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ISSN2372-840X(online)

002-06/2014EN

An Overview of Spanish Teaching in U.S. Schools: National Survey Results

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Topic: Spanish Teaching in U.S. Schools

Abstract: The role of Spanish in U.S. Schools is undisputed. However the numbers of programs, as well as the opportunities for students to reach high levels of proficiency in Spanish or other languages, are inadequate.

Key words: Spanish Language, Foreign Languages, Teaching, School, Survey

I. Background

The position of the Spanish language in the world today remains strong. Spanish is the second most commonly spoken language around the world, after Chinese (Lewis, Simons & Fennig, 2013). In the United States, after English, Spanish is

the most common language, spoken by approximately 38 million people (United States Census Bureau, 2012). Not surprisingly, Spanish is also the foreign/world language most often taught in public and private schools in the U.S. Although the selection of languages to be taught in schools sometimes appears to be politically motivated – schools change the languages they offer according to major world events and sociopolitical contexts – Spanish has been the most widely offered foreign/second language in U.S. schools, kindergarten through twelfth grade, for many decades (Draper, 1991). By the 1970s, it became the most frequently studied foreign/second language in U.S. colleges and universities, when Spanish overtook French (Modern Language Association, 2013).

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of Spanish teaching in elementary and secondary schools in the United States, showing trends in languages taught across three time points – 1987, 1997, and 2008 – and providing comparisons with other languages. The information is based on the most recent data collected for a national survey of foreign language teaching in elementary and secondary schools conducted every decade by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2010). The report includes an overview of the survey methodology and details on the teaching of all languages in schools; how Spanish teaching compares with other languages over time; types of language classes at elementary and secondary school levels; details of a standardized Spanish curriculum and assessment program – the Spanish Advanced Placement (AP) program; and Spanish classes offered outside of regular school programs, including heritage/community language programs and private language school programs. The conclusion offers recommendations to invigorate language teaching in the U.S., with Spanish leading the way as the most commonly taught language.

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II. Methodology

Two questionnaires were developed for CAL's national language survey of elementary and secondary schools, with variations in item wording that reflected the two different levels of instruction. Overall, survey items were worded similarly to those of two previous surveys to allow for comparison (Rhodes & Branaman, 1999; Rhodes & Oxford, 1988). The surveyed schools were selected through a stratified random sample of public and private elementary and secondary schools in the United States. Data were collected during the 2007-2008 school year. Surveys were sent to the principals of 3,561 elementary schools, including 2,225 public and 1,336 private schools. The secondary school survey was sent to foreign language department chairs of 1,554 secondary schools, including 777 public and 777 private schools. The final response rate was 72% of sampled schools. During data analysis, in addition to examining overall results for 2008 survey items and comparing subgroups (e.g., by school size, region, socioeconomic status), data from the 1997 and 2008 surveys were analyzed for statistically significant increases or decreases for comparable items. (See Appendix A for details of the methodology.) For this report, selected data points were also compared with data from the first (1987) survey administration.

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III. Foreign Language Instruction in U.S. Schools

Language in Schools. The overall amount of language instruction in U.S. schools has fluctuated over the twenty-year period for which data was gathered. In 1987, less than a quarter of all elementary schools offered foreign language instruction (in any language). By 1997, this number had increased to almost one third of all elementary schools. However, by 2008, this upward trend had reversed back to 1987 levels, with about one quarter of schools teaching foreign languages (Figure 1).

Similarly, foreign language instruction decreased in middle schools, from more than 70% of all middle schools in 1987 and 1997, to fewer than 60% in 2008. At the high school level, however, foreign language instruction remained steady with more than 90% of all high schools offering foreign languages at each time point.

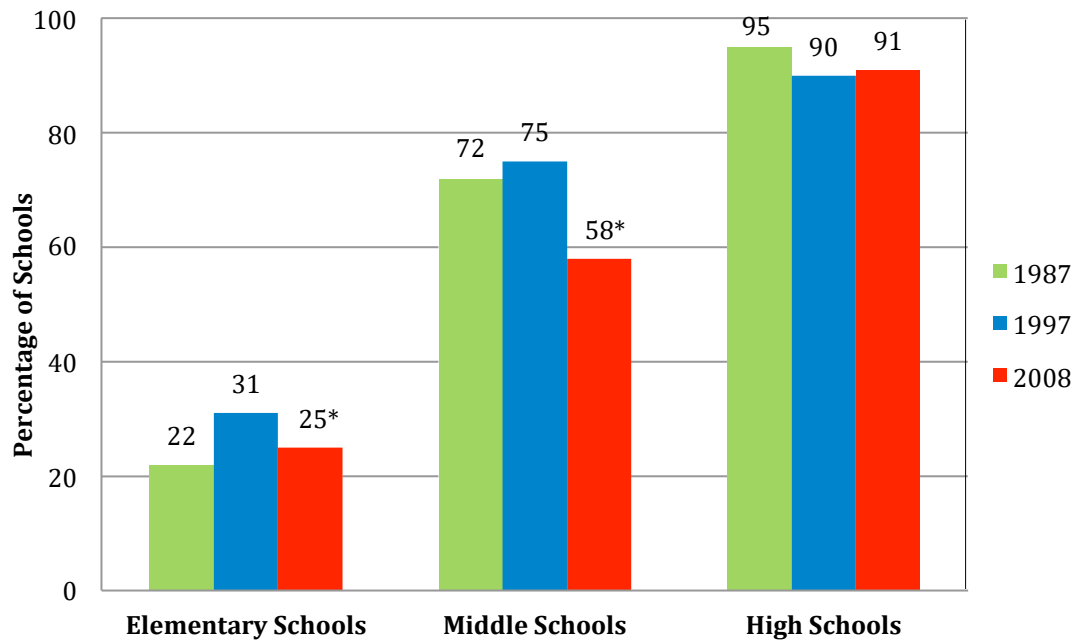


Figure 1. Schools Teaching Foreign Languages (by School Level) (1987, 1997, 2008).

* Denotes statistically significant decrease from 1997 to 2008.

A more detailed analysis shows that the overall decline in elementary school language instruction was primarily because fewer public elementary schools offered foreign languages in 1997 than in 2008, decreasing from about 24% to only 15%. In contrast, private elementary schools continued to offer foreign languages at more than 50% of all schools (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2010, p. 21). Whether schools offered foreign languages varied according to their location, size, the socioeconomic status (SES) of the students, and the geographic region. Overall, urban and suburban schools, larger middle and high schools, and elementary and middle schools with a higher SES were more likely to offer foreign

languages. At the elementary school level, school size was not a factor, while SES was not a factor at the high school level. Although language instruction decreased in all five geographical regions by 2008, schools in the Northeast (and the Southern region for elementary schools only) were still more likely to offer languages than in any of the other regions (for details, see Rhodes & Pufahl, 2010, pp. 21f.; see Appendix B for the classification of states by region used in the analysis).

Student Enrollment in Foreign Languages. According to the CAL survey estimates, about 4.2 million of the 27.5 million elementary school students in the United States (15%) were enrolled in foreign languages in 2008. Specifically, while the number of private elementary school students enrolled in language classes increased from 1.5 million to almost 2 million from 1997 to 2008, the number of public elementary school students studying foreign languages declined from 2.5 million to 2.2 million (see Rhodes & Pufahl, 2010, p.28, for details on how estimates were calculated).

At the secondary school level, an estimated 10.5 million students of the 25.7 million students nationwide (41%) were enrolled in language classes in 2008, a decrease from the nearly 12 million students (52%) enrolled in 1997. Of the students enrolled in foreign language classes in 2008, 2.3 million attended middle or junior high schools, 6.7 million attended high schools, and 1.5 million attended combined middle/high schools. However, because many of the surveyed schools did not provide detailed enrollment data, estimates are subject to biases of unknown magnitude.

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IV. Spanish Instruction in U.S. Schools

Spanish is by far the most commonly taught language in schools and has increased in popularity over the past 20 years. In 2008, 88% of the elementary schools with foreign language programs taught Spanish, compared to 79% in

1997, and 68% in 1987 (Figure 2). At the same time, French and German decreased. In secondary schools, 93% of schools with language programs offered Spanish, unchanged from 1997 but an increase from 86% in 1987 (Figure 3). As in the elementary schools, both French and German instruction in secondary schools decreased during this time period.

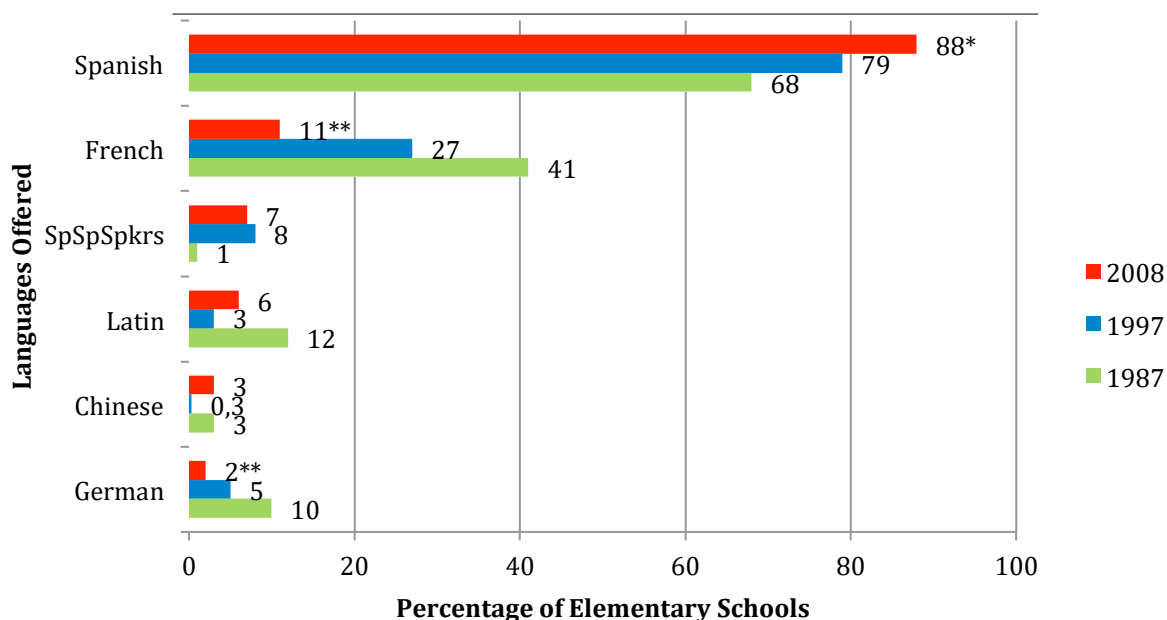


Figure 2. Languages Offered by Elementary Schools with Foreign Language Programs (1987, 1997, 2008).

Note. SpSpSpkrs = Spanish for Spanish speakers. Other languages, including American Sign Language, Italian, Japanese, Russian, etc., accounted for less than 3% at all three points in time (except Hebrew in 1987 at 6%).

*Indicates a statistically significant increase from 1997 to 2008.

**Indicates a statistically significant decrease from 1997 to 2008.

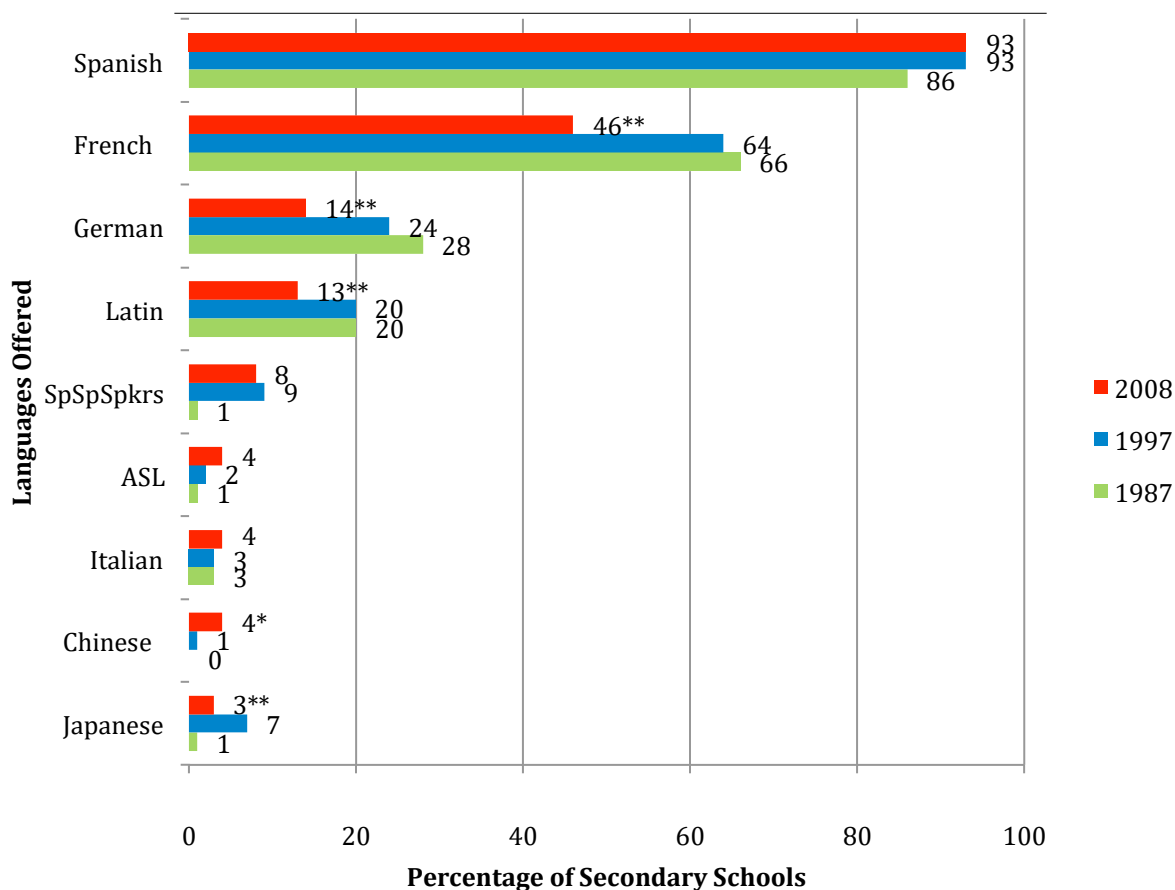


Figure 3. Languages Offered by Secondary Schools with Foreign Language Programs (1987, 1997, 2008).

Note. SpSpSpkrs = Spanish for Spanish speakers; ASL = American Sign Language. Other languages, including Russian, Arabic, Hebrew, etc., accounted for less than 3% at all three points in time.

*Indicates a statistically significant increase from 1997 to 2008.

**Indicates a statistically significant decrease from 1997 to 2008.

However, because overall fewer public elementary and middle schools offered foreign language instruction in 2008 than in 1997, the percentage of public schools that teach Spanish also decreased. Thus, in 1997, 19% of all public elementary schools in the United States offered Spanish, compared to only 12% in 2008. Similarly, in 1997, 62% of all U.S. middle schools offered Spanish; in 2008, only 55% did. In contrast, 41% of all private elementary schools nationwide

offered Spanish in 1997, a number that increased to 46% in 2008.

After significantly increasing from 1987 to 1997, *Spanish for Spanish Speakers* course offerings (courses designed for students who are Spanish speakers who come from a Spanish-speaking heritage) remained essentially unchanged in 2008, taught in 7% of all elementary and 8% of secondary schools with foreign language programs. However, Spanish for Spanish Speakers was mostly offered in public schools, by 16% of public elementary schools and 10% of public secondary schools with foreign language programs.

With respect to other languages, Chinese instruction increased significantly from 1997 to 2008, although the total number of schools offering Chinese was still very small (3–4%).¹ Additional languages, including American Sign Language (ASL), Italian, and Japanese were taught at fewer than 4% of all schools with foreign language programs. Latin instruction continues to fluctuate over the years, with 6% of elementary schools and 13% of secondary schools with language programs offering it in 2008.

Spanish was the most commonly taught language in all regions of the United States. In all five geographical regions (see Appendix B), Spanish was taught in at least 80% of all elementary schools that offered foreign languages, with the highest percentage in the Central region (93%) and the lowest in the Pacific Northwest (80%). Spanish for Spanish Speakers was most commonly offered in the Southwest and Pacific Northwest regions (about 15%) (Table 1).

In comparison, at the secondary school level, Spanish was taught in all regions by more than 90% of schools with foreign language programs, with the highest percentage in the Southwest region (95%). Spanish for Spanish Speakers classes, too, were most frequently taught in the Southwest, in almost one out of five secondary schools, while the percentage of schools in all other regions was in the single digits (Table 2). In addition, survey results showed that language classes for native speakers, which were overwhelmingly Spanish, were most likely to be offered in large public high schools, urban public high schools, and in schools with a high percentage of minority and lower SES students.

In contrast, French, the second most commonly taught language nationwide, was most often offered by schools in the Northeast and least often by schools in the Southwest, i.e., 22% vs. 5% of elementary schools and 70% vs. 35% of secondary schools with foreign language programs. The other regions fell in between.

	Northeast		South		Southwest		Central		Pacific Northwest	
	1997 (%)	2008 (%)	1997 (%)	2008 (%)	1997 (%)	2008 (%)	1997 (%)	2008 (%)	1997 (%)	2008 (%)
Spanish	77	88	74	88	95	81	72	93	89	80
French	39	22	35	10	5	5	31	7	6	12
Spanish for Span. Speakers	4	2	9	5	19	15	4	4	15	14
Latin	4	7	6	8	1	4	3	4	0.4	4
Chinese	—	3	—	1	—	5	—	4	—	3
German	1	2	2	2	3	3	10	2	5	1

Table 1. Top Six Languages Taught in Elementary Schools by Region (1997, 2008).

Note. Totals for each region add up to more than 100% because many schools offer more than one language.

— = N was too small to calculate a percentage.

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	Northeast		South		Southwest		Central		Pacific Northwest	
	1997 (%)	2008 (%)	1997 (%)	2008 (%)	1997 (%)	1997 (%)	1997 (%)	2008 (%)	1997 (%)	2008 (%)
Spanish	100	92	89	93	94	95	91	94	95	91
French	93	70	66	40	45	35	59	43	47	36
German	27	13	14	6	29	12	30	22	15	13
Latin	36	22	24	19	12	7	14	9	12	5
Spanish for Span. Speakers	6	7	6	8	20	18	4	3	20	3
Chinese	—	5	—	5	—	5	—	3	—	—

Table 2. Top Six Languages Taught in Secondary Schools by Region (1997, 2008).

Note. Totals for each region add up to more than 100% because many schools offer more than one language.

— = N was too small to calculate a percentage.

V. What Types of Spanish Classes were Offered?²

Elementary schools. At the elementary school level in 2008, 50% of the language programs were categorized as *language focus* (with focus on listening, speaking, reading, and writing); 44% as *exploratory* (aiming to gain general exposure to language and culture, learning basic words and phrases); and 6% as *immersion* (with at least 50% of the school day taught in the foreign language. (See Figure 4; See Appendix C for detailed definitions of program types.)

An important issue to address is the level of Spanish proficiency attained by elementary school students. A consistent finding over all three survey periods was that more than 40% of elementary programs aimed at only introductory exposure to language in an exploratory-type of program. Exploratory programs, by definition, do not provide instruction that will lead to any level of proficiency, yet by 2008 they made up 44% of the elementary programs offered. Only immersion programs (partial, total, and two-way) provide instruction that allows students to attain a high level of proficiency, but they made up only 6% of elementary language programs. With language focus programs, the amount of instructional time varies widely; it is not known what percentage of these programs provide enough instructional time for students to develop proficiency. Survey results showed that the majority of schools offered language instruction for less than 120 minutes per week, with more than one third of those offering instruction for less than 60 minutes per week. The *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners* (Swender & Duncan, 1998) report that student outcomes correlate with time in program and recommend that elementary school students be offered programs that meet “3-5 days per week for no less than 30-40 minutes per class” (p. 482). It is quite evident that a large number of elementary schools in 2008 were not offering enough instruction for students to attain proficiency in Spanish.

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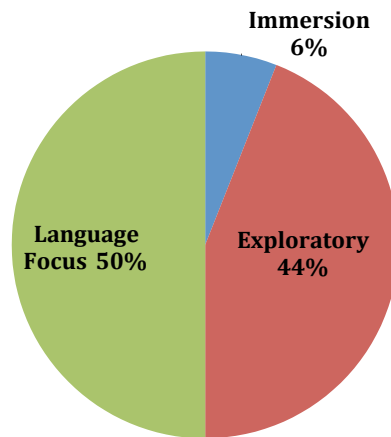


Figure 4. Elementary School Foreign Language Program Types (2008).
Note. N = 764 programs.

Secondary schools. As in the two earlier surveys, almost all secondary schools in 2008 with foreign language programs offered standard foreign language classes, which included instruction in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and culture skills. Other types of classes were offered at few schools. However, continuing a trend from the two previous time periods, there was a statistically significant increase in the percentage of schools offering Advanced Placement (AP) classes: 21% of secondary schools with a language program offered AP language classes in 2008 compared to 16% in 1997 and 12% in 1987. Other classes that increased from 1987 to 2008 were classes for native speakers, distance learning, and International Baccalaureate (IB) (Figure 5). All other types of language classes remained relatively stable over the two decades.

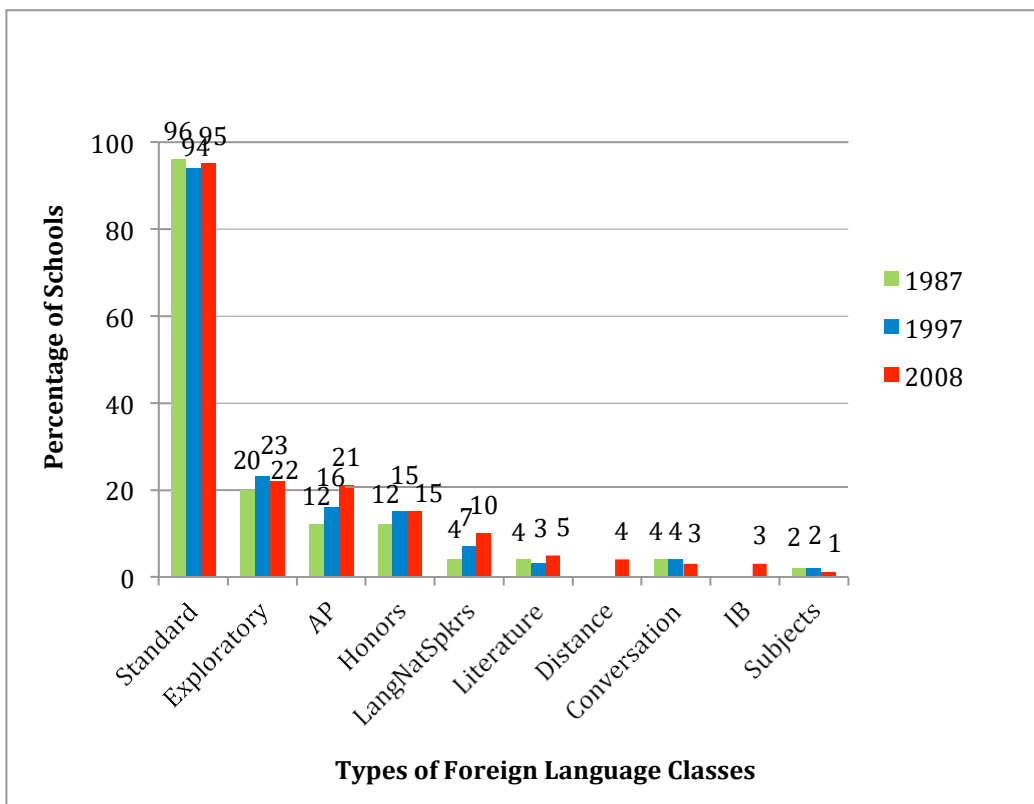


Figure 5. Types of Foreign Language Classes (1987, 1997, 2008).

Note. LangNatSpkrs = Language Classes for Native Speakers; AP = Advanced Placement; IB = International Baccalaureate; Subjects = Content-area subjects taught in foreign language

Spanish exploratory classes (those that introduce students to language and culture with a focus on basic words and phrases) in 2008 were offered more often in middle schools (28% of middle schools) than high schools (5% of high schools). This follows a pattern for all other languages (and other subject areas) that an introductory approach is more often offered in middle schools.

Secondary schools that offered language classes for native speakers overwhelmingly offered Spanish. These classes were most likely to be offered in large public high schools, urban public high schools, low SES schools, schools in the Southwest, and schools with a high percentage of minority students.

Despite increases over the decade in the percentage of secondary schools offering Advanced Placement courses, language for native speakers classes, and

International Baccalaureate classes, there has not been a major increase in intensive language programs. Research has shown that intensive language instruction leads to better language proficiency outcomes (Johnson & Swain, 1997). The immersion model provides such intensive instruction, helping students attain a high level of proficiency. Secondary schools, like elementary schools, need to provide more immersion-type foreign language programs, where selected academic subjects are taught in the foreign language, in order to achieve better proficiency outcomes. The language education profession recommends standards-based, proficiency-focused programs that result in high levels of language proficiency, enhanced academic success in English and other subject areas, and the ability to communicate and compete in an increasingly global workplace and community (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010).

VI. Advanced Placement Courses in Spanish

An important question to ask about Spanish teaching and learning is: What is the content and targeted proficiency level of language classes? Advanced Placement (AP) courses are one of the most reliable indicators of proficiency attainment because they provide a level of consistency through standardized curriculum and assessments, culminating in a final nationwide examination administered by the College Board (College Board, 2014a). Currently, AP courses are offered in more than 30 subjects, including seven languages (Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin, and Spanish). Spanish is the only language with two courses, that is, *Spanish Language and Culture* and *Spanish Literature and Culture*. These courses are developed by a committee of college faculty and AP teachers and cover the content, skills, and assignments of equivalent college-level courses. Many universities consider AP courses in their admission decisions, and students who successfully pass the AP exam receive college-level credit at thousands of universities in the United States and abroad. While there are no specific prerequisites, students in the AP Spanish Language course are typically in their fourth year of high school language studies, while the AP Spanish Literature

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course is equivalent to a third-year college introductory course studying literature written in Spanish (see College Board, 2014a).

AP foreign language and literature class offerings steadily increased in U.S. schools between 1987 and 2008. CAL survey data revealed that 40% of all high schools that offered foreign languages also offered AP language courses. AP classes correlated with school size, SES, geographic region, and minority enrollment. Large schools in urban and suburban areas and schools with a high SES were more likely to offer AP classes than smaller, rural schools and schools with low or medium SES status. Schools with high minority enrollment were also more likely to offer AP language courses.

The CAL survey findings are supported by data reported by the College Board (2014b). Accordingly, the two AP Spanish exams are not only the most popular world language AP exams, but with more than 106,000 examinees, the AP Spanish Language exam ranks 11th among all subject tests for 2013, after an increase from 62,000 examinees in 2003 (Table 3). AP Spanish Literature was the second most administered language AP exam with about 15,000 examinees in 2013, followed by 14,000 examinees in AP French Language.

AP Examination	Subject	Examinees in Thousand
English language		390
US History		360
English literature		325
Calculus AB		223
US Government		216
Psychology		199
World History		175
Biology		162
Statistics		141
Chemistry		107
Spanish language		106

Table 3. Top AP Examinations by Number of Examinees (2013) (compiled from data at College Board, 2014b).

A closer look at the College Board 2014 annual report reveals that the majority of AP Spanish exams were taken by students of Hispanic and Latino origin—66% of AP Spanish Language examinees (see Figure 6) and 86.8% of Spanish Literature examinees in 2013 (College Board, 2014b, Subject Supplements). The corresponding percentages for White students, the second largest group, were about 23% and 8.6%, respectively. Figure 6 and Table 4 show further details of the ethnic and linguistic background of the AP Spanish Language test takers as well as the respective passing rates. Colleges usually award credit for a score of 3 and higher on the 1-5 score scale.

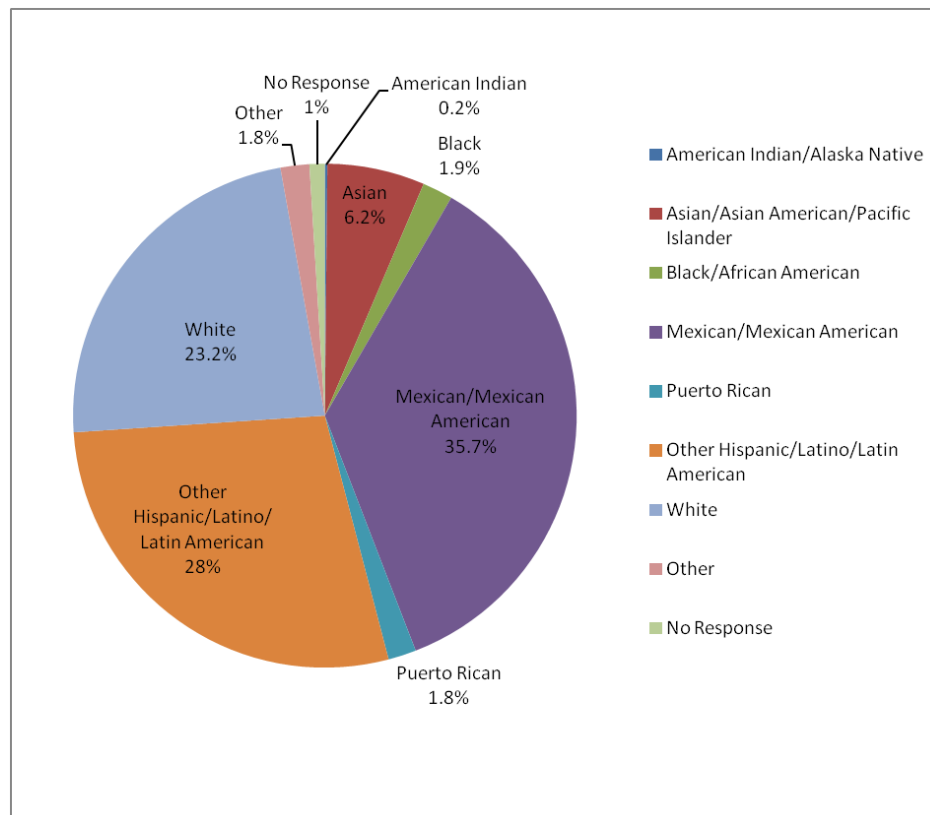


Figure 6. Ethnic/Linguistic Background of AP Spanish Language Examinees (2013) (compiled from data at College Board, 2014b, Appendix C).

Ethnicity	Total Number of Examinees	Percentage of Examinees	Passing Rate (%)	Mean Grade
American Indian/Alaska Native	171	0.2%	44	2.39
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	6,636	6.2%	64	3.07
Black/African American	2,069	1.9%	31	2.02
Mexican/Mexican American	37,994	35.7%	81	3.65
Puerto Rican	1,906	1.8%	69	3.26
Other Hispanic/Latino/Latin American	29,749	28.0%	79	3.60
White	24,674	23.2%	56	2.80
Other	1,962	1.8%	63	3.03
No Response	1,038	1.0%	63	2.99
Total	106,199	99.8%*	72	3.34

Table 4. Ethnic Background and Passing Rate of AP Spanish Language Examinees (2013) (compiled from data at College Board, 2014b, Appendix C).
Note: A passing rate was defined as a score of 3 or higher on the AP exam.
***Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.**

A large portion of the AP Spanish Language exam takers were students in California and Texas, accounting for almost half of all AP Spanish test takers nationwide. Other states where AP Spanish played a relatively large role were others in the Southwest but also New Jersey and the District of Columbia. Table 5 lists the states in which Spanish was in the top 10 of all AP subject tests taken. For comparison, AP English Language was the number 1 ranked exam in all states nationwide.

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State	Number of Exams	Rank in State
California	34,788	6
Texas	18,048	7
New Jersey	3,202	10
Arizona	1,970	7
Nevada	752	10
New Mexico	671	7
District of Columbia	137	10
United States	106,199	11

Table 5. States with AP Spanish Language Among the Top 10 Exams (2013) (Created from data at College Board, 2014b, State Supplements).

VII. Spanish Taught Outside of Regular School Program

Although the survey did not gather data on Spanish language instruction outside of school (heritage and community language programs, private language school classes, etc.), these programs constitute a growing area of Spanish instruction for children. Interest in the maintenance and revitalization of heritage languages has grown over the last fifty years, despite years of debates over the merits of bilingual education for language minority students (Wiley, Peyton, Christian, Moore, & Liu, 2014; Center for Applied Linguistics, 2013). These Spanish programs are offered in the evening or on weekends and are geared toward children who have at least one Spanish-speaking parent or grandparent or who come from a Spanish-speaking heritage. Heritage language programs are often offered by community organizations and foreign embassies/consulates in places of worship or school settings in non-school hours in response to parents who want their children to develop and maintain strong language skills.

The number of proprietary language schools for children (offering classes after school and on weekends) is also increasing, with Spanish as one of the most popular languages (personal communication with Marty Abbott, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, May 8, 2014). Parents are seeking out extracurricular language classes in order to provide their children with early bilingual skills that they hope will eventually help them compete successfully in the global marketplace. At the same time, these parents are lobbying public school districts to expand Spanish immersion programs so that their children can get a multilingual/multicultural public education that meets the “community’s goals of raising children who excel academically and socially on a local and global level” (D. Millhouse, as quoted in Wiggins, 2014).

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VIII. Conclusion

The role of Spanish in U.S. education is strong and growing. At all levels of schooling, from Pre-K to university, Spanish is overwhelmingly the most commonly taught language. More and more schools are requesting Spanish as the language they want to teach, especially if they can only offer one language because of curricular or budget reasons. The position of Spanish is at an all-time high. At the same time, however, CAL's National K-12 Foreign Language Survey revealed that foreign language instruction, over the past decade, has decreased substantially in elementary and middle schools nationwide. Moreover, only a small percentage of the elementary and middle schools not teaching languages in 2008 planned to implement a language program the following two years. These results are disconcerting and affect Spanish as much as other languages. The United States is at a point in history when, as Gene R. Carter (2008), Executive Director of ASCD (formerly the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development), states, "At stake is whether an entire generation of learners will fail to make the grade in a global economy." At a time when countries around the world are implementing language programs for younger and younger children and are positioning them to become multilingual world citizens of the 21st century, the United States is not making concerted effort to provide students with the early-start, long-sequence foreign language instruction that will prepare them to participate effectively in a globally competitive world.

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Although the role of Spanish is undisputed, the numbers of programs, as well as the opportunities for students to reach high levels of proficiency in Spanish or other languages, are inadequate. In addition, the extraordinary resource the United States has in students who already speak Spanish—heritage language speakers—is not being developed as it could through the expansion of two-way immersion programs. CAL's survey report (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2012, pp. 84-87)

offers six recommendations to invigorate language education in the United States, with the goal of dual language proficiency for all children:

- *Encourage the establishment of new foreign language programs, particularly those that start in the elementary school and aim at a high degree of proficiency*
- *Offer more intensive foreign language programs, including those that build on the skills of Spanish heritage language speakers*
- *Address problems, such as inequitable access to foreign language instruction, teacher shortages, and lack of certification, especially among elementary school language teachers*
- *Improve the articulation pattern for schools that offer foreign language classes in the early and middle school grades*
- *Expand the research base on foreign language instruction*
- *Recognize the vital importance of an American citizenry that can communicate effectively in many languages and across cultures, and make the teaching and learning of foreign languages a priority in the K-12 curriculum.*

What is lacking in the United States is a widespread recognition that knowing another language is as important as knowing science, social studies, language arts, and mathematics. When legislators, administrators, and other education policy makers recognize the need to include foreign languages in the core curriculum, the necessary funding and other resources needed to make this happen will follow. This change in attitude is the necessary first step in moving the United States toward parity with nations around the globe that graduate students who can communicate in more than one language. The high level of interest in Spanish and the strong foundation of existing programs offer promise that the Spanish language can help lead the way toward this goal.

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Appendix A: Methodology

*Questionnaire**Development*

Two questionnaires were developed for elementary and secondary schools, with variations in item wording that reflected the two different levels of instruction. Overall, survey items were worded similarly to those of two previous surveys to allow for comparison (Rhodes & Branaman, 1999; Rhodes & Oxford, 1988). Both print and online versions of the questionnaires were developed. Content validity, including the clarity, appropriateness, and utility of each survey item, was assured through several survey reviews, including a formal clinical trial with principals and foreign language teachers.

Sample Stratification

The surveyed schools were selected through a stratified random sample of public and private elementary and secondary schools in the United States. Schools were selected within four major subgroups, defined by crossing instructional level (elementary vs. secondary) with type of control (public vs. private). Ten sampling strata were defined by crossing the level (elementary or secondary vs. “combined,” [i.e., schools with elementary and secondary grades]) with school size based on enrollment. Within these strata, additional implicit stratification was induced by sorting schools by the following variables:

- Metro status (urban, urban fringe, town, rural)
- Geographic region (Northeast, South, Southwest, Central, Pacific Northwest)
- Socioeconomic status (SES; percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch)—public schools only
- Minority enrollment (percentage of students classified as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic Black, or Hispanic)

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Weighting for National Estimates

In general, weights are required for analysis of data from a stratified sample design. In this survey, the purpose was to reflect the variable probabilities with which schools were selected and to compensate for differential rates of nonresponse. Under the stratified sampling procedures described above, large schools were generally sampled at high rates than smaller ones and thus should have correspondingly smaller weights than small schools. Similarly, to compensate for survey nonresponse, schools with low response rates should have relatively larger nonresponse adjustments than schools with high response rates.

Data Collection

Data were collected during the 2007-2008 school year. Surveys were sent to the principals of 3,561 elementary schools, including 2,165 public elementary schools and 60 public combined (elementary and secondary) schools, for a total of 2,225 public schools; and to 927 private elementary schools and 409 private combined schools, for a total of 1,336 private schools. The secondary survey was sent to foreign language department chairs of 1,554 secondary schools, including 748 public secondary schools and 29 public combined schools, for a total sample of 777 public schools; and to 316 private secondary schools and 461 private combined schools, for a total of 777 private schools. The final response rate was 72% of sampled schools. For details on sampling and weighting procedures, see Rhodes & Pufahl (201, pp. 12ff.).

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Data Analysis

In addition to examining overall results for 2008 survey items and comparing subgroups (e.g., by school size, region, SES), data from the 1997 and 2008 surveys were analyzed for significant increases or decreases for comparable items. Tests for statistical significance (i.e., t-tests for means and/or proportions) were conducted using weighted data and a significance level of 0.05. With the significance level used for these data at 0.05, noted as $p < 0.05$, there is less than a 5% probability (p) that the difference between two numbers presented, such as an increase or decrease, happened only by chance.

Classification of States in Geographical Regions by Language Associations (Rhodes and Pufahl, 2010)

Central (16)
Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Wisconsin

Northeast (12)
Connecticut, District of Columbia, Delaware, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont

Pacific Northwest (6)
Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming

Southern (9)
Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia

Southwest (8)
Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawai'i, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah

Note: California and Hawaii were included in the Pacific Northwest region in the 1997 survey, but they are now included in the Southwest.

Appendix C: Elementary School Program Types

The following are definitions of program types as defined in the National K-12 Foreign Language Survey.

Exploratory goals: Gain general exposure to language and culture, learn basic words and phrases, and/or develop an interest in foreign language for future study. Portions of this program may be taught in English. (Often called *FLEX*—foreign language experience/exploratory).

Language focus goals: Acquire listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills; gain an understanding of and appreciation for other cultures. Focus of instruction can be on language and/or subject content. (Often called *FLES*—foreign language in the elementary school.)

Immersion goals: Be able to communicate in the language with a high level of proficiency and acquire an understanding of and appreciation for other cultures. At least 50% of the school day is taught in the foreign language, including academic subjects. (Called *partial, total, or two-way immersion*, depending on the amount of foreign language used and the make-up of the student body.)

Notes

¹ Those languages taught by 6% or fewer schools have a large range of error because of the small *ns*. So those data are not as accurate as those for the languages represented by higher percentages.

² Since the vast majority of foreign language classes in the U.S. are Spanish (88% at elementary school; 93% at secondary school), data presented here from the CAL foreign language survey interchangeably refer to all language instruction and Spanish language instruction.

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