



*Routledge Research in Language Education*

# **THE INFLUENCE OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE ON US LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

**CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION**

Theresa Ulrich



# The Influence of the Foreign Service Institute on US Language Education

Through close analysis of primary source textual documents produced by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) between 1947 and 1968, this unique text reveals the undocumented influence of the FSI on K-12 language instruction and assessment in the United States.

By investigating the historical development of the FSI and its attitudes and practices around language learning and bilingualism, this text provides in-depth insight into the changing value of bilingualism in the US and highlights how the FSI's practices around language instruction and assessment continue to influence language instruction in American public schools. By mapping the development and integration of language proficiency assessments which strongly resemble those used by the FSI, historical analysis uncovers key political and economic motivations for increased promotion of language instruction in the US education system.

Providing insights into issues of language instruction and assessment in public education that persist today, this book will be particularly useful to researchers and students interested in how policy formation has shaped language instruction and assessment in US public schools.

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# **The Influence of the Foreign Service Institute on US Language Education**

Critical Analysis of Historical  
Documentation

**Theresa Ulrich**



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# List of Abbreviations

<b>AC</b>	American Councils
<b>ACLS</b>	American Council of Learned Societies
<b>ACTFL</b>	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
<b>AID</b>	Agency for International Development
<b>ALS</b>	Army Language School
<b>AAPPL</b>	ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Language
<b>BEA</b>	Bilingual Education Act
<b>CAL</b>	Center for Applied Linguistics
<b>CED</b>	Committee for Economic Development
<b>CI</b>	Confucius Institute
<b>CIA</b>	Central Intelligence Agency
<b>CLS</b>	Critical Language Scholarship
<b>CRA</b>	Civil Rights Act
<b>CFR</b>	Council on Foreign Relations
<b>DCPS</b>	District of Columbia Public Schools
<b>DLIFLC</b>	Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center
<b>DOD</b>	Department of Defense
<b>DOE</b>	Department of Education
<b>DOI</b>	Department of the Interior
<b>DOS</b>	Department of State
<b>EAG</b>	Enhanced Assessment Grant
<b>EL</b>	English learner
<b>EEOA</b>	Equal Education Opportunity Act
<b>ESEA</b>	Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
<b>ESL</b>	English as a second language
<b>ETS</b>	Educational Testing Service
<b>FBI</b>	Federal Bureau of Investigation
<b>FOIA</b>	Freedom of Information Act
<b>FLES</b>	Foreign Language in the Elementary School

<b>FSA</b>	Foreign Service Act
<b>FSI</b>	Foreign Service Institute
<b>FSO</b>	Foreign Service Officer
<b>FY</b>	Fiscal year
<b>GAO</b>	Government Accountability Office
<b>HICOG</b>	US High Commissioner for Germany
<b>HR</b>	House of Representatives
<b>IHE</b>	Institutes of Higher Education
<b>IIE</b>	Institute of International Education
<b>ILR</b>	Interagency Language Roundtable
<b>IOA</b>	Office of Administration and Management
<b>JFSOC</b>	Junior Foreign Service Officers Club
<b>JOT</b>	Junior Officer Training
<b>K-12</b>	Kindergarten through the twelfth grade (end high school)
<b>K-16</b>	Kindergarten through the end of university
<b>LEP</b>	Limited English proficiency
<b>LS</b>	Language services
<b>LULAC</b>	League of United Latin American Citizens
<b>MLA</b>	Modern Language Association
<b>MLJ</b>	<i>Modern Language Journal</i>
<b>NAACP</b>	National Advancement of American Colored Peoples
<b>NARA</b>	National Archives Research Administration
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NCLB</b>	No Child Left Behind Act
<b>NSF</b>	National Science Foundation
<b>NDEA</b>	National Defense Education Act
<b>NLFI</b>	National Language Flagship Institute
<b>NSA</b>	National Security Act
<b>NSAM</b>	National Security Action Memorandum
<b>NSF</b>	National Science Foundation
<b>NSC</b>	National Security Council
<b>NSLI</b>	National Security Language Initiative
<b>OCR</b>	Office of Civil Rights
<b>OE</b>	Office of Education
<b>OPE</b>	Office of Postsecondary Education
<b>OSD</b>	Office of the Secretary of Defense
<b>REFTEL NOTAL</b>	Reference Telegram Not To All
<b>RELA</b>	Reaching English Learners Act
<b>RF</b>	Rockefeller Foundation
<b>SEATO</b>	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
<b>SLS</b>	School of Language Studies
<b>SOB</b>	Seal of Biliteracy
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom

<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet Social Republics
<b>VEC</b>	Vietnamese Education Center
<b>VTC</b>	Vietnam Training Center
<b>WIDA</b>	World-class Instructional Design and Assessment
<b>WLARA</b>	World Language Advancement and Readiness Act
<b>WWI</b>	World War I
<b>WWII</b>	World War II

## Part I

# Historical Background and the Role of the Foreign Service Institute in the United States

For many decades, the United States (US) military has maintained a connection with public schools and language study (Liskin-Gasparro, 1984). The link between these entities has prompted questions about evolving perceptions of foreign language instruction and bilingualism in the country. The resulting inquiry presented in this book is expressed through a narrative timeline of historical events and policies related to language instruction in the US over time (Gottschalk, 1964; Porra, Hirschheim, & Parks, 2014). The investigation process analyzed US government practices and policies that impacted language instruction in public schools. The push for unified, government-directed curriculum resulted in the development of *common* schools, which sparked an English-only policy (Saracho & Spodek, 2006; Spring, 2001, 2010, 2012). The lack of appreciation for bilingualism and foreign language education perpetuated the English-only philosophy, resulting in periods of declining high school foreign language enrollment (Brown, 1943; Smith, 1923). The Rockefeller Foundation (RF) attempted to reignite interest in foreign language education by investing in the US Army Language School (Fosdick, 1952). However, it was not until after World War II that the US government established policy to augment the foreign language skills of US diplomats (Liskin-Gasparro, 1984).



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# 1 Development of the FSI and Its Governmental Language Proficiency Assessment Framework

## Chapter Overview

Through a retelling of a World War II (WWII) historical event, it became evident that US service personnel were ill prepared to communicate with their adversaries in Japanese. As a result, the US government formed the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), which became responsible for foreign language training in government departments (Geoghegan, 2008). The FSI language proficiency assessment framework later entered Kindergarten through Grade 12 (K-12) US public schools (Liskin-Gasparro, 1984). The lack of military preparedness, and the later development of a language assessment framework which migrated into public schools, generated questions about the country's historical attitudes and practices toward foreign languages (Herzog, 2003). The resulting inquiry incorporated analysis of primary source documents written by FSI agents from 1947 to 1968. This period encompassed the beginning of the FSI's debut through the initial period of its development of foreign language instruction programs (ILR, n.d.). The themes discovered in these historical documents addressed the investigatory questions of the study and laid the foundation for understanding related historical events and policy formation that evolved into modern day issues and political views (Spring, 2001, 2010, 2012).

Shortly after Japan officially withdrew from WWII, Lieutenant Commander S. L. Johnson of the submarine *USS Segundo* was charged with locating remnants of Japan's naval fleet. Commander Johnson and his crew had been patrolling the southern waters of Japan for several days without incident. However, on August 29, 1945, at 11:53 PM, just 13 days after Japan's formal surrender, the US routine mission was unexpectedly altered (Geoghegan, 2008).

A large unidentified object appeared on the *USS Segundo*'s radar screen (Geoghegan, 2008). The object was massive, approximately 25% longer than the *USS Segundo* and weighing twice as much (Geoghegan, 2008; Manley, 2014). Gordon Nesland, a crew member of the *USS Segundo*, recalled seeing the object for the first time. He said the vessel looked like a monster to the US crew. It was longer than a football field and was like nothing the sailors had ever seen (Rddad, 2015).



Figure 1.1 Japanese submarine I-400 in Hawaii

At the time, the American crew did not realize they had encountered a gigantic Japanese submarine. However, this submarine was extraordinary. In addition to being the largest submarine in history, it was heavily equipped with weaponry. It also housed floatplane attack bombers. In fact, this was the first vessel designed to simultaneously act as a submarine and an aircraft carrier (Geoghegan, 2008; see Figures 1.1 and 1.2). After overcoming the shock of what the American crew had discovered, Commander Johnson initiated communications with the Japanese submarine. The I-401 series Japanese submarine eventually ceased and permitted the crew of the *USS Segundo* to board her (Geoghegan, 2008).

Once on board, Lieutenant Johnson was struck with awe over the submarine's technological advances which reflected its devastating capability. Johnson quickly realized that the Japanese I-401 submarine needed to be secured so that it would remain out of the hands of the Russians (Geoghegan, 2008). Lieutenant Johnson later learned that this gigantic vessel was one of a series specially designed to attack the US as a last attempt to alter the outcome of WWII. Had an I-401 submarine attack happened six months earlier, the conclusion of WWII might have differed (Geoghegan, 2008).

While on board the super submarine, crew members of the *USS Segundo* began negotiating terms for surrender. The negotiation process was tedious. None of the American crew spoke Japanese ("From the Sea to the Moon," 2008; Geoghegan, 2008). Partly because he spoke some English, Lieutenant Bando, Chief Navigator of the I-401,



Figure 1.2 I-400, or I-401 (Japanese Submarine 1944) interior of the aircraft hangar, showing tracks for rolling planes out (October 14, 1945)

was charged with negotiating the terms of surrender on behalf of the Japanese crew (Geoghegan, 2008). Johnson later stated that communication through Bando's limited English was like trying to talk to a toddler, slow and haphazard (Geoghegan, 2008). Ongoing attempts at negotiations were frustrating. At one point, Captain Arriizumi, commander of the I-401, shared with Bando that he was ready to scuttle the super submarine and have its crew commit suicide (Geoghegan, 2008).

Crewman Nesland shared that tensions eased when sailors from both crews began to exchange photos of their families, the only real means of communication available to them (Rddad, 2015). Eventually, the Japanese crew conditionally surrendered. The *USS Segundo* safely escorted the I-401 submarine and its captive members back to Japanese shores (Geoghegan, 2008).

This historical event illustrating the capture and surrender of the Japanese super submarine resulted in a positive outcome for the US; however, the language barrier created challenges that could have easily led to devastating results. Having the ability to communicate in Japanese would have been a great advantage to the American crewmen. Not having Japanese-speaking crew members aboard a vessel in Japanese waters reflects a serious lack of preparation on the part of the US military. This situation prompted the question of why the US had not taken steps to secure bilingual crewmen. A historical inquiry into the matter revealed

## 6 Development of the FSI and Its Framework

Table 1.1 Original FSI Language Proficiency Scale

Rating	Description
0	<b>No proficiency</b> —No communicative ability
1	<b>Limited proficiency</b> —Courteous language, i.e., vocabulary related to travel
2	<b>Limited working proficiency</b> —Language of daily routines related to social and work-related contexts
3	<b>Full working proficiency</b> —Accurate language and usage for informal, formal, and professional occasions
4	<b>Advanced working proficiency</b> —Full professional working proficiency
5	<b>Educated native speaker</b> —Language is of the level comparable to and fully accepted by native speakers

Adapted from Sollenberger, H. E. (1978). Development and current use of the FSI oral interview test. In J. L. Clark (Ed.), *Direct testing of speaking proficiency: Theory and application* (pp. 3–12). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

historical events and policy formation that outlined the role of bilingualism in the US government and its connection to public education.

### US Military Language Assessment Enters Public Schools

A historical investigation of language instruction in the US military resulted in the discovery of a rubric that was designed to assess military personnel's foreign language proficiency levels. The rubric was a language proficiency assessment framework composed of a 6-point scale and corresponding descriptors of language level skills (ILR, n.d.; Jackson & Kaplan, 2001; see Table 1.1). US public school educators trained in language acquisition might detect the resemblance of the military framework to those used in public schools for students (ACTFL, 2012; WIDA, 2020). Language assessment frameworks used in Kindergarten, the optional first year of US school, through Grade 12 (K-12) in American public schools are used to measure proficiency in foreign language and English learner programs (ACTFL, 2012; WIDA, 2020).

### Similarities between US Military and Public-School Language Frameworks

A side-by-side comparison of the military, foreign language, and EL frameworks revealed their multiple similarities (see Table 1.2). The three frameworks all included textual or numerical labels to create a scale for each proficiency level as well as corresponding descriptors of language skills at those levels. Additionally, each framework incorporated differentiated base levels that measured language domains separately: reading, writing, speaking, and listening (ACTFL, 2012; Child, 2001; ILR, n.d.; WIDA, 2020).

Even more, the three frameworks relied on a figure to depict the progression of language acquisition levels and skills. The bottom or lower portion of the figures represented the lowest language proficiency level.

Table 1.2 Comparison of the Three Most Widely Used Language Proficiency Frameworks in the US

<i>Military</i>	<i>Foreign Language</i>	<i>English Learner</i>
Ascending proficiency levels represented by an upside-down triangle	Ascending proficiency levels represented by an upside-down cone	Ascending proficiency levels represented by an ascending staircase
Six base levels	Five base levels	Six base levels
Base levels labeled with numbers and text	Base levels labeled with text	Base levels labeled with numbers and text
Differentiated base levels (plus)	Differentiated base levels (low, mid, high)	Differentiated base levels (plus in writing domain)
Corresponding scale levels and descriptors	Corresponding scale levels and descriptors	Corresponding scale levels and descriptors
Performance descriptors separated into four domains	Performance descriptors separated into four domains (original 1982 framework)	Performance descriptors separated into four domains

(ACTFL, 2012: retrieved from <http://www.actfl.org>; ILR, n.d.: retrieved from <http://www.govtilr.org>; WIDA, 2012: retrieved from <https://wida.wisc.edu/>).

The levels of increasing proficiency were visually represented by rising and widening of the figures. The highest proficiency levels appeared at the top of each figure in its broadest band. Each increasing level moving upward on the figures reflected greater language proficiency and effort toward attainment of language than the preceding level below (ACTFL, 2012; Child, 2001; ILR, n.d.; WIDA, 2020; see Figures 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5).

Although the similarities between each of the three frameworks were apparent, their relationship was not markedly addressed in education literature. In addition to the original lingering question about the military’s lack of bilingual servicemen during WWII, the investigation process for

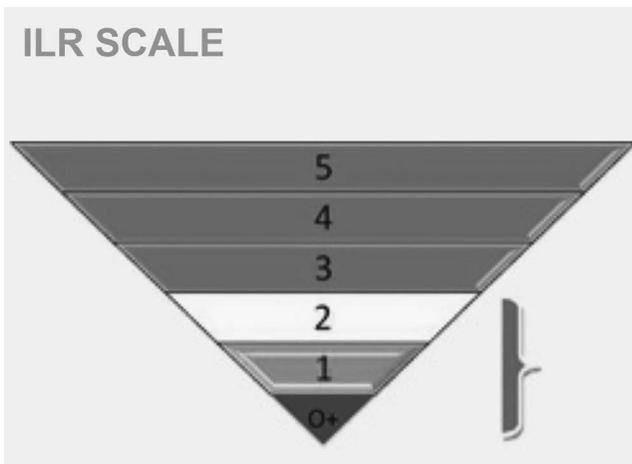


Figure 1.3 The ILR Scale