

Mandatory Spanish Instruction in American Undergraduate Business Schools: Responding to the Demands of a Growing Consumer Base

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American undergraduate business schools are, without exception, overlooking a critical skill sorely lacking in their student bodies, a tool available on most campuses and which, if incorporated into business curricula, would enable their graduates to address the needs of burgeoning markets: Spanish. Ostensibly, there are both ideological and seemingly practical impediments to requiring its inclusion. But understanding that we live in a bilingual country¹ where a significant percentage of the populace is Spanish-speaking,² our institutions of higher business learning would ostensibly fail in their duty to produce business graduates prepared to enter the workforce gainfully without mandating significant cultural and foreign language exposure.

INTRODUCTION

It is undisputable that American students sorely lag behind their counterparts in foreign language skills, stymieing the development of relationships and threatening business growth. But as the U.S. becomes more of a bilingual country, foreign language studies are opening up new economic and cultural possibilities. With an increasing Hispanic populace representing a considerable marketable force, businesses must rise to the challenge of accommodating the Spanish-speaking customer to ensure economic growth, and in some cases, sheer survival, despite personal political views and ideologies. Thus, politics aside, the stark reality is that failure to include a foreign language requirement in post-secondary instruction will produce a business school graduate disconnected with an ever-changing international economy. Further, failure to include mandatory Spanish instruction may produce a business graduate unable to navigate employment in the domestic market.

This paper presents the results of a survey of 84 undergraduate schools of business surveyed with respect to their current language requirements, identifies the potential benefits of incorporating Spanish instruction into business curricula, and explores reasons why such a proposition might be rejected. While this discourse does not attempt to address the subject of *bilingual* education – an issue usually relegated to the K-12 educational process – it does serve as a wake-up call to undergraduate schools that are serious about providing quality, well-rounded education and enlarging employment opportunities for its business graduates.

THE DOMESTIC MARKET

There are few topics that have fostered such frenzied national debate and legislative focus than immigration and what to do with the illegal and/or undocumented immigrant.³ Demonstrations in major U.S. cities in 2006 amplified the need to address these issues.⁴ While a small portion of the demonstrators were of non-Spanish speaking descent,⁵ the vast majority were Hispanic, with the largest number of émigrés of Mexican ancestry.⁶ Numerous jobs are held by Mexican immigrants, both documented and undocumented, at the skilled and unskilled levels, fueling ongoing policy debate and call for immigration legislative reform.⁷ As discussion continues over this topic, the need to accommodate the Spanish-speaking consumer has never been so pressing nor has it created so many business opportunities for the bilingual business student graduate.

With America's "melting pot" population becoming increasingly foreign (the majority of foreign-born residents being Hispanic), has it not become the norm to telephone a company and hear "en español, marce dos" (for Spanish, press 2) or to visit a business and notice the lettering on the door informing the customer, "se habla español aquí" (Spanish is spoken here)? Patrons of governmental offices are presented with forms and instructions printed in both English and Spanish. It is rare to approach a public establishment without quickly discovering that the particular business employs either native or learned Spanish speakers. With this changing business landscape in the United States, it would be difficult to refute that there is a rapidly increasing demand for a bilingual workforce (Worthy, 2003).

Demographics

Irrefutably, the Hispanic population is the fastest growing minority in the United States.⁸ According to United States Census Bureau statistics taken in 2000, 12.5% of the U.S. population is documented to be Hispanic, an increase of 9% from 1990. Foreign-born immigrants, largely from Latin America, rose to 11.1 percent in 2000, the highest foreign-born increase recorded since an increase of 11.6 percent in 1930 which was recorded in the decennial census (Gibson and Jung, 2004). The growing potential market power of this population segment is documented by *Table 1* which first categorizes the U.S. Hispanic population by age according to 2000 census figures and then indicates the rising percentage of Hispanics who are foreign-born. Since not all Hispanics are presumed to speak Spanish with any degree of proficiency, *Table 2* indicates the main language spoken at home by Hispanics residing within the United States in 2000.

TABLE 1
TOTAL POPULATION OF U.S. HISPANICS: 35.3 MILLION (2000)

% of U.S. Hispanic population < 18	37.5 %
% of U.S. Hispanic population 18-64	59.0%
% of U.S. Hispanic population > 64	5.3%
% of foreign-born U.S. Hispanic pop.	20% (1980 census figures)
% of foreign-born U.S. Hispanic pop.	36% (1990 census figures)
% of foreign born U.S. Hispanic pop.	39% (2000 census figures)

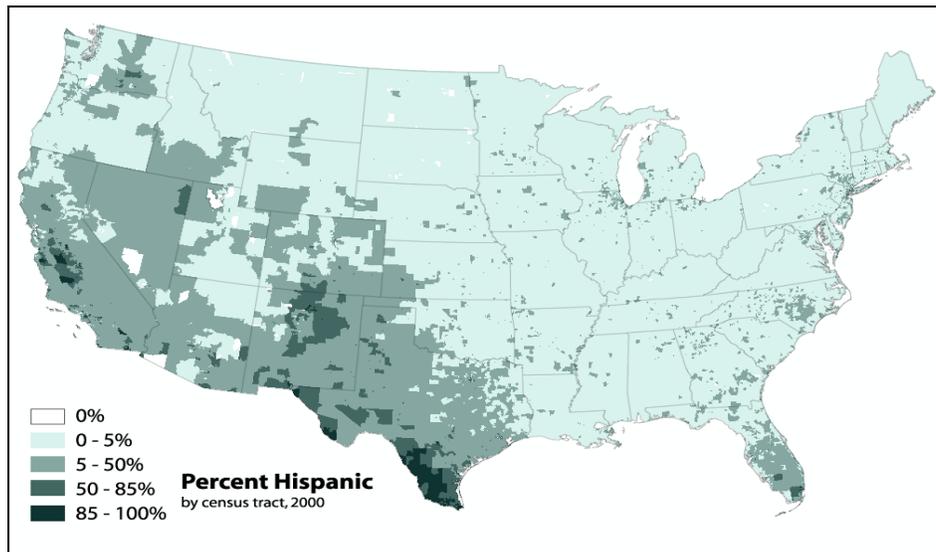
TABLE 2
PREDOMINANT LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME (2000)

English only	82.105%
Spanish	10.710

During the 1990s, the Hispanic population soared by approximately 58% to 35.3 million in 2000 from 22.4 million in 1990. This increase was nearly three million more than the U.S. Census Bureau had predicted. The Bureau conceded in March of 2001 that it had significantly underestimated the number of illegal immigrants residing in the United States. While the Bureau had originally reported about six million illegal aliens living in the country, new data revealed in 2001 suggested that the number could be as high as 11 million, signifying that one out of every 25 residents was in the U.S. illegally (Gibson and Jung, 2004).

Applying the Bureau's census year 2000 statistics, Hispanic populations are geographically concentrated in the Southwestern states, Florida, major metropolitan areas including the cities of New York and Chicago, and along the Eastern coast (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Figure 1 provides a visual impression of the census 2000 statistics regarding the geographic distribution of Hispanics.

FIGURE 1



The Bureau's monthly census bulletins indicate that there was a 3.3% percentage increase in the Hispanic population from July of 2004 to July 1 of 2005, with a long-term projection that Hispanics will constitute approximately 24% of the nation's total population by 2050, with 102.6 million people of Hispanic origin (U.S. Census Bureau, Projections of the Resident Population by Race, Hispanic Origin). Other reports which base calculations upon the total influx of Hispanic immigrants, both legal and illegal, forecast this population segment to be closer to 50% of the total U.S. population by 2050, with over 90% of those households maintaining Spanish as the predominant language spoken at home (Harper, 2005). More recently, the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau's Current Population survey of 60,000 households indicate that

approximately 867,000 Hispanic workers were added to the national workforce between the quarters of 2005 and 2006, accounting for 40% of all workers added to the U.S. labor force in both unskilled and skilled positions of employment (Kochhar, 2006).

Whatever political ramifications arise from these statistics, the fact remains that a significant market exists which can no longer be ignored.

Marketing to the Hispanic Consumer

In her address to the VNU 360 Hispanic Conference in Dallas, Texas, on September 27, 2005, Ketchum South Director Rhonda Harper noted that by the beginning of 2005, the Hispanic population represented approximately \$653 billion in disposable income, a figure which has increased about 30% since 2001. Summoning domestic entrepreneurs, retailers and manufacturers to both acknowledge and take advantage of this consumer presence, Harper directed U.S. business leaders to recognize that the country's Hispanic population is acculturated, but not assimilating into, a homogenous culture contrary to historical trends. Despite the advances in technology and communications, preservation of language and culture in an increasingly Hispanic population has resulted in segmented marketing zones. Challenging the next generation of business leaders to embrace this diversity with new leadership, vision and capacity, Harper stressed the active incorporation of the growing Hispanic market into each business's strategic plans. Such inclusion should be imperative because of a forecasted shift, within the next several decades, of the balance of world economic power from the European Union to South America and with the change in the balance of power, bilingualism would then no longer be an option in strategic business planning (Harper, 2005).

Recruiting the Spanish-Speaking Business Graduate

As the baby-boomer generation begins to retire and leave the corporate world, U.S. based businesses are projected to hire 17.4% new college graduates from the class of 2007, with accounting and business administration comprising the degrees in highest demand and with the greater increases in recruiting efforts occurring in both the South and the West. Giving highest priority to communication skills, these employers will be looking for a more diverse applicant pool. Although Americanized English may still be regarded as the international language of industry, bilingual skills, especially those of English coupled with Spanish, have been touted as the primary vehicle leading to new jobs, promotions and pay raises. (National Association of Colleges and Employers Job Outlook 2007 Survey).

According to the January 2005 Korn/Ferry International Executive Recruiter Index, 88 percent of executive recruiters have cited the ability to speak more than one language as "critical to international business success. Seventy-nine percent of North American recruiters cited Spanish as the additional language most in demand by employers" (Woog, 2006). While business schools are seemingly reluctant to implement mandatory Spanish instruction within business school curricula, employers are responding to the market demand by employing bilingual business leaders as an integral part of their new employee recruiting efforts. Several industries have even established in-house employee referral programs to attract both entry-level and semi-skilled workers and are additionally tailoring merchandise to each industry's demographic interests. Selected areas of commerce have been leaders in this regard:

Media and Communications

Newspapers are beginning to answer the call to publish daily Spanish language editions. In light of the fact that 48.9 of the population of the city is Hispanic, *The Los Angeles Times*, is being called upon “to see this diversity as an opportunity, and move into niche markets. With such defined minority groups, the market is ripe for development.”⁹

In 2004, Wal-Mart began publishing both a magazine and monthly ad circulars in Spanish, targeted for its stores heavily patronized by Hispanic customers. In addition to the promotion of merchandise, these publications offer specialized financial and money wire services. Wal-Mart has even partnered with Sprint to offer pre-paid wireless services, successfully enlisting new Hispanic subscribers in more than 1300 of its stores (Harper, 2005).

News programs broadcast on the Spanish-language Noticias 41 and Noticiero Univision within the New York City area have frequently posted higher ratings than any of the three major news broadcasts over the CBS, NBC, and ABC networks. With increased accessibility to World Wide Web services linking more and more foreign communities together, Spanish has now risen to the 4th most common language spoken by all Internet users (IMAC, 2006).

Entertainment

The entertainment industry is exposing children to the Spanish language at an earlier age through such programs as “Sesame Street” and “Dora, The Explorer” while Spanish programming networks including Univision Communications Inc., Telefutura and Telemundo, are gaining larger shares of the market at the expense of English language television. (Tobenkin, 1997). Catering to the adult viewer, the ABC network currently broadcasts “Monday Night Football” and the evening news with a Spanish soundtrack in many major markets.

With sweeping technological advances in telecommunications especially within the last two decades, the majority of televisions now sold in the United States market contain the “SAP” (second audio program) feature capability, allowing the majority of network programming to be captioned in Spanish.¹⁰

Financing and Banking

Managing account and investment activity within Hispanic market is no longer confined to the traditional southwest and eastern coast urban centers, but rather extends throughout the United States, from well-known financial institutions to local community banking establishments. This expansion by the banking industry may very well be in response to reports that by the second quarter of 2006, the Hispanic unemployment rate had fallen to a historic low of 5.2% and wages for Hispanic workers had risen at a faster rate than for all other groups of workers (Kochhar, 2006). Industry leaders such as Wells Fargo, Chase Manhattan and Bank of America have quickly taken advantage of the fact that by 2003, nearly 40 percent of the Hispanic population lacked any type of formal banking relationship, allowing for re-postulating the provision of services, staffing and products to the Hispanic population (Knapschaefer, 2003).

A number of financial establishments have drawn on both favorable immigrant national legislation in the form of amnesty bestowed upon three million undocumented workers under the 1986 Immigration and Reform Act and the perceived notion of Hispanic pride in home and business ownership. Many banks are intentionally increasing lending and commercial loan opportunities to Hispanic families desiring to purchase homes and/or to start businesses. In fact, according to Fannie Mae, between 1993 and 2002, Hispanic customers represented the most significant growth sector in the mortgage financing industry (Knapschaefer, 2003). One banking

establishment – boasting over \$248 million in assets – even partnered with the Immigration and Naturalization Service to assist with the processing of foreigners in its bank lobbies, resulting in the establishment of many new immigrant account holders and loyal customers of that particular bank. The overwhelming flow of money from Mexican workers in the United States to friends and relatives in their homeland, has necessitated an expansion of the banking industry's remittance business. It is estimated that during the first half of 2003, \$6.1 billion was sent back to Mexico by Mexican immigrants working in the United States (Knapschaefer, 2003).

Tapping the Hispanic market has produced an increase of profits for statewide and community banks as well. By the mid-1990s, a prominent Colorado banking chain successfully recruited bilingual workers into both its customer service departments and its more skilled positions of financial planning, attracting hundreds of new depositors (Litvan, 2004).

Technology

In Texas, GB Tech Inc., an information-systems company based in Houston, has successfully incorporated employee referrals as part of its overall business planning, using its retirees as consultants to train new hires in advanced technology. This example of successful strategic planning is helping to alter the commonly shared perception that Hispanic workers are only entering the marketplace in low paid, unskilled labor positions. (Litvan, 2004).

Insurance

Insurance companies are also responding to new market forces. A principal officer of a mid-sized Massachusetts insurance company noted that the company's customer base rose between 15%-20% upon using representatives with bilingual skills and subsequently marketing to the local Hispanic population. In addition to enlarging the company's clientele base, the development and implementation of its bilingual capital marketing to Hispanic customers also helped the insurance company project and reflect an appreciation of a different language and culture (McCoy, 2004).

Transportation

In the wake of financial forecasts of Hispanic consumer spending reaching \$1 trillion by 2010, General Motors Dealerships formally recognized the importance of tapping into the growing domestic market of Spanish-speaking customers by drawing into its labor pool both skilled and unskilled Hispanic workers. GM staged its first job fair in Philadelphia in 2004, promoting the event widely through the Spanish Univision television network. Successful bilingual worker recruitment eventually led to the establishment of GM's training program BEST" (Bilingual Employment Sales Training). Similarly successful employment job fairs were held in Chicago in 2005 and most recently in New York. By offering the assistance of its newly-trained bilingual employees, GM facilitated the car buying experience for the Hispanic consumer while offering comprehensible loan service programs through its financing arm, General Motors Acceptance Corp. (Shuldiner, 2005).

THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

Changing Economic Foci

Within the last decade, local investment has only feebly responded to government fiscal policy changes in Washington (Mandel, 2006). It is highly questionable that even the most

stringent attempts to reign in the budget deficit will produce any notable domestic investment and growth. Although the stock market is rising, interest rates are somewhat stabilized, and unemployment is at an historic low, these usual markers of financial stability are largely the result of the influx of cheap foreign goods and money. Over the past 3 years, wages for college graduates with a B.A. have declined by 8%, a phenomenon largely blamed on the intensification of global competition. Based upon current numbers, economists have predicted that by December 2007, foreign imports will exceed federal collected revenues. Already in November of 2006, the federal government collected 2.4 trillion in revenue with foreign imports exceeding 2.2 trillion (Mandel, 2006).

New York and Washington are no longer universally regarded as the primary centers of international commerce; rather, the shift has been made to London, Beijing, New Delhi, and most recently, Mexico City, the latter due largely in part to the implementation of the 1994 North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Mandel). In fact, as of 2005, 86% of Mexico's product exports were purchased by the United States,¹¹ further warranting the employment of individuals who are, at a minimum, conversationally fluent in Spanish, in order for businesses to stay competitive globally. The increasing importance of bilingual proficiency is further warranted as additional Spanish-speaking Latin American economies strengthen and join NAFTA and the current administration pushes for the adoption of other trading agreements, including the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). And as these free trade policies appear to stimulate cross-boundary growth in commerce and industry, they have been blamed for the exploitation of the Hispanic worker, demise of local governance, and ruination of the environment, ultimately leading to the increased and often perilous exodus of Hispanic peoples to the United States, not for reasons of escaping political repression, but due to economic pressures forcing homeland abandonment (Labor Council for Latin American Development Advancement, 2004).

Many new business opportunities in the European Union are emanating from Spain, the second largest country in the conglomerate. With new worldwide emphasis on environmental sustainability, efficient infrastructure design and alternate fuel development, Spain has emerged as a leader sporting six of the world's top ten transport infrastructure concessions companies (*BusinessWeek's* Ranking of Top Transportation Developers). One such company, Acciona, a multinational corporation with business relations in five continents and a member of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, is in the forefront of developing renewable energy sources and building eco-efficient buildings.

Spain also boasts one of the fastest-growing immigrant populations, with more than 600,000 foreigners arriving on an annual basis, primarily from Latin America and Africa. This new and growing influx of Spanish-speaking foreigners has not been overlooked by such European telecommunications giants as Vodaphone, the British cell phone company, which, during a one-month period in October 2006, signed up a half-million new Spanish-speaking subscribers. Translating the need for expatriates to stay in touch with family and friends, Vodaphone's Spanish subsidiary wasted no time in launching its ad campaign dubbed "Mi País" (My Country), offering new customers low cost calls to over 50 countries (*BusinessWeek's* "Say Hello to the Folks Back at Home").

Outsourcing

Since 2000, the United States has experienced an increase in the outsourcing of jobs, with an estimated monthly job loss projected to be between 12,000 and 15,000 skilled and unskilled

workers.¹² The growing trend of foreign relocation of employment positions and business transactions is causing employers to reevaluate how they recruit potential employees. Academic acumen has always been a key trait in the employment selection process; new attention, however, is now being given to the individual prospect's diverse background and ability to communicate with new forces of the market sector.

Marketing Globally

According to the Korn/Ferry International Executive Recruiter Index, in January of 2005 88% of executive recruiters cited the ability of the new business school graduate to speak at least one other language as being critical to international business success and that 79% of North American recruiters identified Spanish as the second language most in demand (Woog, 2006). While politics and ideologies may defer to the dictates of market forces and trends, cultural sensitivity has become an unexpected by-product of heightened foreign investment and trading. The increasing universality of communication channels has greatly facilitated the foreign business transaction and consequentially commanded the need to recruit employees fulfilling multi-cultural and linguistic qualifications. Business owners once reluctant to appreciate and respect racial and cultural diversity must now come to terms with differences in customs and values in attempting business negotiations (Jennings, 2006). Those business leaders will be looking to institutions of higher learning to graduate business students with adequate bi-literacy and bilingual skills. By adopting business curricula incorporating mandatory Spanish instruction, students' future occupational and educational opportunities would inevitably increase in both a rapidly growing pluralistic society and expanding world economy. But is higher education responding to this challenge?

SPANISH INSTRUCTION IN UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS SCHOOLS

To discover if America's undergraduate business schools are answering the call to prepare students to embrace new opportunities created by ever-changing domestic and foreign market forces, various undergraduate schools of business were surveyed with respect to foreign language instruction. Both private and public institutions were selected, representing programs ranked by *Business Week* in 2007 as the nation's top-ranked 61 choices based upon factors of peer review, physical resources, and the percentage and nature of employment opportunities after graduation.

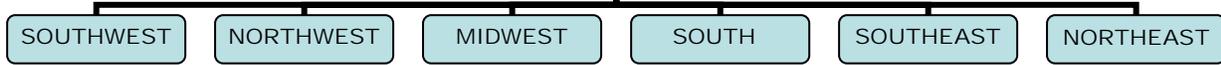
Methodology

Eighty-four undergraduate schools of business were surveyed. Over 85% of the schools selected were surveyed by telephone conference with, or e-mail correspondence to, the admissions representative of the particular school. Information collected for the remaining schools was extracted from that school's online listings of undergraduate business school curricula requirements.

The information obtained is characterized under three main findings "No Foreign Language Requirement," "Foreign Language Requirement," and "Foreign Language Requirements for International Business Majors Only," and grouped by geographic regions – Southwest, Northwest, Midwest, South, Southeast, and Northeast. These results are summarized in Table 3.

TABLE 3
n=84

NO FOREIGN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT



U. of Southern Cal. (Marshall)		University of Michigan (Ross)	Vanderbilt University (TN)	Wake Forest (NC) (Calloway)	N. Y. University (Stern)
Brigham Young U. Marriott (NV)		Purdue U. (IN) (Krannert)	U. of Georgia (Terry)	U. of Maryland (Smith)	Mass. Inst. Tech (Sloan)
Texas Christian University (Neeley)		Indiana U. (Kelley) (<i>int'l req't however</i>)	Mercer University Stetson (GA)	University of Miami (FL)	Georgetown U. (D.C.)
Texas A&M		Washington U. (MO)	Belmont University (TN)	University of FL (Warrington)	Carnegie Mellon (PA)
Baylor University Hankamer (TX)		U. of WI (Madison) (<i>certif. program</i>)		Florida State U.	Lehigh U. (Pa)
Arizona State U. (Carey)		University of Iowa (Tippie)		U. of Central FL 2 yrs. h.s. req'd	Babson U. (MA)
U. of Texas - Dallas		Butler U. (IN)			George Wash.(D.C.)
Pacific Lutheran University (CA)		Capital University (OH)			Syracuse University Whitman (NY)
University of Redlands (CA)		Hamline University (MN)			Fordham U. (N.Y.)
					U. of Connecticut
					Drexel University LeBow (PA)
					Bentley College (MA)

FOREIGN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT



University of Texas McCombs	University of Denver (Daniels)	University of Chicago	Emory University Goizueta (GA)	U. of Virginia (McIntire)	U. of Pennsylvania (Wharton)
SouthernMethodist U. Cox (TX)		Notre Dame University - IN	University of Tennessee	University of NC	Cornell U. (NY)
Pepperdine U. Graziadio (CA)		University of IL Urbana-Champaign	Samford University (AL)	U. of Richmond - Robins (VA)	Penn State (Smeal)
U.C. Berkeley - (Haas)		University of Evansville (IN)		Elon University Love (NC)	University of Pittsburgh
		N. Central College (IL)		Virginia Polytech Inst. (Pamplin)	Loyola College Sellinger (MD)
		Oklahoma U. (Price)		Stetson University (FL)	
		Valparaiso U. Urschel (IN)			
		John Carroll U. Boler (OH)			
		Xavier University Williams (OH)			

FOREIGN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT FOR INT'L BUSINESS MAJORS ONLY					
SOUTHWEST	NORTHWEST	MIDWEST	SOUTH	SOUTHEAST	NORTHEAST
	Creighton University (NE)	Ohio State U. (Fisher)		James Madison (VA)	Villanova U. (Pa)
	Gonzaga U. (WA)	U. of Minnesota (Carlson)			Boston University
		Michigan St. – (Broad)			Northeastern University (MA)
		Marquette U. (WI)			State University of New York - Buffalo
		Bradley U. (IL)			Ithaca College (NY)
		Drake U. (IA)			
		Miami University Farmer (OH)			
		U. of Arkansas (Walton)			

Findings

None of the schools selected required Spanish language instruction as part of the business school curricula or for that matter, any other specific language. Instruction in a foreign language – any foreign language – was the essential requirement, when one existed. Three years of foreign language instruction in a business school was the maximum and the typical requirement for any language proficiency was two semesters, often allowing the business student to test out of the requirement by way of a language proficiency placement examination upon entering the institution. Several schools only required any foreign language instruction for those business students majoring in international business.

It is interesting to note that special attention was given to foreign language requirements by several of the top 20 business schools as listed by *Business Week*, including the University of California – Berkeley (Haas), the University of Pennsylvania (Wharton), the University of Chicago, University of Iowa (Tippie), Penn State University (Smeal), Notre Dame University, and Indiana University (Kelley). Foreign language requirements at other business schools are deemed unnecessary, as the majority of business students were already described as demonstrating fluency in another foreign language, most notably Spanish (e.g., Brigham Young University, University of Southern California (Marshall), and the University of Richmond). This assumption of multilingual abilities is especially prevalent in states commonly known as having large Hispanic populations, including the Southeast, Northeast, and Southwest regions. Other schools – several of which are located in areas of high Hispanic population concentration (e.g., University of Texas (McCombs)) – indicated (1) a preference of students to take Spanish (e.g., University of Evansville (IN)); (2) an administrative recommendation to adopt Spanish as the language of choice for their business students (e.g., Pepperdine University (CA), Purdue University (IN) and Villanova University (PA)); (3) the creation of a separate certificate or other special acknowledgment for studying Spanish (e.g., University of Wisconsin – Madison); and (4) a required Spanish Business Course for International Business majors (e.g., Xavier University Williams (OH)).

RESISTANCE TO ADOPTING MANDATORY SPANISH INSTRUCTION

If instructing Spanish in business schools appears to be the logical way to prepare the next generation of business graduates to both accommodate the needs of the growing number of Spanish-speaking consumers domestically and to seize business opportunities created by the increasing shift of economic activity from Europe to Central and South America, than why haven't U.S. business schools readily incorporated the study of Spanish instruction into their curricula? There are several key postulates which may help explain the current silence of undergraduate business schools in this regard.

Ideological Compromise and Public Sentiment

The incorporation of Spanish instruction into the undergraduate business curricula may be inextricably tied to unwelcome political positioning, creating – albeit inadvertently – a stance subject to disfavor by alumni and prospective new students alike. Mandatory second language Spanish instruction might be regarded as tantamount to advocating *bilingualism*, a practice which has garnered significant public aversion, particularly over the last two decades. In the forefront of ambiguous and piecemeal immigration policies, California's historic Proposition 63 offered to that state's electorate in 1986 the ability to abolish bilingual Spanish/English instruction in primary and secondary schools. Representing the first English-only measure passed by ballot initiative, the passage of Proposition 63 permitted the commencement of civil litigation by anyone residing or doing business within the State of California against a state or local government office which committed an act undermining the English language or which, in any way, "diminish[ed] or ignore[d] the role of English as the common language of the State of California" (Galindo at p. 103). In the wake of this sentiment (surprisingly expressed in a state heavily populated by Hispanics), a business school revising its curriculum to include mandatory Spanish instruction might be regarded as overly risky. But it is this type of risk in higher education which is exactly what is needed if survival of American businesses are to be ensured (Corigan, 2002). Acknowledging and embracing the resource value of language as a key business tool not only addresses the dictates of market forces, but gives credence to the importance of social and cultural diversity (Galindo at pp. 110-116).

There is no doubt that the English language is a symbolic marker of "America," but not necessarily a symbol imbued with the principles of democracy. Speaking Spanish in the school hallways and within business environments has often invited xenophobic responses. The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) has, within the last decade, gained national attention with respect to its reaction to several such instances. In Texas in 1997, two Latinas were fired by an insurance company for speaking Spanish to each other on the worksite, even though they had initially been hired to help service the company's 90% Spanish-speaking clientele. (Amarillo Globe-News, 1997). More recently, MALDEF was asked to address a situation which occurred in a public middle school in Mt. Prospect, Illinois, involving the administrative use of a mandatory contract whereby Spanish-speaking students were prohibited from speaking Spanish while in school subject to penalty of suspension. Upon pursuing a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution, the school quickly retreated from its original anti-Spanish-speaking policies (MALDEF, 2006). With cries of discrimination looming in both settings, would it not be all the more prudent for the employer and the administrator to be, at a minimum, conversationally fluent in both languages?

Despite repeated public demands to maintain English as the only language for use in schools and businesses, a majority of U.S. citizens surprisingly favor measures to allow illegal immigrants to stay in this country or, at a minimum, to obtain temporary work visas. According to a 2006 joint New York Times/CBS News poll, U.S. adult citizens nationwide were asked to comment on whether illegal immigrants who had lived and worked in the U.S. for a period exceeding 2 years be allowed to stay and apply for legal status or whether they should be deported to their native countries. Over 61% of those surveyed favored job and residential retention while 35% opted for immediate deportation. Similarly, a 2006 NBC/Wall Street Journal survey asked U.S. adult citizens whether they favored deportation of illegal immigrants who did not possess valid work permits or whether such immigrants should be allowed to stay upon condition of passing security checks and paying income taxes. Approximately 35% of the respondents favored deportation while 61% expressed approval of legitimizing residential status (Pew Hispanic Center, 2006). Regardless of public sentiment concerning the treatment of illegal immigrants – the vast majority being Spanish-speakers – speaking Spanish appears to nonetheless generate a negative stigma. Whereas speaking French in the fashion industry, whether it be in the renowned fashion districts of Paris or New York, is prevalent and even deemed trendy, communicating in Spanish seems akin to the sanctioning of illegal immigration, especially in light of anti-immigrant initiatives previously discussed (Journal of the European Union Chamber of Commerce, 2003).

Congruence with Trends of State and National Legislation

While the development of currents in social thinking would be expected of universities, it is these same institutions that rarely “rock the boat” or assume needless risk-taking ventures (Weingartner, 1992). Critics of higher educational structuring have type-cast university chief personnel as bureaucrats and managers seeking to maintain the status quo and conform to prevailing legislative policies rather than as true leaders. The goal of higher education administration is thus diverted from implementing creativity or innovation, and simply relegated to maintaining stagnant educational orthodoxy (Corrigan, 2002). In this light, it is hardly surprisingly that American universities will implement changes that fail to conform to legislative initiatives.

Renewed interest in the dominance of the English language in instruction and standardized testing in American schools surfaced with the passage of the “No Child Left Behind Act.”¹³ The major deficiency with this legislation is that English Language Learners (ELLs) – predominantly Hispanic – are expected to achieve the same level of required academic performance with mainstream students not later than 12 years after the end of the 2001-2002 school year (Rossell, 2005). The “No Child Left Behind” legislation has been repeatedly cited for the creation of a standards-based post-secondary curriculum and required exit examinations usually designed for native-English speaking students. Documented studies have shown that low scores for an ELL student often serve to chill the learner’s desire to further or even complete his or her education at a post-secondary institution (Schwinge, circa 1999).

Individual state voter initiative measures passed subsequent to California’s Proposition 63 (discussed *supra*) include California’s *Proposition 227*, activated in 1998 by 61% of the state’s electorate, to place limited English proficient students (predominantly Hispanic) in English-only immersion programs for a period not to exceed one year. Despite implementation, the program has largely been circumvented by permitted withdrawals through parent waiver of their children into mainstream classrooms. Empirical studies have shown the program’s failure to produce the

hoped for higher test scores, more than likely due to personal and family influences (Rossell, 2002). This proposition was followed by Arizona's *Proposition 203* in 2000, again by ballot initiative, with the aim to mandate English immersion programs unless waived by the parent (Rossell, 2002: 10). The typical outcome of these acts and similar state initiatives has resulted in school districts across the country lowering overall expected educational levels, failing to comply with legislative dictates, and establishing multi-proficiency levels. In order to encourage heightened academic achievement and thus the incentive and opportunity to pursue a degree in post-secondary education, several states, including Arizona and Florida, have successfully initiated their own programs which emphasize English academic proficiency over English social literacy (Rossell, 2002: 10-16). Program administrators and proponents have advanced the theory that ELL low scores are not incurred by students who do not know the answer; rather only by those who do not know the English. This is not to say that at the post-secondary level, English language proficiency should be downgraded in importance. Rather, by incorporating Spanish instruction into the business school curricula, the prospective ELL student may see new appreciation of his or her culture and with this acknowledgement, acquire the necessary impetus to pursue higher education, at least in the business field.

Student Rejection

In the recent past, new students shopping for an undergraduate program would outwardly bemoan any curricula that required foreign language instruction. More likely than not, they have already been exposed to at least the fundamentals of a foreign language during their high school tenure. Such a revised policy might turn away prospective new students, especially those raised in a monolingual environment or who simply have difficulty with learning any foreign language. This justification for not adopting Spanish language instruction is akin to excising Math from the curricula because a significant percentage of business students don't like the subject or cannot grasp more quantitative means of pedagogy.

Rejecting Spanish as a required language in an American business school may even be voiced by the Hispanic student. Studies show that ELL students have demonstrated a tendency to shun communicating in Spanish in recognition of the need to assimilate to the host country and as a result of hostile feelings and negative self images garnered from living and being educated in America. By forsaking their primary language for that of English, these students quickly learn as peer pressure mounts that the knowledge and exclusivity of communication in English generates long-term socioeconomic acceptance (Worthy, 2003).

Burdening Standard Business Curricula

Adopting a Spanish foreign language requirement might unduly tax the curriculum, which may arguably leave little room for course electives. However, as long as freshman core and general education requirements remain undisturbed, at least an attempt has been made to balance the student's exposure to different topics and perspectives and to ensure the student a broader and more comprehensive education. Many undergraduate business schools simply do not even offer a full business regimen of classes until the junior year – underscoring the importance of gaining a more diversified education before entering into a professional business school program. In accordance with this practice, adding necessary tools to the curriculum may serve not only to buttress the notion of providing a well-balanced professional education, but would concomitantly impart a marketable skill to the business graduate.

Taxing Institutional Resources

Simple economics dictate that the university student will want to attend the business school which provides the best opportunity of securing the most favorable employment opportunities upon graduation. If businesses are truly striving to accommodate the growing bilingual market, new hires should be adding “Spanish” to their résumés as their second (and sometimes first) language spoken with some degree of conversational fluency. American business schools might argue the paucity of resources to address the procurement of this skill as their respective foreign language departments may already be tapped to capacity limits and/or the financial resources simply do not exist to add the necessary classroom space. However, as businesses strive to accommodate a large segment of their market, so must the educational institutions that produce the new generation of business leaders. Hiring part-time or retired adjunct Spanish language instructors might ease the economic burden faced in achieving this goal.

Historical Emphasis of Language Instruction in American Schools

Perhaps the hesitancy to add Spanish language instruction or even require foreign language study as a business school curriculum requirement at all is the result of America’s poor history of emphasizing the importance of learning a language other than English. Prior to 1923, 22 states in America had laws which prohibited the instruction of any foreign language. By 1954, over half of U.S. high schools lacked foreign language courses and with those that did, only 14.2% of the student populations actually enrolled in foreign language study. As a consequence, it is estimated that less than 9% of Americans are fluent in any foreign language and are quite correctly dubbed “linguistically challenged” people by world educational standards (Bower, 2005).

For the undergraduate business student, there is no doubt about the importance of honing English communicative skills first. Social scientists generally agree that without English proficiency skills, opportunities, earnings, desired residential and commercial locations, and career advancement will inevitably be negatively affected (Lopez and Mora, 1998). Ostensibly, America’s K-12 educational system has performed poorly in offering foreign language instruction. An attempt to rectify past deficiencies prompted the United States Senate to declare 2005 as the “Year of the Foreign Language Study.” New focus on foreign language study was also brought to the forefront when Keith Cothrun, President of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, stressed in his 2004 address to the National Press Club that there has never been a more urgent time for Americans to learn a language other than English and that Americans must stop expecting world accommodation. By strengthening linguistic capital, “the benefits today and tomorrow for our nation and our global partners are truly beyond measure.” (Bain, 2005: 13).

NEED FOR CHANGE

The influence of English-only advocates is on the wane. Spanish language acquisition should be regarded as an integral part of the business student’s comprehensive learning experience, especially as the market demand for bilingual business leaders is becoming increasingly apparent. And while students may be leery of the academic demands of second language proficiency, recent research has indicated that academic excellence achieved in one’s predominant language necessarily lends itself to concomitant success in a second language (Worthy, 2003).

By reviewing and redesigning curricula to include the mandatory instruction of Spanish, undergraduate schools of business may be better equipped (1) to accommodate the growing demands of the domestic market which must strengthen its linguistic capital for economic survival; (2) to understand and appreciate a growing diverse workforce; (3) to address the needs of a changing global economy and garner the favor and respect of prospective international business partners; (4) to recruit new students by offering a more viable and valuable degree; (5) to demonstrate to alumni that their schools of matriculation are actively and appropriately responding to, and keeping abreast with, changing times in the marketplace; and, (6) to promote ideals of diversity which in turn may develop a heightened sense of self worth for the Hispanic student.

There must be business education curricula reform and quality business school leadership to reflect the demands of the market and to reach out to promote the ideals of diversity, multi-cultural respect, and community outreach. This type of risk-taking is necessary to demonstrate that our business schools wish to lead and are simply not quiescent with the role of mere managers. The articulation of new value systems ostensibly dictates curricula revision. If social mores do not prompt this change, hopefully our business schools will ultimately respond to market forces. Requiring the instruction of Spanish at the post-secondary level and specifically incorporating the development of this skill into the professional business curriculum may also give the Hispanic high school student the necessary incentive to pursue a degree in higher education. For these students, new hope would be generated for career development in more skilled and rewarding positions of employment.

From a purely economic point of view, the call for the business student to adopt a minor, if not a second major in a foreign language, is becoming more and more critical as counselors and advisors receive feedback from business leaders demanding broader communication abilities and heightened cultural sensitivity. The ability to post at least conversational fluency in a language (with Spanish now being the language of choice), “is a real asset in the résumés students send to prospective employers.” (Arnold, 1983: 3).

CONCLUSION

Spanish has quickly worked its way into everyday discourse in the United States, is claimed by almost half of Western Hemisphere countries as their primary language, and is quickly becoming the foreign language of choice throughout Europe. Even a minimum grasp of the Spanish language lends well to communicating in other Romance languages such as Italian, French and Portuguese, thereby enhancing skills for conducting business in the European market (IMAC, 2006).

Businesses that turn to America’s business schools for their new recruits expect and require more than just a degree in accounting, finance, management or marketing. Actual cultural appreciation and involvement with diverse cultures and situations mandated by a business school curriculum enhance the value of the undergraduate degree while concomitantly answering the needs of the business owner.

As Dr. Harper observes, “[w]hile the future is certain, it is not known who will lead the way. But one thing is clear – success will not find neutrality between those who are visionary leaders and those who are not (Harper, 2005: 4).” This cautionary statement is equally pertinent to those institutions of higher education that fail to prepare their graduates to appropriately recognize the

distinctiveness of this country's population as well as to respond to the dictates of an ever-diversifying global economy.

ENDNOTES

¹ In 1990, over 39% of all foreign-born persons living in the United States were Hispanic. United States Census Bureau 1990 statistics, March 3, 1999 internet release date.

Web Site: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/tab09.html>.

² U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2004, Ethnicity and Ancestry Statistics Branch, Population Division. Web Site: http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hispanic/ASEC2004/2004CPS_tab1.1a.html.

³ On September 22, 2006, the United States House approved three new bills, targeting illegal immigration by making deportation of gang members easier and by criminalizing tunneling under the Southern border of the United States. With such piecemeal proposed legislation, political pundits are predicting serious resistance in the Senate, especially for the House's failure to address the citizenship status of illegal immigrants already in the United States and the need expressed by the business community for a "guest worker program."

Gaouette, Nicole. *Los Angeles Times*. September 22, 2006.

⁴ During the first three weeks of March, 2006, massive marches protesting new immigration bills designed to subject all illegal immigrants to felony prosecution and immediate deportation were held in the cities of Denver, Chicago, Washington, Boston, Detroit and Phoenix, with more than half a million Latinos demonstrating in the streets of Los Angeles alone.

Gonzalez, Juan. "'Latino Giant' Awakens," *New York Daily Times*. March 28, 2006.

⁵ In the April 10, 2006 edition of the *Christian Science Monitor*, staff writer Daniel B. Wood commented that over 50,000 Korean illegal immigrants reside in Southern California alone. On Boston Common, Indian émigrés, together with business representatives and students from Germany, China and Britain, joined the wave of protests staged on April 10, 2006, officially declared a "Nation Day of Action," involving over 90 municipalities.

⁶ *Op cit.*

⁷ Legislative reports indicate that the Sensenbrenner-King Bill (H.R. 4437, the "Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act"), sponsored by James Sensenbrenner (R-WI), Peter King (R-NY), and passed by the House on December 15, 2005, would potentially impact an estimated 11 million unskilled, low-wage, undocumented workers currently in the United States, the majority of whom are Hispanic.

Web Site: www.nclr.org/files/35613_file_sensenbrenner_king.

⁸ World News Digest: "2000 Census: Racial, Ethnic Minority Populations Surge," May 10, 2001.

Web Site: <http://www.facts.com/2001213270.htm>.

⁹ Excerpt taken from Web Site: http://www.times_should_look_inward_to_move_forw.php.

¹⁰ Excerpt taken from Web Site: <http://spanish.about.com/library/weekly/aa010101a.htm>.

¹¹ Excerpt taken from Web Site: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35749.htm>.

¹² Excerpt taken from Web Site: <http://www.cfr.org/publication/7749/#4>.

¹³ Passed by the 107th Congress, Public Law 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425, Jan. 8, 2002.

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