Interpreters in the Field

TSgt Dieudonne Batawila & Dr. A. Clive Roberts
Interagency Language Roundtable, Foreign Service Institute, Arlington, VA
21 June 2019

“Peace through Partnerships”
USAF 818 MSAS Interpreters in the Field

Overview

- 818 MSAS Mission
- Command Language Program
  - Stats for FY2018
- Survey on Language Use in the Field
- 9L000 Interpreter/Translator
  - Background
  - African Partnership Flight (APF)
  - Sheppard Mobile Training Team
  - African AF Chiefs Symposium
  - Challenges

“Peace through Partnerships”
Mission Statement:

- Build, sustain, and expand the relationships with and the capabilities of Partner Nation Air Forces in direct support of the Combatant Commander Requirements
Forging Partnerships in Africa

- African countries face a variety of unique challenges
  - VEOs
  - Terrorism
  - Political unrest
  - Vast geography
  - Medical pandemics
  - Natural disasters

- The capacity of most African nations to address such challenges is limited by their abilities to effectively employ, leverage, and sustain air force capabilities

“Peace through Partnerships”
Forging Partnerships in Africa

Solutions

- The 818th MSAS helps narrow the capability gap of our African partners to overcome challenges through deliberate capacity building efforts.

- The unit has established long-term and enduring training programs, covering a vast array of Air Force functions, while creating genuine relationships with our African partners on behalf of the United States government.

- Building Partnerships!

“Peace through Partnerships”
Proficiency Requirements
- 1/1 in 2/3 skills (Reading/Listening/Speaking)
- Goal: 2/2 for TS and MC

Initial Acquisition French Course
- 14-week/420 hr course with home station DLIFLC LTD instructors
- 2-Week/60 hr AFCLC LITE Immersion to Lyon, France

Two x 2-week enhancement classes annually (120 hrs. total) for all squadron members in 30+ AFSCs
Command Language Program

- Broadband Language Training Service (DLIFLC) French classes
- Individualized Language Education Plans (ILEPs)
- French E-Mentor classes
- Online self study using GLOSS, NFLC materials in African French, Portuguese, and Arabic
- Coming soon: Language Lab
  - Language library & study area with Virtual Reality capability
Command Language Program: FY18 Statistics

- 3 x Initial Acquisition courses
  - 16 students for FY 2018
  - 31% achieved ILR 1+/1
  - 69% achieved ILR 1+/1+
  - 100% pass rate
- 20 x Enhancement courses

- 18% DLPT increase over 2017
  - Listening improved by 27%
  - Reading improved by 6%
- 84% of unit exceeded 1/1
- 50% of testers earned 1+/1+ or higher
  - 6% achieved 2/2
  - 9% achieved 3/3
- 100% of OPI (Speaking) testers achieved a 1 or higher

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Survey on Language Use In the Field

- Purpose of Survey was to determine:
  - How language is used in the Field
  - What type of language is employed
  - What linguistic situations are encountered
  - Which skills are used most frequently and which skills are most essential
  - What language levels are needed in each skill

- 20 Air Advisor reported language engagements in 5 countries:
  - Mauritania, Cameroon, Tunisia, Chad, and Mali
Survey on Language Use in the Field

Follow up actions:

- Review internal guidance to ensure that language training fits real-world language needs
- Devise strategy to reach proficiency goals
- Modify curriculum in initial acquisition course to suit needs
- Tailor individual Airman’s Language Education plans by skill

“Peace through Partnerships”
### Language Proficiency by Skill in Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/ Level</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JR /MC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS / SA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JV / TS</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JT / BA</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RY / SA</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZM / MC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBD / MC</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JH / TS</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BB / SA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RY / SA</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DJ / SA</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SM / BA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/ Level</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MG /MC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JN/BA</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AK / TS</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RY/SA</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC / TS</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM / MC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JF / MC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD/BA</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AVERAGE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(.75 = + level)
## Language Interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner Nation Personnel</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stores</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxis</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government officials</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer Games</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drivers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Peace through Partnerships”
### Interactions / Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotels, stores, restaurants</td>
<td>10 mins daily. Drivers: 10 mins daily. Coordinating instructor absence: 5 mins. Once. Partner Nation: 5 mins five times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drivers</td>
<td>60 mins daily. Hotel Staff: 30 mins three times. Stores: 5 mins seven times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Nation students</td>
<td>240 mins daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Nation students</td>
<td>130 mins daily over period of three weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>10 mins daily. Partner Nation: 20 mins daily. Public/stores: 10 mins daily. Restaurants: 10 mins daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>60 mins daily. Airport: 10 mins six times. Marketplace 30 mins once. Drivers: 10 mins daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport</td>
<td>45 mins once. Drivers: 45 mins twice. Key leader staff: 20 mins twice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Staff</td>
<td>30 mins 10 times. Partner Nation personnel: 30 mins on 7 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Staff</td>
<td>10 mins 4 times. Driver: 2 mins 10 times. Airport: 15 mins four times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Staff</td>
<td>5 mins twice a day for 14 days. Students: 20 mins throughout day 14 days. Air Base Staff: 15 min daily. Tourist market: 30 mins once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Staff</td>
<td>15 mins for four days. Partner Nation: 60 mins daily over seven days. Drivers: 20 mins daily over 3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Nation</td>
<td>15 mins daily for 14 days. Hotel: 2 mins daily for 14 days. Market: 45 mins 7 times. Drivers: 5 mins ten times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**“Peace through Partnerships”**
## Tasks By Importance

### PRIORITIZATION OF TASKS IN FRENCH BY IMPORTANCE (1-5, 1 being low importance and 5 being extremely Important)

Averaged responses from 12 survey participants

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>Conducted training in second language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.8/5</td>
<td>Conversed with host-nation personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.8/5</td>
<td>Conversing with government officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.92/5</td>
<td>Conversing with local drivers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey of Language Use in the Field

Tasks By Importance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.35/5</td>
<td>Obtaining or giving directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.50/5</td>
<td>Conversing with Airlines and/or airport staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.90/5</td>
<td>Checking in/out of hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>/5</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PRIORITIZATION OF TASKS IN FRENCH BY IMPORTANCE (1-5, 1 being low importance and 5 being extremely important)
Averaged responses from 15 survey participants
Ordering food, asking for hotel room to be unlocked, small-talk with drivers, conversations with Partner Nation personnel, talking with cashiers in stores. Much of language use in the field was doing daily tasks involving locals in the country. 50% of time conversing with Partner Nation personnel was in French, although interpreters were there.

Neither the airline attendant in Yaounde nor Garoua spoke English. Understanding French was imperative in order to comprehend the directions that were given regarding extra baggage fees among other things. Neither of our drivers spoken fluent English. French was necessary to communicate directions.

The Tunisian Air Force utilized English and Arabic as their primary languages when dealing with the MSAS. French, however, was also utilized once they realized we train in the language. Outside of that, French was utilized mostly when shopping or eating in the local community and for assistance at either the airport or hotel when checking in.
The aptitude for French and English were related to the Tunisian’s socioeconomic status. Training all officers, almost all students were very proficient in English. However, the specific details still needed translating to ensure concepts are understood. All the officers continued to put an emphasis on how important it is to international relationships to lean each other’s languages. Any language and cultural competence show, contributed greatly to building strong relationships.

While it is always beneficial to be able to converse with the Partner Nation, my language skills were extremely beneficial and helpful when I got sick and the embassy had to refer me to a local clinic. I went to an international clinic where the doctor on staff was French. My ability to not only describe what I was feeling, but also to understand what she was asking of me, was crucial in navigating through the medical process. Between her English and my French, I was able to get the medical care/medication I needed to enable me to complete the mission. If I had remained ill, I would have had to return from the mission early which would have impeded the mission progress and my own upgrade training would have suffered.
During our initial Key Leader Engagement, I was able to communicate with the Base Commander of the Malian Air Force Base in French. I was able to communicate what I needed from the Malian Air Force for the two-week engagement. I worked with my interpreter to get feedback and help with the French language. He provided assistance and I was able to communicate with my students successfully. The French language is extremely important. It helps our mission to build partnership because it brings us closer to our partner nations.

Authorization to release communications equipment with Tunisian Customs; checking into the Airline; coordination of base activities and graduation ceremony; briefing the Chief of Staff of the Tunisian Air Force on the activities of the Security Forces personnel; negotiating with local law enforcement while during a traffic stop

Speaking with airport officials in French was essential when we had to re-book our flight and retrieve our luggage from the airplane. Used French to communicate with key leader staff while on base in Garouda

Topics of interaction included work, culture, news, family weekend activities, everyday life, classroom instruction on weapons, directions
### Survey on Language Use in the Field

**Time Spent Communicating in Target Language (French) on Mission**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL: 20 Air Advisors averaged 20 hours each, conversing in French</td>
<td>406 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVERAGE HRS PER PERSON</td>
<td>20 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURES BELOW ARE BASED ON TWO MISSIONS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL MAURITANIA - Five (5) Air Advisors</td>
<td>200 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVERAGE PER PERSON MAURITANIA</td>
<td>40 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL CAMEROON - Seven (7) Air Advisors</td>
<td>76 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVERAGE PER PERSON CAMEROON</td>
<td>10.86 hrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Peace through Partnerships”
## Survey on Language Use in the Field

**Duration of Interaction, Frequency of Skill Use, Country and Air Advisor Level**  
MC = Mission Commander, TS = Team Sergeant, SA = Senior Advisor, BA = Basic Advisor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration of language use</th>
<th>Frequency of skill use</th>
<th>AA Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26.5 hrs</td>
<td>S ≥ 4; L ≥ 4; R ≥ 4</td>
<td>MC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 hrs</td>
<td>S ≥ 4; L ≥ 4; R ≥ 2</td>
<td>MC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5 hrs</td>
<td>S ≥ 4+; L ≥ 4</td>
<td>TS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td>S ≥ 4; L ≥ 4; R ≥ 4</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 hrs</td>
<td>S ≥ 4; L ≥ 4; R ≥ 4; W 1</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 hrs</td>
<td>S ≥ 4; L ≥ 4; R ≥ 4</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 hrs</td>
<td>S ≥ 4; L ≥ 4; R ≥1; W 1</td>
<td>BA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration of language use</th>
<th>Frequency of skill use</th>
<th>AA Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.5 hrs</td>
<td>S ≥ 4; L ≥ 4; R ≥ 4; W 1</td>
<td>MC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 hrs</td>
<td>S ≥ 4; L ≥ 4</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84 hrs</td>
<td>S ≥ 4; L ≥ 4</td>
<td>TS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66 hrs</td>
<td>S ≥ 4; L ≥ 4; R ≥ 4</td>
<td>BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.5 hrs</td>
<td>S ≥ 4; L ≥ 4; R ≥ 4; W 1</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey on Language Use in the Field

Summary and Conclusions

- **Summary and Conclusions**
  - Average DLPT Scores: Reading 1+, Listening 1 (high), Speaking between 1 and 1+
    - MCs are at 3/2+, 2/1+ and 1+/1+ levels of proficiency
    - TSs are at 1+/1+ and 1+/1 levels of proficiency
    - SAs range between 1/1 and 3/3
    - BAs range between 1/1 and 1+/1+
  - Language proficiency at level 1/1+ is essential during African Partner Nation Missions
    - Majority of daily communications is conducted in French with locals in hotels, taxis/drivers, airport, and stores but some training is done in French. Official interpreters need 3/3 or higher proficiency
    - Need to deal on occasion with situations with complications

“Peace through Partnerships”
Survey on Language Use in the Field

Summary and conclusions (cont’d)

- Language proficiency at level 1+/2 is desirable for communication with Partner Nation personnel
  - Explaining/communicating mission tasks
- Language proficiency at level 2 and above is desirable for communication with government officials
  - Abstract and hypothetical situations, supporting opinions
- While the majority of second language use occurs in situations technically requiring 1+/1 proficiency, because interaction is live with native speakers, proficiency at L2 to L3 is highly desirable in many of the interactions with Partner nation personnel and officials
- Speaking and Listening are the two most critical skills for Air Advisors
- Integrate ILR Interpreter Proficiency guidelines into USAF Interpreter Training
- Ensure that USAF Interpreters attend formal Interpreter courses, i.e. those offered through Middlebury’s Monterey Institute of International Studies

“Peace through Partnerships”
818 MSAS Interpreters

“Peace through Partnerships”
Air Force Interpreter/Translator

■ Positions
  - French (2)
  - Arabic (1)
  - Four (4) years Controlled Tour

■ Key Duties
  - Interprets from/into assigned foreign language (French, Arabic, Spanish)
  - Translates document/lesson plan in to the target language
  - Liaison between MSAS Advisors and in-country interpreter services
  - Assists with language sustainment and enhancement in-garrison
  - Facilitates weekly Language lesson activities

“Peace through Partnerships”
Air Force Interpreter/Translator

- **Background**
  - Primary AFSCs (2S & 1N3)
  - Language Skills
  - LEAP Scholars
  - Regional Expertise

“Peace through Partnerships”
Air Force Interpreter/Translator

In-Garrison
- Translate Documents and Air Force approved Lesson Plans from and into the target language
- Quality check all translated documents/lesson plans performed by interagency translation service.
- Facilitate weekly morning lessons to enhance MSAS members’ language skills.

In the Field (AFRICOM AOR)
- Manage embassy vetted language services
- Provides continuous language support to deployed team (on & off duty)

“Peace through Partnerships”
African Partnership Flight (APF): Share ideas, exchange concepts, enhance cooperation, and increase interoperability.

BigDecimal Key Performances:
- 9Ls deployed to Sénégal and Rwanda to provide interpreter service supports in French
- Provided simultaneous interpretation services during USAFE-AFAFRICA-Partner Nations’ engagements/lessons/briefs
- 818 MSAS 9Ls supervised local language support during APRRP planning Conference
Vignette – Sheppard AFB MTT

Sheppard Mobile Training Team:
Share ideas, exchange concepts, enhance cooperation, and increase interoperability with focus on C-130 MX

➢ Key Performances:
• Facilitated PNs personnel in/out processing
• 818 MSAS 9Ls coordinated augmented language support (LEAP)
• Provided simultaneous interpretation services during MSAS-PNs engagements/lessons/briefs
• 9Ls primary POCs (airport meets/send-offs; PNs personal needs, etc.); local sightseeing and excursions.

“Peace through Partnerships”
Vignette – African AF Symposium

African AF Chiefs Symposium: Share ideas, exchange concepts, enhance cooperation, and increase interoperability.

➢ Key Performances:
  • Supported the African Air Forces Chiefs Symposium

“Peace through Partnerships”
Challenges

Quick Stats:

- **300 million** people speak French around the world including Africa
- **44%** live in sub-Saharan Africa
- **85%** of the world’s French speakers could live in Africa by 2050

“Peace through Partnerships”
Challenges

- The Language evolves rapidly

“The French language is not going to wait in all these countries for the Académie to decide before it evolves”

*Francine Quéméner*
Program specialist at the French language observatory
International Organisation of La Francophonie
Challenges

- Technical Data
- Level of Literacy present in the host Nation’s Military
- Linguistic diversity
  - U.S. Regional colloquialisms
- African Regional Colloquialisms
  - Nouchi
Transforming French in five key phrases

- **Wesh?** - a slang phrase used in France to mean "what's up?" from the Algerian dialect of Arabic
- **Je suis enjaillé(e) de toi** - a phrase used in Ivory Coast meaning "I really like you". "Enjailler" is a slang word from Nouchi, Ivorian patois, which some say derives from the English "enjoy"
- **Deuxième bureau** - a phrase used in DR Congo and Togo. Its literal translation is "second office," but it means "mistress"
- **Ça avance ndank-ndank** - a phrase used in Senegal meaning "it's moving forward slowly," using "ndank-ndank," a Wolof word for "little by little"
- **Je wanda** - meaning "I wonder," "no way" or "I can't believe it," a popular expression in Cameroon and even the name of a gossip magazine, taken from the English word "to wonder" and reflecting the country's use of English, French and Pidgin
Questions?

“Peace through Partnerships”