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студенттер мен жас ғалымдардың  
XII Халықаралық ғылыми конференциясының  
БАЯНДАМАЛАР ЖИНАҒЫ

**СБОРНИК МАТЕРИАЛОВ**

XII Международной научной конференции  
студентов и молодых ученых  
**«НАУКА И ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ – 2017»**

**PROCEEDINGS**

of the XII International Scientific Conference  
for students and young scholars  
**«SCIENCE AND EDUCATION - 2017»**



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## LACK OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE USA

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## Introduction

*It is not a nice-to-have. Languages are a need-to-have.**Francine Rivers*

**Relevance.** Nowadays, the United States have surpassed other countries in both economic and political way, and is considered to be the most developed country in the world. However, this country also is not deprived of some issues to solve. Although the States take a leading position in many respects, budget cuts, low enrollments, and teacher shortages mean the country is falling behind the rest of the world. Year by year, as the national fund's priorities are being determined, language education remains peripheral. Of course, this problem will lead to disastrous consequences for the world power, such as downfall of national morale, economy's deterioration, loss of competitiveness, and many others. The generalizability of much published research on this issue is problematic. Thus this prospective study was designed to investigate the problem of the US lacking language skills dwelling on the scientific articles, explore the role of the foreign languages in the US educational system, as well as, take attempts to find possible solutions.

The **novelty** of the research is considered to be the following: as the US is currently facing monolingual myopia, there is an urgent need of reforms to be introduced regarding language policy. Therefore, this study offers some important **insight into the issue** to reflect on the ways to solve the problem with foreign languages. The study was conducted in the form of a survey, with data being gathered via an **interview with American students from Minnesota and California** to reveal the real state of the issue.

The **hypothesis put forward is:** the USA have driven out all the competing languages from its territory, due to better conditions for the development of English language, as well as, being a predominant force on the continent. As a result, American employees have no chances against multilingual competitors beyond English speaking countries.

**The history of the foreign languages deficit in the US**

Over the last century, foreign languages didn't have much impact on the US citizens' life. Nowadays, less than 1 percent of grown-ups in America are proficient in a foreign language which was taught at their US schools.

In other words, foreign languages started to lose their position in American educational system. As US colleges and universities had a drop in foreign languages department, the need for comprehensive survey appeared. Therefore, since 1958, the Modern Language Association has been holding an investigation over the number of enrollments in languages other than English at US institutions of higher education. In their 2015 report, the tendency of steady decrease can be outlined, i.e. involvement in such courses declined by 6.7 percent (compared to 2013 and 2009 data) [1, p. 1].

To be more specific, the percentage of elementary and middle schools offering foreign language instruction diminished dramatically from 1997 to 2008 from 31% to 25% in elementary schools, and from 75% to 58% in middle schools. The drop occurred primarily in public schools. The number of high schools, including foreign languages in their curriculum, between 1997 and 2008 stayed steady at about 93% [2, p. 1]. Moreover, the percentage of public and private elementary schools offering foreign language instruction decreased from 31 to 25 percent from 1997 to 2008. Instruction at public elementary schools dropped from 24 percent to 15 percent, with rural districts hit the hardest [3, p.1], which resolves in overall decrease throughout the centuries in studying foreign languages.

### **The role of foreign languages in the US educational system**

Director of language policy initiatives at the University of Maryland stated, ‘An absence of support for language learning at a federal level is creating more concern in the US. There is no education policy, as well as, probably will never be. Language education in the US has been seen mostly as a national security issue not an education issue.’ [5, p.3].

In 2013, approximately 198,000 US students were taking French course. At the same time, only 64 students were studying Bengali; whereas around the world, over 193 million people speak Bengali, but just 75 million people speak French. In 2010, European languages made up 95 percent of all courses in American educational system. As US education secretary, Arne Duncan, declared, that it revealed the shortcomings and inequalities in language education today [4, p. 1].

About one-third of elementary and secondary schools with language programs reported that language teaching had been negatively affected by No Child Left Behind program, because focus on reading skills and Math had drawn resources away from foreign languages which were not included in the law’s accountability measures.

Regarding the topic of foreign languages teaching in US educational institutions, MLA identified 219 languages in American higher education in 2006. Out of a total enrollment of 17,648,000 students, only 1,522,770 (8.6%) took foreign language courses.

This year, Spanish, French, German, Italian, and the classical languages accounted for 80% of the total language enrollments. Besides, only 10% of students studied Japanese, Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Portuguese, and Korean that are accepted as extremely important [2, p. 2].

To be more specific, the table below illustrates the top 15 language enrollments (other than English) in US educational system.

Table 1. Enrollments in Top 15 languages other than English

<b>Languages</b>	<b>Fall 2002 enrollments</b>	<b>Fall 2006 enrollments</b>	<b>change</b>
Spanish	746,267	822,985	10.9%
French	201,979	206,426	2.2%
German	91,100	94,264	3.5%
Italian	63,899	78,829	29.7%
Japanese	52,238	66,605	27.5%
Chinese	34,153	51,582	51.0%
Russian	23,921	24,845	3.9%
Arabic	10,584	23,974	126.5%
Modern Hebrew	8,619	9,612	11.5%
Portuguese	8,385	10,267	22.4%
Korean	5,211	7,145	37.1%
American Sign Language	60,781	78,829	29.7%
Latin	29,841	32,191	7.9%
Ancient Greek	20,376	22,849	12.1%
Biblical Hebrew	14,183	14,140	-0.3%
204 other languages	25,716	33,728	31.2%
<b>Total enrollments</b>	<b>1,397,253</b>	<b>1,577,810</b>	<b>12.9%</b>

Overall, total enrollments in foreign languages increased by 12.9% between 2002 and 2006. It’s blatantly obvious that Spanish remained the most taught language. The number of students studying this language far exceeded those who studied European languages more than twice. The largest increases at four-year colleges between 2002 and 2006 were in Arabic (126.5%) and Chinese (51%). Nevertheless, even with these considerable growths, the total number of students studying these languages remained very small.

So, the information above can easily prove inexpediency of US educational system. Nowadays, about 7,000 languages are spoken ubiquitously, and it would take several lives for one person to learn all of them. Spanish and French are often default offerings at institutions across the

country. However, there is a wide range of variability — focuses tend to change over time. Janet Ikeda, a Japanese-language professor, spoke on this subject, ‘Administrators are cutting established programs for what I call the ‘language du jour.’

The MLA has tracked data over seven decades showing the impact of international and domestic developments on language education. But, these pop-up programs may be misguided: Learning a language in a non-immersive classroom setting takes years. So if schools are offering learning the “language du jour” today, it’s bound to be the “language d’hier” tomorrow [4, p.3].

During the investigation, I interviewed some Americans from Minnesota and California, who already graduated from their US schools. Twelve eighteen-year-olds were asked to give responses to the list of questions. There were three questions:

1. Which foreign languages did you study at school?
2. Was there any agitation work in your environment?
3. Did you have a lot of foreign language courses, language schools, institutions etc. in your environment?

The results of the questionnaire are given below.

Table 2. Questionnaire: foreign languages in Minnesota and California high schools

Participants	First question	Second question	Third question
Candidate 1 MN	Spanish	no	no
Candidate 2 CA	Spanish	no	no
Candidate 3 MN	Spanish	no	no
Candidate 4 MN	French	no	no
Candidate 5 MN	Spanish	yes	no
Candidate 6 MN	Spanish	yes	no
Candidate 7 CA	Spanish	no	no
Candidate 8 CA	Spanish	no	no
Candidate 9 CA	Spanish	yes	no
Candidate 10 MN	French	no	no
Candidate 11 MN	Spanish	yes	no
Candidate 12 MN	Spanish	no	no
<b>In total</b>	<b>10 Spanish, 2 French</b>	<b>8 “no”, 4 “yes”</b>	<b>12 “no”</b>

According to this interview, I found that the most taught foreign language was Spanish; only two individuals studied French at school. This is an indicator of narrow specialization in American high schools (at least in Minnesota and California). There was extremely low level of propaganda among Minnesota high schools (only one person acknowledged the presence of agitation work). As all interviewees answered the third question, immensely small number of students studying foreign languages directly connected with inadequate number of these languages courses and specialized places.

To sum up, as soon as foreign languages are incorporated as a compulsory subject at school and university programs, and as soon as the learning of foreign languages becomes a priority in the curriculum, it is hardly that the American educational system will produce graduates who can communicate effectively in a foreign language.

#### **Possible reasons of foreign languages low skills in the US**

The role of foreign languages within US educational system is precisely minimal. Nevertheless, there is a question: why is that Americans are lacking in multilingual skills?

Washington Post article speculates that business, technology and new course offerings may be pulling students’ focus away from languages. Clayton Lewis, Head of School at Washington International School, put forward two other hypotheses. Firstly, Americans may firmly believe in so-called English-language-exceptionalism. It’s well known that English is lingua franca of all areas. US students, therefore, may find it unnecessary to learn any other language. Perhaps if their only competitors in the global job market were other monolingual Americans, there would be no reason for concern. However, there will be fierce competition among well-educated graduates from

Europe, China, Mexico and many other countries who have already mastered English on top of their mother tongue. The reality of the twenty-first century is that monolingual Americans will definitely lose multilingual ones.

According to C. Lewis, another explanation is phenomenon of American laziness. Usually, US students are taking the easy way out. The situation with learning foreign languages is extremely difficult, because there is no quick way to learn them. Real fluency comes easily for very few and must be constantly cultivated if it is to be maintained. Honestly speaking, if you surf the web for about half an hour you will find that US people struggle to even write and read English correctly. This points out that they are either refusing to learn English and act like cavemen or they are simply lazy and don't want to be bothered.

Apart from it, US educational system tends to debate the real importance of learning foreign languages. American educators disagree about whether or not it's a worthwhile investment - whether it produces a greater return than, for example, social studies. Additionally, the educators face the problem of which language they should take precedence.

As a result, the problem of teacher shortages appeared. The language-policy analyst Rachel Hanson describes this as a big chicken-or-the-egg challenge in language education: "You can't expand language education if you don't have the pool of teachers to teach it," she said. "And, if the students aren't learning the language and becoming proficient, they won't become teachers." [4, p.3].

### **Approximate solutions**

Personally, I think United States have multiple solutions to the problem with foreign languages. Suggested ones included giving more recognition to heritage languages, improving lobbying for languages in the way that has recently proved successful for science subjects, using technology better to support language teaching, identifying role models, and getting employers on board. In other words, a fundamental change in attitudes is extremely needed.

Furthermore, another solution can be dual-language instruction. This program includes a variety of subjects which are taught in two languages, thereby eliminating the need to hire a separate language instructor. A great number of benefits can be outlined in this course. As an instance, elementary school children are most likely to get immediate impact on their overall learning. Bill Rivers, one of the country's most prominent language lobbyists, points to significant evidence that students in dual-language programs outperform their peers in reading and math by fourth grade — regardless of their race or socioeconomic status [4, p. 2].

All of those solutions are achievable. And I hope they will be accomplished as soon as possible.

In short, US education system is now failing to provide with critical skills the majority of this country's youth. Due to American conservatism, there is more to offer for studying European languages. However, the world is currently in a state of globalization. While Asian countries are getting more and more influence, there is no non-Western language offerings in US.

As a result, many young Americans face the problem of being worse than not only Asians, but also Europeans. The Modern Language Association reports, 'There may be fewer students taking courses in languages other than English, but the ones who are enrolled are often going further than ever before and presumably are being put in a position to gain greater proficiency than ever before.'

Therefore, to involve America in world trend of globalization, there should be comprehensive approach to foreign language acquisition that will prepare the next generation of Americans for success in a highly competitive, tightly interconnected world.

In conclusion, I would like to add president of the American Council of Learned Societies, Pauline Yu's quotation, 'Language isn't just a bridge between cultures. It's a gateway into a culture.'

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## THE INFLUENCE OF THE INTERNET ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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According to the “Media-system” agency, there are about 3.3 million active users of the Internet in Kazakhstan. The influence of the Internet on the English language is one of the aspects of the problem that is called “language and technology”. People began to communicate on different websites, using special programs such as ICQ, MailAgent, Instagram and so on. As a result, there is an appearance of a new language form that can be called as “electronic language”. The Internet alongside with radio, television, mobile phones forms a universal network for communication-**cyberspace**. The founders of the Internet set certain net etiquette and the style-informal and tolerant to mistakes, abbreviations, slang and so called “smiles”. Yet even more scholarly sources contain bold statements about the ways new communication technologies are impacting on communication patterns to an extent not seen since the introduction of commercial television. According to Herring (2004) text messaging is the most mobile and ubiquitous form of computer-mediated communication in popular use. [1]

The rapid nature of the growth of this message form has meant that until recently only a small amount of research attention has been devoted to its study; there is relatively little in the standard academic Literature: on this topic. The popular press and the Internet, however, are useful sources of information in this area, and scientific articles concerning modern communication forms such as email and cellular telephony also provide valuable data on the issue.

Given the newness of the technology it is not surprising that published, systematic research on the linguistic and social aspects of mobile communication is comparatively rare.

Thus this prospective study is designed **to investigate the issue** of influence of the internet on the English language and to offer some important **insight into the problem** to reflect on the ways to solve it.

Illiterate phrases and abbreviations are often beyond the cyberspace, and even people, who generally don't use the Internet, started exploiting reduced expressions such as **AWHF** instead of commonly used “**are we having fun?**” But the well known British linguist David Crystal refuses generally accepted views on on-line communication as illiterate and degenerating phenomenon. He admires with varieties of language forms. According to Crystal, “Netspeak” phenomenon can substantially change our views on language being a new step of its development. [2]

Internet becomes especially popular among youth which “grew on computers”, and, respectively, becomes an integral part of their life. Thanks to network, they got an opportunity to avoid the problems in communication caused by the prejudiced attitude towards distinctions in age, sex, race, skin color, clothes, etc. The “anonymized” communication in network allows them to judge about each other only by messages. Certainly, as well as any other structure, Internet communication isn't deprived of shortcomings, for example, impossibility to estimate sincerity of the opponent on the other side of the monitor. However the similar type of communication attracts youth with a wide range of inaccessible earlier interactive opportunities.