

## Languages in the News

### Interview with Clay Pell

Clay Pell, former director for strategic planning for the National Security Staff, was recently appointed the new Deputy Assistant Secretary for International and Foreign Language Education. Pell speaks Chinese, Spanish, and Arabic and claims he is committed to foreign language study.

During an interview with the editor of *Language Magazine*, Pell declared that his focus in his new position was to ensure that the “next generation of students are fully prepared to lead and thrive in the 21st century, including with critical foreign language and international skills.” He explained how studying foreign languages widened his world perspectives and cites the multitude of benefits of language study, including cognitive advantages, enrichment, and global competitiveness. He also claimed that study abroad experiences are closing the achievement gap between minority students and their majority peers.

Pell asserted that the Department of Education is prompting states to include global competencies into “common academic core subjects, into college-and-career-ready standards, and into expected learning outcomes.” His four main goals for increasing foreign language study in the U.S. are 1) to build “bridges” at all levels so individuals have opportunities to study foreign languages throughout school and employment; 2) to include those individuals who are typically underrepresented in such programs; 3) to advance technology so that individuals have access to cutting-edge resources, and 4) to continue to support

the study of less commonly taught languages. Pell also emphasized the need for initiatives that support and increase the number of dual language immersion programs, the number of heritage language speakers, and study abroad programs.

Click [here](#) to read *Interview with Clay Pell*.

### *The U.S. Foreign Language Deficit: Why it Matters*

Kathleen Stein-Smith summarizes the evidence showing that Americans lag behind the rest of the world in language skills and why this is a disadvantage both economically and socially. She points to recent studies in which legislators lament the lack of workers with language skills, yet little has been done to reverse this trend.

One reason she suggests for the lack of progress is that Americans cannot easily find and immerse themselves in language-rich environments in the United States. Furthermore, the general lack of motivation to explore new languages is another hurdle.

Her suggestions for combatting this mindset include highlighting the multilingual skills of figures in popular culture (media, sports, movies) and engaging in a strategic marketing campaign with business, government and educational organizations--similar to what occurred in the European Union--to increase interest and motivation in language learning among adults.

Click [here](#) to read *The U.S. Foreign Language Deficit: Why it Matters*

# Tips and Tools for Early Language

## WEBSITES

### World Digital Library

The World Digital Library (WDL) is a site that provides materials from countries and cultures around the world, free of charge and in multilingual format. The site was created by a team at the U.S. Library of Congress, with contributions by partner institutions in many countries and with the support of the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and a number of companies and private foundations.

The WDL was created to promote international and intercultural understanding, expand the volume and variety of cultural content on the Internet, provide resources for educators, scholars, and general audiences, and build capacity in partner institutions to narrow the digital divide within and between countries. On the WDL site it is possible to discover, study, and enjoy cultural treasures from around the world in a variety of ways. The cultural treasures include manuscripts, maps, rare books, musical scores, recordings, films, prints, photographs, and architectural drawings. One can browse by place, time, topic, type of item, and contributing institution, or locate items by an open-ended search in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, or Spanish. Many more languages are represented in the primary materials themselves.

Click [here](#) to access the World Digital Library.

This issue of *Newsworthy* was compiled by Tammy Dann. Send any comments, questions or information for future issues to her at [tdann@nnell.org](mailto:tdann@nnell.org)

## APPS for iPads, iPods and iPhones

### Ottercall (English, Spanish, or French)

In this free app, children can practice their pronunciation with an otter that fishes. Students listen to a word, record themselves as they repeat the word and receive immediate feedback on the accuracy of the pronunciation. Depending on the feedback, the otter can earn a fish or a boot. This is one way for students to hear and compare sounds as they learn new words in English, Spanish or French.

### iCardSort

Help children of all ages to brainstorm and categorize any group of vocabulary words. Create unlimited word decks then alphabetize, match, organize or share the decks easily with others. When finished with a deck, simply tap the reshuffle button so the app is ready for the next use. While the possibilities are endless, unfortunately they are not free. This app costs \$5.99.

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