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## Watch Your Language...And Other Things

*By Ashley LaFayette, Student at Whitworth University*

*Editor's Note: Ashley LaFayette is a student at Whitworth University in Spokane, Washington. She participated in a history and political science study abroad opportunity that lasted four and half months. She stayed in homestays in Arusha, Dar es Salaam, and Zanzibar. Ashley studied philosophy, religion, language, and culture. She also completed a teaching internship for one month. This article is an excerpt from her personal blog about the experience.*

They call it a language barrier. It makes me think of a wall, but I'm noticing holes in the wall that I can look through. Not only am I learning Swahili itself, but also ways to get around that barrier as well through humor, gestures, openness, and love. I'm learning how I can use their use of English to help my Swahili, too.



**"This experience has helped me think of all people around the world in a personal way."**

For example, whenever someone is leaving me quickly, they say to me, "I am coming!" This bugs the heck out of me because, in my semi-practical mind, I think, "No, you're not!" as they run away. From it, though, I know that if I am leaving and coming right back to someone, instead of saying *Nitarudi*, which is like saying, "I'm coming back" in English, I should say *Ninakuja*, "I am coming." I can't just translate language. I have to translate culture, too.

*Continued on page 2...*

# LINGO

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The Pacific Northwest Council for Languages publishes *Lingo* in March and September. PNCFL welcomes short articles, descriptions of innovative courses, reviews of teaching materials, and other items of interest to language teaching professionals.

Members may send submissions to the editorial board by email attachment or postal mail to the addresses above. Submission deadlines are February 15 for the March issue and August 15 for the September issue.

To obtain advertising information, please contact Mandy Lindgren at [mandyl@uoregon.edu](mailto:mandyl@uoregon.edu) or 541-346-1773.

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## Watch Your Language

*Continued from page 1...*

So, even though it drives me crazy, I understand that to them, it actually makes perfect sense. And instead of saying, "I'm going to get my bag," in Swahili, I will say, "I'm going to take my bag." Because they use the word *chukuwa*, not *pata*. Being the outside culture, we of course have many moments when we mess things up.

Like not using the respectful form of "what" when we're called. Or, for example, my sister was joking about Krista and I having our house brothers as boyfriends. But, when she pointed to Liza, our guard, I said, "Yours?" She nodded her head and happily said yes. We burst up laughing. She was pretty defensive and embarrassed when someone explained it to her.

Last week, all of the house parents of we Whitworth students planned a surprise lunch. They took us two hours away to the base of Mount Kilimanjaro. We all thought we were going to town. But, while there, a baby went to the bathroom on a lady, and I later found out it wasn't even her baby. But, back home, my nine-year-old sister says, "Madam Ashley, do you remember when that baby polluted on that lady?" and laughed her head off. I guess if I want to say the word "urinated," I should look up the word for "polluted."

She described *jamba*, which means to fart, as "when you pollute the air." We explained the many ways to say it in America:

farting, passing gas, cutting the cheese. Yes, we're a close family, even despite language barriers.

I'm excited about our spring break trip to the game parks and the new adventure coming in Dar-es-Salaam. But I'm not excited to leave this family. I've reached the point where I can tell them if I don't like something and not feel uncomfortable about it. Where I can get the coffee and sugar out myself. Where I can wash my clothes without their help. I've reached the point where I'm comfortably at home. And now, we've talked about farting. There's no going back after that. (So I guess you're all my best friends now.) My experience with the homestay is incomparable. It's helped my language, my understanding. It's given Africans a name and face, from Zanzibar it's given Muslims a name and face. Faces and names close to my heart. I know that in Dar there will again be awkwardness and uncertainty, but I feel like I will be able to handle it better.

This experience has helped me think of all people around the world in a personal way. Instead of just being people in other places, they are personalities, stories, likes, and dislikes. They have senses of humor. Boy, do they have senses of humor!

Before coming here, I wondered if their humor would be anything like my strange sense of humor. But guess what I found? More humor like mine! My house sister, Lucy, and I greet each other in as



## Gullickson Receives National Award



Janice Gullickson, curriculum coordinator for world languages for the Anchorage School District, was recently honored by a national industry organization. Two-Way California Association of Bilingual Education has named Gullickson this year's recipient of its Promoting Bilingualism Award. This award is presented to educators whose body of work demonstrates a strong commitment to promoting bilingualism and mul-

tilingualism for the children and families of their organization.

This recognition honors Janice Gullickson's work that has spanned over forty years in Alaska and her commitment to promoting access and education to world languages. Janice's commitment to bilingualism and bi-literacy for all students has been the focus of her work throughout her career.

Congratulations, Janice. 🎉🎉

low of voices as possible. Leticia walks around repeating words in strange voices. We taught Liza the word puppy, and now at night we hear him saying, "puppy, puppy, puppy" in a high pitch voice to the new *mbwa mdogo*, little dog.

I could tell you so much about each person. Fredi surprises us with his humor. The power went out the other night again, so Krista and I took our flashlights out of our rooms to help. We decided to wait in the dark in the living room rather than our bedroom. To entertain ourselves, we began singing. After the lights came back on, Fredi came in and looked at us like we were freaks. Standing in front of us, he raised his hands up, palms facing us, and said, "Start."

"Start what?"

"Singing. I am the conductor."

And he continued to mimic the movements of a person who actually has control of their choir. Sometimes Fredi is just...Fred.

Judy's always helping us translate things. Alfonzi is always getting in trouble, then running to another adult in the house to cherish him. That baby is always so wronged. Esta is our favorite to talk to, even though she knows close to no English. She teaches us to cook and clean, and she just likes to be with us. Fortu works and asks what gifts we're going to give him. He is a kind man. Mama works long days as a journalist. She comes and checks on us if we're not feeling well. And when Baba is going on a rant before prayer and its late, she'll kneel down to pray in the middle of his talking as if to say "I'm tired, stop talking now."

Even though the traffic is crazy here and our Baba is a speeder and weaver, I feel safe in his car. His ambition in life shows in his driving, and I appreciate that. And I think it's fun.

I think that's a snippet of everyone. See, they're real people. The way they've taken Krista and I in is beyond me. It makes me want

to open my house and life up to students of the world when I am older and able to. I'd have the understanding of what they're going through.

They keep asking when we're going to come back, why we have to go. I'm with a group, I tell them. I wish I could tell them I will be back in a few months. When will I be back? A year? Five? Ten?

I'm at peace though. The future is exciting. Today I live and interact with the people I meet on the streets. I live with my family. Next week, I'll get a whole lot of pictures of elephants and lions...and finish my policy paper. Sometimes, I forget I'm actually in school. Next month, I'll have a new environment to get used to. I'll finish school. I'll take my final tests.

I was thinking how I'm going to go from summer to summer, sun to sun. But then reality hit me: it's Spokane. Who wants to bet my plane will be delayed by snow?



**T**he devastating 9.0 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami off the coast of Japan on March 11, 2011, touched many lives, both in Japan and around the world – including nine University of Alaska-Fairbanks (UAF) students studying in Japan.

Erica Keiko Iseri, exchange and study abroad advisor and National Student Exchange coordinator with the UAF Office of International Programs and Initiatives, serves as the primary contact for students at UAF while they're abroad, helping to ensure students' safety and well-being while they're thousands of miles away from home. Her first thought after tuning in the news on March 11: "I better get to work."

She and many others across UAF spent the day in a flurry of emails, phone calls, and constant monitoring of students' Facebook pages.

They learned that all of the current exchange students were safe, including a student studying at Tohoku University, in Sendai near the quake's epicenter. Through a Facebook message the student posted from a phone

with waning battery power, she let people know she had made it safely to a school gym being used as a shelter.

Some students decided to come home early, and both UAF and the Japanese partner universities where they were studying supported that choice. For the majority of students who were in areas less affected, Iseri says, there was a very strong sense of "this is my home right now."

When the earthquake occurred, the students on exchange were in the middle of cultural and linguistic immersion experiences they had been preparing for, in some cases, well before setting foot on the UAF campus. When students do enroll at UAF, many seek involvement with the Japan Club. The club holds game nights, calligraphy practices, and other cultural events. Japan Club also helps promote the Japanese traditions of *senpai* and *kohai*, by which less experienced individuals (*kohai*) are helped along by the more experienced (*senpai*).

"It's this mutually beneficial relationship where the *senpais* are mentoring and tutoring their *kohais*; the *kohais* benefit from that. After they go abroad, they come back and they're the *senpai*," explains David Henry,



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**Many U.S. groups and agencies, including the U.S. Navy, provided rescue and relief immediately after the disaster.**

assistant professor of Japanese. “When they leave, there’s this network in Japan [of Japan studies alumni] who can help our graduating seniors make connections, so that [*senpai-kohai* relationship] continues.”

While some students expressed their solidarity with Japan by remaining in the country, the Fairbanks community expressed theirs by forming the Fairbanks-Japan Relief Society (a division of the Fairbanks Japan Society, formerly known as the Fairbanks Aurora Club). After the disasters, the group quickly went from a casual listserv for the Japanese community in Fairbanks to a driven, highly active, all-volunteer fundraising force that sponsors everything from bake sales to concerts and has already sent more than \$35,000 to the Red Cross in Japan.

For the disaster’s one-year anniversary, the Fairbanks-Japan Relief Society held a memorial event at Pioneer Park that featured traditional Japanese drumming, music, calligraphy, martial arts demonstrations, and a video from survivors in Japan. Most importantly, this event – and the others since the quake – fostered a higher level of collaboration than was seen before the disaster.

Japanese instructor Chisato Murakami notes, “It’s a sad event, but because of it, I think people in the community and students really got to know each other and felt connected with Japan.”

“Real friendship and communication – that can be really important,” continues Murakami. “Their involvement in the various relief events gave the students valuable experiences beyond the classroom.” The personal connections Japanese studies students have been making, either while studying abroad or participating in community activities, will have a lasting effect.

*This article originally appeared in the 2012 issue of the University of Alaska-Fairbanks (UAF) College of Liberal Arts newsletter. For more on the UAF Japanese studies degree program, visit <http://www.uaf.edu/language/japanese/>. For more about the Fairbanks-Japan relief effort, visit <https://sites.google.com/site/fjrelief/>.*



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**Trisha Widmayer, a senior majoring in Japanese studies and an exchange student in Japan during the earthquake, wears her authentic kimono during UAF’s PopCon.**





© Judy Tolbert

## Summary of JNCL-NCLIS Delegate Assembly

*By Judy Tolbert, PNCFL Representative to JNCL-NCLIS*

I went off to Washington, D.C., in May with a bit more confidence this second time as the PNCFL delegate to the Joint National Committee for Languages-National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL-NCLIS) Delegate Assembly May 20-22. I eagerly anticipated learning the latest on policies and appropriations for foreign languages and international education, and I looked forward again to the privilege of meeting with the other delegates representing more than 200,000 language and international studies professionals.

Information sent out prior to the meeting included an agenda highlighted with a Senate Hearing: "A National Security Crisis: Foreign Language Capabilities in the Federal Government"; scheduled visits to the Alaskan Congressional delegation; an overview of the 112th Congress, 2nd Session presented by key legislative assistants; and a reception to honor the retirement of Senator Daniel Akaka (D-HI), a longtime advocate of foreign languages and international education.

Language learning education cannot be more crucial.

- 80% of the world does not speak English.
- 67% of U.S. high school students graduate not knowing another language or culture.
- Foreign language teaching is six times more effective now than it used to be.
- The lack of linguistically proficient and culturally competent students poses a threat to our national security and economic prosperity.
- Students need to reach a level of 3, 3+, or 4 after a long articulated K-12 sequence in order to function with the ability to infer, analyze, establish rapport and trust, and use critical thinking skills in the

target language, not just transfer information.

- Some failing schools in Delaware, California, and Utah will start immersion schools to raise students' overall achievement.

- According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, 1/5 of future jobs will depend on international trade and commerce.

- Although the FLAP grants and Title VI were zero funded, this does not mean that they are eliminated.

- JNCL-NCLIS and ACTFL have drafted a letter to President Barack Obama asking him to "address the language crisis in our country...create a national priority on language learning...articulate the imperative for multilingual graduates, identify and promote best-in-class approaches to language learning, and support the development and scaling of high quality language programs" and to "prioritize American security, American students as global citizens, and American economic interests by

supporting such programs in your FY 2014 budget."

The legislative day of the JNCL-NCLIS delegate assembly included many objectives.

### ***Restoration of the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP)***

FLAP was the only national program supporting foreign language education at the elementary and secondary levels. Funding for FLAP was eliminated in the final fiscal year 2012 budget enacted by Congress.

*Objective:* Restore funding to FLAP so it continues as an independent competitive grant program

### ***Title VI of the Higher Education Act and Fulbright-Hays***

Title VI of the Higher Education Act, Foreign Language and International Studies, and its overseas component, the Fulbright-

Hays Program, was recently reduced by 40% (\$50 million). For more than fifty years, these programs have helped students gain expertise in more than 200 foreign languages.

*Objective:* Restore the previous funding level of \$125.8 million to Title VI

### ***The Language Flagship***

The Language Flagship is a national model for designing and

implementing language programs at the K-12, undergraduate, and graduate levels. Currently, the Language Flagship funds twenty-four centers of intensive language instruction at universities across the country and K-16 language programs that offer pathways to superior proficiency starting in the early grades.

*Objective:* Provide a minimal funding increase so that the program can double in size and scope

### ***STARTALK Program***

STARTALK runs K-16 summer programs for language teachers and students. STARTALK's goal is to provide innovative language instruction, train language teachers, facilitate 21st century curriculum development, and create effective assessments.

*Objective:* Provide increased funding to expand the program

### ***National Security Language Initiative for Youth & the Critical Language Scholarship Program***

The National Security Language Initiative for Youth provides merit-based scholarships to students in grades 9-12 to learn critical need languages through overseas summer and academic-year immersion programs. The Critical Language Scholarship Program provides scholarships for intensive overseas summer immersion language programs in thirteen critical languages for U.S. undergraduate and graduate students.

*Objective:* Increase the funding for both programs in order to reach more students

Following his last Senate hearing, JNCL-NCLIS honored Senator

***Continued on page 12...***



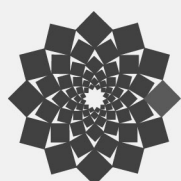
***Judy Tolbert on Capitol Hill during the JNCL-NCLIS Delegate Assembly in May***

***Photo Opposite Page: Judy in the office of Representative Don Young (R-AK)***



# SAVE THE DATE

PRE-CONVENTION WORKSHOPS ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2012



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# Flipping the Classroom

*A Press Release*

**A**ugust 13, 2012, Auburn Hills, Michigan — Inside an urban warehouse near Detroit, Michigan, young Teacher's Discovery techs have created a semester-long, interactive e-textbook program for first-year Spanish students. "Voces" (Voices) is radically transforming the way students learn. "Voces" is digital, interactive, multi-dimensional learning that is accessible to students 24/7. Teachers are embracing the new tech trend of digital e-textbooks, bringing learning into the 21st century.

Skip McWilliams, President of Teacher's Discovery, remarked, "We've heard over and over from teachers all over the U.S. - and it's supported by studies - that kids are simply not engaged in learning. They're bored. Our solution at Teacher's Discovery was simple: create a cloud-based e-textbook. By engaging kids with interactive vocab activities and videos, coupled with the ability to super-size the images onto a smartboard, kids are suddenly more focused and interested."

"Voces" is not only interactive and multi-dimensional, but it is priced to be in line with reduced school budgets — after all, while school

budgets are shrinking, teachers are under more and more pressure to teach relevant material that will prepare their students for the modern world. The budget crunch may be a blessing in disguise, as schools and teachers are forced

appropriate tools and material in order to engage the students....I was gladly surprised when my year 9 classes responded in the most receptive manner to the engaging presentations included with the Voces program...My students are engaged and have been more focused and attentive, particularly when discussing the grammar presentations...I'm totally satisfied by Voces and I still cannot believe how complete this program is! I strongly recommend it!"

With bold, interactive audio and video flashcards; captivating videos showcasing authentic, unscripted footage from around the Spanish-speaking world; and fun,

educational games, "Voces" is flipping the classroom, changing the way we think about learning. Paper textbooks, while still important tools in the classroom, will eventually be replaced with 21st century classroom technology.

Teacher's Discovery techs are currently developing high school English and advanced Spanish cloud-based e-textbooks, which will debut in December. Folks interested in learning more about "Voces" can call them at 1-800-832-2437. 🐼🐼



***"Voces is digital, interactive, multi-dimensional learning that is accessible to students 24/7."***

away from pricey, stagnant materials of times' past and hurtled toward computer-based materials that can be accessed anywhere and are affordable.

Marcelo Brignardello, who lives and teaches in Australia, offers his views: "I just wanted to congratulate you for such a great Spanish program! The truth is that in Australia, we don't have much support for the Spanish language as a subject. Resources are extremely limited, and it can be a huge challenge to find the

# Linguistic Connections That Tie the World Together

It wasn't yet 9 a.m. on a cold Saturday morning last March, but the Brooks Buildings Gathering Room was buzzing with energy. Linguists, archaeologists, biologists, anthropologists, elders, and young people eager to learn from them were gathered for a day-long presentation extravaganza on the Dene Yeniseian hypothesis, an exciting, continent-spanning development in one of the greatest unsolved puzzles in human migration.

Luckily, you don't need to be trained in any '-ology to understand the basics of the Dene Yeniseian hypothesis. In a nutshell: the Ket language of Central Siberia (which is part of the Yeniseian language family), once thought to be an isolate, might in fact be related to the Na-Dene languages of Alaska (Athabascan, Eyak, Tlingit) and the American Southwest (other Athabascan languages such as Navajo).

While this linguistic connection has been proposed by Russian scholars of Ket for nearly 100 years, only now is it being backed up by new research from several different fields, including anthropology, human genetics, and newer developments in linguistics such as advanced computational phylogenetics.

Spearheading this new work is Edward Vajda, professor of Russian and linguistics at Western Washington University. Vajda first



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***Edward Vajda with residents of Kellogg, who speak the Central Siberian language Ket.***

noticed convincing linguistic evidence for the hypothesis when he was doing historical reconstruction of verbs in the Ket and Navajo languages. He reported on some of his first proposed cognate pairs in 2000. James Kari, University of Alaska-Fairbanks (UAF) professor emeritus in linguistics who works with Athabascan languages, heard of Vajda's research and knew he was on to something big.

Vajda presented additional research in 2006, and he and Kari collaborated to hold the first conference on the Dene Yeniseian hypothesis. The conference was held in Fairbanks in 2008 and coincided with the Alaska Anthropological Association's annual meeting in Anchorage.

The hypothesis conference was a huge success; many linguists and researchers from across the sciences presented work, including UAF anthropology professor Ben Potter, who has remained active in Dene Yeniseian research. In 2010 Potter and Kari co-edited *The Dene Yeniseian Connection*, a book of edited papers from the 2008 conference.

Reaction from the linguistics community has been positive. Earlier this year, Michael Dunn, a prominent historical linguist writing in the journal *Language*, the most prestigious linguistic journal in the U.S., concludes, "This collection is clearly a very important contribution to historical linguistics and prehistory in general, but

as the authors themselves point out, the Dene Yeniseian hypothesis is a work in progress. In the best traditions of science, Vajda and colleagues have presented their evidence and arguments to the scrutiny of their peers, and there are exciting times ahead as in the coming years we can hope to see a scientific consensus emerge.”

For linguists both established and budding at UAF, where many focus on recording or revitalizing endangered languages, a highlight of this year’s conference (which included the Saturday workshop and a Tuesday evening lecture) was learning about Vajda’s recent fieldwork. In 2008, Vajda conducted fieldwork in the village of Kellog, located in the Yenisei River basin of Central Siberia. Kellog is home to most of the remaining fluent speakers of Ket, projected to be less than fifty in number. As with many Alaska Native languages, Ket suffered from years of state-sanctioned oppression of native languages and cultures.

In connection with Vajda’s visit, articles from the book were used in classes, from linguistics to anthropology; Vajda then participated in some of these classes.

The 2012 conference presented an opportunity for UAF students to learn about interdisciplinary research first hand. Anthropology graduate students Allie Dewey and Michael Kenyhercz presented a paper exploring evidence of the Dene Yeniseian hypothesis from genetic and biological anthropology. UAF professors Gary Holton and Mark Sicoli were able to involve undergraduate students from math and linguistics in their phylogenetic modeling of linguistics data.

From the classroom to the all-day workshop, from book publications to evening lectures, the 2008 and 2012 conferences underscore how UAF values and promotes interdisciplinary research and the deep connections that can be found here, both personal and professional.

Vajda is quick to remind you that he’s standing on the shoulders of giants, says Holton. UAF students have the opportunity to experience this firsthand when projects like these become part of the research and classroom culture.

*This article originally appeared in the 2012 issue of the University of Alaska-Fairbanks (UAF) College of Liberal Arts newsletter. The 2008 and 2012 Dene Yeniseian conferences were organized and hosted by the UAF Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC). Additional information about ANLC and Dene Yeniseian can be found on the web at <http://www.uaf.edu/anlc/dy/>.*

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## Summary of the JNCL-NCLIS Delegate Assembly

*Continued from page 7...*

Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI) with a reception in his honor held in the Hart Senate Office Building. Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI) has been a long-time friend and supporter of foreign languages and international education. At the end of 2012, he will retire from the Senate seat that he has held since 1990. He was presented with a book of tributes written by teachers and students who had participated in programs he had supported while a Senator.

### ***What You Can Do***

- Invite your elected officials (any

and all levels) to visit your classroom.

- Be a resource: research articles on all aspects of language education.
- Remind representatives that a K-12 education is the best bargain in the budget.
- Tell real stories from your classroom.
- Hold representatives accountable.
- Model advocacy for students, colleagues and parents.
- Remind our representatives: We encourage you to promote national security, U.S. students as global citizens, and our nation's economic

interests by supporting these programs.

On an exciting note, I am proud to announce that the new JNCL-NCLIS Executive Director Dr. William Rivers accepted my invitation to attend the AFLA Conference at the University of Alaska Fairbanks in September.

