The Value of Speaking a LOTE in U.S. Business

By OFELIA GARCÍA and RICARDO OTHEGUY

ABSTRACT: How much value do foreign languages really have in a country like the United States, where the most proficient speakers of languages other than English (LOTEs) tend to be immigrants with little influence or power and where the rich and powerful tend to have little knowledge of LOTEs? This article first discusses the role of English and LOTEs in the history of the United States and in our current position within a global community. It then presents empirical evidence of the value of LOTEs in both domestic and international business. Our findings in the business world reflect the relationship between power and LOTEs in U.S. society, with LOTEs being more valuable in ethnic and small businesses and for clerical positions than in large corporations and for managers and executives. The article concludes by suggesting that in our increasingly multilingual world, our ability to speak LOTEs would give us a greater degree of control over business decisions at all levels. But LOTEs would then have to become more widely spoken among the majority population, would have to be preserved and developed among minorities, and would have to become associated with power and profit among both Anglophones and ethnolinguistic minorities.

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In the study of language and society, it is an accepted axiom that languages are forms of capital used to negotiate social goods and benefits. For both the individual and the society, languages can be said to have value no less than other commodities. For any particular society, it is thus reasonable to ask how much relative value any given language has in relation to the other languages used in the same society. In the United States, where many languages are spoken alongside English, one would want to know what the relative value is of these languages with respect to English. Do languages other than English (LOTEs) have great value relative to English in the United States? Do they have little value or none at all?

In raising this question, the primary concern will be with value in its literal economic sense, for as Florian Coulmas has stressed, "What prevails in matters of language is often that which is profitable." But the social value of language is multidimensional, the economic dimension being, despite its primacy, still only one among several. In discussing the issue of LOTEs as economic resources in the United States, we will also bear in mind that the value of languages is manifested not only as economic resources but also as repositories of literature and culture, instruments of sociopolitical integration, and indicators of sociopsychological identity.

In addition to taking into account the other dimensions of linguistic value, our study of LOTEs as economic resources will have to take into account the broader historical context. For it is only when one understands the interaction of LOTEs and English in U.S. history that one can frame correctly the question of how much relative economic value LOTEs have in the United States today.

In this article, we will present some empirically grounded answers to the question of the economic value of LOTEs, compare the role of LOTEs in the United States with the role that foreign and second languages play in other countries, and present some policy options for future handling of LOTEs by U.S. business, by the U.S. educational system, and by U.S. society as a whole.

**The Economic Dimension**

In determining the fate of LOTEs that have come into competition with English both in the United States and abroad, the economic dimension has played a far greater role than the other aspects of linguistic value. With rare exceptions in U.S. history, the promotion of English over the LOTEs of native and immigrant ethnolinguistic minorities has taken place peacefully and cannot be described as a forceful imposition. The economic power associated with En-


3. For the difference between tolerance and promotion, see Heinz Kloss, *The American Bilingual Tradition* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1977). For a more complete analysis of U.S. language policy, see, among others, Ofelia
English has alone served as a magnet for speakers from ethnonlinguistic groups. Having been given opportunities as equal participants in the larger U.S. society, members of these groups have embraced English as the vehicle through which to take advantage of those opportunities. In evaluating and comparing the value of their LOTEs (as repositories of their literature and culture and as indicators of their sociopsychological identity) to that of English (as the means to economic betterment), these speakers have chosen to focus on the economic dimension as the most important facet of linguistic value. A complete shift to English by the third generation after contact has easily followed as the general norm.4

It has only been in cases where the ethnonlinguistic group has been deprived of easy access to economic integration—as in the case of African Americans, Native Americans, and Mexican Americans—that English has had to be forcefully imposed, an enterprise that has met with uneven success. For these groups, the value of the LOTE, as a repository of their culture and as an indicator of sociopsychological identity, has been far greater than that of English, which in their case has not been associated with much economic gain.

In the primacy of English over LOTEs in U.S. history, then, it is the economic dimension of linguistic value that has come to the fore. It is true, of course, that the ability of the society to promote the abandonment of LOTEs in favor of English has contributed to creating the very concept of peoplehood in the United States. It is also true that the Founding Fathers, despite their apparent lack of interest in matters linguistic, were well aware that English was favored by geolinguistic forces to play precisely that role. They regarded the speech of the former metropolis as in little need of official status, since they knew well that it already had the most language power, language attraction, and language pressure.5

And to be sure, English eventually did evolve as the language of sociopolitical and sociopsychological cohesion, as well as the language of preeminence in the definition of U.S. culture and identity.

But despite the growing importance of these other dimensions, the economic factor is still the one that best explains the place English occupies in the United States. For, as we have seen, in those sectors of U.S. society where its economic dimension has been diminished, English has not thrived as easily or as much, and the currency of LOTEs has remained strong.

The preponderance of the economic over the other dimensions in


5. For a discussion of these three terms, see William F. Mackey, "Las fuerzas lingüísticas y la factibilidad de las políticas del lenguaje," Revista mexicana de sociología 38:279-309 (1976).
the value of English became more apparent as the nation matured and as its borders, colonies, and markets expanded. The expansionist push of the United States, which coincided with the reduction of British influence, was accompanied, as one would expect, by a corresponding push on behalf of the language that was common to both the declining and the emerging power. In the words of Phillipson, “The British Empire ha[d] given way to the Empire of English.”

When it came to language, the growing nation dealt with the LOTE-speaking populations it met around the world in much the same way it had dealt with those initially encountered in North America. The imposition of English was attempted not only on Native Americans and Mexicans but also on the people of Puerto Rico and the Philippines. And English was used to speak with people in the new European markets and also with people in the new Latin American markets that were developed, often using considerable force, during the decades before and after World War I.

But in these phases of international expansion, there was a wholesale failure to heed the lessons that should have been learned on the domestic front, namely, that LOTEs readily give way to English only when people can reasonably come to associate it with substantial economic betterment and that when ethnolinguistic groups are not treated as coparticipants in the economic enterprise, the large value of the LOTE as an indicator of sociopsychological identity far outweighs the economic dimension of English. It is thus that the English-based policies that the United States tried in Puerto Rico and the Philippines turned out to be complete failures. In all these areas of expansion, and especially in Latin America, English was learned only by the elite, who were after all the only social sector for whom it made sense to focus on the economic value of English.

In contrast to the strong promotion and widespread acceptance in the United States of the economic value of English, the economic value of LOTEs has usually been denied. The teaching of what have, significantly, always been called “foreign” languages in the United States grew slowly and at an uncertain pace. The LOTE teaching profession has sometimes emphasized the literary and cultural value of French, Spanish, and other LOTEs. At times it has stressed the sociopolitical value of the LOTEs. But only rarely, and then with little success, has it made an argument in terms of their economic value.

In 1883, the Modern Language Association came into being, recognizing the aim of modern language study to be “literary culture, philological scholarship, and linguistic discipline.” From the very beginning, the value of learning some LOTEs for sociopolitical benefit was also present. For example, the teaching of German was substituted for


Spanish in the period surrounding World War I because German was considered a threat to the political integrity of the United States. LOTEs were again taught for the purpose of national defense during the Sputnik era in the 1960s.

Some arguments for learning LOTEs because of their economic value in business were occasionally made. An example was C. P. Harrington, writing in 1932 in *Hispania*, the journal of the Spanish teaching profession:

Those of us who traveled or lived in Spanish America before 1914 saw how rapidly Germany was taking the lead in trade with these countries. One of the chief reasons for this was perfectly apparent. The German firms sent as agents and representatives only men who were trained in Spanish and who spoke the language fluently and had been given a good idea of the psychology of the people with whom they were dealing. Most English and American representatives did business through interpreters and constantly got into trouble of various kinds because of their ignorance of the language and customs of the people they had to do business with.  

But as early as 1923, the economic argument for learning Spanish was being called by a Teachers College professor "the biggest gold brick in American education." The Modern Foreign Language Study of 1929 recommended reading as the primary aim of foreign language education and limited foreign language instruction to two years.  

The increased U.S. participation in global affairs during the period surrounding World War II had only a negative impact on foreign language study. The U.S. LOTE teaching profession adopted such slogans as "Foreign Languages for the Air Age!" and "Americans, awake to language needs!" In reality, however, there was less interest in languages than ever. In 1940, the American Youth Commission, in its report entitled *What the High Schools Ought to Teach*, characterized "'foreign languages as useless and time consuming.'" In 1944, Harvard's *General Education in a Free Society* repeated:

"Foreign language study is useful primarily in strengthening the student's English. Translation is excellent practice. . . . For the average student there is no real need at all to learn a foreign language. . . . The aim of foreign language teaching is not to give a practical command of the new language but to improve one's English."  

During the 1960s, the National Defense and Education Act of 1958 provided financial assistance for the teaching of foreign languages. Yet by 1966, an article in the *Modern Language Journal* warned, "The syllabus is there, the teachers are there, the books are there, but where are the students? They drop it. They don't need it."


In conclusion, then, the value of LOTEs in the United States, at least from the point of view of the larger English-speaking society, has rested solely on dimensions other than the economic one. This is in sharp contrast with English, where the economic dimension appears to be the biggest contributor to its social value.

THE SOCIOPSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION

The low value accorded to LOTEs by the English-speaking majority derives not only from their low valence on the economic dimension, but also from the fact that the dimension where they do enjoy a high valence has been little recognized. For on the sociopsychological dimension, particularly among ethnolinguistic minorities, U.S. LOTEs have enjoyed high marks. Yet the LOTE teaching profession, as it groped for something that would make LOTEs valuable, never asserted the sociopsychological dimension that rendered these languages valuable for U.S. minorities. Not until 1965, for example, in an article entitled “The Bilingual Mexican-American as a Potential Teacher of Spanish,” was the role of Spanish in defining the personal and professional identity of Latinos recognized.12 Not until 1966, when Joshua A. Fishman published his now famous Language Loyalty in the United States, were the LOTEs linked to the sociopsychological identity of U.S. ethnolinguistic groups.13

The silence on this matter was, of course, understandable. Given that, as we have seen, English was never very strong on the sociopsychological dimension to begin with, relying for its value on the economic dimension instead, it made little sense from the point of view of national cohesion to promote this dimension in a competing set of languages. Better to have no language with strong valences on the sociopsychological dimension than to promote this aspect of the LOTEs.

The overall weakness of the non-economic dimensions of linguistic value has thus manifested itself in U.S. history in two ways. The first is the general inability to establish English as a language of strong value for all members of U.S. society on strictly sociopsychological, as opposed to economic, grounds. The second is the general inability to acknowledge the strong sociopsychological value that LOTEs do have for U.S. minorities.

As we shall see presently, this narrow conception of linguistic value—in strictly economic terms—has started to produce considerable difficulties for a U.S. society facing now two puzzles it can scarcely understand. One puzzle is why the increasingly English-speaking world has become reluctant to do business solely in English. The second is why the also increasingly English-speaking U.S. minorities have become vociferous about using their LOTEs in public and institutional domains. These developments make sense only when the sociopsychological dimension of linguistic value develops as strong a valence as that of the economic dimension. Recognizing the skewed sit-

uation of linguistic value among both English and LOTEs in the United States and understanding the distortion that this skewing introduces into the understanding of the role of LOTEs in U.S. society will become an important part of the answer to our question of whether LOTEs are a true economic resource in the United States.

LINKING THE SOCIO-PsyCHOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS

The growing recognition of the sociopsychological dimension of the value of LOTEs for U.S. minorities produced little change in the national conception of language. This conception was still grounded in the economic dimension of linguistic value, on which the LOTEs continued to show low valences. Despite the attempt in Fishman's Language Loyalty to link the economic and sociopsychological dimensions, LOTEs continued to be regarded as of little economic value. Public use of LOTEs in bilingual education, bilingual ballots, and bilingual services only emphasized how monolingual language minorities, with little English proficiency, were unable to partake of the economic benefits accessible to English speakers. U.S. LOTEs were restricted to their role as instruments for communication with a mostly poor and English-ignorant population.

Demographic developments began to alter this picture during the 1970s and 1980s, which saw considerable growth in both the absolute and relative size of the LOTE-speaking population in the United States. The 1990 census confirmed that 32 mil-

lion people in the country, or one of every seven, are speakers of LOTEs.14 These growing numbers produced an increased relevance for the economic dimension of LOTEs, not only because of the growth of the bilingual industry in education, business, and the media but also because of sharp increases in the amount of business that LOTE speakers started doing with each other within the ethnic enclaves.

It was also around this time that what has been called the ethnic boom started to develop worldwide, as language minorities everywhere started to insist that their languages be recognized as indicators of their sociopsychological identity.15 This ethnic boom was not limited to the United States, nor to the Third World or Latin America, but took special significance in Europe. A special characteristic of this boom was the links it began to establish between the different dimensions of linguistic value. Claims regarding language rights, which were often argued on grounds of culture and identity, started to produce in many cases quite tangible material advantages. In other words, the sociopsychological dimension of linguistic value began to merge with the economic one.

This merger of the two dimensions has been quite apparent in Europe and Canada. The European national languages, whose position had developed in part out of the presumed need

14. Significantly, the census figures show that three of every four of these LOTE speakers also speak English "well" or "very well."
for a common language to fuel economic development, started to be challenged by the languages of indigenous minorities, now claiming a voice. The Welsh in Great Britain, the Catalans in Spain, and the Québécois in Canada were successful in using their languages, above all indicators of their sociopsychological identity, for their own economic benefit.16

Significantly, it was also around this time that English spread worldwide, now no longer just the language of elites but accessible to members of many social strata. In the words of Fishman and his colleagues,

Probably never before has so much of the world been so accessible via a single language, as well as via one whose volume and value at a reasonable "standardized" level is sufficiently great and sufficiently monitored to obviate any danger of its fragmentation into a variety of new languages.17

It was in many ways a U.S. dream come true, for as Lenin has said:

"The uniformity of language and its unimpeded development is one of the most important presuppositions of a truly free and all-encompassing trade commensurate with modern capitalism . . . and eventually a presupposition of the close relation of the market with every entrepreneur, even the pettiest, with every seller and buyer."18

But ironically, what one might call the English language industry, which Great Britain and the United States had aggressively supported in order to gain economic advantage, finally bore fruit only as the economic hegemony of the United States started declining.19 English was clearly the language of business, but the increased relative power of many countries vis-à-vis the United States began to have linguistic consequences. Borrowing a page from their own linguistic minorities, the European states, even as they encouraged the spread of English, began to demand a role for their own LOTEs. Even as they invested heavily in English instruction for their populations, they started to carve out areas of business activity that had to be carried out in their national languages, thus solidifying a diglossic arrangement in which their own LOTEs would also be used in business.20 As Fishman and his colleagues have written, "More and more


[English] is [only] a co-language even of commerce, industry and finance—the domains in which Anglophone-dom reigns supreme—since increasingly the lower and middle levels of such activity are conducted predominately in protected vernaculars" [emphasis added].

The fact that English occupies the leading position on the international foreign language market thus obscures the fact that other countries have started to transform the value of their LOTEs as indicators of sociopsychological identity into economic advantage for themselves.

Has this coupling of the sociopsychological and economic dimensions of linguistic value that characterizes Europe and the Third World taken place in the United States? Has the sociopsychological value that LOTEs have for U.S. minorities, along with their increased economic value in the ethnic enclaves, transformed LOTEs in the United States into an economic resource in any way comparable to the situation elsewhere? What follows is a study based on an analysis of U.S. business practices that attempts to provide some empirical evidence concerning these questions.

\section*{LOTEs AS LINGUISTIC RESOURCES IN THE UNITED STATES}

This section will attempt to answer two questions: (1) Is there any value in using LOTEs in domestic business? (2) Is there any value in using LOTEs in international business? Our results are based on published studies, on our study of employment needs of U.S. businesses, and on our interviews with key corporate executives and with the presidents of two major search firms.

\section*{LOTEs in domestic business}

Does speaking a LOTE add significantly to the prospective value of an employee in the United States? Does an individual in the United States derive any tangible material benefit from knowledge of a LOTE? Does U.S. society benefit economically from its members' knowing LOTEs? The answer to these questions, it turns out, depends on whether the focus is on U.S. businesses abroad or on domestic operations and whether on executive or salaried positions.

Domestically, these questions can in turn be asked of intra-ethnic business—enterprises owned mostly by members of ethnolinguistic minorities located in ethnic areas, whose customers are also primarily ethnics—or of all enterprises without regard for location or ownership.

If one looks at intra-ethnic business, the value of speaking LOTEs appears high, as employment in such businesses seems to depend crucially on command of the ethnic language. This was the finding of two separate studies in which we looked at LOTE use in the ethnic market.\footnote{22. The two studies were conducted as part of a graduate research course given by Ofelia García. More detailed findings appear in Carmen Leon, Blanca Mendez, and Nuria Velazquez, "Spanish in the Business Community of Washington Heights" (M.S. thesis, School of Education, City College of New York, May 1993); Rafael Castillo, et al., "Linguistic}
of these studies looked at Spanish use in business in the predominantly Dominican neighborhood of Washington Heights in New York City. Between 160th Street and 190th Street on Broadway, we found a total of 136 businesses. The ethnic breakdown of the owners of these businesses is found in Table 1.

The majority of these businesses are owned by Latinos, but even when they are not, the evidence suggests that employees are hired for their Spanish proficiency. Of the 540 employees in the businesses, 294 (54 percent) are Spanish-speaking monolinguals, 203 (38 percent) are bilingual, whereas only 44 (8 percent) do not speak Spanish. Clearly, Spanish-speaking proficiency is a valuable asset for employment in this market. Although some of these businesses sell mostly ethnic products (food, clothing) or services (agencies to send money abroad, travel agencies) for the ethnic population, most sell products that could be found in businesses on any other U.S. street (furniture, discount products of all kinds, florists, beauty parlors). The main difference is the language of the sale.

The second study looked at the use of LOTEs in the businesses of the linguistically diverse Jackson Heights, also in New York City. The more complex ethnic breakdown of the owners of businesses in this area reflects the higher linguistic heterogeneity there (see Table 2).

There is not a single dominant ethnic group in Jackson Heights. Whereas, in Washington Heights, Dominicans owned 41 percent of the businesses, in Jackson Heights, Colombians, the majority among owners, constituted only 19 percent of the total. In this highly heterogeneous area, the different ethnic groups are specialized, thus capitalizing on their LOTE skills to purchase from suppliers. The Koreans, for example, own the fruit and vegetables stores and the laundromats; the Chinese own restaurants and dry cleaners; the Russians own shoe repair stores; the Greeks own restaurants and hardware stores; the Irish own bars; the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number of Businesses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglo</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic</td>
<td></td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuban</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaniard</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Hispanic</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 2
ETHNIC BREAKDOWN OF OWNERS OF BUSINESSES IN JACKSON HEIGHTS, NEW YORK CITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number of Businesses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglo</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidarian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian or Pakistani</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hispanic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number of Businesses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecuadoran</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombian</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Hispanic</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Hispanic</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indians own candy and stationery stores; and the Colombians own travel agencies and beauty salons. Even in this more heterogeneous area, there is evidence that LOTEs are quite valuable. Of the 313 businesses surveyed, 124 (40 percent) had exterior signs in a LOTE, and 240 (77 percent) conducted most of their business in a LOTE.

It appears from these studies that, in the intra-ethnic market, the value of the LOTE for the individual has a clear economic dimension. Since this market, though small, makes a contribution, which in some areas is quite significant, to the overall economy of the society, it can be asserted that for U.S. society, too, the LOTEs have a significant economic dimension when they are used crucially to drive the economic activity in the intra-ethnic market. In other words, in this market, U.S. LOTEs are a definite economic resource for the individual and for the society at large.

Looking beyond the intra-ethnic market, one can see a strong pattern of growth in the market presence of speakers of LOTEs throughout the United States. This growth is quite evident, for example, in the many telephone directories being published in several LOTEs in the United States.23

The Spanish-speaking market alone has increased at the rate of 62 percent over the last nine years, and Latino spendable income has grown, from $84 billion 10 years ago to $170 billion in 1990. Between 1980 and 1987, while the U.S. population grew by only 6 percent, the Latino market

grew by 30 percent, and the Asian American market by more than 100 percent.\textsuperscript{24} It would appear that the ability to speak Spanish, Chinese, or Korean is a valuable resource in order to sell to this population, whether the item for sale is electrical appliances or hamburgers. In many Hispanic neighborhoods in the United States, the world-famous hamburger chain harbors under its golden arches menus in Spanish and counter employees who take orders in Spanish. At one of these restaurants, we recently witnessed the effects of LOTEs on business efficiency. As the burgers and fries popped over the counter at the usual speed on the line with the Spanish-speaking employee, the line with the English-speaking employee was moving slowly, creating inefficiencies caused by her difficulty in communicating with the Spanish-speaking customers.

Another aspect of the growing role of speakers of LOTEs in domestic business has to do with the increasing number of small ethnic businesses that are potential purchasers of corporate products. For example, in New York City, the number of Latino and Asian businesses more than doubled between 1982 and 1987. By 1987, there were approximately 21,000 Hispanic businesses and 27,000 Asian American ones in New York.\textsuperscript{25} Given this presence in the general U.S. market of potential customers who are speakers of LOTEs, the question arises as to whether the value of speaking a LOTE for a prospective employee in the general market is as clear as we found it to be in the intra-ethnic situation. The answer seems to be yes at the lower levels and no at the higher ones. Knowledge of LOTEs appears to be an important job qualification for many positions in general U.S. businesses, but only for the clerical staff. This is the result of our study of the help-wanted section of the \textit{New York Times} from 1970 to 1988.\textsuperscript{26} The total number of help-wanted ads listing a LOTE requirement in the sample, analyzed per type of position, appears in Table 3.

Table 3 makes clear that the overwhelming need for LOTEs by business is for secretaries, positions often requiring little education and held mostly by women. Jobs that require LOTEs are thus primarily attractive economically to people with few other skills, as the rather low mean salaries offered per language in 1988 make evident (see Table 4).

Besides looking at stated demand for knowledge of LOTEs, we have asked U.S. business executives whether such knowledge would be an economic resource for an individual who might be hired by their companies.


\textsuperscript{26} The study was conducted by Lucía Clemente for her master's thesis at the School of Education, City College of New York, and was directed by Ofelia Garcia. The sample for the study consisted of the \textit{New York Times} for the first Sunday of February for the years 1970, 1972, 1975, 1980, 1986, 1988. Section nine of those editions of the \textit{New York Times} was analyzed in its entirety.
One of the corporate vice presidents we interviewed emphasized that whereas speakers of LOTEs are not needed overseas (because, as we shall see presently, U.S. corporations are able to run their overseas operations with local nationals) they are certainly needed domestically. But as we learned from our interviews, the perceived need for LOTE-speaking employees in domestic operations is a response to much more than the growing presence of LOTE speakers in the market. The problem of communicating with workers, it turns out, is as much in the minds of executives as is communication with customers.

One of the executives we interviewed summarized his comments by saying that the use of LOTEs “makes good business sense.” He noted that especially in the markets with a large Spanish-speaking population—south Florida, southern California, Hous-
TABLE 4
MEAN SALARIES LISTED IN HELP-WANTED ADS
FOR POSITIONS REQUIRING LOTEs, 1988

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number of Ads</th>
<th>Mean Salary</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>$27,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>$28,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>$26,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>$32,828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
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<td>Spanish</td>
<td>52</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yiddish</td>
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<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean salary</td>
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<td>$30,744</td>
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Parallel to what, as we shall see later in this article, is the growing need for LOTEs in international business when dealing with lower-level employees, LOTEs are very much needed in U.S. business in order to manage the growing LOTE-speaking work force.27 By the year 2000, Latinos will be the largest minority in U.S. industry and commerce.28 Employers will be responsible not only for managing this largely Spanish-speaking work force but also for ensuring their safety. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration now requires that company safety procedures, benefits information, and maintenance and technical information be effectively communicated to employees. In many instances, this requires the use of a LOTE.29

In conclusion, we have seen that the U.S. market is characterized by growing numbers of LOTE-speaking customers. If we ask whether this fact has repercussions for the actual demand for knowledge of LOTEs among prospective employees, the answer is that it does, although primarily in the ethnic community and, outside of it, at low-paying levels. In other words, we have found that the linguistic value of LOTEs in the United States has a clear economic dimension for prospective employees, even if it is one that is manifested

primarily in the low-wage sector in both the intra-ethnic and the general markets. Further, we have found that U.S. business executives perceive the need for LOTE speakers to be greater in the United States than abroad and that this need is not simply based on the need to communicate with customers but is also in large part a response to the need to communicate with workers.

**LOTEs in international business**

Recent studies of the LOTE needs of U.S. corporations have all confirmed that corporations view LOTE skills as of only secondary importance in hiring and promoting U.S. managers. The results of these studies were confirmed by the views expressed in our interviews. In general, U.S. corporations feel that their need for LOTE-speaking employees has decreased, as the role of English in international business has increased. While in the past, U.S. expatriates who headed international subsidiaries might have needed to speak LOTEs, today these positions are being occupied by local nationals.

Four reasons were given for this change in the style of international operations: (1) a global and international company has to respond to local needs known only to local nationals; (2) many of these local nationals have been schooled in the United States and are thus deeply familiar with U.S. culture; (3) the local national is bilingual, able to communicate fully not only with the U.S. managers but also with the LOTE-speaking rank and file; (4) hiring local nationals is cost-effective, since it is much cheaper than paying benefits to U.S. expatriates.

U.S. corporations invest heavily and aggressively in teaching English in other countries. For example, the two large corporations whose employees we interviewed hire teachers of English as a second language and run English language classes abroad. Although they pay for instruction in LOTEs for the few Americans they still send abroad, this effort is small, usually involving only a thirty-day immersion course for the employees and their families. We were told that U.S. employees needed to know LOTEs not for business but primarily for "goodwill" and "for cultural and social adaptation."

It is instructive to realize that although English continues to grow as the international language of business, U.S. corporations have started to face the problem that international business cannot be done in English alone. In fact, their current business practices actually confirm their need for LOTEs. But this need has been filled by hiring foreign LOTE speakers, a cost-effective practice given the LOTE ignorance of our highly educated holders of MBAs and the low benefits accrued from financing LOTE instruction for managers. U.S. corporations have merely reaped
the benefits of the heavy investment in English language education that other countries have financed.

In continuing to accept the failure of U.S. LOTE education, however, U.S. corporations have started to pay the price for not being totally in charge of their own resources. One of the presidents of an executive search firm we interviewed said that foreign languages for U.S. managers will be increasingly needed in the future because, as he put it, "one of us has to check on them." The boundary between the United States and the world has become more porous as English has spread, and more of "them" can do "our" business.

At the same time, the countries of the world have drawn their boundaries tighter, using their LOTEs as linguistic capital with which to negotiate economic advantages for themselves. This pattern of insisting that LOTEs be used in business, despite the ability to speak English, is increasingly evident throughout the world. For example, although the Latin American elite is clearly English speaking, Beneke has observed that they "have developed a sense of cultural identity that does not favor the use of English in trade and other contacts." Likewise, Germans have become more assertive in insisting that German is an international language that must be recognized as one of the business languages of the European Community.

Although English is widely used in European international business, it is not seen as the international language. In France and Germany, it is necessary to use French and German. In a survey of 5814 leading executives in 10 European countries, only 31 percent reported using English for professional purposes. Concerning the European Community, Shipman concludes, "Even the United Kingdom and the Irish nations can no longer rely on doing business solely in English." Increasingly, English alone cannot be used to penetrate the non-English-speaking markets.

This pattern is also evident if one looks at Japan, a lucrative, yet difficult, market. Japanese society invests heavily in English-language education. Six years of English are required in high school.

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31. For a theoretical analysis of how groups draw boundaries for their benefit, see Fredrik Barth, "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries," in Ethnic Groups and Boundaries, ed. Fredrik Barth (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), pp. 9-38.


required before high school graduation. All Japanese corporations provide tuition for English-language classes and invest greatly in language training and other international management training.\(^{38}\) Yet the difficulty in doing business with Japan lies precisely in their insistence that business be conducted in Japanese. While some argue that Japanese are just poor English learners, the argument may be made that the Japanese are using their difficult language as their most prized capital, ensuring thereby their own self-regulation and self-control.

In addition to attempting to shift the balance of power by insisting that their LOTEs be used, LOTE-speaking countries can also now buy from other LOTE-speaking countries that usually have more multilingual ability. For example, the Chinese can now choose between American, Japanese, German, and South Korean suppliers. It is well known that Koreans, for example, are investing heavily in Chinese-language classes to increase their trade with China.\(^{39}\)

As the United States has become cognizant of the difficulties involved in increasing trade, different LOTE-teaching programs for business purposes have been developed. Numerous programs emphasizing language and international business have sprung up, such as the Language and International Trade Program at Eastern Michigan University.\(^{40}\) One of the corporations whose vice president for international affairs we interviewed has started supporting a cadre of young MBAs who will spend their junior year in Beijing. They will be hired as managers in marketing, employed in the New York headquarters for two to three years, and then given an overseas assignment. This is but one small effort to develop highly qualified managers with Chinese language facility and familiarity with the Chinese culture. This same vice president also told us that his company prefers hiring Americans to hiring local nationals. However, he said, it is very difficult to find highly qualified Americans with the language skills necessary. A president of a search firm told us that U.S. LOTE speakers simply did not have the managerial skills required for managerial positions, attesting to the fact that LOTE facility in the United States is usually related to immigrant and minority status and is more often found in people lacking educational opportunities of the kind desired for such high-ranking positions.

In understanding why the LOTE capabilities of U.S. managers have not been given much value by U.S. corporations, the words of John Graham are instructive:

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By nature, we all like to hire and promote younger executives with similar skills and backgrounds to our own. If foreign languages were not part of my education, then the people I hire don’t need these skills either. After all, I’m quite successful enough, even though my Japanese vocabulary is limited.41

As long as elite U.S. schools and universities continue to put little emphasis on the acquisition of LOTEs, American executives will be monolingual and U.S. corporations will have to rely on foreign nationals with LOTE capabilities.

The picture that emerges, one where aspirants to top-level jobs in international corporations appear not to derive any economic value from knowing a LOTE, is complicated when we look at the entire work force. Although U.S. managers have little need for LOTEs, secretaries who can speak LOTEs are in demand. For example, one of the vice presidents we interviewed commented on how important LOTEs were for the secretaries of the corporation’s international division, a comment that confirms the finding of our newspaper survey.

The answer to our question when focused on international business, particularly on large corporations, is thus quite complex. The value of LOTEs appears to be real for aspirants to low-level positions in international business but less so for those looking for the top jobs. This lack of an economic dimension to the value of LOTEs for aspirants to top-level positions seems to exist largely by default. Prospective U.S. executives could conceivably derive economic benefit from knowing a LOTE, if the corporation had made it a point to keep top positions abroad in the hands of U.S. nationals. But given that the decisions regarding top staff are being made by U.S. executives who themselves speak no LOTEs, and given the myriad other factors encouraging a devolution of top international positions to foreign nationals, it turns out that in reality there is not much of an economic dimension to the value of LOTEs at the top rungs of the international corporate ladder.

Yet the situation is quite fluid. In many quarters, the notion that top positions do not require LOTEs is being questioned, as shown by the training programs designed to increase LOTE-speaking ability. This, in turn, seems to be a response to the realization that countries in Europe, Asia, and Latin America are willing to conduct business in English only to a point and that a truly successful international business strategy has to rely on executive cadres with better LOTE preparation.

The situation that we have described for large international corporations does not apply to small companies doing business abroad. Although large U.S. corporations show little interest in the LOTE abilities of their U.S. managers, small companies report that LOTE skills are of incalculable value.42 For example, an equipment-manufacturing

and-exporting firm in eastern Washington State attributes the rapid expansion of its international sales to its multilingual work force. The president of the search firm who had told us that the lack of LOTEs in bigger U.S. corporations did not make a difference concluded by saying that LOTEs in small businesses were a definite advantage. Whereas the bigger corporations can count on the “corporate culture” to homogenize cultural and linguistic differences, small businesses seeking to expand exports certainly cannot.

Which LOTEs are valuable?

When LOTEs are needed in U.S. businesses, which LOTEs are more critical? Many believe that Japanese, Chinese, and Korean are the most important. One of the vice presidents we interviewed agreed that, in the long run, these LOTEs would be most valuable, since Asia and the Pacific were the markets of most growth. Yet he also told us that the Latin American-Caribbean market is right now the most profitable because it is the most mature. This attitude was confirmed by a recent survey of top U.S. executives who were asked which LOTE would be most needed for a successful business career. Of those surveyed, 44 percent preferred Spanish, 33 percent preferred Japanese, 8 percent preferred French, 6 percent preferred Chinese, 5 percent preferred German, and 1 percent preferred Russian. The preference for Spanish vis-à-vis the other LOTEs lies in its ability to be utilized not only in international business but also, as we have seen, in the domestic market.

Also confirming the value of Spanish in the current market are our results from the study of the help-wanted ads in the New York Times mentioned previously. Table 5 displays the number of positions per language that appeared each of the years included in the study.

Spanish is still clearly the number-one language needed by business. Business demand for Spanish has been rather steady in the last 20 years. The demand for Japanese, however, has increased twentyfold, from 2 ads in 1970 to 41 in 1988. Most surprisingly, the most recent demand for French and German in business is almost equal to that of Japanese, and the demand for both doubled between 1970 and 1988. This growth can be attributed to the increased presence of French and German in the business of the European Community. But although Japanese, French, and German have value only in the international scene, it is Spanish that is also valuable at home.

CONCLUSION

In the United States today, there tends to be an inverse relationship between access to power and profi-


<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Portuguese</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Italian</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>Russian</th>
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<td>18</td>
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iciency in LOTEs. The most proficient speakers of LOTEs tend to be immigrants with little influence or power, whereas the rich and powerful tend on the whole to have little knowledge of LOTEs. This inverse correlation between power and LOTEs that characterizes U.S. society as a whole finds a striking counterpart in the U.S. business environment, where LOTEs are less relevant in the large corporation than in the small business and less necessary among people in the boardroom than among those in the back room.

The rest of the world, however, is assiduously working on transforming this correlation, which had once existed for them, too, between English and power. In an obvious attempt to regain some control from the United States in international business, other countries have instituted policies to spread knowledge of English beyond their elite, but they have at the same time established a diglossic relationship between English and the national LOTE, securing a place for each. In this way, to the sociopsychological dimension of the value of the LOTEs has been added an economic one, and U.S. competitors have increased their capacity to be in control of the language of business. The result is that a world whose sociolinguistic configuration used to resemble that of the United States—a world, that is, where English was strongly associated with power and the LOTEs were not—is moving toward a configuration where both English and the LOTEs have a share.

As the multilingual world turns, little change seems apparent in the national sociolinguistic paradigm of the United States, where English monolinguism continues to be seen as a mark of power and prestige. We continue to insist that English be used in business, but as our power declines, the world's insistence that their LOTEs also be used is becoming more and more of a reality. To do business in an increasingly multilingual world, we have had to rely increasingly on foreigners. More and more, we have given up control of our corporate decisions.

To regain that control, we would need to learn from other countries that the U.S. sociolinguistic profile can be reshaped to gain advantages for ourselves and that LOTEs in the United States could be promoted among both the elite and the poor, among both the Anglophones and members of ethnolinguistic minorities. In order to accomplish this change successfully, we would need to alter a national posture that almost always in fact, if only occasionally in name, is inspired by an English-only ideology. We would need to accept LOTEs not as foreign languages but as legitimate and valued second languages, languages associated with a majority population that has learned them well in school and associated also with respected, well-integrated, loyal U.S. citizens who have preserved and developed them at home.

A useful model might be the Netherlands. Of course, there are hundreds of ways in which the United States is not like the Netherlands. But the Netherlands has been quite successful in maintaining Dutch as the national language while making English a nearly universally spoken
second one, showing that a highly developed and highly industrialized urban society with its share of political, social, and economic tensions can be successful at investing in, and profiting from, a highly developed second language alongside a national one.\(^45\) English in the United States, a far more powerful language than Dutch, should be able to coexist in a similar fashion with our national LOTEs.

But to promote Dutch-style bilingualism in the United States, we would need to do some shifting in the way we interpret the dimensions of linguistic value. English, still valued primarily for its economic dimension, would need to undergo an enhancement of its sociopsychological dimension as a source of national identity. The LOTEs of ethnolinguistic minorities, still primarily valued only by the ethnics and only for their sociopsychological dimension, would have to come to be valued by everyone and would have to undergo an enhancement of their economic dimension. The LOTEs, that is, would have to become more widely spoken among the majority population, would have to be preserved and developed by the minorities, and would have to become associated with power and profit among both majority speakers and ethnics.

Once we recognize that it is possible to secure a national identity in the United States built around English and around LOTEs as second languages, we would not only need to improve our efforts at promoting English but to decide which LOTEs to promote and how to promote them.

Making a choice of second languages is a difficult but necessary step in planning a cost-effective second language agenda. Whereas the choice of English is an easy and obvious one for the rest of the world, the choice of second languages for the United States is complex. Our national investment in the promotion of LOTEs will be costly, and although some LOTEs should be promoted for certain functions and at certain times, not all LOTEs need to be promoted as second languages for all U.S. citizens.

It seems logical that the initial campaign to promote LOTEs as second languages should focus on a language that would give us the highest returns and would be the least costly to promote. Spanish seems to be the logical first choice. As we have seen, Spanish has the greatest applicability in business, both internationally and domestically. But beyond this economic dimension, the advantage of Spanish lies in the small cost we would incur promoting it. First of all, the growing Latino Spanish-speaking population has always had in its ranks teachers able to teach Spanish as a second language. Because of its long U.S. history, Spanish speakers have more bilingual ability than do other more recently arrived groups, an asset that would be important in teaching Spanish as a second language. The education of Spanish-language teachers at the elementary level has also been more institutionalized than that of other language groups because of its importance in bilingual education. Finally, the

Spanish-language education industry in the United States is huge, with a heavy investment in books, materials, publications, software products, audiovisual materials, records, and so on. Clearly, Spanish has a significant advantage over other LOTEs, for the costs in promoting it would be lower and the resulting benefits would probably be higher, given the opportunities to practice Spanish in many settings in the United States and abroad.

The choice of Spanish as a universal second language in the United States would not obliterate our need for other LOTEs, however. A bilingual U.S. citizenry would surely have more interest in languages. In addition, a well-articulated educational policy of maintaining ethnic languages would make many languages besides Spanish thrive in our schools. In a number of settings, and for many populations, the promotion of other languages, in particular Japanese and other languages from the Pacific Rim, would be a desirable policy goal.

The educational system must be the pillar of our LOTEs-as-second-languages campaign. Forms of enrichment bilingual education encouraging additive bilingualism for all need to be instituted among the poor as well as among the elite. As in Singapore and other places, our regular, mainstream education must be bilingual. Depending on the sociolinguistic profile of the school community, three types of bilingual education programs at the elementary school level need to be promoted:

— LOTE immersion bilingual programs for language-majority children;
— dual-language bilingual programs for both language-majority and language-minority children;46 and
— heritage language bilingual programs for language-minority children.

But if the LOTEs of the United States are to be efficiently used as economic resources, our investment in promoting them cannot stop at the elementary level. At the secondary level, our language teaching must be broadened and strengthened. We must offer students more languages and more choices, and we must make it possible for students to study LOTEs longer than the traditional four years. In order to accomplish this goal, we will need to be more innovative in our LOTE teaching practices, relying more on interactive media and other forms of distance learning. We will also need to transform our system of granting high school credit for LOTE study, relying perhaps more on achievement in proficiency tests, rather than on years of study.

At the college level, development of LOTE proficiency should go hand in hand with educating students for the twenty-first century. Moreover, LOTE proficiency should be required not only of students in the humanities but also of everyone studying to be a teacher, nurse, doctor, psychologist, sociologist, economist, accountant, or engineer. In particular, we need to develop undergraduate and

46. For more on dual-language programs and their recent growth in the United States, see K. J. Lindholm, Directory of Bilingual Education Programs, Monograph no. 8 (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, Center for Language Education and Research, 1987).
graduate programs that study the use of language functions not only in literature but also in society, in business, and in the development of our economy.

In explaining the change that will be required of university language departments that now focus on language and literature, Seabrook has proposed that we learn from Thoth, the ancient Egyptian deity, who was not only the god of literature but also the god of science and trade. 47 In the language policy that the United States needs for a future of greater economic and social justice and steadily sustained development, the LOTEs of the United States must be given their proper place, side by side with English, in the manner of the divine Thoth: they must be regarded not only as carriers of cultural, literary, and sociohistorical traditions but also as carriers of economic value for all our citizens and for the society as a whole.