



U.S. Businesses Need More Multilingual Employees

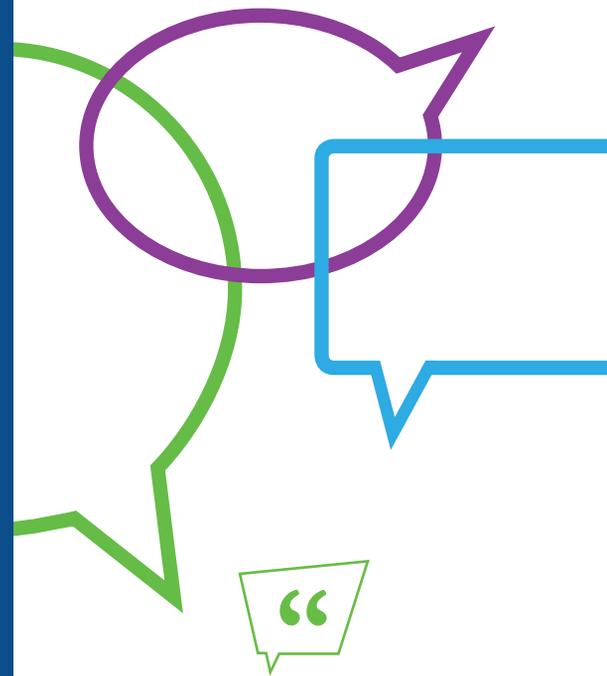
According to a survey of 1,200 managers and human resources professionals familiar with their organization's foreign language needs, U.S. employers are losing business opportunities because they can't find employees who are able to communicate in languages other than English.

A groundbreaking industry report, based on a survey conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs for ACTFL as part of its *Lead with Languages* campaign, with support from Language Testing International and Pearson LLC, includes new data that underscore the vital need for language skills in the U.S. workplace and the impact on the U.S. economy.

Making Languages Our Business: Addressing Foreign Language Demand Among U.S. Employers, reveals a critical demand for employees who can communicate in languages other than English. In boardrooms and in the field, with customers and partners and on social media, U.S. employers today are increasingly conducting business in a language other than English. Accordingly, the ability to effectively communicate in more than one language is a critical asset for U.S. students—not only by helping them thrive in a global economy, but also by boosting their marketability in the workplace. Fully one-third of survey respondents reported that their needs for foreign language skills were not being met by current employees.

This important report confirms what language educators have long claimed: Learning a language opens career paths and increases employment opportunities for students, not only as language educators, but also in the larger business community.

"There is no denying the dominant position STEM subjects have enjoyed in today's curriculum," notes Howie Berman, ACTFL's Executive Director. "World languages, unfortunately, are often treated as a competing discipline. Our survey findings highlight the need for world language skills to be recognized as a complementary and interdependent capability. We already know that language



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— Howie Berman
ACTFL Executive Director

learning deepens our connections to other cultures, boosts confidence, strengthens decision-making, and contributes greatly to national security; we also know that language skills are necessary to produce the globally competent employees U.S. businesses are seeking. This reality requires an education system that prepares graduates to be proficient in the languages they need to successfully compete in a 21st century global economy.”

Making Languages Our Business advocates for an education system that prepares graduates to become proficient in other languages and cultures in order to maintain a pipeline of prospective employees that U.S. industry needs to compete in our global economy.

According to the report, the vast majority of U.S. employers say they rely on employees with language skills other than English to advance their business goals. Those unable to fill this need find themselves falling behind in the global market. Key findings of the report include:

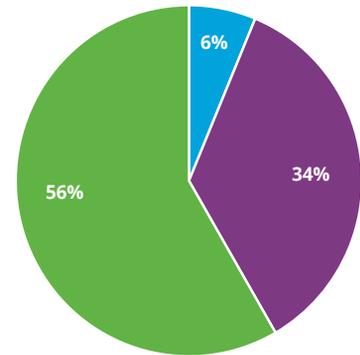
- Nine out of 10 U.S. employers report a reliance on U.S.-based employees with language skills other than English.
- Nearly half of the U.S. employers surveyed (47%) indicated that their language needs are primarily for the domestic marketplace.

- One-third (32%) of employers report a high dependency on language skills other than English.
- One-third (34%) of U.S. employers reliant on foreign languages report that their foreign language needs are not currently being met by their employees.
- A majority of employers report that their need for foreign languages has increased over the past 5 years and project that it will continue to grow.
- Nearly one in four U.S. employers surveyed acknowledged losing or being unable to pursue a business opportunity because of the lack of foreign language skills.
- Proficiency in Spanish, Chinese, and French are currently in the highest demand among U.S. employers.

The report also proposes seven concrete recommendations for U.S. employers to help them better recruit and sustain a multilingual workforce, and explains the implications of early language instruction for creating a more robust pipeline of future workers with language skills.

“We in the language education community can’t sit back and wait,” said Berman. “We have to show where languages fit in when it comes to preparing students for the future. We have to show our value.”

Future Demand for Foreign Language Skills



- More Demand
- Same Demand
- Less Demand

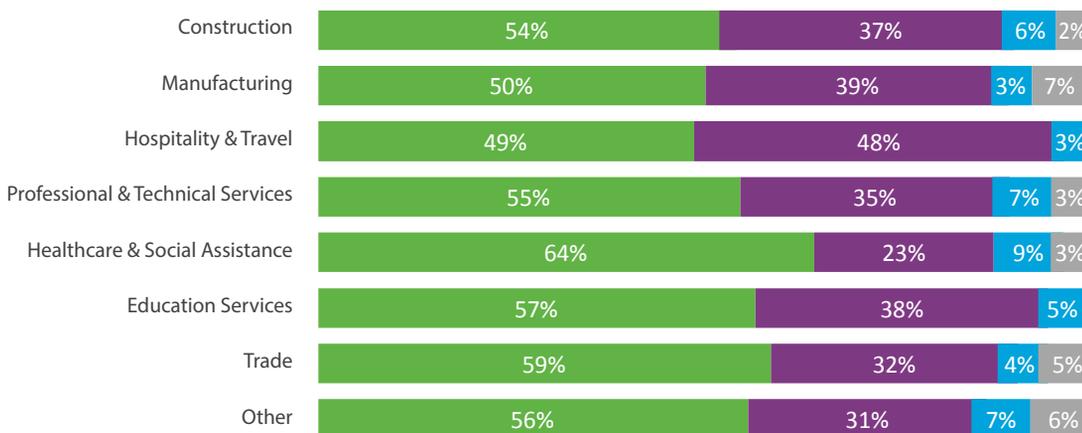
Base: All respondents



In the future we'll need more employees who speak Spanish.

— Small Financial Services Firm

Future Demand for Foreign Language Skills, by Sector



*Survey sample of Trade comprises 85% retail and 15% wholesale

Base: All respondents

Most In-Demand Foreign Languages Reported by U.S. Employers

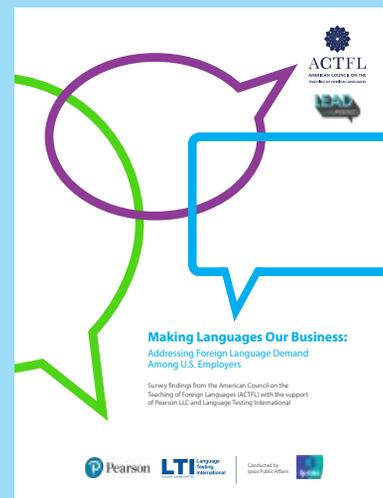
Language	Total
Spanish	85%
Chinese	34%
French	22%
Japanese	17%
German	17%
Russian	12%
Arabic	11%
Italian	10%
Korean	9%
Hindi	8%
Portuguese	8%
Other*	5%



The pool of bilingual candidates is increasingly very attractive to companies needing language skills and [that's why] we're finding the supply increasingly stressed.

— Large Retailer

Share This Report



Making Languages Our Business provides an insightful and factual look at the U.S. business community and its unmet language skill needs. Think what a powerful argument this report makes for those who decide how to spend resources in our schools, as well as for those who influence academic choices and decision-making.

Seven Ways to Share the Results of this Survey

- Pull the complimentary poster out of this issue of *The Language Educator* and hang it in a visible, central location.
- Forward a copy of *Making Languages Our Business* to the administrators who make institutional resource allocations where you teach. It contains compelling arguments for increasing the number of multilingual graduates at every level of our educational system.
- Send a copy of the report to counselors who advise students on academic decisions. They cannot inform students about this opportunity if they do not know that a strong demand for bilingual employees exists.
- Share it with parents. They need to know about this career path if they are to support funding for immersion and dual language programs and place their children in these programs, advocate for world language curriculum at every level, and encourage their children to become proficient in multiple languages.
- Send *Making Languages Our Business* to area reporters and news organizations. With any luck, they will explore the implications of the survey findings for your community.
- Blog about it, post it to your social media platforms, and talk about it at social events.
- Send a copy of *Making Languages Our Business* to your elected officials. As funding decisions are made, perhaps the critical need for bilingual and multilingual individuals will come to mind.

While the data in this report was provided by the business community, our reach does not end there. Be an advocate by widely sharing the facts and figures that are so clearly illustrated in *Making Languages Our Business* to help accomplish education policy change across the nation.

Download the full *Making Languages Our Business: Addressing Foreign Language Demand Among U.S. Employers* report, the nine-page *Executive Summary*, and a succinct Press Release from leadwithlanguages.org/report, where you can also explore recommendations for how businesses, teachers, administrators, parents, and students can help shape education policy.