

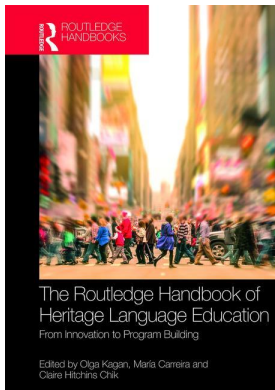
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## **The Routledge Handbook of Heritage Language Education From Innovation to Program Building**

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### **The Demographics of Heritage and Community Languages in the United States**

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# The Demographics of Heritage and Community Languages in the United States

*Terrence G. Wiley and Shereen Bhalla*

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In an attempt to document the linguistic profile of the United States (U.S.), this chapter addresses the linguistic demographic diversity of the country based on current and historical U.S. Census data, while noting the strengths and limitations of such data. It also references data from several major national surveys of foreign language (FL) education in an attempt to assess whether the country's efforts to promote education in languages other than English are improving or declining over time, and the extent to which educational programs are tapping into the vast pool of multilingualism within U.S. families. The chapter notes that the failure to adequately appreciate and tap into the nation's internal diversity represents a missed opportunity to build on its linguistic resources. In discussions regarding language diversity in the U.S., diversity is often presumed to be a problem or even a threat to linguistic unity and the hegemony of English (Wiley, 2004, 2005). Meanwhile, others decry what is perceived to be a FL learning crisis in this country, where the percentage of those learning FLs has declined. On closer analysis, language diversity within the country's population is often depicted as menacing, whereas the learning of FLs, initially by monolingual speakers of English, is seen to be a positive individual achievement (Wiley, 2007b). The chapter concludes by revisiting guidelines (Spolsky, 2011) for a national language policy that would recognize and build on the country's language diversity.

## 1 Sources of Language Diversity for the United States

The sources of linguistic diversity in the form of heritage and community languages<sup>1</sup> in the U.S. and its various territories are complex. Prior to the arrival of Spanish, English, Dutch, French, and Russian colonizers in the lands now under its domain, what eventually became the U.S. and its territories were inhabited by indigenous native peoples, who spoke a vast array of Native American and Pacific island languages, many of which remain today. Historically, Spanish is an old colonial language, but it became "native" to groups who were later conquered or annexed by the U.S. Despite having this fundamental relationship to the nation, it is now often considered an "immigrant" language, spoken by those from countries that have never been or are not currently under U.S. jurisdiction. Additional languages, such as Tagalog, Ilocano, and other languages of

the Philippines are also difficult to classify. They are currently considered immigrant languages, although the Philippines came under American rule from 1898 through 1946. English itself is problematic in that it was an old colonial language that was also a major immigrant language, and is now considered a common language. Although the U.S. does not have an official language, English functions in that capacity for a majority of states, although Hawaii and New Mexico have co-official languages, Hawaiian and Spanish, respectively.

The sources of language diversity in the U.S. result from several phenomena rooted in American history: (1) immigration, both voluntary, as in the case of most European and recent immigrants, and involuntary, as in the case of enslaved Africans, (2) expansion through conquest or annexation, and (3) social transmission, both informal through family and community efforts, as well as through formal instruction. The policy disposition of the federal government and its constituent states toward language diversity has been somewhat mixed, ranging from active promotion to restriction. By the time of the first U.S. Census in 1790, over 60% of the European population identified as being “English” and another 18% identified as “Scotch,” “Scotch Irish,” or “Irish.” Some knowledge of Celtic languages along with English can be assumed among these immigrants. Those indicating “German,” “French,” “Dutch,” “Swedish,” or “unassigned” accounted for about 21% (Parrillo, 2009, p. 67). Language data were not collected at that time; thus ethnic identification serves as a rough indicator of language background.

Among the large African-origin population, native languages had been repressed even as English literacy was restricted. Prior to the establishment of the U.S. as a republic, Southern colonies imposed the first restrictive language policies under the auspices of “slave codes” designed to regulate the language and literacy practices of enslaved Africans and those coming into contact with them. Slave codes prohibited the use of native African languages while also imposing “compulsorily ignorance laws,” which prevented African Americans from becoming literate in English (Weinberg, 1995). Despite these repressive measures, there is evidence of the influence of African languages as well as literacy in Arabic among some of the enslaved (Lepore, 2002).

Native Americans were treated differently. Despite motivations to teach English to Native Americans during the colonial period, missionaries found it necessary to use Indian languages to communicate with this population (Gray, 1999). Gradually, a number of tribes developed some degree of bilingualism after contact with French, Spanish, and English colonizers. As recently as the nineteenth century some tribes, such as the Cherokee, had achieved a relatively high degree of native language literacy through their own school systems and presses (Weinberg, 1995). This came to an abrupt end with the imposition of compulsory English-only boarding schools from the 1880s through the 1930s. The boarding school movement resulted in rapid native language loss. In the early nineteenth century in Hawaii, native language literacy had been promoted by missionaries, resulting in nearly universal adult literacy in a short period. By the end of the century, however, Western diseases and subsequent education restrictions on the Hawaiian language resulted in the decimation of both the population and Hawaiian literacy (Beckman & Heck, 1998; Wilson, 2014). Overall, restrictive policies greatly disrupted the intergenerational transmission of languages among Native Americans and Pacific island peoples who had been incorporated into the U.S. and its territories.

European immigrants generally fared differently. German immigrants, for example, began coming to North America in the 1680s; thus, German settlements were widespread long before the establishment of the modern German State in 1871. Well into the nineteenth and

Table 3.1 Sources of Language Diversity throughout U.S. History and Mode of Incorporation/Transmission

| <i>Immigration<br/>Voluntary or Involuntary</i>   | <i>Territorial Expansion<br/>Conquest or Annexation</i>  | <i>Social Transmission<br/>Informally and Formally</i>  |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Voluntary and involuntary (in the case of the enslaved) colonization and immigration to 1776</li> <li>■ Immigration from western Europe before and after the Civil War</li> <li>■ Restricted Chinese immigration starting in 1882 followed by restrictions against other Asians</li> <li>■ Continued Western European immigration, with increased Eastern European immigration through World War I (1914–1918)</li> <li>■ Immigration quotas favoring Western Europeans from 1923 through 1965</li> <li>■ More equitable immigration policies following 1965</li> <li>■ Refugee integration</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 13 British Colonies to 1776</li> <li>■ In 1779 the U.S. became a new nation that included territories as far west as the Mississippi</li> <li>■ Subsequent westward expansion included the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, Florida ceded by Spain in 1821</li> <li>■ Texas Annexation (1845)</li> <li>■ Mexican Cession of the southwest (1848)</li> <li>■ Gadsden Purchase (1853)</li> <li>■ Alaska purchased (1867)</li> <li>■ Hawaii Annexation (1898)</li> <li>■ Philippines (1901–1946) and Puerto Rico (1901)</li> <li>■ Various Pacific Island Territories (1945)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Intergenerational transmission through the family and extended family networks</li> <li>■ Language maintenance through social networks</li> <li>■ Community-based language instruction</li> <li>■ Formal language education, in public or private programs</li> <li>■ Self-directed education</li> <li>■ Transnational existences</li> </ul> |

twentieth centuries, German language education and bilingual education were prevalent in the U.S. (Luebke, 1980; Toth, 1990; Wiley, 1998). In the decades immediately following the American Civil War (1861–1865), German immigration rapidly increased, soon to be eclipsed by immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe by the 1890s and leading up to World War I (1914–1918). World War I, coupled with increasing anti-immigrant sentiment, unleashed widespread xenophobia and gave impetus to the Americanization movement (1915–1925), which promoted English while restricting instruction in FLs. Nevertheless, German and other European languages remained prevalent until late in the twentieth century (see Table 3.2). It was not until the 1970 U.S. Census that Spanish surpassed German as the second-most-spoken language in the U.S.

Largely as a result of changes in ethnically restrictive immigration policies after 1965, along with changes in international migration patterns, immigration from Mexico and Central America increased greatly along with immigration from Asian countries, from which it had previously long been restricted. Refugees from Cuba, Southeast Asia, and more recently a wide array of countries have added to the current linguistic diversity of the country. Despite the liberalization of immigration policies, the dominance of ideologies and educational policies emphasizing English results in rapid language shift to English and the failure to retain heritage and community languages (Arias & Faltis, 2012; McField, 2014; Moore, 2014; Wiley, Lee, & Rumberger, 2009).

Table 3.2 Mother Tongue of the Foreign-Born Population: 1910–1970

| Language                      | All races |           | White      |            |            |            |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|                               | 1970*     | 1960*     | 1940*      | 1930       | 1920       | 1910       |
| Total                         | 9,619,302 | 9,738,155 | 11,109,620 | 13,983,405 | 13,712,754 | 13,345,545 |
| Mother tongue data available  | 9,523,155 | 9,360,179 | 10,861,120 | 13,941,172 | 13,705,588 | 13,229,273 |
| English                       | 1,697,825 | 1,937,184 | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)       |
| Spanish <sup>(3)</sup>        | 1,696,240 | 813,429   | 428,360    | 743,286    | 556,111    | 258,131    |
| German                        | 1,201,535 | 1,332,399 | 1,589,040  | 2,188,006  | 2,267,128  | 2,759,032  |
| Italian                       | 1,025,994 | 1,277,585 | 1,561,100  | 1,808,289  | 1,624,998  | 1,365,110  |
| Yiddish <sup>(2)</sup>        | 438,116   | 503,605   | 924,440    | 1,222,658  | 1,091,820  | 1,051,767  |
| Polish                        | 419,912   | 581,936   | 801,680    | 965,899    | 1,077,392  | 943,781    |
| French                        | 410,580   | 330,220   | 359,520    | 523,297    | 466,956    | 528,842    |
| Uralic languages              | 199,543   | 266,286   | 338,300    | 378,196    | 423,986    | 349,180    |
| Greek                         | 193,745   | 180,781   | 165,220    | 189,066    | 174,658    | 118,379    |
| Chinese                       | 190,260   | 89,609    | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)       |
| Hungarian                     | 161,253   | 213,118   | 241,220    | 250,393    | 290,419    | 229,094    |
| Tagalog                       | 152,498   | 73,500    | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)       |
| Russian <sup>(4)</sup>        | 149,277   | 276,834   | 356,940    | 315,721    | 392,049    | 57,926     |
| Portuguese                    | 140,299   | 91,592    | 83,780     | 110,197    | 105,895    | 72,649     |
| Swedish                       | 131,408   | 225,607   | 423,200    | 615,465    | 643,203    | 683,218    |
| Dutch                         | 127,834   | 130,482   | 102,700    | 133,142    | 136,540    | 126,045    |
| Japanese                      | 118,090   | 95,027    | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)       |
| Ukrainian                     | 96,635    | 106,974   | 35,540     | 68,485     | 55,672     | 25,131     |
| Lithuanian                    | 95,188    | 99,043    | 122,660    | 165,053    | (NA)       | (NA)       |
| Norwegian                     | 94,365    | 152,687   | 232,820    | 345,522    | 362,199    | 402,587    |
| Serbo-Croatian <sup>(5)</sup> | 83,064    | 86,957    | 70,600     | 109,923    | 125,844    | 105,669    |
| Slovak                        | 82,561    | 125,000   | 171,580    | 240,196    | 274,948    | 166,474    |
| Arabic                        | 73,657    | 49,908    | 50,940     | 67,830     | 57,557     | 32,868     |
| Czech                         | 70,703    | 91,711    | 159,640    | 201,138    | 234,564    | 228,738    |
| Danish                        | 58,218    | 85,421    | 122,180    | 178,944    | 187,162    | 183,844    |
| Celtic <sup>(1)</sup>         | 45,459    | 42,765    | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)       |
| Armenian                      | 38,323    | 37,270    | 40,000     | 51,741     | 37,647     | 23,938     |
| Finnish                       | 38,290    | 53,168    | 97,080     | 124,994    | 132,543    | 119,948    |
| Hebrew <sup>(2)</sup>         | 36,112    | 38,346    | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)       |
| Korean                        | 34,748    | 8,550     | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)       | (NA)       |
| Romanian                      | 26,055    | 38,019    | 43,120     | 56,964     | 62,336     | 42,277     |

| <i>Language</i>                              | <i>All races</i> |              | <i>White</i> |             |             |             |
|--|------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|  | <i>1970*</i>     | <i>1960*</i> | <i>1940*</i> | <i>1930</i> | <i>1920</i> | <i>1910</i> |
| Hindi  | 22,017           | 3,493        | (NA)         | (NA)        | (NA)        | (NA)        |
| Flemish                                      | 20,801           | 30,254       | 31,900       | 42,263      | 45,696      | 25,780      |
| Slovene                                      | 19,178           | 32,108       | 75,560       | 77,671      | 80,437      | 123,631     |
| Turkish                                      | 16,646           | 14,063       | (NA)         | 10,457      | 6,627       | 4,709       |
| Persian                                      | 15,986           | 6,936        | (NA)         | (NA)        | (NA)        | (NA)        |
| Asian and Pacific island languages<br>n.e.c. | 13,102           | 14,534       | (NA)         | (NA)        | (NA)        | (NA)        |
| Thai (Laotian)                               | 11,695           | 1,666        | (NA)         | (NA)        | (NA)        | (NA)        |
| Albanian                                     | 7,528            | 7,297        | (NA)         | 7,586       | 5,515       | 2,312       |
| Indonesian languages                         | 6,915            | 7,273        | (NA)         | (NA)        | (NA)        | (NA)        |
| African languages                            | 6,605            | 982          | (NA)         | (NA)        | (NA)        | (NA)        |
| Native American languages                    | 5,809            | 2,463        | (NA)         | (NA)        | (NA)        | (NA)        |
| Polynesian languages                         | 4,956            | 1,372        | (NA)         | (NA)        | (NA)        | (NA)        |
| Basque                                       | 2,169            | 1,580        | (NA)         | (NA)        | (NA)        | (NA)        |
| Caucasian                                    | 421              | 192          | (NA)         | (NA)        | (NA)        | (NA)        |
| Bulgarian                                    | (NA)             | (NA)         | (NA)         | 12,128      | 12,853      | 18,341      |
| Lettish                                      | (NA)             | (NA)         | (NA)         | 7,590       | (NA)        | (NA)        |
| Other languages                              | 325,074          | 360,019      | 389,240      | 446,026     | 481,543     | 382,048     |
| Mother tongue<br>n.e.c.                      | 189,170          | 8,113        | 63,880       | 3,352       | 1,228       | 646         |
| <i>Mother tongue data not available</i>      | 96,147           | 377,976      | 248,500      | 42,233      | 7,166       | 116,272     |

Note: \*Indicates sample data; (NA) Not available; n.e.c. Not elsewhere classified.

For 1970, includes 10,031 cases of Breton (which appears to be an unrealistically large number), and 10,208 cases of Other Balto-Slavonic languages. In 1960, the 535 cases of Breton were included with French. For 1960, includes 49,610 cases of Other Balto-Slavonic languages.

<sup>1</sup>For 1970, assumes that all individuals with Celtic mother tongue are White.

<sup>2</sup>For 1910–1940, Hebrew is included with Yiddish.

<sup>3</sup>For White in 1960, the published estimate (794,714) includes Basque. The estimate here assumes that all individuals with Basque mother tongue (1,580) are White.

<sup>4</sup>For 1920, probably includes a “considerable proportion” of individuals of Yiddish mother tongue erroneously reported as of Russian mother tongue. See sources in text.

<sup>5</sup>For White in 1960, the published estimate (87,997) includes Dalmatian. The estimate here assumes that all individuals with Dalmatian mother tongue (1,137) are White.

Source: Adapted from “Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 2000,” by C. Gibson and K. Jung (2006), U.S. Census Bureau Working Paper Number POP-WP081.

## 2 Data Sources for Demographic Analyses of the Diversity in the U.S. National Population

The primary source of data for language diversity has come from the decennial censuses held by the U.S. Census Bureau, which was first conducted in 1790. The 2000 Census was the last one to include questions on place of birth and language. Those questions are now asked in the American Community Survey (ACS), which is also directed by the U.S. Census Bureau. ACS is an ongoing survey that samples three million households per year to estimate demographic indicators between the censuses. ACS's Question 14 asks informants whether they speak a language other than English at home; if so, they are asked to name that language, and also to say how well they speak English (very well, well, not well, not at all) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

Table 3.3 Languages Other Than English Most Commonly Spoken in the Home

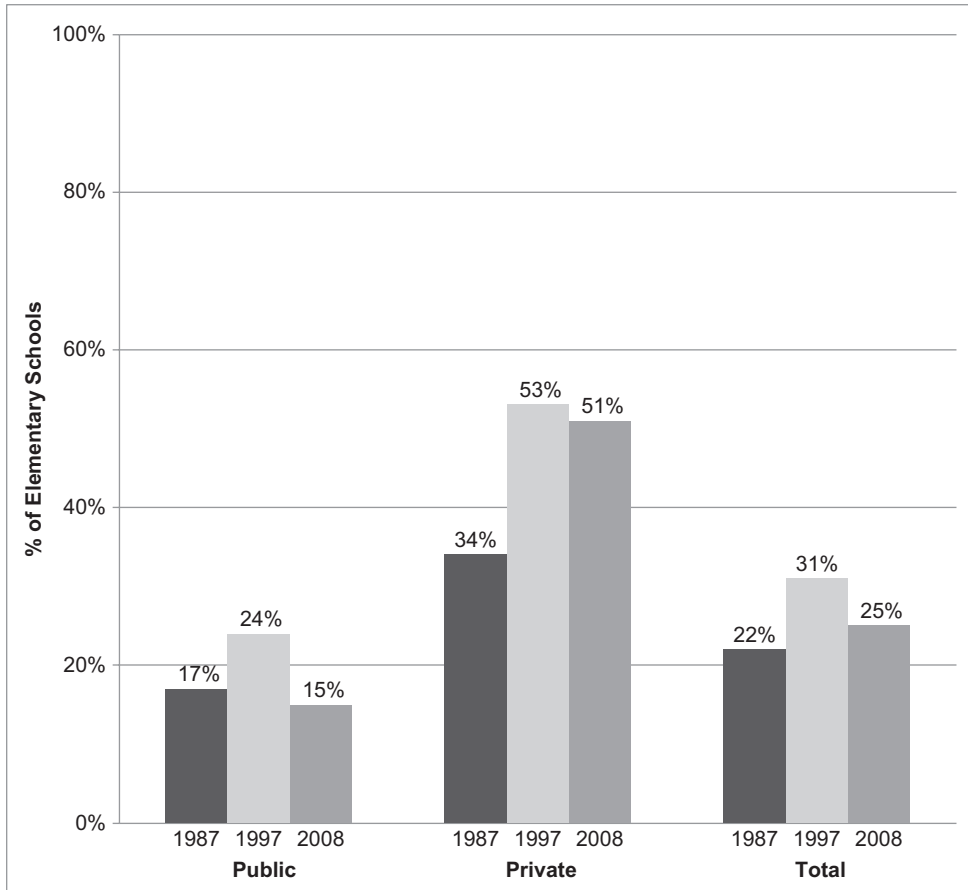
| <i>Languages other than English most commonly spoken in the home, 2006–2010</i> | <i>Languages other than English most commonly spoken in the home, 2008–2012</i> |
|---|---|
| 1 Spanish   | 1 Spanish   |
| 2 Chinese   | 2 Chinese   |
| 3 French  | 3 Hindi   |
| 4 Hindi   | 4 French  |
| 5 Vietnamese  | 5 Vietnamese  |
| 6 German  | 6 German  |
| 7 Korean  | 7 Arabic  |
| 8 Arabic  | 8 Korean  |
| 9 Filipino/Tagalog  | 9 Filipino/Tagalog  |
| 10 Russian  | 10 Russian  |

Source: Created from American Community Survey data using the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (Ruggles et al., 2010).

## 3 School-Based Data for Foreign Language Instruction

In assessing the role of formal education in promoting heritage and community languages in the U.S., one of the foremost challenges results from the manner in which questions about languages are framed. Languages other than English are typically categorized as “foreign” or “modern” and more recently “world” languages. Occasionally, data are being tracked for programs in, for example, “Spanish for native speakers,” or “Vietnamese literacy for native speakers,” where “native” for the most part refers to heritage students, but comprehensive data regarding the number or percentage of heritage learners are lacking. Even in the case of FL instruction, large-scale data, particularly up-to-date comprehensive data, are difficult to find.

For K–12 school data, the two most important sources come from periodic surveys conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). CAL conducted three nationally representative surveys in 1987, 1997, and 2008 of K–12 public and private school programs to determine which languages are being taught and what percentage of schools is offering them at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2010; Ruggles et al., 2010). These surveys have focused primarily on programmatic practices that help to ascertain national trends across time (comparing 1987, 1997,



**Figure 3.1** U.S. Elementary Schools Teaching Foreign Languages (Public, Private, Total) (1987, 1997, 2008)

Source: Reprinted with permission from "Foreign Languages Offered by Elementary Schools with Foreign Language Programs" by I. Pufahl and N. C. Rhodes, 2011, *Foreign Language Annals*, 44(2), p. 261. Copyright 2011 by Foreign Language Annals.

and 2008) and have been particularly useful in documenting increases or declines in the percent of programs offering various languages. By focusing on FL instruction, these surveys have not provided data on instruction specifically targeting heritage-community education programs (Fee, Rhodes, & Wiley, 2014).

In Figure 3.1, the decline in offerings of FL instruction between 1997 and 2008 is evident. In 1997, approximately 31% of elementary schools taught FLs compared with 25% in 2008. This results in a statistically significant decrease of 6% in FL instruction. However, Figure 3.1 also shows that a reverse trend occurred between 1987 and 1997, when the percentage of elementary schools offering FLs jumped from 22% to 31%, resulting in an almost 10% increase before the 6% decline between 1997 and 2008.

Similar to the decline in elementary school language instruction, middle and high schools also saw a drop in schools offering FL instruction between 1997 and 2008, from 86% to 79%



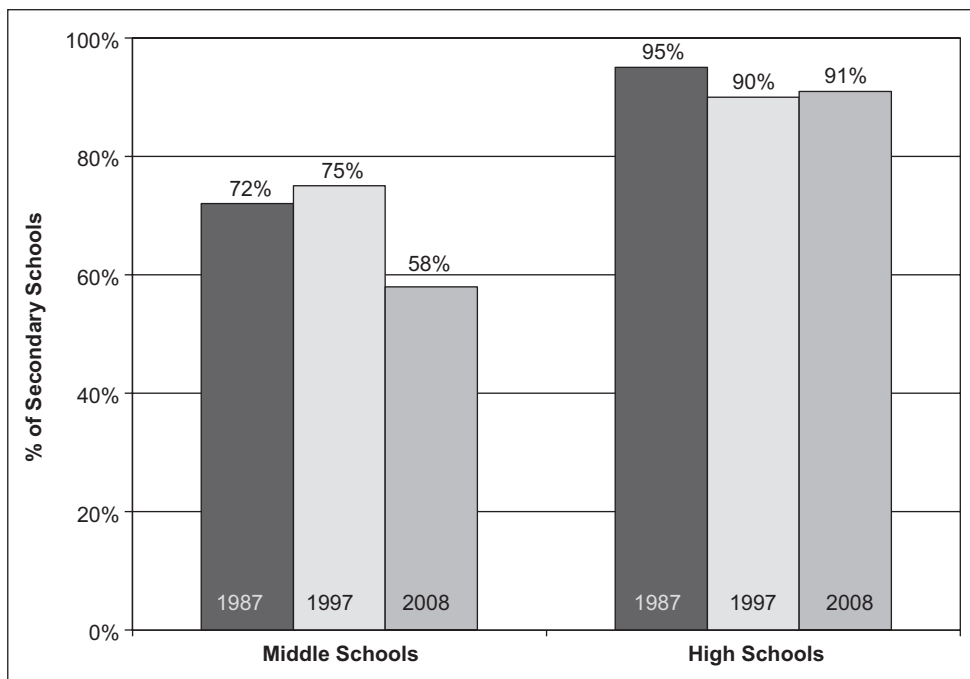


Figure 3.2 U.S. Middle and High Schools Teaching Foreign Languages (Total) (1987, 1997, 2008)

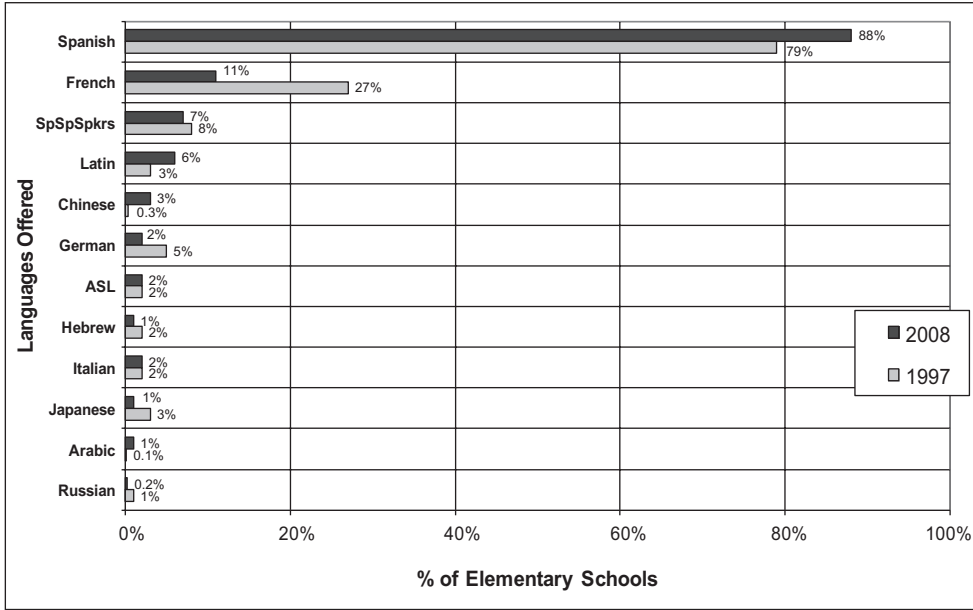
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(see Figure 3.2). One reason for this decline is the decrease of language instruction at the middle school level from 1997, when 75% of middle schools offered language instruction, to 2008, when the percentage decreased to 58%. However, both private and public high schools maintained FL instruction in the same range, with a slight decrease from 95% in 1987 to 91% in 2008.

When examining FL programs in primary and secondary schools, Spanish was the most commonly taught language and increased in the number of offerings from 1997 to 2008. In 2008, 88% of the elementary schools with language programs taught Spanish, compared to 79% in 1997 (Figure 3.3). From 1997 to 2008, Spanish was offered by 93% of secondary schools with language programs. In 1997, 19% of all public elementary schools in the U.S. taught Spanish; in 2008, only 12% did. Similarly, in 1997, 62% of all U.S. middle schools taught Spanish; in 2008, only 55% did. On the other hand, in 1997, 41% of all private elementary schools nationwide offered Spanish, while in 2008, 46% did (Fee et al., 2014, pp. 10–11).

In terms of other languages, both French and German were offered in fewer schools between 1997 and 2008. Latin and Japanese were also less frequently offered at secondary schools in 2008 compared to 1997. In addition, in spite of Chinese being the second-most-spoken language other than English in the U.S., the total number of schools offering Chinese is relatively small, 3%–4%.

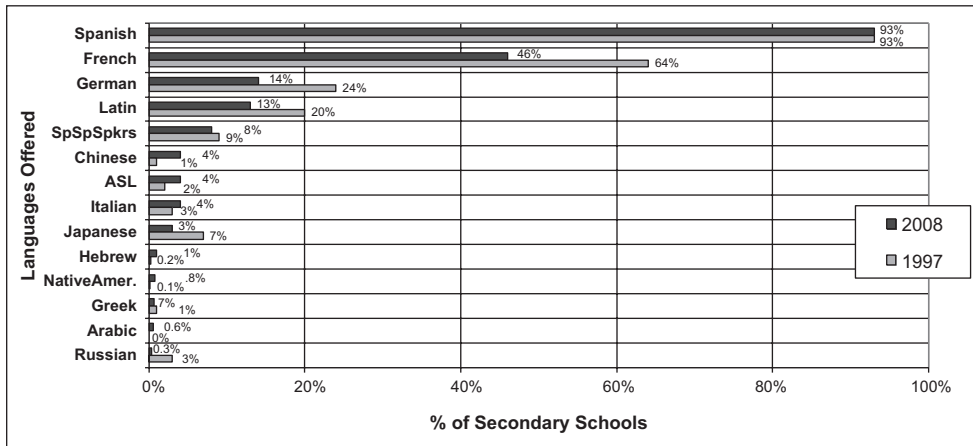
Turning to the national survey conducted by ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages [ACTFL], 2010), important data on K–12 language instruction from this



**Figure 3.3** Foreign Languages Offered by Elementary Schools with Foreign Language Programs

Note: "SpSpSpkrs" stands for "Spanish for Spanish speakers."

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**Figure 3.4** Foreign Languages Offered by Secondary Schools with Foreign Language Programs

Note: "SpSpSpkrs" stands for "Spanish for Spanish speakers."

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source adds to our understanding of the topic. Whereas the CAL surveys have focused on program data, ACTFL focuses on FL enrollment data collected from the various states. Thus, looking at the CAL and ACTFL surveys provides useful information regarding both programs and enrollments. The strength of the ACTFL survey is that it attempts to provide comprehensive national data by language and state; however, it is dependent on how well the various states collect and report such data. For this reason, ACTFL was not able to provide data for all 50 states; only 34 reported. Additionally, ACTFL has, thus far, collected data without disaggregating enrollments for students who may be heritage or community language learners, given that few programs make this distinction.

In an attempt to begin addressing this issue, Fee et al. (2014) compared the ACTFL K–12 FL enrollment data for selected states against ACS census data reporting on the number of potential heritage learners living in households where languages other than English are being spoken. This comparison provides a crude indicator regarding how many potential heritage-community language (HL-CL) learners might be enrolled in FL courses. However, we can assume that many students enrolled in such classes are not HL-CL learners, but are true FL learners. Thus, where we see a much higher number of potential HL-CL learners in comparison to the actual number of learners, we can assume that there is a significant lack of participation by potential HL-CL learners. These numbers correspond to Fee, Rhodes, and Wiley's (2014) findings, and are reflected in the updated ACS-ACTFL comparisons for selected states shown in Figure 3.6.

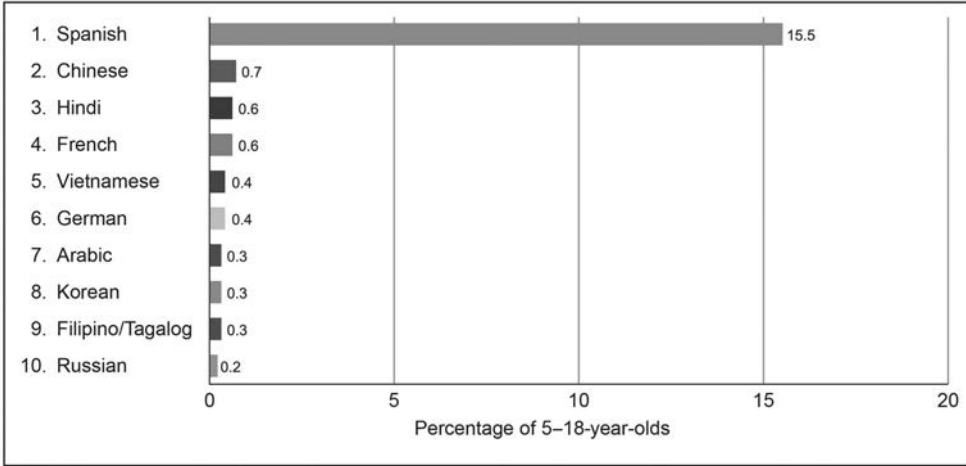
#### 4 Student Enrollment in Foreign Language Classroom

In addition to the decline in the number of FL programs in primary and secondary schools, enrollment in these classes also declined. According to Fee et al. (2014), in 2008 an estimated 4.2 million out of 27.5 million elementary school students (15%) in the U.S. were enrolled in FL classes. From 1997 to 2008, the number of public elementary school students enrolled in language classes declined from 2.5 million to 2.2 million, while the number of private elementary school students enrolled in language classes increased from 1.5 million to almost 2 million (Fee et al., 2014).

At the secondary school level, an estimated 10.5 million students out of 25.7 million (41%) were enrolled in language classes in 2008, a decrease from nearly 12 million (52%) in 1997. Of the students participating in language classes in 2008, about 2.3 million attended middle or junior high schools, 6.7 million attended high schools, and 1.5 million attended combined junior/senior high schools (Fee et al., 2014).

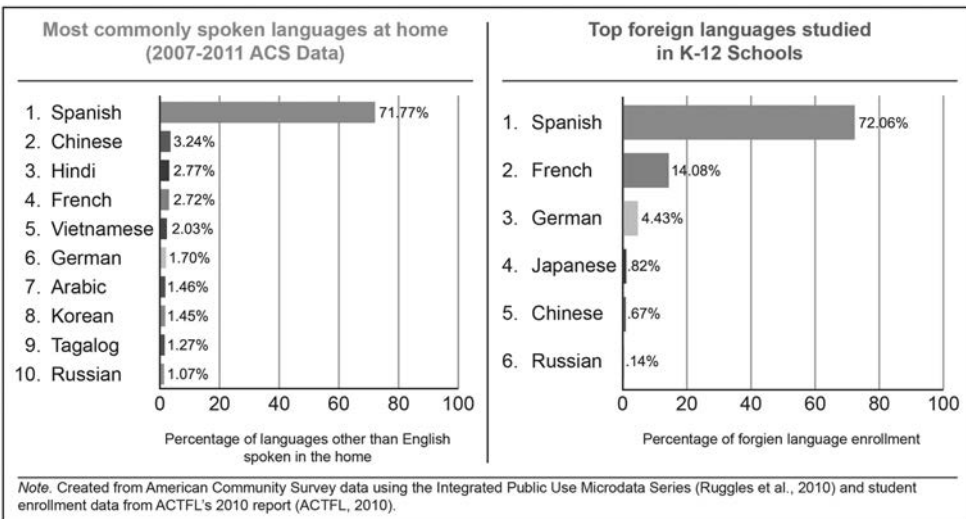
Figure 3.5 compares languages other than English spoken in the home. Spanish remains dominant in the homes of school-aged children in the U.S. overall. However, over two million 5–18-year-olds live in homes where languages other than Spanish are spoken. The nine other languages listed in Figure 3.5 (Chinese, Hindi, French, Vietnamese, German, Arabic, Korean, Filipino/Tagalog, and Russian) are very rarely offered for heritage language (HL) study in primary or secondary schools (Fee et al., 2014).

In comparing the list of the top 10 languages spoken in homes in the U.S. against the most commonly taught FLs in U.S. schools, it becomes clear that there is a disconnect between FL education and HL skills. The ACTFL (2012) survey examined K–12 student FL enrollment and found a significant discrepancy between the languages of HL-speaking students and FL enrollment. The 10 most commonly spoken languages in homes by 5–18-year-olds based on 2007 through 2011 ACS data compared against the top FLs studied in K–12 schools based on the ACTFL 2007–2008 student enrollment study are shown in Figure 3.6.



**Figure 3.5** Languages Most Commonly Spoken in the Home in the U.S., 5-18-Year-Olds (2008-2012) without Subgroups

Source: Created from American Community Survey data using the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (Ruggles et al., 2010).



**Figure 3.6** Languages Most Commonly Spoken in the Home among 5-18-Year-Olds (American Community Survey, ACS Data) versus Foreign Languages Studied in K-12 Schools (2007-2008) (ACTFL Student Enrollment Data).

Source: Created from American Community Survey data using the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (Ruggles et al., 2010) and student enrollment data from ACTFL's 2010 report (ACTFL, 2010).

Figure 3.6 demonstrates how little FL enrollment reflects HL communities and HL speakers in U.S. schools. While Spanish ranks number one on both lists, most Spanish FL courses are not designed for Spanish heritage speakers. As shown in Figures 3.3 and 3.4 above, CAL's 2008 national survey found that only 7% of elementary schools and 8% of secondary schools with FL programs offered Spanish for Spanish Speakers courses (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2010). The data presented in Figures 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 indicate that FL education has not responded to the demographic changes occurring within immigrant and HL-speaking communities in the United States (see Kagan, this volume, for a discussion of this phenomenon in Los Angeles). Despite having moved up to the third and seventh spots, respectively, as the most commonly spoken languages in homes with 5–18-year-olds, Hindi and Arabic are noticeably missing from FL enrollment data in the United States. Furthermore, Vietnamese, Korean, and Tagalog are not commonly found in FL offerings either. These languages represent missed opportunities to encourage and promote the language development of heritage speakers.

## 5 Trends in Higher Education

Since 1958, the Modern Language Association (MLA) has conducted and analyzed data to determine which languages have seen significant increases or decreases in U.S. higher education. In 2009, as part of this series, the MLA published a report of a survey that examined enrollments in languages other than English in higher education institutions (Modern Language Association [MLA], 2010). The MLA's 2010 report analyzes survey data collected in fall 2009 of undergraduate- and graduate-level enrollments in courses offered in languages other than English. Findings from the 2009 survey represent almost 99.9% of all higher educational intuitions in the United States (MLA, 2010).

The report found that enrollment ratios for the top 10 most studied languages stayed unchanged from the MLA's previous report based on survey data collected in 2006. Spanish continues to be the most studied language on college campuses with a 5.1% increase in enrollment since 2006 (MLA, 2010). Additionally, Spanish, French, German, and American Sign Language (ASL) remain the most studied languages among undergraduate and graduate students, despite a slow pace in enrollment gains. Arabic saw an increase of 46.3% from 2006 to 2009, jumping from the 10th most studied language in 2006 to the 8th in 2009. Italian, Japanese, and Chinese were the 5th, 6th, and 7th most studied languages, with Latin and Russian completing the list of the top 10 enrollments (MLA, 2010).

## 6 Conclusion: The Need for a Comprehensive Policy That Embraces the Multilingual Reality of the United States

Recent concerns about the “foreign language education crisis” based on some of the dismal statistics on FL education in the U.S. are not new (Wiley, 2007a, 2007b). The late U.S. Senator Paul Simon, for example, drew attention to this in his book, *The Tongue-Tied American: Confronting the Foreign Language Crisis*, first published in 1980. Senator Simon focused on three major areas where he felt the United States was weakened by the lack of foreign-language abilities: national security, diplomacy, and international business. Decades later, his themes still resonate in public policy debates, with increased focus on defense and national security concerns, as the testimony of a recent federal panel indicate:

Currently, only 74 percent of the State Department's “language-designated” positions are filled with adequately qualified personnel while only 28% of language jobs at the Defense

Department are “filled with personnel at the required foreign-language proficiency level,” remarked Laura Junor, a deputy assistant secretary of defense, in her statement. . . . Without a fully capable team working on the nation’s most pressing international conflicts and diplomacy issues, national security is compromised. The prospects of the next generation filling the gaps are dire. As Eduardo Ochoa, the Education Department’s assistant secretary of post-secondary education reported, only 30 percent of high school students and eight percent of post-secondary students are enrolled in a foreign language course. As for less-commonly taught critical languages, less than one percent of post-secondary students are enrolled in courses.

*(Editorial, Language Magazine)*

In attempting to identify the cause of the U.S.’s failure to promote foreign language education, Simon (1980) lamented the influence of the early twentieth century Americanization movement, with its emphasis on English only and anti-foreign-language stance, which still held sway in popular discourse and ideologies about learning languages in the U.S. In fact, the 1980s saw a resurgence of anti-immigrant sentiment in the form of the English-Only movement that targeted “foreign” immigrant languages (Wiley, 2004). Today, we can add to that movement’s lingering influence perceptions regarding the rise of English, an international language, which have resulted in complacency for some that knowing English is sufficient given its much-hyped role in the global economy and, particularly, in global higher education. It is clear today, as it was to Simon decades ago, that the fundamental reasons for the lack of policies and programs relate to a failure to value and nurture the linguistic resources within the population of the multilingual U.S. This is not a demographic problem but a failure to provide a guiding strategy that could “bring together the issues of foreign, heritage, and immigrant languages and start to build a unified policy that will include heritage languages . . . and the traditional values of learning other languages and cultures” (Spolsky, 2011, p. 5).

Spolsky (2011) has outlined a number of principles that could help to guide such an effort: “The first is the development of policies to ensure that there is no linguistic discrimination—that languages and speakers of specific languages are not ignored in the provision of civic services” (p. 5). These are essentially “protective rights”—that is, protections from discrimination (Wiley, 2007b). Next, there is a need to ensure that there are “adequate programs for teaching English to all, native-born or immigrant, old or young” (Spolsky, 2011, p. 5). This would require “the development of respect both for multilingual capacity, the cognitive advantages of which have been shown (Bialystok, 2001; Spolsky, 2011), and for diverse individual languages” (p. 5). Spolsky contends that this would require “a multi-branched language capacity program that

- strengthens and integrates a variety of language education programs;
- connects heritage programs with advanced training programs;
- builds on heritage and immersion and overseas-experience approaches to constantly replenish a cadre of efficient multilingual citizens capable of professional work using their multilingual skills; and
- provides rich and satisfying language instruction that leads to a multilingual population with knowledge of and respect for other languages and cultures” (p. 5).

A national policy with such a broad, comprehensive scope would help to recognize and build on the significant language diversity within the United States while helping to better link the country’s citizens with a multilingual world.

## Note

- 1 “Heritage language” tends to be the widely accepted expression in the U.S. when referring to speakers or learners of ancestral or family and community languages in addition to English, the dominant language. The HL label, however, is not always preferred or accepted in all contexts, particularly outside the U.S., or even inside the U.S. by some Native American language speakers (see Wiley, 2014 for elaboration on the definition and utility of the construct). Thus, our preference is to use “heritage and community” languages to be more inclusive for those who prefer not to use or identify with the HL label.

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