In 1978 a study was initiated to determine the use and importance of foreign language proficiency in Pennsylvania businesses. Two hundred eighty-four respondents represented the commercial, health, and municipal domains. Positive responses (indicating employment of personnel skilled in languages other than English) were received from 41% of businesses, 60% of health care facilities, and 79% of municipalities, thus from 43% of total respondents. The survey revealed the following trends: (1) 85% of positive responders have employees with foreign language proficiency; (2) fewer than 25% of employers include an item on language proficiency on employment applications, and fewer than 20% would consider such proficiency for promotion; (3) the most important language in all categories was Spanish, with Italian, German, and French appearing less than half as frequently (this discrepancy was less pronounced with business respondents); (4) change in client attitude brought about by foreign-language-skilled personnel seemed most important in the health field (52%); and (5) 62% of the businesses felt that expansion might increase their needs for language proficient employees. The responding organizations are listed in an appendix. Results are reported in tabular and graphic form.
Report of Survey on Business Use of Foreign Language

By
Grace E. Laverty
Bureau of Research and Evaluation
Pennsylvania Department of Education
Business Use of Foreign Language

In 1978 the Division of Communications, Bureau of Curriculum Services initiated a study to determine the use and importance of foreign language proficiency in Pennsylvania businesses.

Procedures

A 15-question survey form was prepared and sent to commercial businesses, health care facilities, and municipalities within Pennsylvania. Between 900 and 1000 survey forms were mailed out by the Division of Communications during the summer of 1978. Forms were completed and returned during the fall of 1978.

After assistance was requested from the Bureau of Research and Evaluation, the returned forms were sorted and keypunched, and the data were analyzed by computer.

Sample

In two conversations, Mrs. Gordon of the Division of Communications gave the following information about the sample selected to receive survey forms:

1. Commercial businesses in the international area, exporters and importers, selected from Pennsylvania Department of Commerce listings. Only business with an annual volume above $20,000, with 10 or more employees and engaged in business with countries on more than one continent outside the United States were selected.

2. Hospitals and nursing homes--all that were known or listed in some unspecified source. Department of Health.

3. Certain municipalities "known to have large non-English dominant populations."

Between 900 and 1000 surveys were distributed, and 284 responses were received for a response rate of about 30 percent.

Responses were received from 130 commercial businesses, 14 municipalities, and 139 hospitals and other health care facilities. (One response from a church mission organization was not included in the sample of 283.) These were divided into those who employ speakers of foreign languages and those who do not, and the major part of the analysis was conducted for the responses from the employers of foreign language speakers. There were a total of 124 positive responses included in the analysis: 53 commercial business firms, 11 municipalities, and 60 health care facilities.

Analysis

After sorting of positive and negative responses, the positive survey forms were prepared for computerized data processing. The frequency and percentage of positive answers for each item or item part were calculated.

Limitations

The generalizability of the findings in this study are limited to the specific categories of business included in the sample. Even of this limited sample, the majority of responders said they did not employ speakers of languages other than English.
Results - Negative Responders

Seventy-seven commercial businesses said they do not currently employ persons with skills in languages other than English. Some returned the form, others sent a letter explaining that the survey was not applicable to their businesses. Among the 77 were 16 business leaders who made further explanations or statements:

- Spanish is or would be useful because we have Spanish-speaking workers.
- The government should see that kids learn English and basic skills, not foreign languages.
- Firm works in other countries (5, 6, 3, 9, 4 or 6 countries, import from 4, market to some) but use only English with no problems.
- It would be useful in sales and engineering for translation, and we would give preference to foreign language proficient person in hiring.

The health care facilities had a different pattern of response. Twenty-five said yes, they do have some foreign language proficient employees, but these were counted as negative responders because they did not complete the form. All 25 said it was not a requirement for employment. Of these 25, 14 did say that if the occasion arises, those skills might be used in working with patients. One would provide training in Yiddish conversation skills. Among the 54 no responses were the following remarks:

- Employment not based on language skills
- Not applicable
- No need for foreign language skills
- No, but need more proficiency in English
- No, but could use foreign language skills (if nurses and aides were available with them)

Among the 14 responding municipalities, three said no, they do not hire persons with foreign language skills. Most were careful to comment that language is not a hiring criterion, but that because of the ethnic groups within the municipality, they do have speakers of languages other than English. Eleven were included in the computer analysis of positive responses.

Results - Positive Responders

The results shown here will appear by item for three categories and a total. All percentages were based on the following numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial businesses</td>
<td>53 (41%)</td>
<td>124 (43%) of sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care facilities</td>
<td>60 (43%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipalities</td>
<td>11 (79%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 124 (43% of sample)
In interpreting these findings, remember that they are based on only 43 percent of the respondents.

**Item 1. In how many countries does your firm operate?**

(This item was appropriate for commercial business only. Some responses were only approximate.)

Mean number of countries = 16
Standard deviation = 23.46
Range was 90 (1 to 91 countries)

**Item 2. Does your firm currently employ persons with skills in languages other than English?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of &quot;Yes&quot;</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Item 3. If your answer to Number 2 is yes, check foreign language skills below that employees use in their work.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number and (Percentage) of Checks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>34 (64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>34 (64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Comprehension</td>
<td>26 (49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>35 (66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>32 (60)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(See attached graph)

**Item 4. Does your firm's job application include an item concerning language proficiency?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of &quot;Yes&quot;</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Item 5. Foreign language proficiency would be a positive consideration. (Check all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Number and (Percentage) of Checks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. employment</td>
<td>27 (51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. promotion</td>
<td>19 (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. salary increase</td>
<td>6 (11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 6. Where do you get employees with foreign language proficiency?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Number and (Percentage) of Checks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide training</td>
<td>14 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit abroad</td>
<td>16 (30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 7. Check languages most useful in your firm's operation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number and (Percentage) of Checks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>40 (76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>36 (68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efik</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>12 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>19 (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>10 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swahili</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>5 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>31 (58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(See attached graph)

Item 8. Check the employee foreign language proficiency most desired by your firm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Number and (Percentage) of Checks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversational</td>
<td>34 (64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>10 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>31 (58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical vocabulary</td>
<td>13 (24)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Item 9. If you use employees with foreign language skills, have you detected a difference in the attitude of your foreign clients since you began this practice?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of &quot;Yes&quot;</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 10. Check the technical/professional career areas in your firm that would profit most if employees had foreign language skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Area</th>
<th>Number and (Percentage) of Checks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>41 (77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>21 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>6 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial</td>
<td>12 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>6 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>4 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>21 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4 (8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mostly patient care
**Mainly police and fire persons

(See attached graph)

Item 11. Would you give hiring preference to applicant with foreign language proficiency?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of &quot;Yes&quot;</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 12. If your firm does not currently have employees with foreign language skills, would you employ them if available? (Some responded "yes" who say they do have such employees.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of &quot;Yes&quot;</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Item 13. If your firm's operation expanded, would the need for employees with skills in other languages increase?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of &quot;Yes&quot;</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 14. Would a change in the focus of your business create demand for employees with foreign language proficiency?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of &quot;Yes&quot;</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 15. Would you be willing (on this subject) to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number and (Percentage) of Checks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. discuss on media</td>
<td>10 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. speak to adults</td>
<td>11 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. speak to students</td>
<td>15 (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. discuss with educators</td>
<td>26 (49)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The Appendix lists responders who are willing to discuss this subject if asked. The letters a, b, c, d after the name show context(s) in which that responder is willing to act.)

Summary of Results

Although it is not always a condition of employment, 85 percent of the positive responders do currently have employees with proficiency in languages other than English. Speaking and understanding are the most desired skills (75 percent), reading and writing are next in importance (50 percent) and only about 30 percent of employers desire technical comprehension.

Fewer than a quarter of employers include an item on language proficiency on the application for employment, but half feel it would be a positive consideration in employment. However, fewer than 20 percent would consider it for promotion and only 7 percent in a salary increase. Overall only about one quarter of the respondents answered the item about where employees with foreign language proficiency are obtained. Among business respondents, however, 26 percent provide training and 30 percent recruit abroad.
The most important language over all categories is Spanish, with Italian, German and French appearing less than half as frequently. Among business respondents, however, French and German ranked close behind Spanish. The most desired skills were conversational and translation, with technical vocabulary and composition skills lagging far behind.

Change in client attitude with use of foreign language seemed most important in the health field (52 percent), and comments indicated this was vital in communicating with patients, especially in emergency situations and geriatric care. Overall about half of these respondents would give preference to an applicant with foreign language skills, all other things being equal. In the business category, sales was the career area in which foreign language proficiency was most desirable, with engineering and management second in importance. Sixty-two percent of the businesses felt that expansion might increase their needs for language proficient employees, and 45 percent felt a change of focus might also do it. The health and municipal respondents did not foresee much increase in their need for employees with foreign language skills.
Appendix

Responders willing to discuss this subject:

a. publicly on media  
b. with adult groups  
c. with student groups  
d. with educators

Commercial Businesses

1. Allen Organ Company  
   Steve Markowitz  
   Manager, International Sales  
   Macungie, PA 18062  
   215-966-2200

2. Donery International, Inc.  
   A. Michael Colameco, President  
   P.O. Box 334  
   Wynnewood, PA 19096

3. Advance Enterprises, Inc.  
   John W. Sokolowski  
   Assistant to the President  
   419 Norway Street  
   York, PA 17405  
   717-843-7831

4. National Forge Company  
   Peter J. Amberson  
   Supervisor of Employee Relations  
   Front Street  
   Irvine, PA 16329  
   814-563-7522, ext. 264

5. Amit International Trade Ltd.  
   Annibale Cuozzo, President  
   904 Chestnut Street  
   Philadelphia, PA 19107  
   215-923-8388

6. Mack Trucks, Inc.  
   B. H. Contento, Supervisor  
   Employment and Personnel Services  
   P.O. Box M  
   215-439-3820

7. Latrobe Steel Company  
   Subsidiary of the Timken Company  
   William S. Medve  
   Manager of Personnel  
   2626 S. Ligonier Street  
   Latrobe, PA 15650  
   412-537-7711
Appendix: (continued)

8. Hamilton Watch Co., Inc.  
   K. A. Bromer  
   Personnel Assistant  
   941 Wheatland Avenue  
   Lancaster, PA 17603  
   717-394-7161, ext. 158

9. FMC Corporation  
   Material Handling Equipment Division  
   J. W. Boyce, Division Manager  
   Homer City, PA 15748  
   412-479-8011

10. Certainteed Corporation  
    Elaine F. Hall, Expatriation Coordinator  
    P.O. Box 860  
    Valley Forge, PA 19480  
    215-687-5000

11. Carpenter Technology Corporation  
    John E. Newlin, Jr.  
    Vice-President International  
    P.O. Box 662  
    Reading, PA 19603  
    215-372-4511

12. Fischer & Porter Company  
    David J. Nessim  
    Senior Vice-President, International Operations  
    Corporate Headquarters  
    One Gibraltar Plaza  
    Horsham, PA 19044  
    215-674-6621

13. Andrew S. McCreath & Son, Inc.  
    Fred A. Pennington, Sr., Chairman  
    P.O. Box 1453  
    Harrisburg, PA 17105  
    717-238-9331

14. Pittsburgh Plate Glass, Inc.  
    John N. McLaughlin  
    Manager, Human Resources Division  
    One Gateway Center  
    Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
    412-434-2067

15. VF Corporation  
    Jack Peltier  
    President of VF Corporation International  
    P.O. Box 1022  
    Reading, PA 19603  
    215-378-1151
16. Grocery Store Products Company
R. T. Walters
Manager of Personnel
Union & Adams Streets
West Chester, PA 19380
215-696-6300

17. Kellogg-American, Inc.
Jack Barrett
Financial Planner
565 Cedar Way
Oakmont, PA 15139
412-362-2100, ext. 602

18. Kocks Pittsburgh Corporation
Wolfgang K. Rihmland, President
Four Gateway Center
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
412-261-1194

Philip F. Rogatin, President
2011 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
215-568-1464

20. Dravo Corporation
Fred W. Herman
Personnel Development Specialist
One Oliver Plaza
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
412-566-3903

21. Inland Marine
Robert Slaff, President
79 E. Jackson Street
Wilkes Barre, PA 18701
717-822-7185

22. KEM Plastic Playing Cards, Inc.
John Bjacek, Vice-President
1015 N. Main Avenue
Scranton, PA 18508
717-343-4783

23. Westinghouse Electric Corporation
Ralph H. Davis, Consultant
Key Personnel Services Department
Westinghouse Building
11 Stanwix St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15230
412-255-3626
### Health Facilities

1. **Temple University Hospital and Medical School**  
   Saul Pachman  
   Employment Manager  
   3401 North Broad Street  
   Philadelphia, PA 19122  
   215-221-3999

2. **Holy Spirit Hospital**  
   Raymond P. Barth  
   Director of Personnel  
   North 21st Street  
   Camp Hill, PA 17011  
   717-761-0202, ext. 305

3. **Center City Hospital**  
   Harry Shubin, M.D.  
   Medical Director/Administrator  
   1829 Pine Street  
   Philadelphia, PA 19103  
   215-893-1000

4. **St. Luke's Hospital**  
   Alan M. Fermier  
   Personnel Assistant  
   Ostrum Street  
   Bethlehem, PA 18000  
   215-691-4091

5. **Pennsylvania Department of Health**  
   Eastern Division  
   John L. Breisch  
   Administrative Officer  
   401 Buttonwood Street  
   West Reading, PA 19611  
   215-378-4345
6. Annie M. Warner Hospital
   William D. Myers
   Acting Administrator
   Gettysburg, PA 17325
   717-334-2121, ext. 111

7. Albert Einstein Medical Center
   William J. Schwabe
   Director of Personnel
   Philadelphia, PA 19141
   215-329-0700, ext. 562

8. St. Christopher's Hospital for Children
   John Drenning
   Assistant Vice-President, Personnel
   2600 North Lawrence Street
   Philadelphia, PA 19133
   215-427-5344

9. Sacred Heart Hospital
   Ginnie Benedict
   Personnel Assistant
   421 Chew Street
   Allentown, PA 18101
   215-821-3395

10. Lancaster Osteopathic Hospital
    David Snyder
    Director of Personnel
    1175 Clark Street
    717-397-3711, ext. 2459-0

11. State Health Department
    Gladys Parks, R.N.
    Public Health Director
    103 W. Middle Street
    Chambersburg, PA 17201

12. Saint Joseph Hospital
    Michael Pregmon, Personnel
    Box 316
    Reading, PA 19603
    215-376-4901

13. Episcopal Hospital
    Richard Handschumacher
    Assistant Director, Employee Relations
    Front Street & Lehigh Avenue
    Philadelphia, PA 19125
    215-427-7183
Appendix (Continued)

14. The Rehab Hospital
   Lou Haines
   Director of Vital Services
   4950 Wilson Lane
   Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
   717-697-8211

15. Barnes-Kasson County Hospital
   Sara C. Iveson
   Associate Director
   400 Turnpike Street
   Susquehanna, PA 18847
   717-853-3135

16. Rolling Hill Hospital
   Iris C. Sopolsky
   Director of Personnel
   60 East Township Line Road
   Elkins Park, PA 19117
   215-663-6151

17. Phoebe-Devitt Home
   John M. Herbster
   Director, Training and Personnel
   1925 Turner Street
   Allentown, PA 18104
   215-435-9037

18. Delaware County Memorial Hospital
   Herbert O. Larson, Jr.
   Personnel Director
   Lansdowne & Keystone Avenues
   Drexel Hill, PA 19026
   215-CL 9-3800, ext. 310

Municipalities

1. Johnstown Police Department
   Officer James C. Miller
   Training and Education
   111 Johns Street
   Johnstown, PA 15901
   814-539-8761, ext. 31
2. City of Lebanon
   Rose Marie Swanger
   City Clerk
   400 South Eighth Street
   Lebanon, PA 17042
   717-272-3006

3. Borough of West Chester
   Robert J. Shaw
   Borough Manager
   Gay & Adams Streets
   West Chester, PA 19380
   215-692-7574
Language Skills Needed

Understanding  Reading  Technical Comprehension  Speaking  Writing

--- Business  --- Health Care

Business Use of Foreign Language Survey
Bureau of Curriculum Services, PDE, 1978
Most Useful Languages

- Business
- Health Care
- Municipalities

Business Use of Foreign Language Survey
Bureau of Curriculum Services, PDE, 1978
Areas in Business Profiting Most by Foreign Language Skills

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