and the remainder of more than 600 in Group D (Wiley and Dwyer 1980:7-8). (See Attachment A.)

The Africanist criteria have served that university community as a guide for selecting languages for offering in academic programs and summer intensive programs, making the offering of instructional programs more rational. The resultant 25-30 high priority languages have been the core of offerings in on-demand programs which seek to offer those languages for accessing the scholarship, communities, media, archives, and other foreign language sources through foreign area and foreign language research.

However, the extant language situation has changed in the 25 years that the Africanist criteria have been in use. New nations occasion new "national languages." New perspectives and judgements redefine which languages are of scholarly and government interest.

To re-conceptualize the task of setting priorities in teaching LCTL languages, we move to a more general suggestion of the criteria that can be appropriated for prioritizing all LCTLs.

## The rationale for developing criteria for prioritizing LCTL languages

Based on the African experience for 25 years, we commend these new criteria as a basis in order to lay the groundwork for broader cooperation within the language teaching community. The criteria suggest a summative judgment about (1) the relative significance of these languages for U.S. learners; (2) a basis for judging what priorities should be given to the development of language teaching and materials for particular languages; (3) which languages to offer in summer language programs in the U.S. and abroad, and (4) which languages should be given priority for developing distance learning materials and programs in order to extend access to the LCTL languages in the U.S.

**Qualifying our concern for criteria** - We all concur that every language is important and that special concern should be expressed for the potential loss of very small, minority languages. For linguists, all languages are important. And for the indigenous speakers, their own language may be the most important of all. Furthermore, priority criteria and the resultant language classifications are not meant to marginalize any current language programs, specializations, or research efforts.

**Heritage Languages** - Teaching LCTL languages in the 1990s and beyond has been reshaped by the growing foreign heritage communities in the U.S. from every continent. Because the first responsibility of U.S. universities is to provide access to LCTL languages for research scholars and other users, we believe that the heritage communities provide both tutors for languages and some new learners on our campuses; however, while their demand for learning their heritage language may provide additional enrollments for our classes, their demand is not a criterion for prioritizing languages that serve the broad national interests of students, teachers, linguists, business, assistance projects, government, and the general public.

## Draft Criteria for Prioritizing LCTL Languages

Because no single criterion can be used to prioritize languages, we propose the following major criteria for use in each of the major Title VI language communities, i.e.

**(1) The first criterion is the number of speakers**. This includes people who speak the language as their first language and as an additional language. **In general, the languages with the larger number of speakers are also likely to be "national languages."**

**(2) Is the language a "national language," i.e. the primary language or *lingua franca* for a nation?** This includes whether the language is the official language or, if not, whether it extends across national boundaries and is widely used as a trade language or broad multi-national *lingua franca*.

**(3) Is the language used widely in educational institutions, broadcast and/or print media, and contemporary written and oral literatures of the peoples?**

**(4) Is the language found in large amounts of archival materials important for various disciplines? Some languages now in usage decline may have important residual archives and literatures for certain classes of scholars and users.**

**(5) Is the language important because of its usage or significance politically, culturally, and socially? For example, although Amharic is a minority language of Ethiopia, its dominant usage for many years of government give it importance above the number of speakers.**

**(6) Is the language important for U.S. national interests, such as for scholarly research and use by business, media, foreign diplomacy and development assistance, and other government programs?** This includes concerns such as the need for foreign language to support economic ties between the nation(s) where those languages are spoken and the U.S., “political relations with the nation(s), strategic location of the nation(s) and/or language, and cultural and technological exchange programs” (Wiley and Dwyer 1980:7).

## Conclusion

The U.S. nation needs more capacity in foreign languages. Recently, the American Translators Association, the Federal Interagency Language Roundtable, the Society of Federal Linguists, and the National Foreign Language Center demonstrated that more than 80 Federal agencies have current foreign language requirements (Ted Crump. 2001. *Translating and Interpreting in the Federal Government*. Alexandria, VA: American Translators Association). And national economic, security, and political concerns bring new demand for a rationality in the national commitment to careful use of resources in offering LCTLs in the broad national interest. As Senator Paul Simon noted, “In every national crisis from the Cold War through Vietnam, Desert Storm, Bosnia and Kosovo, our nation has lamented its foreign language shortfalls. But then the crisis "goes away," and we return to business as usual. One of the messages of Sept. 11 is that business as usual is no longer an acceptable option.” (Sen. Paul Simon, “Beef Up the Country's Foreign Language Skills,” The Washington Post, October 23, 2001, p. A23, reported in <www.nflc.org/security/background.htm>.)

Those needs cry out for a rationalization of the use of Title VI resources for LCTLs - in university offerings, instructor and tutor salaries, investments in summer and intensive language abroad programs, and in creating new learning materials and distance learning access. The task now is one for each world regional group of Title VI National and Language Resource Centers.

July 3, 2004

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## Attachment A

## Prioritization of the African Languages in 1978-80

From Wiley, David and David Dwyer. 1980. African Language Instruction in the United States: Directions and Priorities for the 1980s. Michigan State University, African Studies Center.

Note: In 2003-04, the Africanists have produced a new list of priority languages. See “Priorities for U.S. Instruction in the African Languages: New Criteria and New Choices” at <www.elctl.msu.edu/regions/africaoverview.pdf>

Given the nature of the African geo-linguistic and socio-linguistic situation, the decisions concerning which African languages need to be taught certainly are much more complex than they are for most other parts of the world. In order to cope with this situation, we have developed a set of criteria designed to rank the languages into one of four groups, which are designed to suggest the relative significance of these languages insofar as language teaching and materials development are concerned.

The conferees agreed that no single criterion can be used to create a priority ordering of African languages in terms of importance for study in the universities. The major criteria agreed upon are the following:

1. Number of speakers: this would include both the number of people who speak the language as their first language and those who speak it as an additional language.

2. Political, cultural, and social importance: this includes such factors as whether the language is recognized as the official language of any country; whether it extends across national boundaries; how widely it is used as a lingua franca; whether it is a language used in educational systems; the extent to which a recognized literature, oral or written, exists; whether it is an important language in mass media (newspapers, television, and especially radio); whether speakers and/or national governments are actively working in the promotion of its use and literacy in the language.

3. Importance for US. national interests: this includes factors such as economic ties of the U.S. with the nation(s) where the language is spoken, political relations with the nation(s), strategic location of the nation(s) and/or language, and cultural and technological exchange programs.

The languages that rank high by criteria 2 and 3 will typically also have large numbers of speakers, and likewise languages with large numbers of speakers typically will rank high by the factors in 2 and 3. The correlation does not hold universally, however, particularly in cases where African languages have been chosen as official languages of countries. For example, Somali has between 4 and 5 million speakers, yet the fact that Somalia has adopted Somali as the official language and the fact that Somalia has a very active and effective program of development of Somali at all levels of national life locate it in the same high priority category with Hausa or Swahili, which have many more speakers. The fact that Fula is spoken across the entire extent of the West African savanna, in some places as a lingua franca, makes it rank high even though it is not the official language of any country and does not have as many speakers as some other languages.

While all the criteria must be weighed against each other in establishing priorities, those in 3 are particularly subject to change for any given language because of shifting political and economic trends. For example, because of political changes in Ethiopia, Oromo has acquired increased importance. Consequently, a periodic review is called for to see whether priorities have shifted for particular languages.

Because different criteria have varying significance for each language, it is impossible to rank the languages of Africa in any fixed list according to priority for study. Accordingly, they have been listed here in groups, Group A being those languages with large numbers of speakers and meeting at least some of the criteria in 2 and 3. In 1976-77, the category A languages accounted for 93 percent of the enrollments in African language courses at the major African language programs. Group B includes the remaining languages which have more than 1 million speakers. Because accurate demographic data are often difficult to obtain, the list of Group B languages should not be considered to be closed at this time. Should other languages be shown to meet the criteria for Group B, then they too should be added to the list. Group C includes languages with fewer than 1 million speakers that are felt to be of special local importance or to be key languages for primary research. The list of Group C languages also remains open so that, given sufficient evidence, other languages may be added to the list. Group D includes the remaining languages of Africa.

The resulting classification of all African languages into the four categories of priority is presented on the following two pages. In Appendix A to this report, the status of each of the languages in categories A and B is described and annotated in further detail.

**Group A - African Languages (Highest Priority)**

1. Akan (Twi/Asante/Akuapem/Fante)
2. Amharic
3. Arabic
4. Chewa/Nyanja
5. Fula (Fulfulde/Peulh/Fula)
6. Hausa
7. Igbo
8. Kongo
9. Malagasy
10. Mandingo (Bambara/Mandinka/Dyula)
11. Ngala (Lingala)
12. Oromo (Galla)
13. Ruanda/Rundi (Kirwanda/Kirundi)
14. Sango
15. Shona
16. Somali
17. Sotho/Tswana (Ndebele)
18. Swahili
19. Tigrinyna
20. Umbundu
21. Wolof
22. Xhosa/Zulu/Swazi
23. Yoruba

## Group B African Languages (Second Priority)

1. Anyi/Baule
2. Bamileke
3. Bemba
4. Berber(Tamazight/Tamacheq/Kabylle)
5. Chokwe/Lunda
6. Efik/Ibibio
7. Ewe/Mina/Fon
8. Ganda (Luganda)
9. Gbaya
10. Kalenjin (Nandi/Kipsigis)
11. Kamba (Kikamba)
12. Kanuri
13. Kikuyu
14. Krio/Pidgin (Cluster)
15. Luba (Chiluba)
16. Luhya
17. Luo (Acholi/Lango)
18. Makua (includes Lomwe)
19. Mbundu (Kimbundu)
20. Mende/Bandi/Loko
21. Mongo/Nkundo
22. More/Mossi
23. Nubian
24. Senufo
25. Songhai
26. Sukuma/Nyamwezi
27. Tiv
28. Tsonga (Shitsonga/Ronga or Shironga/Tswa or Shitswa)
29. Yao/Makonde (Bulu)
30. Zande (Azande)

Note: There is considerable variability in the English form, spelling, and usage of the names of many of these languages. The alternatives listed here are representative but not exhaustive.

## Group C African Languages (Third Priority)

1. Dinka (Agar/Bor/Padang)
2. Edo (Bini)
3. Gogo (Chigogo)
4. Gurage
5. Hehe
6. Idoma
7. Igbira
8. Ijo
9. Kpelle
10. Kru/Basra
11. Lozi (Silozi)
12. Maasai
13. Mauritian Creole
14. Menu
15. Nama (Damara)
16. Nuer
17. Nupe
18. Nyakusa
19. Nyoro
20. Sara
21. Serere/Sine (Serer)
22. Sidamo
23. Soninke
24. Suppire
25. Susu
26. Temne .
27. Tumbuka (Chitumbuka)
28. Turkana/Teso
29. Venda

## Group D African Languages (Fourth Priority) - All Other Languages