

Chapter 1

Language diversity in the United States: Dispelling common myths and appreciating advantages

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The official language of the U.S. is English. But today's immigrants are not learning English as quickly as those of the past – it seems like they don't want to fit in to the American way of life. Language diversity in this country is a recent problem due to unprecedented levels of immigration, and we are at risk that the different languages spoken here threaten our national unity.

These myths regarding language are fairly prevalent in the U.S. at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Yet all of them are false, and both their underlying premises and their implications are damaging on several levels. They are damaging to intergroup relations because immigrants are accused of lacking the motivation or desire to integrate to mainstream U.S. society and learn English. This often leads others to resent them or accuse them of being unpatriotic. They are damaging to immigrant families in that children who come to school speaking a Language Other than English (often referred to as a “LOTE”) are pressured into erasing that language, which can lead to academic difficulties as well as problems communicating with family members and retaining cultural traditions. They are also damaging to the nation because they squander our vast linguistic resources that could benefit the U.S. economically, diplomatically and culturally. This introductory chapter will explore each of these topics as it addresses these three common fallacies.

Isn't English the official language of the U.S.?

As of the year 2009, the U.S. does not have an official language. While the great majority of Americans today (80 percent) speak English as a native language – and, in fact, as their only language – there is no law or constitutional amendment establishing a national language. As noted by Heath (1997), the founding fathers:

[...] recognized that decisions on language choice and change would be made at the local and regional levels by citizens responding to communicative needs and goals they themselves identified. Moreover, early political leaders recognized the close connection between language and religious/cultural freedoms, and they preferred to refrain from proposing legislation which might be construed as a restriction of these freedoms (Heath 1977: 270).

According to Schiffman, the U.S. has no explicit language policy, but we do have a “linguistic culture” that “supports the use of English to the exclusion of almost all other languages, so that an explicit policy that would officialize English is not necessary, and probably never will be” (Schiffman 2005: 121). The development of our national “linguistic culture” will be further explored in this chapter.

The top 12 LOTEs spoken in the U.S. by people age 5 and older, as reported in the 2007 American Community Survey, are displayed in Table 1.1. What is immediately noticeable in this table is that almost two thirds of all U.S. LOTE speakers (62 percent) are Spanish-speaking, even though Spanish-speakers make up just 12 percent of the nation’s population. In addition, while groups such as French, German, Italian, and Polish speakers have undergone a numerical decline, groups like Russian and Vietnamese experienced tremendous growth during the decade between 1990 and 2000, as well as continuing growth from 2000 to 2007. The ramifications for these trends will be discussed throughout this book.

Table 1.1, Languages spoken in the U.S. (American Community Survey 2007)

Ranking	Number of speakers	% of the population	% change 1990 - 2000	% change 1990 - 2000	% of all U.S. LOTE speakers
English Only	225,505,953	80.27%	+8%	+5%	n/a
1. Spanish	34,547,077	12.30%	+62%	+23%	62.31%
2. Chinese	2,464,572	0.88%	+53%	+22%	4.45%
3. Tagalog ¹	1,480,429	0.53%	+45%	+21%	2.67%
4. French	1,355,805	0.48%	-3%	-18%	2.45%
5. Vietnamese	1,207,004	0.43%	+99%	+20%	2.18%
6. German	1,104,354	0.39%	-11%	-20%	1.99%
7. Korean	1,062,337	0.38%	+43%	+19%	1.92%
8. Russian	851,174	0.30%	+191%	+20%	1.54%
9. Italian	798,801	0.28%	-23%	-21%	1.44%
10. Arabic	767,319	0.27%	+73%	+25%	1.38%
11. Portuguese	687,126	0.24%	+31%	+22%	1.24%
12. Polish	638,059	0.23%	-8%	-4%	1.15%

Some of the most significant implications are for the educational field in the U.S. – both the field concerned with the education of English language learners as well as the field of foreign language education. It is crucial to note that, in 2002, fully 20 percent of all school-aged children spoke a language other than English at home, a figure which has more than doubled since 1979 (National Center for Educational Statistics 2002). The field concerned with helping children learn English as well as their school subjects – often referred to as “bilingual education” or “English as a Second Language (ESL),” is clearly affected by these changes. They must find instructors capable of helping these children learn, which requires training in ESL methodology and, ideally, proficiency in the children’s language. Typically, when these students get to high school and college, they come into contact with the field of foreign language education, which refers to them as “heritage speakers” of the non-English language. Heritage speakers are different from traditional foreign language learners in many ways (Valdés 2001; Potowski and

¹ Although some prefer the term “Filipino,” the term “Tagalog” is used in the U.S. Census.

Carreira 2004), so foreign language educators must accommodate instructional materials and methodologies for these increasing numbers of heritage speaking students. Each chapter in this book will examine educational implications of language diversity in the U.S.

Why don't they just learn English?

The fact is that U.S. immigrants and their descendents *do* learn English, and they learn it quickly. Table 1.2 shows that, overall, speakers of other languages speak English “well” or “very well”.

Table 1.2, LOTE speakers who speak English (Census 2000)

Ranking	Number of speakers	% who speak English “well” or “very well”
1. Spanish	34,547,077	70.9
2. Chinese	2,464,572	73.4
3. Tagalog	1,480,429	93.0
4. French	1,355,805	92.3
5. Vietnamese	1,207,004	68.6
6. German	1,104,354	95.2
7. Korean	1,062,337	71.2
8. Russian	851,174	74.6
9. Italian	798,801	88.9
10. Arabic	767,319	88.5
11. Portuguese	687,126	77.8
12. Polish	638,059	80.4

This is the pattern for most immigrants to this country in the past as well as today. Plentiful research has shown that immigrant communities shift entirely to English very quickly, typically within three generations. In fact, when examining thirty-five different nations in the world, in no other country was the rate of mother tongue shift toward monolingualism in the national dominant language as fast as in the United States (Lieberson, Dalto, and Johnston 1975).

Even the most recently arrived groups exhibit patterns of language use that suggest that the adoption of English is well underway (McKay and Wong 2000: 81). Veltman (2000), for example, found that after zero to five years in the U.S., 20 percent of immigrants aged 0-14 at the time of arrival had already adopted English as their preferred, usual language. After five additional years, the number rose to 40 percent. In addition, Veltman found that younger people today are more likely to adopt English than their older peers did when they were young. This is the trend all over the U.S. and is likely due to urbanization, universal education, mass communication, and greater regional integration into the national economy.

The studies just cited show that immigrants shift very quickly to English. We now turn to the maintenance of heritage languages among their U.S.-born descendants. It is very common for the grandchildren of immigrants not to develop strong levels of their family's non-English language. In 2006, Rumbaut, Massey and Bean found that the "life expectancy" of five languages in southern California (Spanish, Tagalog, Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean) was no more than two generations. That is, Spanish can be expected to begin to die out with the children of immigrants, and not be spoken well or at all by the grandchildren of immigrants – and the Asian languages die out even faster, often not being spoken well by the children of immigrants. These authors tell us that their findings constitute support for the idea of the U.S. as a "linguistic graveyard" (2006: 458). With immigration constituting 65 percent of the total U.S. population growth and virtually 100 percent of its labor force growth in 2000 (Passel 2007), it is in our best interest that these individuals be well educated; this volume argues that this education should include, in addition to English, literacy and communicative skills in the home language.

It is worth mentioning that immigrants abandon their heritage languages for a variety of reasons that will be explored throughout this book, including peer pressure, lack of opportunity

to use the language, or fear that it will interfere with their ability to learn English or get ahead in American society. As noted by Tse (2001a: 33), “[w]hereas knowing English may bring prestige and acceptance, speaking another language – especially a low-status language – can do the opposite” by causing shame for being different or attracting xenophobic reactions in others. Even so, loss of the heritage language can sometimes have serious negative consequences. It can create feelings of linguistic insecurity (Krashen 1998) and identity loss (Fought 2006); Zhou and Bankston (2000a) argue that loss of heritage language and identity leads some students to engage in delinquent behavior at school in the quest for a new identity. Particularly devastating is the weakening of the family, as parental authority is often diminished when parents and children cannot communicate with each other, and elders can no longer transmit family and ethnic values (Rodriguez 1981; Tse 2001a: 52; Wong-Fillmore 1991).

In spite of abundant evidence of rapid acquisition of English, it is today’s large numbers of new immigrants that may create the impression of a lack of linguistic assimilation. In his 2004 book titled *Who are we?*, Harvard professor Samuel Huntington expresses concern about the collapse of the U.S. national identity due in part to the persistence of Spanish among Mexican immigrants. “There is only the American dream created by an Anglo-Protestant society,” writes Huntington, and “Mexican-Americans will share in that dream and in that society only if they dream in English.” However, Huntington would need look no further than the second generation of Mexicans in the U.S., who are typically English-dominant, and the third generation, who are monolingual in English, to see that these concerns are largely unfounded. One recent development that has disturbed the migration pattern of some Mexican nationals, however, may in fact contribute to Huntington’s alarm. Typically, families would make a few trips to the U.S. lasting several months to a year to earn money, and then return permanently to

Mexico. But as border security has tightened, it has become more dangerous and expensive to make these trips, so many have settled in the U.S. “reluctantly, with little interest in identifying as Americans” (Kotlovitz 2007). Yet given that the majority (60 percent) of U.S. Latinos are born in the U.S. and grow up to become either English dominant or English monolingual (Rumbaut et al. 2006), there is no strong evidence supporting Huntington’s argument.

Fears about immigrants not learning English are often accompanied by what we might call the “my grandparent” myth. It goes something like this: “When my grandparents immigrated from [name of country], they did not need bilingual education or special services in their language. They simply worked hard and learned the language. Today’s immigrants want everything handed to them.” What this sentiment ignores, however, is that life in the 1800s and early 1900s required very little knowledge of English to make a decent wage in the areas of manufacturing where many immigrants worked. High levels of literacy, or even a high school diploma, were not necessary as they are today. It is very likely that this person’s grandparents would be at a much greater disadvantage in the twenty-first century as immigrants to the U.S. without English abilities.

Finally, although this volume does not address English learning in depth, an important factor in the U.S. language equation is the acute lack of accessible and well-taught English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in many communities. In some cases, when ESL classes are available, some individuals cannot take advantage of them due to scheduling problems involved with holding more than one job – which can entail working 16 hours per day – or problems with transportation or childcare. But the biggest problem seems to be lack of availability of affordable ESL classes. A 2006 study found that 60 percent of the free ESL programs in 12 states had waiting lists, ranging from a few months in Colorado and Nevada to as long as two

years in New Mexico and Massachusetts (Tucker 2006). In 2005 there were 1.2 million adults enrolled in ESL courses, which is about one in ten of those who reported speaking English “Less than very well” or “Not at all” (National Center for Educational Statistics 2005). The federal government provides money for such classes, but each state decides how much of these funds to spend on ESL classes. According to Santos (2007a), advocates for more English classes argue that this state-federal financing split leaves a system whose quality varies widely from state to state, and is lacking most everywhere. Rather than blame the victims of these shortages, Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, where the immigrant population has tripled since 1990, sponsored a bill in 2006 that would have given legal immigrants \$500 vouchers to pay for English classes since so many of the free ones were full. He stated that “Most education policy is the prerogative of state and local governments, but I would argue that the prerogative to help people learn our common language is a federal responsibility” and that “If we make it easier for people to learn English, they will learn it. I think that ought to be a priority of our government, and I don’t think it has been” (Santos 2007a).

Senator Alexander’s position of helping immigrants attend ESL classes stands in contrast to the idea that laws forbidding the use of non-English languages will somehow promote greater English learning. Some monolingual English-speaking Americans are intolerant of languages other than English spoken here and seek to promote its acquisition through legislative means. In 2007, there were three bills proposed to make English the official language of the U.S. (S133, HR 769 and HR 997)². Although all three were referred to subcommittees but never came up for a vote, this clearly demonstrates that numerous lawmakers and their constituents, much like the large lobbying groups English Only and U.S. English, feel a need to officially protect and promote English. As of 2007, twenty-six states have declared English their official language,

² Bills proposed in Congress can be searched at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

while only three states have any kind of protected bilingualism (Hawaii, Louisiana, and New Mexico).³ And although Native American languages are official or co-official on many reservations, language loss among Native American communities has been systematic, as will be described in McCarty's chapter in this volume.

In fact, such laws do very little to assist immigrants in acquiring English skills. According to the Institute for Language and Education Policy (Crawford 2006), "official English" policies are:

- (1) Unnecessary – The overwhelming dominance of English in the United States is not threatened in any way. Newcomers to this country are learning it more rapidly than ever before. Our language does not need "legal protection."
- (2) Punitive – Restricting government's ability to communicate in other languages would threaten the rights and welfare of millions of people, including many U.S. citizens, who are not fully proficient in English.
- (3) Pointless – Official-English legislation offers no practical assistance to anyone trying to learn English. In fact, it is likely to frustrate that goal by outlawing programs designed to bring immigrants into the mainstream of our society.
- (4) Divisive – The campaign to declare English the official language often serves as a proxy for hostility toward minority groups, Latinos and Asians in particular. It is exacerbating ethnic tensions in a growing number of communities.
- (5) Inconsistent with American values – Official-English laws have been declared unconstitutional in state and federal courts, because they violate guarantees of freedom of speech and equal protection of the laws.
- (6) Self-defeating – English Only policies are foolish in an era of globalization, when multilingual skills are essential to economic prosperity and national security. Language resources should be conserved and developed, not suppressed.

³ Hawaiian was declared a co-official language in Hawaii in 1978. In Louisiana, English and French are both legally recognized, although there is no official state language. New Mexico was declared "English plus" in 1989, with Spanish as the *de facto* second language.

Far from simply seeking to promote English proficiency, ulterior motives for such laws might lie elsewhere. Urcioli (2001), for example, argues that race has been remapped from biology onto language. In past discourses on race, it was posited that there were inherently superior and inferior races, each with intellectual traits attributed to them. Such arguments have become less acceptable in public discourse, but language is seen as fair game, allowing it in many cases to become a proxy for discrimination. Unlike biological race, however, most people think that individuals can and should control their language; if they do not, it is considered acceptable for them to suffer the economic consequences. Urcioli contends that what drives movements like the English Language Amendment is precisely such mapping of race onto language. Race ideology emphasized the importance of compartmentalization such that the inferior would not contaminate the superior; acknowledging a LOTE with official status would permit such contamination.

A more effective policy than English Only legislation and all the negativity it generates would be investing in massive national ESL course networks. But even those who agree that official English policies are unnecessary may ask themselves this question: “Why should the U.S., where 80 percent of the citizens are monolingual English speakers, provide services like voting, driver’s licenses, and those of other agencies in non-English languages? Doesn’t this take away all incentive for immigrants to learn English?” Mayor Bloomberg of New York does not think so. In July 2008 he signed Executive Order 120, probably the boldest act of its kind in the nation, requiring every city agency that has direct interaction with customers to provide language assistance in Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Russian, Italian and French Creole, with a telephone-based service linked to interpreters who speak Urdu, Hindi, Arabic and dozens of other languages. According to Mayor Bloomberg (Santos 2008):

The fundamental basis of government is its interaction with its citizens. If people don't know what we do, don't know what they should do, what the law requires them to do, don't know how to get services, all the money that we're spending providing those services, providing those laws, is meaningless.

That is, language assistance programs for immigrants link them to the services that the host communities have already decided to provide them, services which contribute to the overall wellbeing of the immigrants, their neighbors, and their surrounding communities. Given the contributions of immigrants to the national economy (Orrenius 2003)⁴, there is no reason for the mainstream not to assist them in acquiring services they need and in exercising their rights. As for whether language services remove incentives to learn English, if we refer back to the figures about the acute lack of ESL classes and the long waiting lists to enroll, we may conclude the following: While there may be some individuals who feel they can live life in the U.S. perfectly well in their non-English language – particularly the elderly – it is generally the case that immigrants realize all too well the need for English to get ahead economically and secure the futures of their families, and many are diligently trying to enroll in ESL courses. We must also keep in mind that the children of immigrants will be English-dominant and have no need for such language programs.

A few more words about economics are warranted. Chiswick and Miller (2007) report on almost twenty years of research carried out on four continents, research that applies economic models to understanding the causes and consequences of immigrants' proficiency in the host country's dominant language. The three fundamental variables they identified, called the “three

⁴ This report states the following: “The pace of recent U.S. economic growth would have been impossible without immigration. Since 1990, immigrants have contributed to job growth in three main ways: They fill an increasing share of jobs overall, they take jobs in labor-scarce regions, and they fill the types of jobs that native workers often shun. The foreign-born make up only 11.3 percent of the U.S. population and 14 percent of the labor force. But amazingly, the flow of foreign-born is so large that immigrants currently account for a larger share of labor force growth than natives.” (p. 16).

Es of language proficiency,” were *Exposure* to the destination language, *Efficiency* in its acquisition, and *Economic Incentives* to acquire the language. Their findings, which were universal across the countries studied, included the following: (1) Destination language proficiency increases with duration in the country, educational attainment, living outside of an ethnolinguistic enclave, a younger age at immigration, and parents’ proficiency in the host language (particularly the mother’s proficiency); (2) There is a highly significant and large effect of host country language proficiency on earnings and employment⁵; and (3) Greater typological similarity between the immigrant language and the host language is correlated with greater rates of acquisition, while greater typological distance is correlated with lower rates of acquisition. The field of economics can thus contribute to our understanding of immigrant language use patterns.

To conclude this section, we refer to the seminal work of Richard Ruiz (1984) that proposed three fundamental orientations toward language diversity: *language-as-a-problem*, *language-as-a-right*, and *language-as-a-resource*. According to the language-as-a-problem paradigm, linguistic diversity is a problem that needs to be solved. Similarly, language-as-a-right advocates also commonly view non-English language groups as a problem with regard to school achievement, but this orientation insists that the solutions should not involve discrimination against such students and their communities. For the language-as-a-resource orientation, linguistic diversity is a national resource that should be developed both within the schools and the larger society. It is within this third context of language as a resource that this volume has

⁵ They also found that among the native-born in the U.S., proficiency in an immigrant language in addition to English was associated with lower earnings. However, this is contradicted the findings of Boswell (2000) in several major U.S. cities that, among Hispanics, bilingualism in Spanish was associated with higher earnings than English monolingualism.

been conceived⁶. Promoting linguistic diversity and helping immigrants learn English are not contradictory goals. The authors in this book agree that immigrants to the U.S. should learn English and should learn it well. However, this goal should not require the abandonment of the heritage language; the loss of heritage languages often has not only personal and familial repercussions, but also represents a loss to the nation as a whole. Language learning for the immigrant should not have to be a zero-sum game, substituting English for one's native language.

Aren't our current levels of linguistic diversity a recent problem due to today's high immigration rate?

Arguments about the supposedly unprecedented proportion of immigrants and the recency of linguistic diversity are unsustainable when we examine the historical facts. The geographical area that is today the U.S. has always been ethnolinguistically diverse. In addition to the English, early settlers included French, German, and Spanish-speaking populations, not to mention the 300-plus Native American languages that were spoken here. In colonial Pennsylvania, German-speaking immigrants made up about one third of the population and printed newspapers in German, conducted their businesses in German, educated their children in German, and drew up legal contracts in German. In fact, the U.S. Articles of Confederation were printed in English and German. Under the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the U.S. acquired a territory with a French-speaking majority; Louisiana's governor from 1816-1820, Jacques

⁶ We accept Ruiz's framework, although Urcioli (2001) argues that "there is a false dichotomy between 'diversity-as-a-wonderful-garden' and 'diversity-as-polluting-and-dangerous.' It is false because it positions language as a 'thing' in a neat package that maps neatly onto ethnic, regional, racial, or national types of people." These debates have such teeth because "people can't leave them alone: they feel compelled to take and defend positions because these are not debates about language so much as they are about being 'American.' Hence the moral edge" (2001:191).

Villéré, spoke no English when he was elected, and Louisiana's Constitution of 1845 established that the state legislature would conduct business in both French and English. Residents of California have been conducting their lives in Spanish since the Spaniards' arrival in 1542 (not to mention the non-Europeans already living there, who had their own languages). The first Anglo settler arrived some 275 years later, in about 1820 – thus the Southwest is full of descendents of Spanish-speakers who never immigrated here, but rather whose homelands were annexed by the U.S. The 1849 constitution of California recognized language rights of Spanish speakers by stating that all laws, decrees, and regulations be published in English and Spanish. In 1880, press publications in German, Yiddish, Spanish, Czech, Polish and Italian languages were very common. Colorado's 1876 constitution was printed in English, Spanish and French, and German maintained such a strong presence that many schoolchildren of German descent received a large portion of their primary education in German up until World War I (Schiffman 1996).

Technically, all languages besides those spoken by indigenous Native Americans are in fact historically immigrant languages. In spite of our undeniable history of linguistic diversity, immigration figures prominently in today's discussions about language diversity. This is despite the fact that the proportion of immigrants in the nation today is actually smaller than in the past. In 2006, the foreign born population was estimated at 37.9 million people, or 12.5 percent of the population (Camarota 2007), which is actually a slightly smaller percentage than the almost 15 percent in 1890 and in 1910, as shown in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3, Proportion of foreign-born population in the U.S.

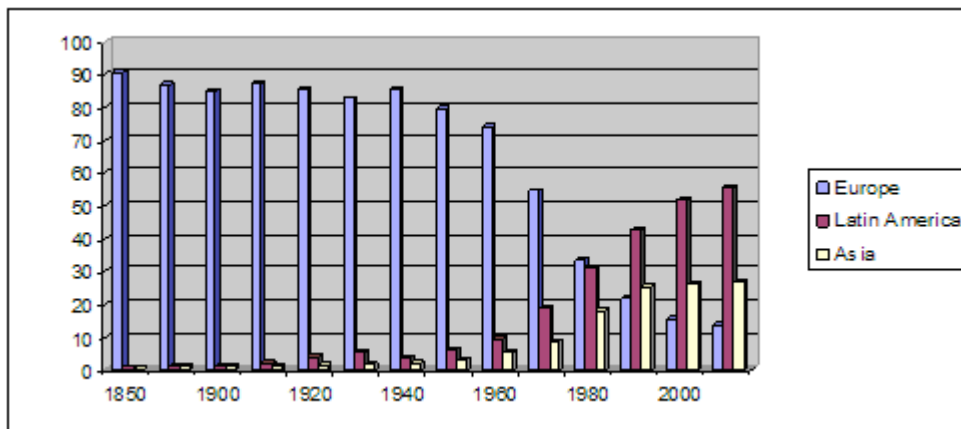
Year	% foreign born	# foreign born, millions	% change
1850	10.0	2.2	n/a
1890	14.8	9.2	318%
1900	13.7	10.4	13%
1910	14.7	13.5	30%
1920	13.2	13.9	3%
1930	11.6	14.2	2%
1940	8.8	11.6	-18%
1950	6.9	10.4	-10%
1960	5.3	9.7	-7%
1970	4.7	9.6	-1%
1980	6.2	14.1	47%
1990	7.9	19.8	40%
2000	11.1	31.1	57%
2005	12.4	35.6	15%

However, it is also true that the foreign-born population dropped to between 5 percent and 9 percent during the sixty years between 1940 and 2000. Thus, the jump to 12.4 percent in 2005 is notable. In addition, the overall U.S. population is larger with each Census, so there are larger *numbers* of foreign-born people living today in the U.S. than ever in its history. The 14.7 percent foreign born population in 1910 consisted of 13.5 million people, while the 12.4 percent in 2005 consisted of almost 36 million – almost triple the number of foreign-born people since 1910. These larger numbers and consistent growth also lead to very dense concentration of foreign-born residents in some areas. For example, in 2000 approximately seven in ten people in Miami and Hialeah, Florida, were foreign-born. The largest foreign born populations in U.S. cities in 2000 were in New York (2.9 million), Los Angeles (1.5 million), Chicago (629,000) and Houston (516,000), and more than half of all non-English speakers lived in three states – California, New York, and Texas – and were Spanish speakers. Yet all regions of the country

experienced increases in the foreign-born population, by nearly 90 percent in the South, 65 percent in the Midwest, 50 percent in the West and nearly 40 percent in the Northeast.

The origins of today's immigrants have changed as well. Whereas Europeans formed the bulk of immigrants in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is now groups from Latin America and Asia that are the most numerous among the U.S. foreign born (see Figure 1.1).

FIGURE 1.1, Origins of U.S. foreign-born population



According to the 2000 Census, just 14 percent of today's immigrants to the U.S. came from Europe, while 26 percent came from Asia and 55 percent from Latin American. Returning to the list in Table 1.1 of the top twelve non-English languages spoken in the U.S., many people are surprised at the continuing presence of French, German, and Italian, given that these groups have not seen large waves of new arrivals in the last eighty years. Given current immigration trends, it is likely that Asian languages such as Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Korean will soon displace these three European-origin languages on the list. Particularly notable is that the Census-counted Russian-speaking population grew by 191 percent and the Vietnamese-speaking

population grew by almost 100 percent in the years between 1990-2000, while Chinese and Korean grew by approximately 50 percent.

An important influence on today's composition of immigrants was the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. Influenced by the Civil Rights movement, the U.S. passed this act abolishing the national-origin quotas that had been in place in the country since 1924. However, some argue that this law has not responded adequately to the ever-changing patterns of immigration. While doing away with racial preferences in immigration by treating all countries equally, regardless of population or immigrant desire to come to the United States, its critics argue that the law ultimately disadvantages many potential immigrants in its preference for skilled workers.

Thus far, we have seen that language diversity has always been present in the U.S., and that the foreign-born population is in fact at a proportionally lower concentration than in the past, although numerically larger and from different areas of the world than before. Yet some concerns about immigration that were voiced in the past are repeating themselves today. When immigration peaked during the Industrial Revolution, English-speaking U.S. residents resented what they perceived as a lack of willingness on the part of immigrants to assimilate and learn English. For example, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, nativist Americans criticized Italian immigrants' lack of ability (or willingness, as some accused) to master English. Some even suggested that the Italians, who tended to congregate in their own neighborhoods, were fundamentally different from previous immigrant groups, and racist sentiments emerged in public discourse that Mediterranean groups were morally inferior to the races of Northern Europe. But as the Italian immigrants had children and grandchildren, just the opposite was true of their language use: They not only learned English, they largely forgot Italian. As we have

seen, the same is true of today's immigrants, yet the same accusations of lack of assimilation are heard against them.

Doesn't language diversity threaten our national unity and lead to political strife?

As of 2000, approximately 330 different languages are spoken in U.S homes (Census 2000)⁷. In fact, the 2000 Census itself was printed in six languages: English, Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Tagalog. However, as we have already addressed, there is no mistaking the fact that English is being learned by speakers of LOTEs. More importantly, there is evidence to suggest that language diversity does not lead to political problems. Fishman (1991a) conducted an analysis of 238 variables in 170 different nation-states, and found that linguistic heterogeneity could not predict either civil strife or gross national product. Civil strife was related to long- and short-term deprivation and coercive power relationships, while gross national product was connected to issues of modernization and industrialization. Thus, language diversity was not causally related to either civil strife or gross national product; it is not the case that a multilingual society necessarily results in a divided society.

A previous section in this chapter described how quickly immigrants and their descendents are learning English. Yet for some monolingual English-speaking Americans, knowing English is not sufficient to be considered a true American. One must completely abandon the language of their country of origin, as a rite of passage or a cost of entry, as if retaining a heritage language reflected divided loyalties. According to Schiffman (2008), the connection between language and citizenship took more than a century to evolve in the U.S, and no idea that any particular language was necessary for being or becoming a citizen existed in the

⁷ Of these, 176 are indigenous Native American languages.

early years of the nation. Kloss (1998) notes that in the 1800s, nativism began primarily as an issue of schooling, as mainstream Americans resented paying taxes to support schools run by Catholics or in languages other than English. Public schools began appearing in the 1830s and took upon themselves the goal of “Americanizing” the children of immigrants. In order to become “good citizens”, it was reasoned, they needed to know English. Thus, joining of these two issues, citizenship and language, was accomplished (Schiffman 1998).

A speech given by Theodore Roosevelt in 1918 clearly demonstrates the national monolingual ideology of the early twentieth century:

We have room for but one language here and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, and American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding house; and we have room for but one soul [sic] loyalty, and that is loyalty to the American people.

Roosevelt’s provocative term *polyglot boarding house* evokes a sense of transience and poverty; a multilingual nation to him represented a type of Babel-esque slum. He also stated that “[t]here is no such thing as a hyphenated American who is a good American. The only man who is a good American is the man who is an American and nothing else.” Almost a century later, this ideology regarding language is still strongly present in many sectors of the country. As Schmidt (2000) argues, the nation’s recent large-scale immigration coupled with persisting ethnolinguistic stratification and inequality has fueled recent U.S. language policy conflicts. Increased immigration has heightened Anglo-American anxieties that English is threatened, along with national unity and identity. A clear example is the growth of lobby groups such as U.S. English, which currently has almost two million members. Shifts in educational terminology reflect this trend as well. As part of 2002’s No Child Left Behind, the *Bilingual*

Education Act was retitled the *English Language Acquisition Act*, and the *Federal Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs* (OBEMLA) was renamed the *Office of English Language Acquisition*. “Bilingual” has become almost a dirty word in educational circles, with more and more pressure to shift children to all-English classrooms as soon as possible. California, Arizona, and Massachusetts have eliminated bilingual education in favor of “sheltered English immersion” (see Freeman and Freeman 1998 and Adams 2006 for greater details on structured English immersion), although a similar proposition failed in Colorado.

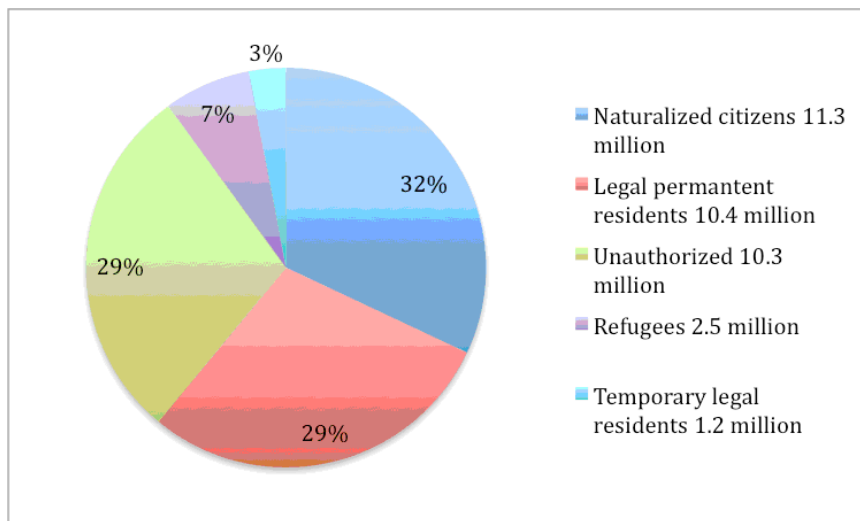
Yet even while the United States Department of Education seems to be adopting an increasingly monolingual and monocultural policy, other Cabinet-level entities – including, almost ironically, the Department of Defense – has a publicly announced and promoted the “Defense Language Transformation Roadmap” (U.S. Dept. of Defense 2005), calling for a policy to “identify and recognize the value of personnel achieving and maintaining the highest levels of proficiency in critical languages by paying a substantially enhanced Foreign Language Proficiency Pay (FLPP).” Clearly at least some elements within the federal government view language diversity as essential to national interests.

We should also note that today’s overall percentage of foreign-born residents who have become naturalized U.S. citizens is the highest level in a quarter of a century and 14 percentage points higher than in 1990 (Passel 2007)⁸. This suggests that many immigrants are interested in becoming part of the political process and in being productive members of their community. The legal status of the nation’s foreign-born population (Figure 1.2) remains fairly evenly divided

⁸ This increase was not due to any significant change in the total number of non-citizen legal permanent residents, which was 11.8 million in 2005 and 11.5 million in 1995. Also, the number of unauthorized immigrants grew from 20 to 31% of the foreign-born between 1995 and 2005, so this ten-year period saw a growth “among both the most and the least rooted of immigrants” (Passel 2007).

between naturalized citizens (11.3 million), legal permanent residents (10.4 million) and unauthorized immigrants (10.3 million). It is often negative attitudes about the unauthorized immigrants that fuels linguistic intolerance towards the other two thirds of foreign-born individuals who are here legally.

FIGURE 1.2, Foreign-born population gaining naturalization



A previous section described the undeniable linguistic assimilation of immigrants, but what about the ethnic identity of immigrants and their descendents? Do they think of themselves as “just Americans,” or do they hold on to national origin self-identifying terms such as “Pakistani”, “Filipino” or “Mexican”? Zhou (2004) claims that today, unlike in the past as embodied in the Roosevelt quote above, “...there is no contradiction between an ethnic identity and an American identity.” That is, the “hyphenated American” (such as “Pakistani-American”) is more common now than in the past. Portes and Rumbaut (1996, 2001) proposed three typologies of the assimilation of the children of immigrants (who are typically referred to as the second generation) which may be helpful in understanding this change. The first model is very

much like the traditional concept of the “melting pot” in which the second generation is expected to blend in completely and become mainstream “Americans” who are monolingual in English. In the second typology, the children of immigrants acculturate not to the white Anglophone mainstream, but to inner-city subcultures. However, they too become monolingual in English. The third typology is called “selective acculturation”. In the process of selective acculturation, ethnic networks and strong communities support the children of immigrants as they learn to deal with prejudice, navigate the education system, and find a place in the labor market. The outcome is upward assimilation, but combined with bilingualism and biculturalism; it allows a fully legitimate place for the heritage language. Portes and Rumbaut (2001: 309) argue that selective acculturation often leads to better psychosocial adjustment and overall achievement among the children of immigrants because it preserves bonds across generations and gives children a firm foundation to support and guide them. Thus, use of hyphenated identity labels may be a positive sign of increasing reliance on selective acculturation strategies by immigrant communities.

The subtitle of this section asked whether linguistic diversity creates conflict and threatens national unity, and the answer provided by the evidence is “no.” What undoubtedly poses a greater threat to national unity and leads to greater conflict among communities is the bullying of immigrants⁹ and language minority groups. Following World War I, the U.S. entered a period of isolationism characterized by “a period of witch-hunting and red-baiting” (Schiffman 2008). The Ku Klux Klan reemerged, not only to terrorize African Americans in the south, but also to intimidate French-speaking Quebecois immigrants in Maine (Vermette 2006). Today we have cases of linguistic repression such as the high school student in Kansas City suspended for speaking Spanish in the hallways (Reid 2005); a teacher in Phoenix who hit children for

⁹ As this chapter has sought to explain, there is a connection between immigration and language diversity. However, this book focuses on language issues and thus does not describe in detail the deplorable problems faced by many immigrants, such as workplace abuse, factory raids, and immigrant-targeted homicides among others.

speaking Spanish in class (Ryman and Madrid 2004); two Vietnamese-Americans chastised for speaking Vietnamese at a graduation ceremony (Pleasant 2008) and employees in New York fired for speaking Spanish on the job or during breaks (Valenti 2003) even though the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission states that mandating that employees speak English on the job constitutes national origin discrimination¹⁰. A model such as selective acculturation would provide a healthier framework for integrating immigrant groups into mainstream activities while simultaneously encouraging ethnolinguistic diversity.

Appreciating advantages: Proponents of linguistic diversity

In spite of having a national linguistic culture that is decidedly monolingual, counterforces have begun to appear in the U.S. that challenge a monolingual ideology¹¹. Some national group, such as the Alliance for the Advancement of Heritage Languages (National Heritage Language Resource Center 2007) as well as city-based efforts like those in San Bernadino, California (Sauerwein 2003) and in Chicago (Multilingual Chicago, n.d.) have declared appreciation of the multilingual character of these cities and seek to promote the learning of English *in addition to* the maintenance of heritage languages by immigrant children. This goal of English acquisition with heritage language maintenance has been referred to as *English Plus*. Crawford (2006: 7) describes English Plus in the following way:

This approach begins with the recognition that, of course, we should pursue the goal of English proficiency for all Americans. But while English is necessary, it is not sufficient in today's world. To prosper economically and to provide security for our people, we need well-developed skills in English, plus other languages. Step one is to conserve and develop, not destroy, the language

¹⁰ The EEOC stipulates that an employer can impose an English-only rule solely when necessary for conducting business.

¹¹ Of related interest are groups that seek to promote linguistic diversity worldwide, such as Enduring Voices (National Geographic 2008) and Living Tongues (2007).

resources we already have. Rather than treating bilingualism as a nuisance or a threat, we should exploit our diversity to enrich the lives of individuals and foster the nation's interests, while encouraging ethnic tolerance and safeguarding civil rights.

As noted by Valdés (forthcoming), “if a society views dual cultural and ethnic membership as positive, and if children are made to feel that there are no insurmountable contradictions in belonging to two groups,” it is more likely that they will develop into bilingual and bicultural individuals.

While these groups are primarily concerned with English acquisition and heritage language maintenance among immigrant families, other groups work to have mainstream English-speaking children study other languages. U.S. high schools, for example, have long offered foreign language classes. According to Rhodes and Branaman (1999), almost 90 percent of U.S. high schools offer foreign languages, although the National Center for Education Statistics (2002a) reports that slightly less than 50 percent of all students in grades nine through twelve were enrolled in foreign languages in 2000 (yet this did represent an increase of almost 40 percent from 1990). Spanish had the highest enrollment (4,058,000 students) followed by French (1,075,000), German (283,000), Italian (64,000), Japanese (51,000), and Russian (11,000). The greatest increase in student enrollment was in Japanese, which jumped 102.5 percent during the ten-year period.

As for U.S. colleges and universities, Table 1.4 displays the top twelve non-English languages spoken in the U.S. (repeated from Table 1.1) and the number of students studying these languages at U.S. colleges and universities in 2002 and in 2006. Students of these twelve languages accounted for 84 percent of all college foreign language enrollments in 2006. As in the high schools, Spanish is the most widely studied foreign language in U.S. postsecondary

institutions, accounting for 52 percent of all enrollments. The next most numerous are French (13% of enrollments), German (6%) and Italian (5%). However, the greatest growth in the number of students was in Arabic, which grew by an astounding 127%, followed by Chinese (51% growth), Tagalog (37%) and Korean (37%). It is likely that the increase in enrollments in these four languages is due in large part to an increase in the population of heritage speakers of these languages. As mentioned earlier, the field of foreign language education must continue to develop appropriate materials and methodologies for heritage-speaking students.

Although the languages being studied in U.S. postsecondary institutions reflect certain broad population growth patterns in the nation, foreign language study in the U.S. is still quite low. The 2006 rate of postsecondary language study was 8.6 language course enrollments per 100 total student enrollments, which is almost half of the 1965 rate of 16.5 language course enrollments per 100 total student enrollments. It is even less common to find foreign language programs where they potentially could do the most good: elementary schools. Schiffman (2008), in a fascinating account of language history in the U.S., notes that, at the close of World War I in 1917, foreign languages were “chased from the elementary schools in state after state, and relegated to high-school instruction only”. Since at that time only 5 percent of the U.S. population attended high school, foreign language instruction was essentially abolished for 95 percent of the population, under “the covert assumption... that ‘foreign’ language was not a necessary part of any child's education, but useful only for adults, especially for those college-bound”.

TABLE 1.4, Foreign language enrollments

Language	% of total language enrollment		% of total language enrollment		% change, 2002-2006
	2002	2006	2002	2006	
1. Spanish	746,267	53.4	822,985	52.2	10
2. Chinese	34,153	2.4	51,582	3.3	51
3. Tagalog	1142	0.1	1569	0.1	37
4. French	201,979	14.5	206,426	13.1	2
5. Vietnamese	2236	0.2	2,485	0.2	11
6. German	91,100	6.5	94,264	6.0	3
7. Korean	5,211	0.4	7,145	0.5	37
8. Russian	23,921	1.7	24,845	1.6	4
9. Italian	63,899	4.6	78,368	5.0	23
10. Arabic	10,584	0.8	23,974	1.5	127
11. Portuguese	8,385	0.6	10,267	0.7	22
12. Polish	1053	0.1	1,379	0.1	31
TOTAL	1,183,547	85.3	1,317,028	84.3	133,481

Eighty years later, in 1997, the Center for Applied Linguistics found that 31 percent of elementary schools¹² surveyed offered foreign language programs, which was up from 22 percent in 1987. However, preliminary findings from their 2007-2008 survey reveal a drop from 31 percent to 25 percent of elementary schools teaching foreign language. Some schools cited reasons for the decline, including budget cuts, a shortage of teachers, and constraints from No Child Left Behind's emphasis on math and reading (Center for Applied Linguistics 2008). Although at least eight states (including Arizona, Arkansas, Louisiana, Montana, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Wyoming) have enacted mandates for teaching non-English languages at the elementary school level, these mandates are unfunded everywhere except

¹² More specifically, 24% of public elementary schools and 53% of private elementary schools offered foreign languages. It is notable that twice as many private schools offer foreign languages, reflecting the notion of foreign language study as more of an elitist pursuit.

Louisiana and Wyoming. That is, even states with laws requiring that foreign languages be taught in the elementary schools often lack the funds to comply with these laws. In other areas, educators have worked without a state mandate to try to promote elementary school foreign language offerings.

These findings are particularly disheartening because an earlier start in language study usually leads to higher levels of proficiency. The advantages of high levels of multilingualism are multiple, both for individuals and societies. At the individual level, in addition to the obvious practical benefit of speaking two or more languages, multilingualism may provide cognitive advantages. In a Tel Aviv University study, Kavé et al. (2008) found that multilingual elders performed significantly better on cognitive-screening measures than comparable monlingual elders, indicating that multilingualism may slow the mental aging process. Similarly, Bialystok, Craik, and Freedman (2007) found that, among patients with dementia, bilinguals showed symptoms an average of four years later than monolinguals, suggesting that knowing more than one language delays the onset of dementia. Bilingualism may have positive effects on children's development as well (see Hakuta 1989 for an overview), especially in the case of nonverbal assessments of intelligence (Hakuta 1987), and there is evidence that the literacy skills developed in the heritage language can transfer to the second language, aiding the development of literacy in English (Roberts 1994; Bialystok, Luk, and Kwan 2005), though the extent of literacy transfer depends on the researcher's definition of literacy and the similarity between the languages and writing systems involved. In addition to the cognitive and practical advantages to individuals, multilingualism benefits society as a whole. Beyond the economic and national security benefits of a multilingual population explored above, Tse (2001a) makes clear three main advantages: "the nation benefits by having citizens who are linguistically and

culturally savvy to advance international business, the nation benefits politically by possessing a rich diplomatic and national security corps, and the country gains educationally by stemming the shortage of foreign-language teachers, especially in the less commonly taught languages” (Tse 2001a: 49-51).

Aims and organization of this book

The present book is aligned with the counterforce to U.S. monolingual hegemony. With a foregrounding in immigration trends (this introductory chapter) and language contact phenomena (Chapter 2), it seeks to contribute to the appreciation and promotion of linguistic diversity in the U.S. by profiling the twelve most commonly spoken non-English languages in the United States. A complete survey of United States languages also requires a discussion of indigenous languages that were here before the arrival of Europeans, even though they do not form one language group and are not on the top twelve list. One of the long-standing issues in an analysis of heritage languages in America, in fact, is the distinction between immigrant heritage languages – to which we have devoted eleven individual chapters – and the indigenous heritage languages – at least 175 in number by our author Terri McCarty’s calculations, but to which we have devoted a single chapter. This is not to minimize the value in analyzing Native American languages on a case-by-case basis, but merely reflective of the limitations of this volume. There is an unfortunate commonality among the vast majority of Native American languages that provides additional justification in treating them in the aggregate; namely, that for the vast majority of them, the more pressing question is not how can these languages be better preserved, but rather, whether these language can be kept from dying out altogether. It remains in our view

the most practical approach, and we have entrusted someone who is eminently well-qualified to write this chapter.

Therefore, a total of thirteen languages or language groups are profiled in this collection. This introductory chapter has outlined general issues related to languages other than English in the history of the United States. Chapter 2, authored by one of the world's leading experts on bilingualism, Susanne Romaine, will explore issues of languages in contact that are prevalent not only in the U.S., but wherever there are multiple languages spoken by a cohesive population. The remaining thirteen chapters will include the special chapter on Native American languages followed by each of the top twelve languages displayed in Table 1.1, in an attempt to discover patterns of language loss as well as factors that contribute to maintenance of ethnolinguistic diversity. The book's concluding chapter, written by language policy expert Terry Wiley, offers an overview of U.S. policies toward language and suggested directions for the future.

According to Veltman (2000), no immigrant group, with the possible exceptions of the very isolated communities of the Amish or Hassidic Jews, has been able to preserve its minority language longer than two or three generations. That is, contrary to the fears of Huntington (2004) or groups such as U.S. English, there is no evidence that any minority language group is resisting English. In spite of the undeniable existence of linguistic assimilation in the U.S., we might view such assimilation as existing on a continuum, with absolute heritage language loss and English monolingualism on one end, and fluent bilingualism on the other. The objective of this book is to challenge the need for absolute ethnolinguistic assimilation and argue for a degree of bilingualism, by presenting case studies of the nation's most commonly spoken non-English languages with an eye to assessing the factors that both support and challenge their vitality and longevity. According to Portes and Schauffler (1996: 25), it is "the character of the immigrant

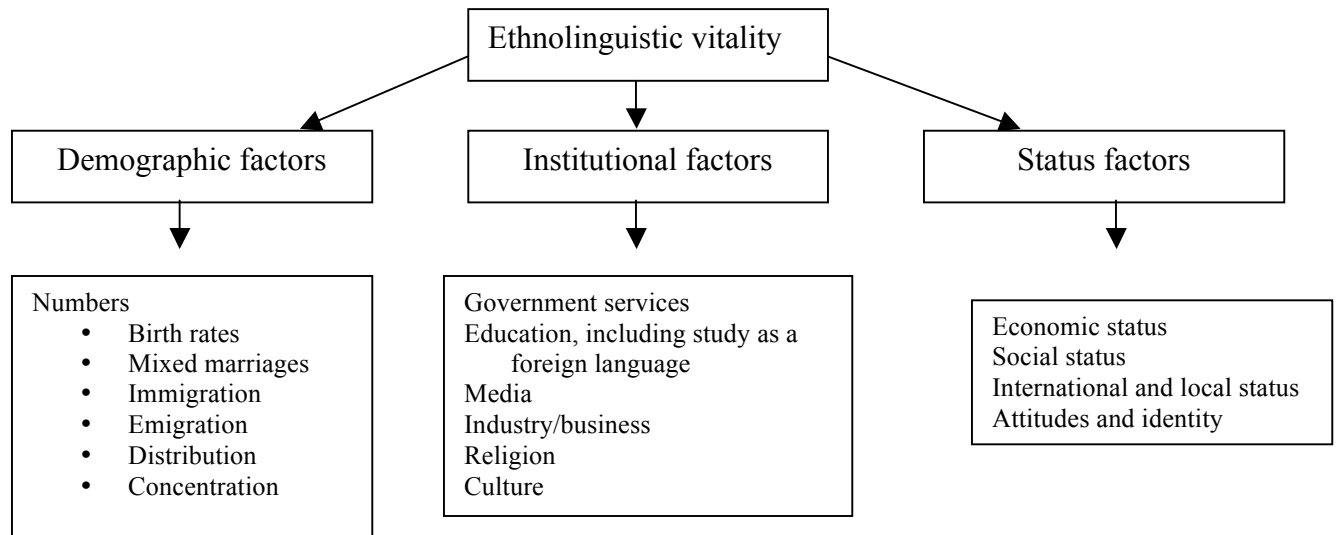
community – its internal diversity, history, and cohesiveness – that seems to hold the key to whether second generation children successfully combine two languages.” Each of these chapters, then, seeks to explore the internal diversity, history, cohesiveness, and other factors that contribute to the intergenerational transmission of non-English languages in the U.S.

In putting together their chapters, the authors evidence what Romaine (1996: 283) terms “certain social and political assumptions about the value of cultural pluralism and the negative aspects of forced assimilation.” Heeding the warning of Veltman (2000: 65), our intent is not to compare rates of language shift across language groups, which may lead to the erroneous conclusion that some groups maintain their mother tongue more than others. It is more appropriate and objective to examine each language group in its own unique sociolinguistic and cultural context with its own distinctive features.

Thus, this book examines the ways in which groups have assimilated linguistically and the ways in which they have been able to maintain their ethnic languages, using as a starting point the model of variables presented by Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977), shown in Figure 1.3. Other factors not contained in this model can also affect the maintenance of a minority language, including the number of speakers in a person’s social network (Wei et al. 1992), the degree of contact that takes place between second and third generation heritage language speakers and new monolingual immigrants from the country of origin, and periods of time spent in the country of origin. All chapters present historical and demographic details about each language group, followed by an exploration of the presence of the language in the U.S. through arenas such as the media, government, business, and education. Education is considered a particularly important realm for the possible maintenance of languages other than English, so this section is often longer than the others. Each chapter concludes by arguing what the current constellation of

variables suggests for the longevity of the language. However, we must recall that the current state of knowledge does not permit definitive conclusions regarding the relative importance of each factor or any combination of factors contributing to language maintenance or shift.

FIGURE 1.3, Factors affecting ethnolinguistic vitality (Giles, Bourhis and Taylor 1977)



To conclude this introduction, there are two basic assumptions driving this collection. The first assumption is that linguistic diversity is a resource, not a problem. As discussed by Brecht and Ingold (2002), the U.S. has “an unprecedented need for individuals with highly developed language competencies not only in English, our societal language, but also in many other languages.” In the five years since this assessment was made, a wide range of initiatives and proposals have reflected the heightened recognition by leadership within the federal government to identify and strengthen those resources – to name but two, the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap (U.S. Dept. of Defense 2005) and the National Security Language Initiative (U.S. State Dept. 2006). More importantly, this recognition has moved beyond defense

and security motivations, and has also expanded below the federal level of support. For example, late in 2007, three states – Ohio, Oregon, and Texas – were selected for significant financial support by the United States Departments of Defense, Commerce and Labor to help refine the nation's policy on foreign language proficiency.

Before presenting the second assumption of this volume, an important point about education is appropriate. It is ironic what we invest such time and resources in foreign language instruction – over 1.5 million enrollments in colleges and universities alone according to 2006 survey data by the Modern Language Association – yet we squander the heritage language resources we have right here. Heritage language learners, as defined earlier, are raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken and understand the minority language to some degree. By way of comparison, consider the amount of time it takes for the true foreign or second language learner to reach high levels of proficiency. Data compiled over decades by the Foreign Service Institute reveal that the average learner needs between 2,400 and 2,760 hours to reach a level of working professional proficiency in Chinese. Translated into classroom seat time, this is between 80 and 92 weeks of 30 contact hours per week (McGinnis 1994). Taken together with the sociocultural knowledge that only a heritage speaker will have, it seems highly economical to tap into our national heritage language pipeline.

In fact, sections of the U.S. government have increasingly come to recognize the importance of identifying and encouraging the maintenance and enhancement of these national linguistic resources. In May 2007, General Dynamics Information Technology was awarded a contract by the U.S. Department of Defense National Security Education Program to develop a national volunteer civilian National Language Service Corps. Members of that Corps would be available for federal activation during times of international crisis, national emergency, or to

fulfill other national needs. The presumption is that for such a program to be worth the money invested in it, a significant number of diverse heritage language speakers need to be not only identified, but also encouraged to retain their heritage languages. In this vein, several states including California, Connecticut, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Virginia have begun offering students foreign language or general credit for their studies at a heritage language school (ACTFL 2008).

Finally, the second assumption of the present volume is that people have a right to maintain their ethnic language and not compromise their U.S. citizenship or their perceived “Americanness.” The outright mandate to abandon a heritage language is in violation of what the United Nations considers a basic human right (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 1992¹³), and although the U.S. does not outlaw heritage languages, pressure to refrain from using non-English languages can be strong. The news events cited earlier – of the students hit or expelled, and the employees fired – provide examples of linguistic intolerance. Clearly the sentiments expressed by the U.S. government in the 1990 Native American Languages Act (Table 1.5) have not trickled down to many educators, employers, and the population at large.

TABLE 1.5, 1990 Native American Languages Act

* There is convincing evidence that student achievement and performance, community and school pride, and educational opportunity is clearly and directly tied to respect for, and support of, the first language of the child or student;

* It is clearly in the interests of the United States, individual States, and territories to encourage the full academic and human potential achievements of all students and citizens and to take step to realize these ends;

¹³ Article 2 states thus: “Persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities... have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination.”

* Languages are the means of communication for the full range of human experiences and are critical to the survival of cultural and political integrity of any people; and

* Language provides a direct and powerful means of promoting international communication by people who share languages

Conflicts over language may in fact be mostly symbolic, hiding other fundamental cleavages that are developing in the U.S. McKay and Wong (2000: 45) argue that the debate over bilingual education is in part a battle over the demographic composition of the nation: One side wants to control borders and assimilate immigrant children, while the other accepts that diversity is here to stay, showing a reflection of the rest of the world, and should be a hallmark of the nation's policy and planning. As mentioned earlier, Fishman (1991a) noted that majority-minority relations of exploitation and competition, not language differences, are the source of ethnic tensions. This was echoed by Lopez (1991: 133), who posits that much of the controversy over language in the U.S. has obscured (or perhaps served as a proxy for) racial hostility and conflict. Although the fixation over language policy as a means to increasing equity and opportunities for minorities may lead to the neglect of other more fundamental problems, those involved in language education see an opportunity to promote linguistic pluralism, particularly when faced with an ever growing population of heritage language learners.

It is our hope that this collection promotes critical thought and discussion among language educators, demographers, sociologists, economists, and others interested in the language diversity we currently enjoy in this nation, and the ways in which we can preserve and increase this diversity while at the same time promoting English proficiency and positive intergroup relationships. Given that language is often closely aligned with differences in

socioeconomic level, gender, legal status, ethnicity, and other factors¹⁴, it is naïve to assume that a linguistic utopia is possible. However, the authors in this volume seek to foster appreciation of linguistic and cultural difference as part of the national concept of what it means to be American – that is, language diversity as both a right and a resource.

Discussion questions

1. Make a list of the myths regarding LOTE^s debunked in this chapter. Can you think of other common beliefs about non-English languages in the U.S.? Which do you think are true and which are false? Next, consider Ruiz's (1984) typology of orientations toward language diversity (*language-as-a-problem*, *language-as-a-right*, and *language-as-a-resource*). Do these myths share a common orientation? What else do they have in common?
2. Choose a country other than the U.S., and compare its language policy and linguistic diversity with those of the U.S. How are they similar or different?

¹⁴ For example, much has been written about African American Vernacular English (e.g., Rickford 1999, Smitherman 1977, Wolfram 1999, and others), which unfortunately falls outside the scope of this volume.