



CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS

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Title VI--International Education Programs Part A: International and Foreign Language Studies

The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is improving communication through better understanding of language and culture. Our primary area of work is in the intersection of language and education. CAL's involvement in promoting foreign language and foreign language education has been one of its foci from its inception in 1959. CAL was involved in consultations during the creation of the National Defense Education Act, and the transition of many NDEA provisions to the Higher Education Act and subsequent reauthorizations of Title VI of that Act. CAL has also been a recipient of grants gained through the annual competition of the International Research and Studies Program under the International Education Programs Office.

Our comments in response to the following questions of the committee apply primarily to one of the purposes of the International Research and Studies Program under Section 601, Part A (C): “to develop and validate specialized materials and techniques for foreign language acquisition, fluency, emphasizing but not limited to the less commonly taught languages.”

What do you view as the purpose of the Department of Education's Title VI and Fulbright Hays program(s)? What are the program(s) strengths, weaknesses, and criticisms?

CAL views the main purpose of Title VI of the Higher Education Act and the Fulbright Hays program as a sustained effort to increase the capacity of U.S. citizens in foreign language and international studies in order to meet the global challenges that confront our nation. Although amended, the original authorizing language continues to be as valid now as in 1958. Some of the language needs to be updated so that it addresses issues of importance in the 21st century, but the original intent continues to be valid.

With respect to the IRS program, a key purpose of Title VI should be, and is, to “develop and validate specialized materials and techniques.” In addition, an important purpose of Title VI is to collect and analyze information that is critical for policy, research, and practice (surveys, databases, and so on). Currently, such projects are supported within the “materials and techniques” purpose, but it would be clearer and more appropriate for this purpose to be explicitly stated.

Strengths and accomplishments of the program (specifically the IRS program) include the following:

- Over four decades, this program has been a key factor in increasing our knowledge about foreign and second language learning and teaching.

- There are very few other sources of support, federal or otherwise, for scholars to conduct basic and applied research on these topics.
- There would be virtually no foreign language tests for currently identified critical languages if it weren't for this program.
- This program has been the backbone for the development of language materials, particularly in the less commonly taught languages, and often at moments of critical need. For example, IRS funding supported the development of extensive Pashto materials that were the only articulated materials available when the U.S. needed them for training personnel.
- This program has provided funding for information on foreign language enrollments K-16 through surveys conducted by CAL, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), and the Modern Language Association (MLA).
- This program has been open to scholars who serve university as well as K-12 populations, creating a pipeline to higher education in many instances.

In other words, the strength of this program lies in the opportunity it provides to a broad cross-section of the foreign language teaching and research community to identify critical needs and fill them, thereby providing resources that increase the opportunity for Americans to develop foreign language competence and international awareness.

The weaknesses of the program lie in three areas—all in some manner related to funding. The first weakness is that the funds allocated to the IRS Program are insufficient. Many good proposals are not funded, and more expensive (larger or longer) projects cannot be funded because too many other projects would then be rejected. For example, we still do not have an adequate English-Pashto/Pashto-English dictionary that is easily available because there has not been funding for this project. Second, this program is not well-suited to providing long-term funding. This makes it difficult to undertake sustained research on foreign language teaching and learning. The foreign language teaching field is woefully lacking in fundamental, longitudinal research. (Unfortunately, other agencies within the Department of Education have not come forward to fund research in foreign language education, so the IRS Program is the only federal source of funding.) Projects that collect and evaluate materials and tests, for example, need to be funded on a long-term basis rather than the 3-year funding terms that are provided now.

The third area has to do with evaluation of proposals and funded activities. All projects in this program are subject to the same criteria, but these criteria do not fit certain types of projects. In particular, forward-looking studies can provide valuable information about future needs so that the IRS Program can set priorities that are less crisis-driven. Studies of enrollments need to be done on a regular basis, and other surveys can yield valuable information. However, these types of projects should be evaluated by a more appropriate set of criteria.

How would you define success for the program(s)? How would you determine if the program(s) are successful or effective? Would you measure effectiveness differently for the various Department of Education Title VI and Fulbright Hays programs?

The appropriate measure of success for the IRS Program is whether the various projects funded through it meet the purposes of the legislation. For example, are there now many more study materials available for the less commonly taught languages? Are there useful measurements that test language proficiency? The answer to these questions is a resounding “yes,” because of IRS Program funding.

The success of IRS funded projects should be measured differently from that of other programs such as the National Resource Centers and study abroad programs, because they make different kinds of contributions to the overall goals of Title VI. Evaluating the effectiveness of materials development and research demands different questions and looks for different results.

What data/information do you use to measure the effectiveness of this program(s)?

The information that is used to measure the effectiveness of this IRS Program is seen in its output – namely all the materials, resources, surveys and research that have been developed through this program. Between 1990 and 1994, this program funded 237 projects, 71% of which were to develop materials. All in all, since 1958, NDEA/Title VI has funded over 1,200 projects, institutes, research projects, and publications that have shaped the modern foreign language teaching and learning field.

The availability of essential resources and information testifies to the program’s accomplishments. As indicated earlier, tests for the less commonly taught languages such as Arabic, Russian, and Chinese, for example, would not exist without IRS support. The development of the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), a pivotal instrument for measuring language proficiency, was partially funded through this program. Numerous foreign language tests developed by our institution, including Web-based assessments, were funded through this program. The only definitive information we have on foreign language enrollments in K-12 and university programs comes from IRS-supported projects. This kind of information is vital for policy makers and program planners, and for creating the necessary pipelines from K-12 to higher education in foreign language education.

Program impact is also evident in the dissemination of information. In addition to databases, publications, and materials, this program enables different entities to respond to questions from the media and the general public with good information. In the past year, for example, CAL has responded to well over 50 media requests. The information that the US State Department used in some of its bulletins on K-12 Arabic language teaching was gathered in a project supported by this program. Other institutions also perform similar functions, relying on IRS-funded information.

Finally, a sign of effectiveness is the increase in capacity, attributable to the interlocking set of IRS/Title VI programs. Summer institutes, such as the South East Asia Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI), are products of Title VI. Conferences such as the *Global Challenges and U.S. Higher Education* (Duke University, 2003) and special issues of journals such as *Foreign Language Annals* that focus on a specific topic are or have been supported by this

program. The Language Resource Centers, whose influence and importance are growing, are funded by this program. Other federal programs that benefit or have benefited from Title VI are the National Endowment for the Humanities and the State Department's Foreign Service Institute.

What data/information do you think is necessary or should be used to measure effectiveness?

As mentioned above, there is a serious lack of quantifiable data to measure program effectiveness. Because the field of foreign language education is not very large and there is a great deal of communication among groups, effectiveness is often measured in qualitative ways and reported at conferences and in journal publications. Resource limitations often force a choice between working toward project objectives or spending precious dollars on measuring effectiveness. In addition, it is rare that follow-up evaluations are funded, so there is little evidence about "what works."

Second, no specific measures have been developed to determine program effectiveness. It appears that all projects funded under Title VI are evaluated with the same measure—Did the project achieve the objectives of the funded proposal? We would welcome an initiative from IEGPS to bring together different constituencies to discuss practical ways for projects to measure the effectiveness of their efforts.

How would you use the results of an evaluation?

CAL would use the results of an evaluation to improve our products and our services to the field.

How do you view the role of the Department of Education's Title VI and Fulbright Hays programs as similar or different from the role of other related federal programs?

Although other programs in the federal government have mandates that could include language and international studies, there are no other federal programs that perform the functions of Title VI and the Fulbright Hays programs. These programs continue to be the primary venues for increasing foreign language competence and international awareness. Many other federal agencies that have language teaching and learning programs within them, for example, are not available to the general public (such as the Foreign Service Institute). Within the Department of Education, one other program reaches the public—the Foreign Language Assistance Program. As it funds states and districts for their educational programming, its grantees benefit from the resources made available as a result of Title VI support. In particular, the International Research and Studies program, through its materials and test development, surveys, and research, generates many tools that are useful to language education programs. Title VI programs remain the central resource for increasing our country's language capacity and international awareness.

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