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## ABSTRACT

An objective of the Department of State's Foreign Service Institute (FSI) in its agenda for change is diplomacy for global competitiveness (DGC). For the language school, this means training to enable students to actively and skillfully represent the United States abroad, take leadership roles furthering U.S. competitiveness, understand the target culture and be able to function linguistically and otherwise within it, explain and advocate effectively American values, systems, and products, and promote relations between the U.S. and the host country. A list of general principles guides its implementation, and an extensive list of topics relevant to DGC, with reference to both the U.S. and target countries, has been developed. These topics range from economic and commercial issues through politics, social issues, culture, and environment. FSI language classes aim at equipping students with general professional proficiency, at Level 3 in oral skills. It uses a variety of teaching methods and a curriculum that includes complex knowledge of the target country. Under DGC, officers need to be both knowledgeable about the target culture and language and also be activists for the United States within that culture's values and traditions. This requires considerable conversational skills and strategies to present policies favorably. (MSE)

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LANGUAGE TRAINING IN THE CONTEXT OF DIPLOMACY FOR GLOBAL  
COMPETITIVENESS  
AT THE FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE,  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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## 1. History of the Foreign Service Institute

On August 13, 1946, President Harry Truman signed into law the Foreign Service Act, authorizing the creation of the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), which was to become the training arm of the State Department. At the time, FSI provided language training to diplomats departing for their overseas assignments. All foreign languages were taught by native "tutors", as they were called, under the supervision of linguists. Once our students became proficient in the language of their assignment, they were sent overseas, expected to watch their predecessor, or a senior officer at work, and learn on the job as quickly as they could.

Today FSI teaches over 60 languages:

Albanian	Greek	Polish
<i>Afrikaans</i>	Hebrew	<i>Portuguese</i>
Amharic	Hindi	<i>Romanian</i>
Armenian	Hungarian	Russian
Azerbaijani	Icelandic	Serbo-Croatian
Bengali	Indonesian	Sinhala
Bulgarian	<i>Italian</i>	Slovak
Burmese	<i>Japanese</i>	Spanish
Byelorussian	Korean	Swahili
Cantonese	Khmer	Swedish
Chinese	Lao	Tagalog (Pilipino)
Creole	Latvian	Thai
Czech	Lithuanian	Turkish
Danish	Malay	Ukrainian
Dari	Mandarin	Urdu
Dutch	Mongolian	Uzbek
Estonian	<b>NAfr Arabic</b>	Vietnamese
Finnish	Nepali	
French	<i>Norwegian</i>	
German	Persian <b>Afghan</b>	
Georgian	Iranian	
	Tajik	

Note: *Italics* mark 23-week courses, plain font, 44-week courses and **bolded**, 2-year courses.

It has pioneered a system of language proficiency testing and is recognized as a world leader in developing high quality intensive language training. Our courses range from 8 weeks for Familiarization and Short Term Courses in most languages, to 23-week courses in world languages, 44-week courses in hard languages and 2 years, one in Washington, one overseas in superhard languages (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean). Most language classes are full-time intensive, meeting 5-6 hours a day, 5 days a week.

FSI also teaches area and professional studies, including political, economic, administrative, computer, management and office skill courses. Consular training is taught entirely by simulation. A Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs offers 50 to 60 symposia a year and conducts study and research in the field of foreign affairs. The Overseas Briefing Center is the main source of information for family members. Specialized training added a whole new dimension to the formation of our students. Once they left FSI, they were not only proficient in a foreign language, they had substantive training in their specialized field as well.

After having resided in rented quarters for almost half a century, FSI has just moved into its own quarters, a campus built to our requirements and equipped with state of the art technology, in Arlington, Virginia. Set on a 72-acre wooded site, the National Foreign Affairs Training Center (NFATC) is the new home for our students and staff. The physical move to the National Foreign Affairs Training Center has triggered a series of initiatives included under the name of "Agenda for Change." At the same time that we are changing our location and work conditions, we are also seeking to push our training to a "higher level of excellence and relevance." One of the elements of the FSI Agenda for Change is *Diplomacy for Global Competitiveness (DGC)*.

## 2. What is Diplomacy for Global Competitiveness?

Lawrence Taylor, the Director of FSI, described this initiative as follows:

*"Diplomacy for Global Competitiveness has become a central organizing theme for all FSI training, not just limited to training for economic/commercial work and business facilitation, but also to be integrated with science and technology, the environment, language and area studies, as well as FSI's traditional courses in political, administrative and consular training. Our curriculum should tie those factors together in ways that help our missions to perform better in advancing U.S. competitiveness and in assisting the U.S. private sector abroad."*

## 3. Goal and Objectives of the DGC Initiative for the School of Language Studies (SLS)

The goal of this initiative is to train all students in the spirit of *Diplomacy for Global Competitiveness*, in order to help U.S. Missions perform better in advancing U.S. general competitiveness and in assisting the U.S. private sector.

The objectives of the training are to enable all students to actively and skillfully represent the U.S. abroad; to take leadership roles furthering U.S. competitiveness; to understand the target culture and be able to function linguistically and otherwise within it; to explain and advocate effectively American values, systems, and products, and to promote relations between the U.S. and the host country.

#### **4. General Principles for Implementation**

- *Diplomacy for Global Competitiveness (DGC) should tie together all training areas at FSI, from junior officer courses, to area studies, professional studies and language classes.*
- DGC applies to all foreign affairs personnel, regardless of their field, and also to spouses.
- DGC covers a wide range of topics, applied to both the target country and the US.
- Topics and skills relevant to the concept of DGC are to be interleaved with existing training by either supplementing or reshaping segments of our training.
- The main focus of our language training has been, and remains, to enable our students to learn the language, culture and develop cross-cultural understanding of the host country. Within the concept of DGC, this focus needs to be expanded to incorporate training students to effectively describe, explain and defend American issues and policies to members of the target culture.
- It is, of course, essential that our graduates understand how the foreign culture operates and be able to interpret and analyze events within it well, but DGC also means that they must be effective representatives of America who can explain and defend American points of view to representatives of the host culture.
- Within the concept of DGC, it is no longer sufficient only to teach the target language, the culture to which the language is connected, and cross-cultural understanding. Our graduates must "know their territory" both ways. Having high-level knowledge of the target country's economic system, for example, and being able to talk about it in the target language must be accompanied by being at least equally articulate when describing the U.S. economy. Our graduates must be equipped with the right language skills to make the transition from being "analysts" to becoming "activists."
- DGC is not restricted to commerce, economics and politics. To apply the concepts of global competitiveness, we can use the metaphor of a newspaper. We should not focus only on the business section of a newspaper. The front page or the "style" or "sports" sections are equally important in enabling officers to be competitive. With no frivolity intended, the ability to participate in "educated, assertive chat" is an objective of this initiative.
- The need for specific training for those officers who specialize in economic-commercial work is clear, but training for DGC should apply to everybody and be of interest to everybody.

#### **5. Topics Relevant to DGC referring both to the target culture AND to the U.S.**

##### **ECONOMICS / COMMERCE**

*market (bargaining, tipping)*

*counting*

*currency (exchange)*

*local food supplies*

*advertisement*

**Economic geography**

*location of target country and the U.S.  
regions, climate  
production of goods  
industries*

**Economic-commercial system**

*type of econ system in target country and the US (capitalistic, planned economy, free enterprise)  
GDP (Gross Domestic Product)  
balance of trade/payments  
merges and acquisitions (takeovers, buyovers)  
savings / inflation / recession / depression*

**Financial system and banking**

*stock market in the US versus overseas  
banking system (borrowing, lending, checking accounts)  
concept of bankruptcy  
investments  
real estate  
taxes*

**Natural resources**

*minerals  
agricultural products (cotton, wool, etc.)  
fishing  
raw materials  
forestry  
tourism*

**Infrastructure**

*communications  
road system  
high tech (computers, telecommunications)  
airlines*

**Trade**

*foreign and domestic trade  
shipping*

**POLITICS**

*register residence  
ID cards (passport, driver's license, car registration)*

**Political system**

*democratic, authoritarian, etc.  
parties  
electoral system (polls, campaigning, funding, bribing, scandals)  
type and branches of the government (monarchy, democracy, parliamentary)*

**Legal system**

*courts of justice*

*judicial system  
police (including the secret police, security forces)  
lawyers (including their status)*

**The Military**

*structure and branches of the armed forces  
general staff  
military recruitment  
defense  
conventional and nuclear weapons*

**Foreign/domestic policy**

*integration among countries  
treaties  
agreements  
territorial disputes  
minorities  
language policies*

**Human rights**

*freedom of speech  
equal rights  
the right to vote  
upward mobility  
class system*

**SOCIAL ISSUES**

*interaction  
manners  
acceptable and unacceptable behavior  
social strata*

**Population**

*occupations  
population distribution and growth  
urbanization (e.g., in Europe the well to do people move to the city, in the U.S. to the suburbs)  
migration, emigration and transmigration (government operated or individually sought relocation)*

**Education/child care**

*educational system  
schooling (from day care to postgraduate programs)  
apprenticeships and universities  
adult education  
language / literacy rate*

**Standard of living**

*average income  
average cost of living  
housing (slums, etc.)  
poverty vs affluence*

*the concept of "luxury"  
spending habits*

**Gender issues**

*role of women  
emancipation of women  
women's rights  
sexual harassment  
household scenarios  
sexual preferences*

**Workers' rights**

*social security  
unions (ie, codetermination)  
arbitrations  
labor laws  
workers' benefits (ie, retirement, insurance, paid vacation time)*

**Social integration**

*immigration  
in country cross-cultural communication (with country nationals and foreigners)  
age issues*

**Ethnic issues**

*ethnic issues concerning neighboring countries and ethnic groups within the target country (ie, chauvinism, racism, prejudice, nationalism, religious disputes)*

**Crime issues, drugs**

*drug addiction  
alcoholism  
prostitution  
shoplifting  
mugging  
violent crime (holdups, stickups, carjacking, highjacking, kidnapping)  
gun (gun control)  
white collar crime  
bribery*

**CULTURE**

*holidays  
social gatherings (appointments, dating, ceremonies)  
dress code  
shopping habits  
gift giving  
making reservations, buying tickets*

**History**

*milestones in history  
history as perceived and taught in the target country  
historical prejudice*

**Religion(s)**

*holidaays*

*coexistence of different religions  
role of religion, philosophy, church, clergy  
separation of church and state (e.g., secularism)  
religion in art, literature  
cults and sects*

**Customs and traditions**

*origin and celebration of holidays  
birth, marriage and death traditions  
festivals  
folklore  
business and negotiation  
relationships  
expectations (including bribing)*

**Value system**

*family  
moral issues  
ethics  
money / wealth*

**Life style, entertainment**

*scheduling, perception of time  
leisure (hobbies)  
pace of life and daily activities*

**Regional sensitivities**

*cultural sensitivities within the country  
racism, chauvinism, sexism  
political groupings and movements*

**Art and literature**

*everything pertaining to specific countries and the U.S. (not just know about it, experience it too)*

**The media**

*role of the media  
government involvement in the media, censorship  
role of foreign news agencies in the target country  
impact of modern technology on news coverage*

**Sports**

*role of sports in the society  
popular sports, players, events  
competitive vs leisure sports  
funding/government involvement in sports activities*

**ENVIRONMENT**

*leaded vs unleaded gas  
recycling  
trash disposal*

*drinking water  
noise control rules  
food protection standards*

**Urbanization**

*littering  
living quarters and recreational space  
population and the environment*

**Energy and transportation**

*public and private means of transportation  
price of energy  
sources of energy (hydropower, nuclear power, etc.)  
energy policies (rules and regulations, restrictions)*

**Pollution**

*international agreements  
everything pertaining to specific countries and the U.S.*

**Preservation of the environment**

*international agreements; differences of interpretation  
standards and policies  
environmental industry*

*Some of these topics are obviously germane. Others may be less obvious, but the task force has seen that they could be relevant. For example, "prostitution" a topic that may at first seem unlikely to fit into the Diplomacy for Global Competitiveness scenario, could be thrown on the table by a hostile counterpart in a foreign country. It could therefore be linked conceptually with Diplomacy for Global Competitiveness in the following way:*

- \* Be aware, through authentic materials, of the changes that occurred over the past ten years in a well publicized area, such as 14th Street in Washington, DC;
  - \* Without denying the fact that prostitution indeed exists, focus on steps that have been taken by either/both the local government or support groups, and highlight their achievements;
  - \* While talking about a social problem with its inherent negative aspects, stress the actions that have been taken to correct it, and, when applicable, what clearly detaches the U.S. from the target country, e.g., interlocutors from a country that has no notion of support groups for street youth, etc. may have something to learn from our country's efforts to correct the downsides of our society, one of them being the grim aspect of night life.
- Prostitution may also be an issue in the target country. One way to disarm hostility is to encourage an interlocutor to describe how their country manages the forces that lead to this kind of social problem. This may in turn lead to a new set of markets for U.S. expertise, products, or cooperation.*
- \* Prostitution is also a key topic in AIDS prevention and public health.

## **6. What language proficiency we train for**

Most FSI full-time language classes aim at equipping graduating students with general professional proficiency, or Level 3 in speaking, according to the Interagency Language Roundtable/Language Skill Level Descriptions:

*Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics. Nevertheless, the individual's limitations generally restrict the professional contexts of language use to matters of shared knowledge and/or international convention. Discourse is cohesive. The individual uses the language acceptably, but with some noticeable imperfections; yet, errors virtually never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker. The individual can effectively combine structure and vocabulary to convey his/her meaning accurately. The individual speaks readily and fills pauses suitably. In face-to-face conversation with natives speaking the standard dialect at a normal rate of speech, comprehension is quite complete. Although cultural references, proverbs and the implications of nuances and idiom may not be fully understood, the individual can easily repair the conversation. Pronunciation may be obviously foreign. Individual sounds are accurate; but stress, intonation, and pitch control may be faulty.*

*Examples: Can typically discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with reasonable ease. Can use the language as part of normal professional duties such as answering objections, clarifying points, justifying decisions, understanding the essence of challenges, stating and defending policy, conducting meetings, delivering briefings, or other extended and elaborate informative monologues. Can readily elicit information and informed opinion from native speakers. Structural inaccuracy is rarely the major cause of misunderstanding. Use of structural devices is flexible and elaborate. Without searching for words or phrases, the individual uses the language clearly and relatively naturally to elaborate concepts freely and make ideas easily understandable to native speakers. Errors occur in low-frequency and highly complex structures.*

## **7. How we train for the Level 3 language proficiency and where DGC fits in**

FSI uses a variety of teaching methods, from remnants of audio-lingual teaching to the silent approach, to the natural approach, all aiming at improving our students' communicative skills. The textbooks, most of which are produced at FSI, or if not, adapted to FSI - use, are supplemented with cross-cultural and professional modules so that students become familiar with the cultural issues of the country of their assignment and receive special language instruction pertinent to their field. Administrative, Consular, Cultural, Economic, Military, Political Modules are taught throughout the school, in some languages for the duration of the course, in others in the second half of language training, when students are ready to tackle such matters at a higher level of proficiency.

Training that encompasses complex knowledge of the target country has enabled our graduates to become effective analysts. Quoting FSI Director Lawrence Taylor again,

*Through Diplomacy for Global Competitiveness we aim to develop the skillful and resourceful activists needed to take a leadership role on behalf of U.S. competitiveness in a rapidly globalizing and increasingly complex world economy: activists, for example, who can anticipate and thereby prevent new barriers to U.S. exports, who can open markets to U.S. business; activists capable of fighting for America's economic interests in areas such as trade in services, financial market liberalization, intellectual property, information and health care technologies, etc., and doing so with foreign language fluency and knowledge on how to be effective in other cultures; activists who understand and can act upon the reality that the interplay between America's competitive excellence and American diplomacy will go far in determining standards of living at home and our power abroad.*

As stated before, DGC implies much more than simply a new focus on economic and commercial issues in training. It includes developing any and all skills and knowledge which contribute to the ability to communicate with representatives of other nations in ways that throw the best possible light on policies, activities, and needs of the United States in the context of the cultural values and traditions of that nation.

To accomplish this requires individuals who are deeply knowledgeable of both American and the host country's cultures and policies and who have a strong proficiency in the language. More than this, however, it requires developing the skills to comprehend nuance, allusion and connotation in spoken and written language and to speak the language in ways that encode American interests in the most culturally appropriate and effective ways.

Lawrence Taylor has said of DGC, *The whole point is to be effective at doing the work.* Effectiveness entails much more than the ability to use the language in controlled situations such as prepared presentations or interviews with locals. Experienced officers say that it is important to be able to establish and maintain personal and professional relationships with people of many kinds. Such relationships typically depend in part on an officer's ability to take part comfortably in educated colloquial conversations about wide varieties of serious and not-so-serious topics. This kind of conversation has been described by one such officer as *educated assertive chat.* Whatever it is called, it seems clear that skill and comfort in its use in a variety of social settings has become critically important in the new global environment.

## 8. Why focus on teaching conversational skills?

Under DGC, officers not only need to be knowledgeable about the culture and language of the country, they need to be activists within that culture. To promote American interests abroad, American representatives have a great need to be able to manage informed, culturally relevant and appropriate conversations with nationals. For example, if people in a certain culture do not like American policies, foreign service officers need to be aware of this, know why each policy is disliked, what cultural values are relevant to the policy, and **what approach they should use in discussing the policy to present it most favorably** -- all in the framework of ordinary conversation, rather than in formal demarches.

We are currently working on a series of training workshops for language instructors that aim at developing in students the ability to carry out *educated assertive chat.* Activities that will be presented are intended to help students develop a **comfort zone** in using conversational skills while they are in training at FSI, so that they will be enabled to interact

with host country nationals in a variety of contexts and to continue learning and developing their conversational skills at post.

We perceive the language training at FSI as the beginning of a whole new experience for our graduating students that will be put to use once they are submerged into a new culture. The better they are prepared to understand that culture, the better they will function in it while representing the American values and interests.