

The Retroactive Approaches of Foreign Language Pursuit for the U.S. Postsecondary Students (3 credits)

Approve by Daniel Leitch on December 14, 2012  
Paper/Project Advisor

**The Retroactive Approaches of Foreign Language Pursuit for the U.S. Postsecondary  
Students**

A Seminar Paper

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

Adult Education

By

Yunmei/Mei Reeder

2012

## **Abstract**

### **THE RETROACTIVE APPROACHES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE PURSUIT FOR THE U.S. POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS**

Yunmei/Mei Reeder

Under the Supervision of Dr. Daniel Leitch

Learning a foreign language takes time and dedication. The reasons below may help to convince the American postsecondary students to take the time and efforts learning a foreign language. This paper emphasizes that the learning of any language other than English for the American students are related to family and friends, work, and travel/study abroad.

Learning foreign languages is no longer a pastime: it is a necessity. How does learning a foreign language help one to meet today's challenges? In many schools and even universities, there is no mandatory requirement for learning a foreign language. The benefits of learning another language – sensitivity to other cultures, understanding of different thought processes, equipping one for the job market, etc. – are not understood and neglected.

Language learning is a long process in order to achieve a certain kind of proficiency, though this is not the focal point of this paper. Our schools and universities will need to address why the country as a whole should encourage our next generation to learn a new languages, for obvious reasons, which will be discuss in the subsequent chapters. It is necessary to educate and promote postsecondary American students to realize the various benefits after learning a new language even though the proficiency cannot be defined.

**Keywords:** College Students; Higher Education; Language Skills; Reading Research; Foreign Language Learning; Study Abroad; Job Market; Global Village

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
APPROVAL PAGE	i
TITLE PAGE	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
▪ Overview	
▪ Problem Statement	
▪ Purpose of the Study	
▪ Significance of the Study	
▪ Study Delimitation	
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	8
▪ The U.S. Postsecondary Students Foreign language Learning Overview	
▪ Break Through the Hesitation	
▪ Foreign Language Learning increases Personal Adaptability	
▪ Learning Language Enriched Social and Cultural Understanding in the United States and beyond	
▪ Greater career opportunities domestically or internationally before and After Graduation	
▪ Summary	
III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	20
▪ Conclusions	
▪ Recommendations	
▪ Study limitation	
REFERENCES.....	25
APPENDIX A.....	28
APPENDIX B.....	30
APPENDIX C.....	31
APPENDIX D.....	32

APPENDIX E.....33

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **Overview**

In order to realize the benefits and advantages of knowing a foreign language, we must first take a language course or learn it from a speaker of that target language. Studies have shown that more college students in the U.S. are studying different languages than before. According to the Modern Language Association of America (MLA), funded by the United States Department of Education, a survey found that between 2006 and 2009, the overall enrollments in foreign language course grew 6 percent, achieving a high mark since the study began in 1960 (2007). So what is the problem when it seems that language learning is looking so great at colleges? The current per 100 total student enrollment is still well short of the 1965 rate of 16.5% (Furman, Goldberg, & Lusin, MLA, 2010). Professor Jarold Weatherford stated that, “For a long time Americans tended to think that knowing English was sufficient for all their needs. As a result, Americans developed an image as the people who cannot say even the most rudimentary phrase in any other language” (1986).

Many studies and research emphasize the importance of middle and high school students learning a foreign language without continuation in the college years. College students, however, will unlikely pursue a foreign language if they are given the idea at a young age that the study of or learning a foreign language is difficult, especially after they have completed high school. Even though there is not any solid evidence to support this assumption, students still may not be inclined to learn a new language or continue what they have learned in high school.

There is a feeling, all too common in the United States, that learning a foreign language is not for everyone. Corey Heller said when (1) we don't feel that we have any place to use the

language regularly and (2) when it is going to mean that we won't have time for more important things. Some may say that language learning is one of the most important things we can do in our lives, but that is for each person to answer for themselves (2011). While you're learning new ways to express yourself and how to not only speak but listen and hear your target language, your old language begins to suffer. The researcher of this study has often heard similar expressions on various occasions in conversation topics involving language learning among American friends and college students. They think language learning is considered more of an academic exercise. It is thus often separated from the reality of actually going out and speaking to a non-English speaker.

This study intends to look at the benefits and the reasons why college students should consider learning a foreign language. Motivation needs to be high when learning a foreign language, especially at the postsecondary level. Personal benefits of language learning include increased adaptability, opportunities to make new friends from a different country, and greater appreciation of culture, both one's own and that of another. The researcher's personal experience demonstrates that it is easier to reach out to more people of diverse cultures by knowing a foreign language.

Economic (personal finance) benefits of knowing a foreign language may include special recognition and career promotions before or after graduation from the college. As the majority of college graduates seek to enter the job market, it is important to know a foreign language as this can be an extra asset for increasing employment prospects and driving the economy (Inman, 1987). If self-employed, knowing a foreign language may increase sales, provide opportunities to open up a new business, or give better service to customers.

Finally, many families now have one or more relatives from other countries. The U.S. Census Bureau points out that the Immigrant numbers and growth rates are significant. Why? First, the foreign-born population in the United States tripled in the past four decades and about 13 percent of the 311.6 million people living in the United States were foreign-born. Second, by 2010, the foreign-born population is expected to increase to 43 million, or 13.5 percent of the total population. (Capps, Fix, Murray, Ost, Passel, and Herwanto, 2005). The numbers indicate to us this is the country of many nationalities. See appendix A for a quick view of the foreign-born in the United States in a 2005 studies (p. 28).

Learning the foreign language of the relatives' may help bond family relationships and create life changing experiences. When some relatives are coming to visit your home for the first time, you may feel nervous because you don't know a lot about them. But with patience, effort and a little humor, it's possible to establish a meaningful bond with relatives you've never met. Avoid coarse and offensive jokes when talking to them because they might get offended. Before the relatives arrive, ask other family members to give you detailed information so you'll have an idea of who the relatives are when you meet them. All of these require the basic common sense as to how to interact with the foreign relatives and it does pay to know the basic language the relative speaks to shorten the distance instantly.

If the in-laws, relatives, or friends speak a different language, learning that language will help communicating with them. It will also provide a better understanding of their culture and way of thinking. In the past, when a family spoke a particular language, it was proper to learn it and possibly, to teach it to the children. This could also be useful when researching the family tree, should some of the documents not be written in English.

In addition to the advantages mentioned above, language learning also offers personal enrichment. Learning to speak a foreign language is not just about increasing one's income. People who like to travel will find it easier to interact with people whose first language is not English when traveling to places of the language learned for convenient practice and spontaneous conversation (Sahin, 2011).

### **Problem Statement**

The ability to learn all subjects well is greatly admired by many in the United States. The ability to speak a foreign language is often seen as a remarkable achievement (Keshavarz & Astaneh, 2002). However, fluency in a language requires time and effort. Adults can learn a new language more efficiently and quickly than children because they can associate words and concepts and such with their native tongue (Fazeli, 2011). According to the U.S. Department of Education, (2006), less American high school students have studied these other languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, or Urdu. Together, these languages are spoken by an estimated 1.7 billion people, roughly 24% of the current world population.

According to a 2006 survey by the Modern Language Association, more college students in the U.S. are studying languages than ever before. Yet the number of foreign language courses taken on a percentage basis of enrollments is only about half of the 1965 rate of 16.5 percent (MLA.org, 2007). This study will investigate the reasons why U.S. college students should consider learning a foreign language and the added personal benefits of such study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Students of foreign languages in the U.S. have access to a greater number of career opportunities and are able to develop a deeper understanding of their own and

other cultures. One purpose of this study is to encourage American postsecondary students to learn at least one foreign language to enhance their competitiveness in the job market, domestic or abroad, and to facilitate connections with the world more easily.

Another purpose of this study is to identify the personal benefits of learning a foreign language among U.S. college students. These hypotheses statements have been initiated based on personal experience and knowledge:

1) The experience of learning a foreign language provides students advantages in exposure to different cultures, expands their horizons, and allows them to more effectively communicate with people who are from different countries.

2) The ability of knowing or speak a foreign language provides college students greater career opportunities before or after the graduation. For example, there is an increased or demand that a company will hire a student at a “career fair” who can speak English, as well as Spanish or Mandarin Chinese, than a student who only speaks English. See appendix B for the top ten immigrants to the United States in a 2005 studies (p. 30).

3) Many families now have members who are from a different country or speak a foreign language. Learning the foreign language of a family member can benefit family relationships.

Questions generated from the hypotheses are:

1) Are college students who speak or learn at least one foreign language more open-minded?

2) Does learning at least one foreign language provide students increased advancement for career opportunities than for students who only speak English?

### **Significance of the Study**

Many studies and much research have identified the benefits and advantages of learning a foreign language, and the importance of doing so. However, little study seems to have been given of the encouragement of American postsecondary students for learning a foreign language. College credit bearing language classes are graded and require discipline. These characteristics may not be very attractive to students in this age group. Yet, U.S. college students need all of the advantages they can obtain to increase adequate employment opportunities.

By providing evidence from various studies and research, this study will make recommendations for the promotion of foreign language learning at the U.S. college/university level. Language learning enables students to be more open minded and gives greater cultural understanding, so important as a result of the increased globalization of US campuses. “There is no question that the academic enterprise has become increasingly global. Nearly three million students now study outside their home nations-a 57% increase in the last decade” (Wildavsky, 2010). The United States attracts many students from overseas so “there is a good reason to believe that bilingualism is the norm for the majority of people in the world” (Keshavarz & Astaneh, 2002).

### **Study Delimitations**

This study intends to review the U.S. college students’ language learning, to look briefly at past and current enrollment rates, and to emphasize the benefits of foreign language learning. The content research was conducted using various studies, journals, and publications as primary sources. These findings and studies support the positive effects of foreign language learning. Another source for the content was the experience of the researcher.

- This study is not directly relevant to students who have no career advancement opportunities due to not knowing a language other than English.
- This study does not intend to research any correlation of academic achievement and learning a foreign language in college.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Review of Literature**

## **The U.S. Postsecondary Students Foreign language Learning Overview**

Communication skills are very important since every day of our lives we need to communicate with different kinds of people around us. Having good communication skills can improve relationships. However, language learning in the States gives greater attention to academic achievement, and thus indirectly ignores the essential part of language learning, how to communicate verbally. “Qualitatively, foreign language instruction in this country has focused on the development of formal structural knowledge rather than on communicative competence” (Hamayan, 1986).

As stated in the previous chapter, one myth declares, “Learning a foreign language early is the best thing to do.” But, is this true? Learning a language at school for academic purposes is different than learning a language in a multilingual home for personal usage. “The emphasis on starting very early is not as important as some might think, according to Dr. Lightbown, professor from Concordia University in Montreal” (Holman, 1998). In fact, studies have shown that adolescents and adults are in many ways better at learning a new language than children, except in the area of pronunciation (Scovel, 1999). Success depends in large measure on the ability of an individual to function as a member of a global village whose members speak a variety of languages.

Globalization has contributed to an increased desire to study new languages because the world is now a “Global Village,” with everyone being interconnected. The researcher believes that when American students begin to learn and appreciate different languages, they may begin to feel less alienated and awkward to non-native English speakers on campuses. We

should look at two factors of adapting the concept of globalized campuses in the U.S. as an ongoing trend. Thus:

1. The importance of learning at least a second language cannot be over-emphasized.
2. Most American college students are still unaware of the cross-cultural benefits that learning a foreign language can bring.

We will discuss these points throughout the following sections. This researcher believes that when Americans begin to learn and appreciate different languages, they may begin to feel less alienated. Such is a common scene when non English speakers speak in front of a few Americans. These can be awkward moments.

### **Break Through the Hesitation**

Contrary to the popular belief that older students or adults have less ability in the beginning to master foreign languages, tones, and pronunciation than younger students or children, adults can adjust learning styles, according to Dr. Schleppegrell's research, which found that adults can "overcome through adjustments in the learning environment, attention to affective factors, and use of effective teaching methods" (1987). So, why is there resistance to wanting to learn a new language among postsecondary level students? We know from the enrollment rate per hundred students is about six students will be evaluated, as well, as stated in overview in chapter one.

The researcher believes learning languages contributes to increased personal adaptability. As a translator and an interpreter, I adapt the meaning of a message from one language to another and, ideally, to also convey the spirit of the speaker's message to the listener or receiver. This was the case when the researcher was contracted by a mechanical parts manufacturer last winter

to interpret terminology and technical procedures from English to Chinese speakers. This required a lot of preparation beforehand in order to adapt to the speaker's and listener's needs. Otherwise, the communication would have been poor!

Drs. Price and Gascoligne discovered some results in their survey regarding overall opinion of foreign language study, attitudes, and motivation that influence students. The most commonly cited reason for not studying a foreign language was that the student simply did not find it necessary. The second and third reasons were the time and cost (2005).

Now that we have learned the most common obstacle that prevents postsecondary foreign language learning, how should we encourage students to overcome the common beliefs and promote language learning? "The awareness of students' motivational profiles may help teachers and tutors provide more appropriate recommendations and interventions to support student foreign language learning" (Matthews, 2008).

"Innovative technologies and media are frequently cited as ways to increase access to information and entertainment in a foreign language, provide interaction with speakers of other languages, and improve foreign language teaching in the classroom" (Pufahl, Rhodes, and Christian, 2001). The important thing is to promote a reverence for the learning of foreign language. It should not be seen as a threat to English speakers. Quite the opposite: It should be a doorway to the true benefits of globalization (Peterson, 2002). Foreign language learning can be unpredictable, anything but a routine set of drills and measurable progress. Even so, the result is worth the experience as well the struggle: "Language is never easy, but doing it as intensively

as possible for as long as you can bear is the only way to jump the initial hurdle,” as one of the researcher’s college friends used to say.

### **Foreign Language Learning increases Personal Adaptability**

The world is full of diversity; diversity in countries, people, plants.... and languages. The *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* says that estimates of total living languages in the world vary from 3,000 to 10,000. Below is a list of the most widely spoken languages in the world (listed in order of the number of native speakers) (Fominyen, 2010).

- Mandarin Chinese (836 million)
- Hindi (333 million)
- Spanish (332 million)
- English (322 million)
- Bengali (189 million)
- Arabic (186 million)
- Russian (170 million)
- Portuguese (170 million)
- Japanese (125 million)
- German (98 million)
- French (72 million)

Source: Dr. Bernard Comrie; the *Encarta Encyclopedia* (1998).

The United Nations uses six official languages in its intergovernmental meetings and documents, Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish (Wikipedia, 2012); the Secretariat uses two working languages, English and French. Hopefully, this is a good start for

the postsecondary students to realize that it does not hurt to learn a different language on American soil with the possibility of living or working abroad in the future.

There is a proverb in Chinese, “A wise man adapts himself to circumstances as water shapes itself to the vessel that contains it.” An increasingly globalized environment requires us to be more and more adaptable. The human race is gifted with adaptability, though it requires time and some effort to adapt oneself to different cultures, lifestyles, or languages. To increase your adaptability, interact with people of diverse cultures and educational background. Whenever you travel to a new place, try local food, learn few sentences of local language and try to mix with local people. Learn about the cultural differences (with your culture) and customs/traditions. Even Mahatma Gandhi emphasized that “Adaptability is not imitation. It means power of resistance and assimilation” (Gandhi, N.D.).

Possessing the knowledge of another widely spoken language will increase flexibility and adaptability in daily life as it tends to make us rethink our mother tongue and to examine the culture we are learning about through the language learning process. Adults can learn a new language more efficiently and quickly than children because “they can associate words and concepts and such with their native tongue” (Fazeli, 2011).

Domestic and international travel is increasing, especially among the younger generation. “...large numbers of people travel to other North and South American countries, to Europe, and even to Asia and Africa with increasing frequency for both work and pleasure” (Weatherford, 1986). Just knowing a few words and phrases in another language will unlock doors and open people’s hearts to you. For many people, these are the primary benefits of learning a second language (Trimnel, 2003).

If you are going to live in another country in the future, either by choice or by chance (such as job requirement), you will need to know its native language to find your way around. And if that country has multiple languages, you need to try and learn them all when possible, or at least become familiar with them. Learning or taking a language lesson in college enables one to be more adaptable after graduation. For instance, if an education major happens to learn Spanish in college, after graduation, he/she can at least help, or even teach, elementary or secondary school Spanish-speaking students to better understand materials covered at school.

### **Learning Language Enriches Social and Cultural Understanding in the United States and Beyond**

In many parts of the world, people are genuinely enchanted with someone who is trying to learn their language. When the researcher accompanied university officials to China last October, the local university hosts were touched that the Americans tried to say a simple phrase such as, “thank you,” in Mandarin. In return, the guests received gifts and warm embraces from the hosts. It then led to all sorts of cultural exchanges and invitations to experience the other local culture, as few other foreign travelers are able to experience. The memories generated from that trip will last a lifetime for the university officials. The same would have happened in Taiwan where the researcher grew up in.

“Learning another language gives the learner the ability to step inside the mind and context of that other culture and opens up new opportunities” (Trimnel, 2003). Learning a foreign language also means learning about a foreign culture. And learning more about another culture will make you more open-minded, more able to critique, to compare, and to understand people. Learning or studying a foreign language can help promote cultural awareness and

understanding of the community and society. As Dr. Weatherford states that that development of the, empathy and understanding for the native speakers of the language, qualities in individuals is greatly facilitated by language study (1986).

Visiting the country of the language you learn allows you to absorb the flavor of the language. Most importantly, being immersed in the environment helps you to *think* in the new language. Of course, most people may not be in a position to go to another country. But there may be opportunities locally to become further immersed in the language and culture. For example, there may be a wholesome publications or radio or TV programs in the language you are learning. One can seek out people in the area who speak the language well and talk to them. In the end, practice is the single most important rule for making progress, as the saying goes: “Practice makes perfect.”

Student exchange or study abroad programs at universities and colleges are other ways to provide students more affordable costs to study abroad and learn a new language and its culture (Quimbita, 1989). The U.S. as a nation refuses to recognize the need for non-English language competence and cultural awareness. This contributes to the widely held image of the arrogant American seeking to impose his language and culture on the world at large (Hamayan, 1986). The researcher does not necessary agree with this statement retrieved above from Hamayan’s studies. We all have a heightened sense of defensiveness when it comes to identity. In general, the American cultural values are important enough for the majority of us to not to change them. This is different than “refusing to change.” It is more helpful when the postsecondary institutes make sure the students understand that learning a new language will lead to assimilation, and assimilation leads to social and culture understanding not just the academic achievement.

Extensive cultural experience creates greater tolerance and appreciation of differences in creeds and customs. See Appendix C for reasons of students choose to study foreign languages at a 2010 UW-Madison study abroad newsletter for parents and families (p. 31).

When answering this question generated from one of the researcher's hypotheses, "Are college students who speak or learn at least one foreign language more open-minded?" We can answer with confidence. Based on the literature surveyed by this researcher, "students who study multiple languages tend to be more open-minded." That is not to say that monolingual students are all close minded. Perhaps they have troubles learning languages. But they can always try to learn. Once you begin to learn a different language, you open yourself up to a new culture, a new way of living, or seeing how people live their lives. This aspect aims at learning a new language in order to empower one's mind more openly to view the world beyond English speakers.

Dr. Marcos states of language learning, that "The benefits to society are many. Americans fluent in other languages enhance our economic competitiveness abroad, ... At the domestic level, foreign language ability helps teachers, health care providers, law enforcement personnel, and other who work with non-English speakers to do their jobs more effectively" (1998, p. 32). Learning the foreign language of a relative may help bond family relationships, since many families now have one or more relatives who are from other cultures or countries.

### **Learning A Foreign Language Provides Greater Domestic or International Career Opportunities, Before and After Graduation**

Not only does knowing a second language open opportunities for brighter futures. It provides tangible benefits to students, improves personal growth and development, and opens

doors for college students and those seeking careers in the business world. The benefits of fluency in a foreign language include an improved social understanding of different cultures, and a positive future economic impact, such as in the expanding career fields of education, social work, business, advertising, sports, travel, and publishing. “Learning another language helps the learner develop the ability to step inside the mind and context of that other culture and opens up new opportunities” (Trimnel, 2003). The author once asked a sophomore at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville why he wanted to take the non-credit Mandarin class on campus at the Confucius Institute. He answered by saying that studying in foreign language class is an excellent way to learn about a new and exciting culture. He hoped to be an engineer one day and to work at John Deere, who works closely with their Chinese partners. At the time, he felt the need to start learning Mandarin for greater opportunities (Jackson, 2010). Jackson works for a company in Japan right now and learns Japanese at the same time.

As the majority of college graduates seek to enter the job market, it is important to know a foreign language. This can be an extra asset for increasing employment prospects. According to the U.S. English Foundation, Inc., around 9 percent are fluent in another language. Compare that to Europe, where around 50 percent of the population is bilingual (2007). It means that Americans only work with countries or people speaking their language. Thus, their adaptability in other countries is limited.

Employers seeking multilingual prospective employees are increasing as the concept of globalization is continuing to impact many fields of the workforce such as education, social work, import and export, advertising, sports, travel, and publishing. “A second language is now becoming a vital part of the basic preparation for an increasing number of careers” (Weathford, 1986).

This can be a positive factor in driving the economy, as Inman notes, that not knowing the language of the country is a great disadvantage to a company. “An employee possessing a solid combination of language and business/managerial skills can have a competitive edge over others without language capability” (Inman, 1987). So, does fluency in at least one foreign language provide students increased advancement for career opportunities than for students who only speak English? The answer is “yes,” according to all the studies that have been discussed in this chapter.

The researcher can personally attest to that because the researcher can speak English and is able to communicate in English. Subsequently, she landed the position that enables her to use her native language in this English speaking environment and to become a liaison between her supervisors and the partners in China. Such communication abilities are an asset. Managers in business dealings often get frustrated with the difficulty in establishing rapport with their foreign counterparts and social interactions due to the lack of language proficiency (Furman, et al., 1987). The United States still dominates the world market, and most large U.S. companies promote competence in their employee’s language ability by investing employment opportunities in education (Cloud & Genesee, 1998).

U.S. postsecondary students need to understand and speak other languages, and to learn and develop new skills to compete with other countries in the international market. Students have the advantage in the US because more immigrants from other countries can enrich the U.S. education with their languages and prepare the next generation better to continue building the country.

## Summary

The American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages states that learning a second language allows individuals the ability to communicate with people that he or she would otherwise not have the chance to know. In addition, it opens doors to other cultures in order to help individuals understand and appreciate people from other countries. Stepping outside of every-day comfort zones and challenging oneself with the task of communicating with a stranger in a second language forces the individual to grow. This type of approach to learning a language allows the individual to grow in areas of self-confidence, effective communication, and gives individuals a positive self-image; all of which add up to a more well-rounded individual.

The days when Americans believed that knowing English was sufficient for all their communication needs are gradually fading. In this fast paced, rapidly shrinking world of Twitter, Facebook, and cell phones, knowing a second language can provide individuals with invaluable benefits in all stages of life. Both experts and researchers agree that knowing a second language is a vital part of living in today's world. In Germany, in France, in Italy, etc., more and more universities offer classes in English. People could think that with English, they could go everywhere. I agree, for universities, but not for the daily life.

Professor Baron points out that “bilingualism, considered normal in most parts of the world, is not valued in American culture and has sometimes been actively discouraged in schools and workplaces” (2001) after the 911 attack. We know from the MLA studies that there are only 6.6 percent of students enrolled in American colleges who are taking foreign language classes. The U.S. as a nation refuses to recognize the need for non-English language competence and cultural awareness. This contributes to the widely held image of the arrogant American seeking

to impose his language and culture on the world at large (Hamayan, 1986). See Appendix D for the student enrollments in higher education from 1960-2006 (p. 32).

The U.S. needs to take the next step of promoting postsecondary foreign language learning, be it in the classroom or not, by studying successful cases from other countries and using the information to implement practices and policies that will support the development of better foreign language learning and interest among the college student. The U.S. postsecondary students need to know it is with many years of unwavering commitment to foreign language learning (Pufahl, et al., 2001).

There is nothing wrong in speaking more than one language and being able to know more about other cultures. This is called a better education. The point here is not about not teaching English or diminishing the ability of speaking just English in daily life. Educate students to overcome the stereotypical mentality and work toward a new future! Understand the challenges, and all the positive effects such education will have on this country!

## **Chapter Three**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **Conclusion**

Why, with the findings of much research on this subject, is the foreign language learning related issue still not sinking in with the college students? World languages are now slated at many schools and universities because government funds are available to teach the so-called “critical languages.” But, what are the critical languages and who categorizes them? Does it mean that other languages are not as important or useful? So, why not look from the fun of it and relieve the pressure on oneself? After all, the purpose of knowing or learning a foreign language is to be able to explore different cultures, and thus, it also brings other benefits, as stated in the previous chapters. Those points should outweigh the academic achievement measurement.

The important thing is to promote a reverence for the learning of foreign language. It should not be seen as a threat to English speakers. Quite the opposite: It should be a doorway to the true benefits of globalization (Peterson, 2002). The ultimate goal for this study to postsecondary students is to say that it doesn't matter whether one learns a foreign language in formal settings or is self-tutored. This is a world of many nations. With the benefits that have been mentioned, one gets to know the world and the people in it better, because ultimately, we do live in a “Global Village” of a 7.047 billion world population, based on the United States Census Bureau, as of November 10, 2012 according to the U.S. & World Population Clocks (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2012).

To sum it up, the study of a foreign language benefits most students, especially the postsecondary students in the Unites States because:

- Knowing a different language can expand your view of the world
- Encourages critical reflection on the relation between language and culture, and language and thought
- Expands your opportunities for meaningful leisure activities (such as travel, viewing foreign language films, watching foreign TV programs)
- Develops your intellect (encouraging good learning habits, memorization, combining course content and skills in a meaningful way)
- Improves knowledge of the native language (through comparison and contrast with the foreign language)
- Exposes you to modes of thought and viewpoints that are available only in the foreign language and its culture
- Teaches and encourages respect for other ethnic groups
- Increases your sense of self-worth. Speaking Italian or Spanish to your grandmother or ordering in French at a French restaurant will do wonders for your ego!

Some reasons are practical, some inspirational, some intellectual and others sentimental, but whatever your reasons, having a clear idea of why you're learning a language can help to motivate you in your personal view of the world. If language skills are to improve here in America, everyone needs to play their part.

Students need to recognize the importance of foreign languages, encourage their children to take an interest and demand that schools give their children the opportunity to benefit from all that languages have to offer. Teachers - I'd like to thank them for all their dedicated work under sometimes difficult conditions, and encourage them to keep it up; universities - should promote language departments wherever possible, even under difficult financial circumstances;

Government, Local Education Authorities and Schools - must give language learning a firm place in school life and enable as many pupils as possible to benefit from the opportunities it creates. In my personal view, this is also a matter of social justice, because languages facilitate social mobility; lastly, the general public and the media - should recognize the value of language learning for future generations and support it accordingly.

Today, the growing interdependence of international markets is blossoming like never before, it is very crucial for the college students to prepare themselves for the future. As an educator, one would agree that providing students with cultural competencies and even the learning of a new language will enhance their competence and confidence to fit in the global village. In a world that is increasingly interdependent, we can no longer afford to remain monolingual.

### **Recommendation**

There are a few steps for continuing the language learning process after high school and into college. The first step is to encourage students to enroll in an introductory cross-cultural communication course, learning about other cultures, and demolish common stereotypes and misconceptions in U.S. Secondly, to encourage students to choose a language course, whether it is a credited or a non-credit bearing class, or, to simply find a friend of another culture or a family member from another country who speaks a language other than English to learn from. There are online language lessons and language learning devices such as MP3s and DVDs also for personal learning. When finances allow, students can also consider “Study Abroad” programs on campus to experience immersion type of study and learning a new language overseas.

Awareness of students' motivational profiles may help teachers and tutors provide more appropriate recommendations and interventions to support student foreign language learning (Matthews, 2008). The important thing is to promote a reverence for the learning of foreign language. It should not be seen as a threat to English speakers. Quite the opposite: It should be a doorway to the true benefits of globalization (Peterson, 2002). See appendix E that shows almost 20 percent of people more than 5 years old spoke a language other than English at home (p 33).

The more time you spend studying and, even more so, using the language, the faster your progress will be. We acquire language skills one step at a time. Though the little progress each time does not seem much of itself, it adds up. The researcher's personal experience was that I took a pocket size notebook with me everywhere I went and jotted down whenever I had learned a new vocabulary word or new phrases when I heard it from English speaking colleagues (back in Taiwan), or heard it from English movies on TV or from an only English radio station back in the 90s. I had found that regularly devoting short periods of time to study a foreign language was more effective than infrequently setting aside large chunks of time. The bottom line is, never give up any opportunity to learn or to speak.

There is a dazzling array of aids available to help people learn a language, including books, recordings, flash cards, and more. Even with all these products, however, many people find that they learn best in a structured classroom atmosphere. Use whatever methods work well for you. Keep in mind, though, that there are no shortcuts around personal effort and perseverance. But there are ways to make learning easier and more fun. One is to increase your exposure to the language and culture.

“You may never be able to pass for a native speaker,” notes the book *How to Learn a Foreign Language*. That’s not the point. You just want people to be able to understand you” (Fuller, 1983). So, rather than lamenting that you are not as fluent as you are in your mother tongue, focus on communicating clearly using what you have already learned.

View the process as a long-term investment. Think of this: As a speaker, how capable is a three or four-year-old child? Does he use sophisticated words and complex grammar? Of course not! Yet, he can carry on a basic conversation. Indeed, even for a child, learning a language takes several years (Scovel, 1999). Learning another language can be easy and fun. It can give you more opportunity in your career and improve your social life, enhance enjoyment of travel abroad and the benefits go on.

Moreover, language is such an integral part of our day-to-day life that mastering it will not only increase the communication but also is reacting to the globalization trend. So why not start today to learn a foreign language? The researcher will use a sentence to sum up this paper. The great Nelson Mandela has said, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart."

### **Study Limitation**

Not many journals or articles address college students learning foreign languages in the 2000s, yet more research exists for the 70s to 80s. Current studies are somewhat limited in the newer methods and theories. Many studies can be found on the relation between foreign language learning and the brain development but not on the lighter side

to simply promote the language learning without emphasizing the thousands of hours of effort or how it helps achieve a successful academic career.

### References

- Brod, R., & Welles, E. B. (2000). Foreign Language Enrollments in United States Institutions of Higher Education. *ADFL Bulletin*, 31(2), 22-29.
- Caldwell, W. (2007). Taking Spanish outside the Box: A Model for Integrating Service Learning into Foreign Language Study. *Foreign Language Annals*, 40(3), 463-471.
- Capps, R, Fix M, Ost, J., Passel J.S., and Herwanto, S. (2005) New Demography of America's Schools: Immigration and the No Child Left Behind Act. Urban Institute, D.C.
- Cummins, J. (2007). Rethinking Monolingual Instructional Strategies in Multilingual Classrooms. *Canadian Journal Of Applied Linguistics / Revue Canadienne De Linguistique Appliquee*, 10(2), 221-240.
- Fazeli, S. (2011). The Exploring Nature of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) and Their Relationship with Various Variables with Focus on Personality Traits in the Current Studies of Second/Foreign Language Learning.
- Fuller, Graham. (1983). *How to Learn a Foreign Language*. Friday Harbor, WA: Storm King Press.
- Furman, N., Goldberg, D. & Lusin, N. (2010) Web publication, Modern Language Association of America funded by the United States Department of Education.
- Grittner, F. M. (1974). Motivating Students in the Foreign Language Classroom.
- Hamayan, E., & ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, W. C. (1986). The Need for Foreign Language Competence in the United States.
- Heller, C. (2009). Multilingual Living and the Editor-In-Chief/Publisher of Multilingual Living Magazine.

- Hoegl, J. K. (1984). National and State Needs for Foreign Language Learning in Government, Business, Tourism, and Agriculture.
- Holman, J. R. (1998). Learning a Language. *Better Homes and Gardens*, 40, 42
- Huang, B. H., & Jun, S. (2011). The Effect of Age on the Acquisition of Second Language Prosody. *Language And Speech*, 54(3), 387-414.
- Inman, M. E., & ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, W. C. (1987). How Foreign Language Study Can Enhance Career Possibilities. *ERIC Digest*.
- Jackson, R. (2010). Personal quote when asked why learning a foreign language.
- Kalivoda, T. B. (1971). An Investigation on Values of College Foreign Language Study.
- Kandel, William A. (2011). "The U.S. Foreign-Born Population: Trends and Selected Characteristics Analyst in Immigration Policy January 18, p.1-3
- Keshavarz, M. H., & Astaneh, H. (2002). The Impact of Bilinguality on the Learning of English Vocabulary as a Foreign Language (L3). *ACTAS/Proceedings*, 255-264.
- Marcos, K. M. (1998). Learning a Second Language. What Parents Need to Know. *Our Children*, 24(1), 32-33.
- Matthews, P. H. (2008). Achievement Motivational Characteristics of University Foreign Language Learners: From the Classroom to the Tutoring Table. *Foreign Language Annals*, 41(4), 611-626.
- Met, M. (1993). Foreign Language Immersion Programs, Montgomery County Public Schools  
<http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/met00001.html>
- MLA, Modern language Association of America (1965-2010) [www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org), funded by the United States Department of Education
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Bailey, P., & Daley, C. E. (1997). Foreign Language Anxiety among

College Students.

Peterson, T. (2002). The Importance of Being Multilingual. Business Week Online. Retrieved

July 25, 2012 <http://www.businessweek.com/stories/2002-09-03/the-importance-of-being-multilingual>

Price, J., & Gascoigne, C. (2006). Current Perceptions and Beliefs among Incoming College Students towards Foreign Language Study and Language Requirements. *Foreign*

*Language Annals*, 39(3), 383-394.

Pufahl, I., Rhodes, N., & Christian, D. ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, W. C.

(2001). What we Can learn from Foreign Language Teaching in Other Countries.

Quimbita, G., & ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, L. A. (1989). Internationalizing the Community College: Examples of Success.

Sahin, Y. (2011). The Importance of the Foreign Language Learning Contributing to World Peace.

Schleppegrell, M., & ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, W. C. (1987). The Older Language Learner.

Scovel T, 1999 *The younger the better myth and bilingual education* In: Gonzalez, R (ed.) *Language Ideologies: Critical Perspectives* Urbana, IL: NCTE

Trimnel, E., Why You Need a Foreign Language - And How to Learn One: English Speaking Professionals and the Global Challenge (May 2003)

U.S. Department of Commerce, United States Census Bureau. (2012). *U.S. & World Population Clocks*. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/main/www/popclock.html>

Weatherford, H., & ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, W. C. (1986). Personal Benefits of Foreign Language Study. ERIC Digest.

Wildavsky, B. (2010). US: Welcoming academic globalization. *The Great Brain Race: How global universities are reshaping the world.* Princeton University Press.

Yang, X., & Chen, D. (2011). *A Comparison of Foreign Language Learning Social Environments, Motivation, and Beliefs between Chinese and American Students.*

## Appendix A

### SNAPSHOT OF THE FOREIGN-BORN IN THE UNITED STATES

IMMIGRATION STATUS	TOTAL NUMBER (2005)	% OF TOTAL	ANNUAL (Federal Fiscal Year 2003)
<b>FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS</b>			
<b>Naturalized citizens:</b> Lawful permanent residents in U.S. at least 3-5 years who have completed naturalization process.	11.5 million	31%	555,000 LPRs became citizens
<b>Lawful permanent residents (LPRs):</b> Persons legally admitted to reside and work permanently in U.S.; most visas are granted through family relationships to relatives of citizens and LPRs (about 74% of total) and employment skills (12% of total).	10.5 million	28%	651,000 LPR visas granted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 333,000 immediate relatives of U.S. citizens</li> <li>• 159,000 other relatives of citizens &amp; LPRs</li> <li>• 87,000 other legal admissions, such as diversity visas</li> <li>• 82,000 employment visas</li> </ul>
<b>Refugees:</b> Persons unable or unwilling to return to their country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution; refugees are admitted overseas, and asylees apply in the U.S. Both may apply to become LPR after one year. Of the post-1980 refugee arrivals, 1.3 million are now LPRs, and 1.3 million are now naturalized citizens.	2.6 million	7%	45,000 refugee/asylee visas granted
<b>Temporary legal residents:</b> Persons legally admitted for a specified purpose and a temporary period.	1.3 million	3%	1.46 million temporary resident visas, including 662,000 students and dependents, and 798,000 temporary workers and dependents
<b>Undocumented immigrants:</b> Persons residing in the U.S. without legal permission. Estimated numbers:	11.1 million	30%	An estimated 500,000 undocumented immigrants have entered the United

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50-65% entered without inspection.</li> <li>• 25-40% overstayed visa.</li> <li>• 10% quasi-legal (e.g., Temporary Protected Status, asylum applicants, persons awaiting green card)</li> </ul>			States per year since 2000
<b>TOTAL FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS</b>	37 million	100%	2.6 million resident arrivals annually
<b>VISITORS TO THE UNITED STATES</b>			
Tourists	24.4 million		
Visitors for Business	4.2 million		
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL VISITORS</b>	28.6 million		

**Source:** Grantmakers concerned with immigrants and refugees

## Appendix B

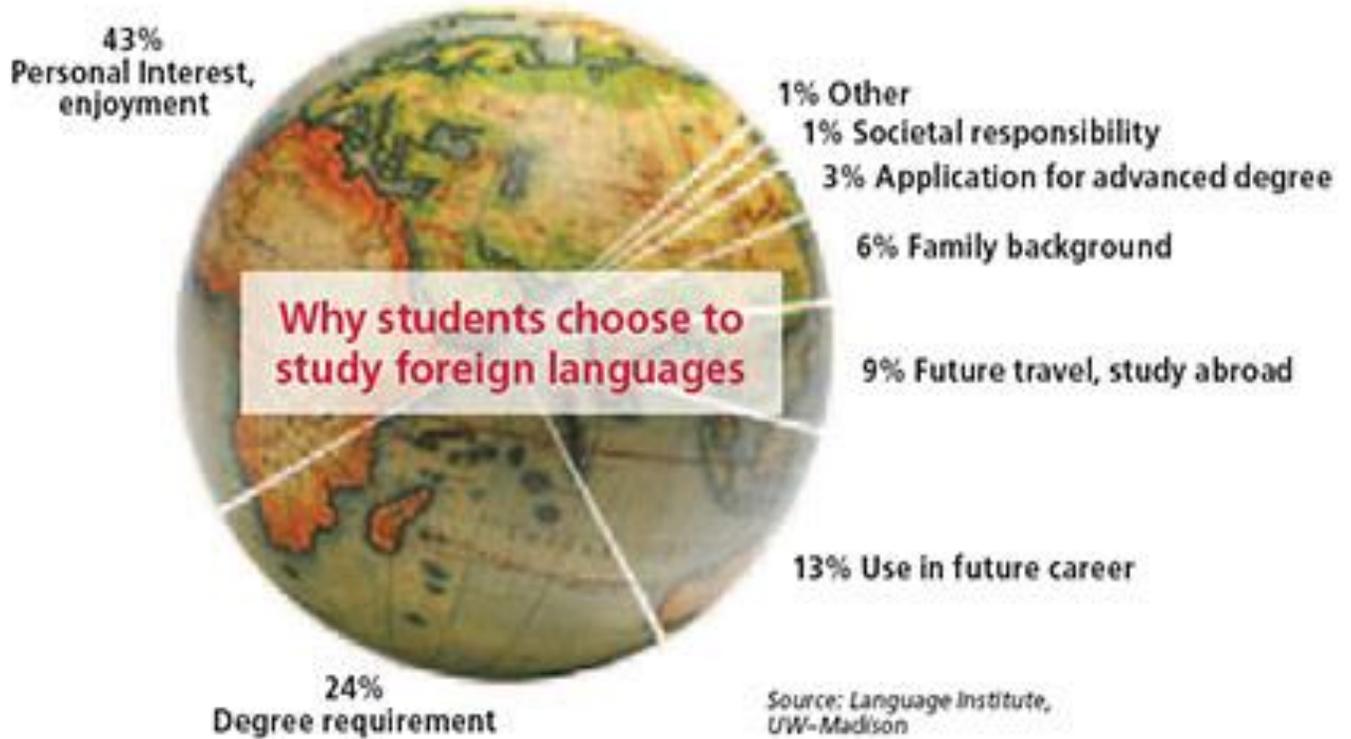
### TOP-TEN IMMIGRANT-SENDING COUNTRIES TO THE UNITED STATES

2004	1960
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Mexico</li><li>2. India</li><li>3. Philippines</li><li>4. China</li><li>5. Vietnam</li><li>6. Dominican-Republic</li><li>7. El Salvador</li><li>8. Cuba</li><li>9. Korea</li><li>10. Colombia</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Mexico</li><li>2. Germany</li><li>3. Canada</li><li>4. United Kingdom</li><li>5. Italy</li><li>6. Cuba</li><li>7. Poland</li><li>8. Ireland</li><li>9. Hungary</li><li>10. Portugal</li></ol>

**Source:** grant makers concerned with immigrants and refugees

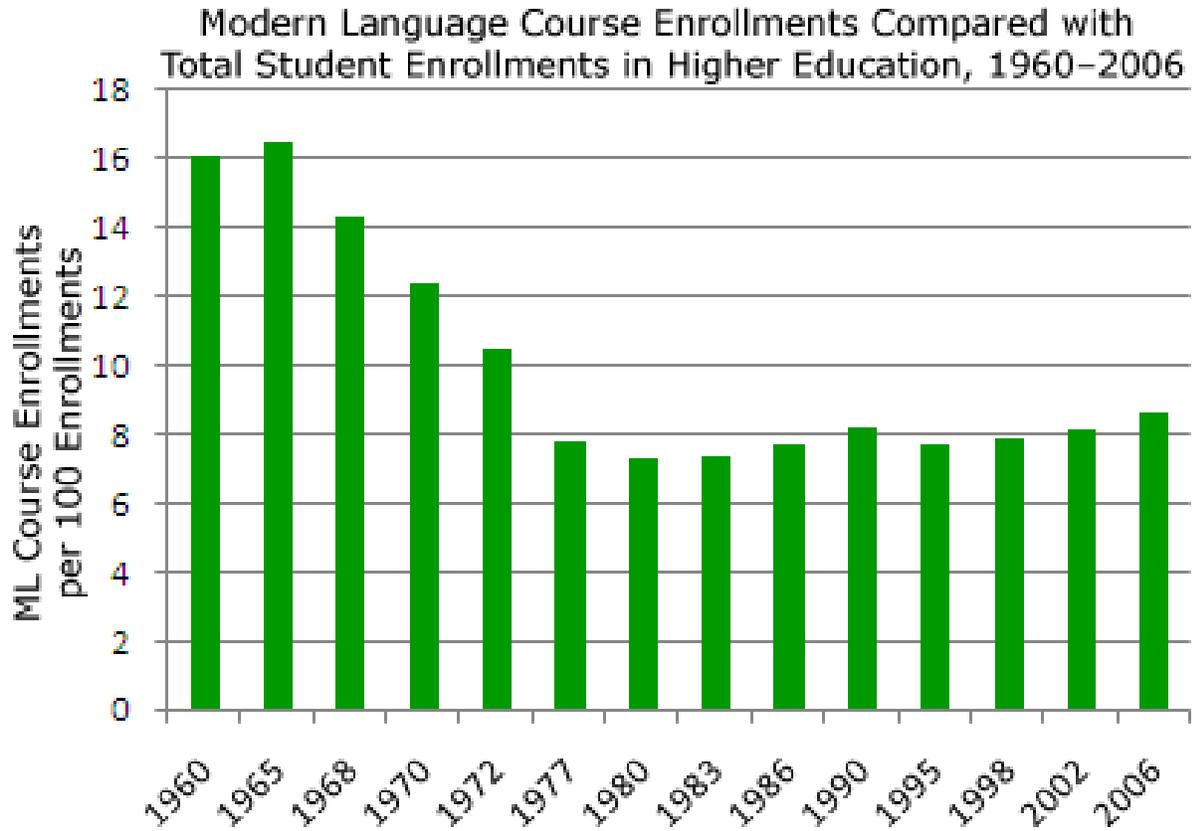
## Appendix C

Source: A Newsletter for Parents and Families of UW–Madison Students | April 2010



Graph showing the distribution "Why students choose to study foreign language" UW-Madison [www.parent.wisc.edu](http://www.parent.wisc.edu)

## Appendix D



Source: graph showing that present US postsecondary enrollment in foreign languages. American Education Research Association

## Appendix E

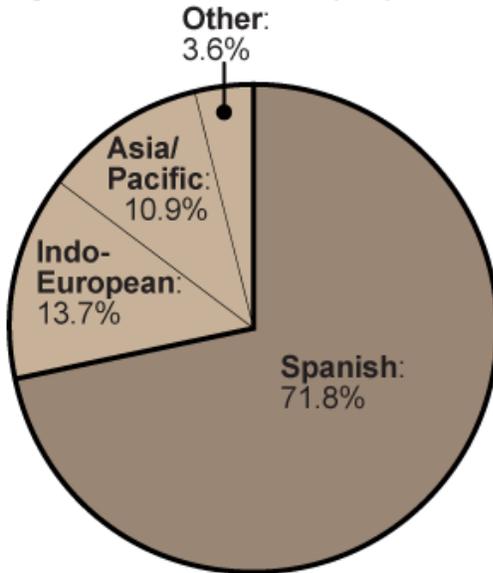
### Americans lag in learning foreign languages

Immersion skills and other programs try to combat the trend

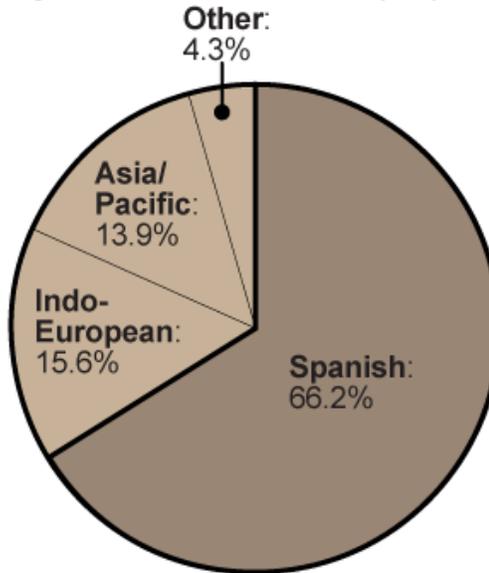
Tuesday, January 4, 2011 | 4:27 p.m. CST; updated 11:22 a.m. CDT, Thursday, April 14, 2011

#### PERCENTAGE OF LANGUAGE SPEAKERS BY AGE GROUP

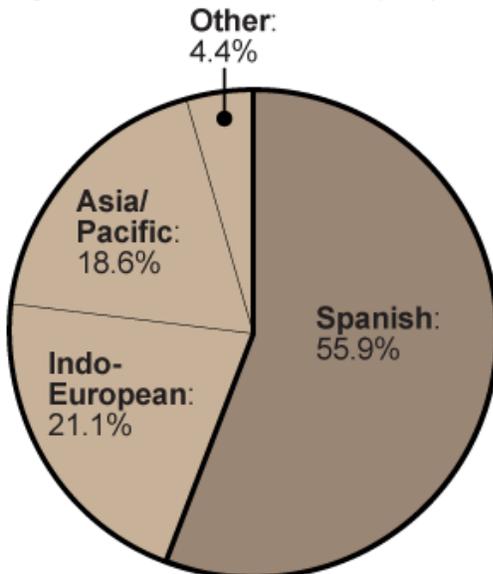
Ages 5 to 17, 11 million people



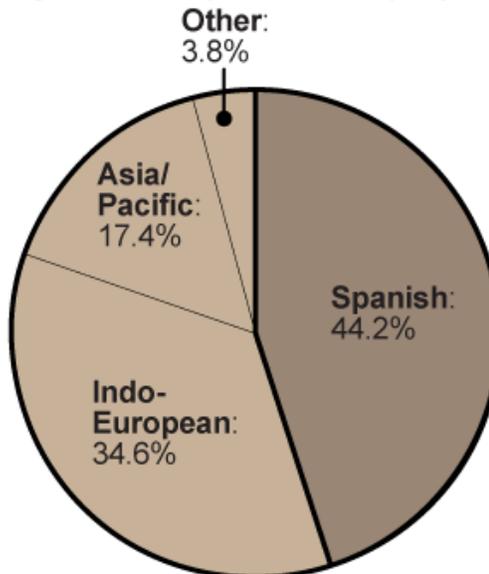
Ages 18 to 40, 23.1 million people



Ages 41 to 64, 16.1 million people



Ages 65 and up, 5.2 million people



Source: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

The U.S. Census Bureau released a report in April that showed almost 20 percent of people more than 5 years old spoke a language other than English at home