



# Language Enabled Airman Program participants assist around globe

by Jodi L. Jordan

Air Force Culture and Language Center Outreach Team

A specially-selected group of U.S. Air Force Airmen are working around the globe, helping accomplish critical missions by using their foreign language skills. These Airmen aren't linguists, though. They're maintainers, medical specialists, contract administrators – pretty much any job you can find in the Service.

In addition to their primary job skills, they also have the ability to communicate in other languages. They are participants the Air Force's Language Enabled Airman Program.

LEAP, operated by the Air Force Culture and Language Center, is a career-long language and culture learning program. LEAP takes Airmen who have language skills, and through a combination of online training and real-world immersion events, sustains and enhances those language skills throughout the Airmen's careers.

The language immersions are called Language Intensive Training Events, or LITES, and they take place at language schools, or in a country where a LEAP participant's language is spoken. The most advanced LEAP participants, however, are available to assist military and governmental organizations when they need interpreter or translator help. And since the program's inception in 2009, about 130 Airmen with advanced language abili-



Photograph by Staff Sgt. Ryan Crane

**From right.** Capt. Mohamed Diallo, a Language Enabled Airman Program participant from Air Force District of Washington, translates closing remarks from Senegal Air Chief Brig. Gen. Kane, while receiving a microphone assist from a member of the Senegal Air Force during Africa Partnership Flight Senegal in June. Diallo and Senior Master Sgt. Odette Toppin provided language interpretation assistance during the week long event, which strengthened partnerships between the United States and air forces in Africa.

ties have answered the call, providing vital assistance in a wide range of jobs and places.

Staff Sgt. Jason Sugimoto, a LEAP participant from the 51st Force Support Squadron at Osan Air Base, Korea, recently supported 5th Air Force in Japan, where he was hand-picked to provide interpreter assistance to the 5th AF Command Chief Master Sergeant during the U.S.-Japan Joint/

Bilateral Senior Enlisted Leaders' Conference hotwash, among other duties.

"Staff Sgt. Sugimoto's language skills, cultural knowledge and most of all professionalism proved to be tremendous assets to both headquarters despite only being here a few short weeks," said Col. Randy Kaufman, the 5th AF director of operations and

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**Colleagues,**

I've been the AFCLC's acting director for nearly two months now. This time has given me a new-found appreciation for the work each one of you do to make sure our Air Force has the cross-culturally competent, language-enabled Airmen it needs to accomplish the global mission. The sheer volume of work you complete, along with your excellence in completing it, makes it clear that the AFCLC is an organization that "fights above its weight."

We have many things to celebrate this August. Our Language Enabled Airman Program is currently holding its first combined officer and enlisted application period. This will culminate in our selecting 400 of the very best applicants to become LEAP participants, bringing our total participant count to nearly 2,000 Airmen. Each of these Airmen brings significant language abilities to our Service, and you can read more about how they are being utilized in the story on Page 1.

We are also ramping up to begin our fall Community College of the Air Force-credit culture courses. These free, online courses develop cross-cultural abilities in our



enlisted force, and they are always "sold-out" within days of their opening.

In addition to the education and training we provide to people across the Air Force, we also support Air University with a wide range of culture-based courses at Air Command and Staff College and Air War College here at Maxwell Air Force Base. Teaching at AU is one of our most important core missions, and it is an honor and a privilege to be a part of educating the future senior leaders of our Service.

The last two months have been a great education for me, too. I have never worked with a more dedicated or professional group of people. As my time as Acting Director grows short, I want to give my sincere thanks all my colleagues here at AFCLC, as well as to our Language, Region and Culture colleagues around the world. I'm proud to be on your team.

Sincerely,

**Lt Col Julie Solberg**  
AFCLC Acting Director

## NEWS

## Application for online CCAF-credit courses begins Sept. 16

The Air Force Culture and Language Center begins accepting applications for the fall 2014 "Introduction to Culture" course Sept. 16. ITC is an online, self-paced undergraduate course designed for enlisted Airmen to improve their cross-cultural competence.

This course fulfills three resident hours of either social science or program elective credit required for Community College of the Air Force degrees. Only enlisted active duty, Air Reservists or Air National Guardsmen eligible to pursue a degree in the CCAF program may take the course.

ITC is one of two online college-credit courses offered by the AFCLC. The next course to be offered is Cross-Cultural Communication. Registration for CCC begins Oct. 14. Interested applicants should apply early, as courses

fill up quickly. Learn more at <http://culture.af.mil> under the "Courses" menu.

## AFCLC professor publishes article

Dr. Lauren Mackenzie, the Air Force Culture and Language Center's associate professor of cross-cultural communication, recently published an article in the Institute for the Study of Culture and Language's Journal of Culture, Language and International Security.

The article, titled "Strategic Enablers: How Intercultural Communication Skills Advance Micro-Level International Security," argues that the knowledge and skills at the heart of the field of intercultural communication are a natural platform for advancing international security.

The full article can be read on the JCLIS website at <http://iscl.norwich.edu/online-journal/>.

## LEAP accepting applications, board meets mid-September

The Language Enabled Airman Program fall 2014 application period is July 15-Aug. 22. LEAP is designed to sustain, enhance and utilize the existing language skills of Airmen. Those intending to submit applications must register their intent to apply by Aug. 8.

Active duty enlisted, officer and officer candidate students in their senior years may apply online during this application period. Please review the complete eligibility requirements and application instructions on the AFCLC public website prior to registering your intent to apply. The selection board for LEAP will convene at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., in mid-September to review and select applicants.

Application instructions and eligibility requirements are available at <http://culture.af.mil/leap/index.aspx>.

# Language-learning ‘Mythbusters’

by 2nd Lt. Abror Samatov  
Language Enabled Airman Program  
participant

“Are you going to tear up our books?” Svetlana Sergeevna, my secondary school teacher, asked me loudly in Russian. I was completely lost. It sounded like one of those guttural warrior cries that Genghizkhan soldiers probably made to intimidate the rivals before battle. I was clueless of meaning of the question, but I yelled proudly and confidently, “Da!”

That was my introduction to a foreign language, in this case, Russian. Fast forward 20 years. Now fluent in five languages, I still remember how alien those words sounded. Not only have I picked up languages, but cultures and ideologies as well.

Language is a way to communicate, a means to establish a connection with a total stranger. Language helps us to express our emotions, to achieve our goals, to pray and praise, to curse and criticize – it’s the center of our lives. But what if you can do all the above in multiple languages?

Acquiring a foreign language is done through hard work, eagerness and persistence. Contrary to popular belief, there is no mythical “language gene” required to speak another language. Anybody can do it with the right motivation. As a matter of fact, it is instinctual. People tend to believe individuals who speak multiple languages are somehow smarter. More knowledgeable, yes! Smarter, no!

Your capacity to learn is not based on education or the number of languages you speak. Research has proven that English speaking school-age children read better in English when taught a foreign language just one hour a week, when compared to children who have no foreign language training. Learning an additional language has positive side effects in other areas of thought processing.

Furthermore, knowing a foreign language changes the way one perceives the world around them. My attitude and demeanor change automatically depending on the language I’m using. For example, a taboo in Turkish may not be a taboo in Russian. Not only is the speech different, but how I must behave with native speakers differs based on the particular language. As Vivian Cooks, Professor at Newcastle University, puts it, “Our cultural attitudes may be changed by the language we are acquiring.”

Human beings obtain and improve all skills during their lifetime. If a child is not spoken to during childhood, they cannot articulate any words, except some indistinctive sounds. They are not born with a language, so their first is foreign. In essence, this means you have already learned a foreign language.

Have you ever observed a child learning to speak? Initially, a child starts to repeat what parents say without understanding. Then, children demonstrate things around the house, which they have learned as their “new vocabulary”. Children don’t care about grammar, spelling or articulation of sounds. Someone always corrects them, and they still never lose their motivation for learning. I’m still corrected on all of my languages to this day.

Thus, I’d advise anybody who has that passion to be immersed in a whole different world. Learn like a child – demonstrate, visualize, use the new words in context and learn with movements. When the new words are combined with physical actions, muscle memory is created, connecting the mind and body. These are far superior to mundane repeating.

There are a lot of methods for learning a language. Modern grammatical method is aimed at learning the language as a system. It’s directed at all four language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. In my opinion, too much attention is paid to text construing, script narratives and essays. Why try to make a person a philologist, instead of just teaching them to speak the language? A person needs practical skills, rather than a secondary specialty.

On the contrary, one of the most practical approaches is the immersion method. According to this method, you can learn a foreign language by becoming (at least for the period of study) a completely different person. This allows one to create the illusion that they are in a completely different world; the world of the target language.

For this method to work, a person should be surrounded by like-minded people who are learning the same language. Heinrich Schliemann, successful businessman and famous archaeologist, discoverer of Troy, fluent in at least 15 languages, wrote all his correspondence and kept a diary in the language of the country in which he was at that moment. I also employed the same system when I was learning Turkish; I even temporarily “Turkisized” my name from “Abror” to Turkish “Ebrar” to fully immerse myself.

Another suggestion that numerous linguists advise is learning through language families. Knowing the ways around the language families is like having a treasure map of the language. For instance, acquiring one or all of Latin-Germanic languages (French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German) is going to be easier for English native speaker than getting into whole different realm of Sino-Tibetan, Slavic or Turkic lingo groups.

The bottom line is that if you have a desire and a passion, it doesn’t matter what language family it belongs to or how hard it is, I’d say, “Keep calm and carry on!”

## AFCLC elective course results in award-winning paper for ACSC student

by AFCLC Outreach Team

Air Command and Staff College student, Maj. Lauren N. DiDomenico, recently won the Foreign Area Officers Association Award, an ACSC -sponsored research award. Her paper, entitled, "Land Disputes Unearth Shaky Legal Foundation: Will Liberia's Land Reform Provide Stability?" originated with research she initiated in the ACSC elective "Tribe and Tradition in the Modern Context" taught by Air Force Culture and Language Center Assistant Professor of Anthropology Dr. Angelle Khachadorian, an expert on tribal and traditional cultures.

DiDomenico chose to continue with her research on Liberian land tenure disputes for her second semester at ACSC by undertaking an ACSC Extended Research Project under Khachadorian's guidance.

DiDomenico's research provides a unique scholarly perspective that melds a deep understanding of the ramifications of conflicting legal systems, with a knowledge of the meanings and significance of tribal cultural values, said Khaachadorian. This approach is unusual for a research product from a professional military education institution.

DiDomenico's work, Khachadorian said, is particularly important because it "critically analyzes the significance of tribal cultural values and legal systems, and the ways these clash with national laws and political systems to create regionally-destabilizing conflicts." DiDomenico notes in her paper that American strategists and military planners typically don't recognize the significance of land tenure issues in sub-Saharan Africa, and the cultural and political impacts of global competition for resources, yet these issues directly effect "economic development, stability of the government, and ethnic and class tensions."

# AFCLC publishes guide on South Korea

## Culture field guides give essential knowledge about people, places to U.S. forces

by Jodi L. Jordan  
AFCLC Outreach Team

The essential elements of a place and its people – that's what U.S. forces learn when they read the Air Force Culture and Language Center's field guides, pocket cultural tools for deploying military members and other government personnel. Available online and in hard copy, the AFCLC offers guides on 28 countries, including its most recent publication, the "U.S. Pacific Forces Culture Guide: South Korea." The South Korea guide is the second AFCLC guide to focus on a country in the Pacific theater of operations.

AFCLC's social science and cultural experts developed the South Korea guide with collaboration from active-duty and retired military members. These experts employed stringent research methods to ensure the guides provide accurate and relevant information, said AFCLC officials.

The South Korea guide is the latest in an on-going effort by the AFCLC to provide U.S. forces with the tools to work effectively in locations around the globe. The center initially developed guides for Iraq and Afghanistan, which were lauded by Air Force and other Department of Defense officials, said Ms. Mary Newbern, AFCLC's Expeditionary Skills Training Programs manager. The success led to a request from U.S. Africa Command for field guides on other countries, and has continued with the work requested by Pacific Air Forces.

According to Lt. Col. Jacqueline Chang, the Director of Air Force Programs in the US Embassy's Joint US Military Affairs Group at Yongsan Army Garrison in Korea, and one of

the project officers for obtaining the guide, the guide is a great asset for U.S. military and government personnel in the country.

"These guides provide our personnel with the specific information they'll need to be successful," Chang said. "There are many resources online and in the community, but the culture guides are tailored to the needs of our U.S. forces – that makes them an invaluable resource."

Maj. Trevor Cook, a Regional Affairs Strategist at PACAF Headquarters, and one of the project officers for the guide, said that the need to understand a country's culture is paramount, and that this guide will be a valuable addition to the resources currently available.

"As this guide is implemented among military and government professionals, it will become a valuable tool and reference to enhance all interactions and communication," Cook said. "Greater understanding of each individual's way of thinking will help build the bridge between nations for stronger alliances and partnerships that are so critical for regional security cooperation."

The AFCLC's guides are available at [culture.af.mil](http://culture.af.mil). The South Korea guide is available only online, but hard copies will be available by mid-September. Requests for any AFCLC guides should be sent to [afclc.region@us.af.mil](mailto:afclc.region@us.af.mil).

***The AFCLC publishes guides on 28 countries. Download guides at [culture.af.mil](http://culture.af.mil) under the "Resources" tab.***

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plans. “I’m a huge supporter of LEAP, so I was extremely pleased to see the program work in such a mutually beneficial way.”

In addition to the value he provided to the different organizations, Sugimoto cited a great personal benefit from the trip.

“Japan is where I grew up, and I have been away a long time,” Sugimoto said. “I was very excited to go there for work. The highlight of the trip was experiencing what the U.S. Air Force does in Japan and learning about the relationship between the Japan Air Self Defense Force and the U.S. Air Force, how it is built to meet common goals. This work gave me a tremendous experience and wide variety of networks that I probably would have never gained. I was very lucky to experience such a wonderful job.”

Another recent LEAP success story came from work accomplished by program participants who worked with 12th Air Force in Chile. Two LEAP participants were asked to provide interpreter help at Chile’s International Air and Space Fair. Both participants were commended on their efforts by Lt. Gen. Tod D. Wolters, the 12th Air Force commander.

In letters to 1st Lt. Eric Prince and Master Sgt. Kelvin Diaz, Wolters said, “Your exceptional efforts provided the entire U.S. team, to include three 3-star flag officers and five additional general officers, opportunities for bilateral discussions with dozens of senior military leaders from 30 foreign nations.” The general also expressed his gratitude to the Airmen for coordinating his meetings with key military leaders from Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Chile and 11 other nations, saying “these exchanges were productive and valuable in further strengthening our relationships with these partner nations.”

Diaz, who is the maintenance training superintendent of the 318th Maintenance Training Squadron at the Inter-American Air Forces Academy



Courtesy photographs

at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, had his work cut out for him during this high-visibility assignment.

“My duties were to coordinate everything from hotel rooms to transportation to bilateral meetings for nine U.S. distinguished guests, including the 12th Air Force commander, the U.S. Southern Command commander, the Undersecretary of Defense for International Affairs, and many others,” Diaz said. “I’ve worked with embassies before, but this was different. I learned how much work goes into making an event of that magnitude a success.”

In addition to serving Department of Defense needs, several LEAP participants have assisted the Department of State at U.S. embassies in Europe, Asia and South America.

Maj. Duc Ho, the executive officer for the 6th Air Mobility Wing, and a fluent Vietnamese speaker, recently returned from a LITE to the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi. While there, Ho worked with the Office of Defense Cooperation as an intern, interacting with key decision makers and representing the embassy on several projects, while also attending Vietnamese classes. “I joined LEAP to leverage my language and operational experiences in order to assist the Air Force in partnership building missions,” Ho



**Left:** Master Sgt. Kelvin Diaz stands with Gen. Carlos Antonio Rodriguez Munguia, the chief of staff of the Mexico Air Force. **Above:** Maj. Duc Ho stands with Ms. Lien Vu, a local staffer/translator at the U.S. Embassy Defense Attache Office in Hanoi, Vietnam. Diaz and Ho completed temporary duty assignments in 2014 as part of the Language Enabled Airman Program.

said. “This LITE allowed me to both improve my language skills and to assist with various mission sets; all the while learning and establishing critical relationships for future success.”

Having participants complete their required LEAP training, while providing crucial assistance to government and military organizations, is effective, efficient and a prudent use of resources, said Lt. Col. Julie Solberg, acting director of the AFCLC and chief of the AFCLC’s Language Division. “At LEAP, we are chartered with building a ‘bench’ of language-enabled Airmen for the Air Force. The program is a valuable investment in our most important resource – our Airmen,” Solberg said. “Combining their training with opportunities to provide real value to our country is an honor for the participants and the program.”

For more information on LEAP, or to request language-related support from LEAP participants, e-mail the AFCLC Language Division at [afclc.language@us.af.mil](mailto:afclc.language@us.af.mil).

**(From right.)** Senior Master Sgt. Odette Toppin, a Language Enabled Airman Program participant, and a Senegalese youth listen to an impromptu guitar performance by a manager from L'Empires de Enfants, a Senegalese orphanage. Toppin and another LEAP participant recently assisted U.S. forces during Senegal Partnership Flight 2014. In addition to providing language interpretation at the event, Toppin accompanied members of the U.S. Air Forces Europe/Air Forces Africa band as a French-speaking cultural advisor during this community visit.



Photograph by Staff Sgt. Ryan Crane

## ABOUT THE AFCLC

**AFCLC VISION:** The Air Force Culture and Language Center, as the acknowledged experts, will lead the U.S. Air Force in building a cross-culturally competent Total Force to meet the demands of the Service's dynamic global mission.

**AFCLC MISSION:** The Air Force Culture and Language Center creates and executes language, region and cultural learning programs for Total Force Airmen, and provides the Service with the subject matter expertise required to institutionalize these efforts.

The Air Force Culture and Language Center was founded at Air University in April 2006, embracing the Air Force Chief of Staff's intention to improve Airmen's cross-cultural competence.

In April 2007, the Air Force further demonstrated its commitment to culture learning by selecting cross-cultural competence as the centerpiece of Air University's re-accreditation efforts. In December 2007, the Center was made responsible for culture and language training, as well as education, across the entire Air Force. Air University's Spaatz Center for Officer Education hosts the AFCLC.



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