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# The Role of Language Education in Maine's Global Economy

Laura Lindenfeld

*University of Maine*, [Laura.Lindenfeld@umit.maine.edu](mailto:Laura.Lindenfeld@umit.maine.edu)

Gisela Hoecherl-Alden

*University of Maine*

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## **Cover Page Footnote**

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# The Role of Language Education in Maine's Global Economy

by Laura Lindenfeld and Gisela Hoecherl-Alden



*If Mainers are to compete in the global economy, they must be able to communicate effectively across languages and cultures. Laura Lindenfeld and Gisela Hoecherl-Alden examine the history and status of language policies, language education, and language proficiency in the U.S. and Maine. They note that Maine's public colleges and universities are for the most part unable to support foreign language education past the intermediate proficiency level, and some only have capacity to provide instruction at the elementary level. There is virtually no support in the state for languages currently defined as critical, such as Arabic and Chinese. At the K-12 level, students in Maine and the U.S. have less access to foreign language instruction than students in most other countries. The authors offer a number of recommendations to the state, public higher education, and K-12 public schools for sustaining and improving foreign language education. 🐉*

If you call someone who knows two languages bilingual and someone who knows three languages trilingual, what do you call someone who knows only one language? An American.

— *European Joke*

In 2007, Governor John Baldacci emphasized the importance of Maine's participation in the global economy for the state's future (du Houx 2006–2007). The governor has repeatedly stressed the need to create a productive synergy between the state's educational institutions and their surrounding communities as a job catalyst for Maine. His subsequent trade missions to Europe, Asia, and Latin America aim to boost international commerce and to move the state and its products onto a global playing field. Recent tourism initiatives seek to make Maine a more viable destination in both New England and abroad.<sup>1</sup> Forty-eight percent of Americans regularly interact with people whose first language is not English, and Maine is no exception (Abbot and Brown 2006). Therefore, providing adequate training in language and culture is where the state's needs, educational policies, and the land grant university's mission should intersect. Yet, the frequent budget cuts to the state's public educational institutions tend to shrink support for the arts and humanities (Zastrow and Janc 2004). These are the areas, however, that teach strategies and skills necessary for meaningful social interaction and cultural expression. In addition, the federal Department of Education's 2002 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) bill requires schools to focus mostly on measurable English and mathematics skills, which in turn results in increased parochialism (Zastrow and Janc 2004). A strong economy based on international trade and tourism relies on diversity and intercultural communication both in person and via technology.

This essay discusses how state and federal education policies challenge the attainment of second language proficiency for Maine's English-speaking citizens and immigrants alike. We argue that Maine's potential to develop a cosmopolitan, highly skilled workforce to support its growth in the global economy requires thoughtful, comprehensive support of language acquisition spread across the range of educa-

tional experiences in the state. We provide a historical overview of language policy in the U.S. and in Maine to show that Maine's ability to succeed in the global marketplace is inextricably linked to our ability to educate citizens who can work in the global economy. Given its central role in the state, Maine's public university system should serve as the leader in integrating second language acquisition across K-12 and throughout higher education curriculum.

#### WHY MAINE NEEDS A COSMOPOLITAN WORKFORCE

Maine's participation in the global economy is growing on a steady basis, and this growth requires a workforce trained to communicate effectively across different cultures. According to the Maine International Trade Center (MITC), the state ranks eighth in the nation in export growth, and its export rate grew 20 percent between 1998 and 2003 (Coyle 2004). Maine exported goods to more than 160 countries in 2005, and concerted efforts are underway to increase trade with the European Union and other global regions. Maine set a record of \$2.63 billion in exports in 2006, an increase attributed to growing trade with Japan, South Korea, and China. China is currently Maine's third largest trade partner, importing \$150 million of Maine goods in 2006 (Maine Department of Economic and Community Development 2007).

Although the MITC provides outreach and technical assistance across the state—and indeed, requests for support have increased by 75 percent over the past five years (Maine Department of Economic and Community Development 2007)—the state lacks a comprehensive system to support language education.



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In addition to affecting Maine's international trade, Maine's tourism industry also suffers from the lack of language skills in its workforce, as is shown by the barrage of phone calls the University of Maine's language department receives every year when foreign travelers arrive. This lack of language ability is not specific to Maine; it is endemic to educational systems across the country. According to Bikson and Law (1994), U.S. students are technologically but not linguistically prepared to communicate across cultures. They go so far as to call them "linguistically deprived" (Bikson and Law 1994). In an information society, communication functions as the central force driving economic growth, and Maine's economic growth requires a cosmopolitan, multilingual workforce.

Although multiple language acquisition studies have unequivocally established that foreign language instruction is more effective the earlier it is provided, most students in Maine do not take a language until the later middle school years or the beginning of high school if they take one at all.

Maine's workforce finds itself in a complex, pluralistic world, in which the economic, political, and educational elite is increasingly multilingual. Likewise, multilingual speakers across the globe are becoming increasingly proficient in English, while monolingual English speakers are losing their competitive edge (Graddol 1997, 2006). The exclusive reliance on English as a lingua franca leaves this state economically and politically vulnerable, and dependent on the linguistic competence and goodwill of others (Stewart 2007).

Maine's success as a participant in the global economy depends upon a well-educated, versatile,

culturally and linguistically diverse workforce that can communicate effectively with global constituencies. Historically, however, education policy has often provided a roadblock rather than a pathway toward language proficiency. In the following section we provide a historical context of language policy and implementation in the U.S. and Maine that have contributed to the lack of support for language education.

### U.S. LANGUAGE POLICIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON MAINE—A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Any attempt to provide insights into the conflicted relationship America has to languages and cultures other than English, begins with a conundrum: as a nation, the U.S. does not have a consciously planned language policy. Like many states, Maine's language policies have historically been vague and underfunded. Although previous incarnations of the Maine Learning Results included the area of world language, it was not until the revised 2007 version that the state called for specific frameworks, timelines, and performance indicators for world language instruction for K-12. Yet, inconsistent funding across different areas of the state will inhibit these meaningful and well-designed goals. This means that some school districts with more resources begin language instruction at the kindergarten level, while others do not begin until high school.

Despite the millions of federal government dollars spent each year on language and multicultural education, there has never been a federal agency entrusted with coordinating, collecting, and disseminating knowledge about language acquisition and pedagogy. This has resulted in lack of support at the state level, and Maine proves to be no exception. For example, the federal government provides funding to K-12 districts to enhance their language programs in the form of foreign language assistance programs (FLAP), yet these funds are competitive and are not continual sources of revenue. They support specific development projects rather than creating and sustaining language education infrastructure. In 2008, for example, only eight grants were awarded to seven states with an average funding level of approximately \$250,000 per district. Maine

has received two of these awards in the last decade: one in Kingfield in 2004 and one in Portland in 2001. Although these programs are well-intended, they are a proverbial drop in the bucket. Likewise, the 2007 America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science Act (COMPETES) bill authorizes two new competitive grant programs that include support for teachers of critical foreign languages (currently defined as Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Hindi, and Farsi) (Powell and Lowenkron 2006). Yet, most universities in the country have no established B.A. or M.A. programs in these languages to train new teachers. As we discuss later, Maine's public universities have no teacher-training programs for critical languages at all.

The federal government has tended to create divergent language policies in response to domestic or international pressures, wherein matters of language maintenance and English instruction for immigrants often become intertwined with issues of foreign language instruction. Throughout U.S. history, language policies have determined language use in public contexts (e.g., "English-Only" legislation in California under Proposition #227). They have also cultivated language skills required for national priorities (e.g., the National Defense Education Act in 1958), or, to a lesser extent, established the rights of individuals or groups to learn, use, and maintain their own languages (e.g., the Native American Language Acts of 1990 and 1992). Since language issues lack roots in American cultural and legal traditions and are defined as components of individual civil rights or liberties, they are vulnerable to prevailing political attitudes. Thus, the economic and political interests of dominant English speakers inform policy and have significant social and economic consequences.

Owing to the haphazardness of language policies, federal government funding has failed to create institutional frameworks and a national culture that values and promotes proficiency in another language. At the same time, lacking a federal agency charged with language issues, the fragmentation of American education under multiple school boards makes policies hard to implement. As a result, only nine percent of all Americans claim they can communicate adequately in a second

language (Blake and Kramsch 2007), meaning that the U.S. is a far cry from having the fluent bilingualism one finds in Africa, India, and many European countries.

Historical analysis of U.S. language policy demonstrates that language education has often been linked directly with U.S. foreign policy. We present this historical context here to provide a frame for the situation in which Maine finds itself. Starting with America's entry into World War I, when the U.S. was facing an enemy whose language was widely spoken within its borders, first German, then all foreign language instruction in the U.S. was drastically restricted, prohibiting any foreign language instruction before the eighth grade (Crawford in press). These measures still affect K-12 language education today. Although multiple language acquisition studies have unequivocally established that foreign language instruction is more effective the earlier it is provided, most students in Maine do not take a language until the later middle school years or the beginning of high school if they take one at all. Likewise, bilingualism disappeared from public consciousness, and language instruction was relegated to state or local authorities until the Russians launched Sputnik in 1957. The resulting National Defense Education Act of 1958 appropriated millions of dollars for foreign language, science, and mathematics education and bankrolled the most comprehensive educational reform since 1917. This legislatively configured the study of world languages and regions for national security purposes, especially German and Russian.

At the same time as Sputnik paved the way for the utilitarian promotion of language instruction as essential for defense, diplomacy, and trade, the civil rights movement gained momentum, and equal education of all became a national priority. Language issues of every ilk burst to the forefront. Suddenly, vocal minorities highlighted the country's multiculturalism: Native Americans in all 50 states attempted to revitalize their endangered languages, while Spanish and Asian immigrants fought a series of court battles for the right to bilingual education. These efforts made some significant inroads, the most consequential of which was the Supreme Court language rights decision on *Lau v. Nichols* (1974). This decision mandated that English

language learners (ELLs) are entitled to help for overcoming language barriers in order to gain equal access to the curriculum. While the ruling does not require bilingual education for ELLs, it does mandate that schools with non-English speaking immigrant student populations institute a so-called Lau-plan. Indeed, bilingual education has been outlawed in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts through the so-called Unz Initiative (see Ono and Sloop 2002; Crawford 1992).

On the whole, language policies generally surface in times of political or economic upheaval and are usually determined by material interests, as struggles for social and economic supremacy with Maine's Franco-Americans and Wabanaki tribes illustrate. Measures outlawing the use of Wabanaki languages in schools and in public life and the effective prohibition of French in public schools serve as examples of this history. As in other parts of the U.S., industrialists in Maine promoted mandatory English instruction for their foreign-born and non-English-speaking workforce in an attempt to subdue labor movements. By labeling such efforts as Americanization, they were able to code resistance as un-American. The resulting melting pot mentality led to a de facto elimination of French and other minority languages among working-class immigrants. Although the U.S. is the fifth largest Spanish-speaking country in the world, Blake and Kramsch (2007) have found that many immigrants feel that using other languages will be viewed as un-American, and their children quickly assimilate to English, losing their Spanish. This same phenomenon has held true for Maine's Franco-American and Native American citizens.

The attacks of September 11th once again drove home the point that Americans were essentially monolingual. In conjunction with the "War on Terror," the federal government promoted several educational reform measures: NCLB in 2002 for K-12 education, the 2005 "Year of Languages" Senate resolution, intended to increase the internationalization of business, law, and higher education, and the National Security Language Initiative (2006) designed to advance national security through language instruction, although with substantially less financial support than in 1958. Furthermore, rather than expanding resources for existing language departments at schools and

universities, there is a widespread lack of funding for K-16 language education including new critical languages of Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Hindi, and Farsi (Powell and Lowenkron 2006). Indeed, rather than extending funding, current reauthorization of the FLAP program suggests the reallocation of 20 percent of funds solely toward critical languages. If enacted, this creates a diversion of funding from established language programs rather than an expansion of funding overall (Lenker 2008). As Catharine Keatley, associate director of the National Capitol Language Resource Center writes,

There is a danger that, in many school districts around the country, the attempt to comply with the No Child Left Behind Act of the U.S. Department of Education, is depleting the resources of foreign language programs in the public schools. David Edwards of the Joint National Council on Languages (JNCL), whose job it is to represent the interests of the foreign language community to the U.S. government, says there is a "disaster waiting to happen" if we do not work as a community to intervene before the damage is done (Keatley 2006).

In short, federally driven frameworks for language acquisition have suffered from lack of funding and systemic support, and this model has generally trickled down to states and resulted in weak infrastructures.

#### A SNAPSHOT: LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IN MAINE

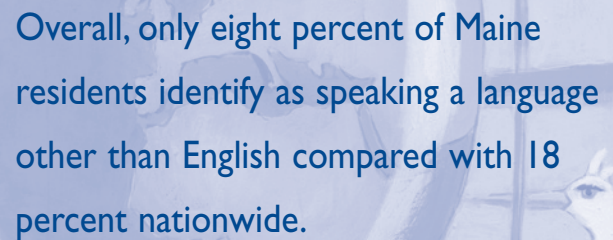
The disconnection among Maine's educational institutions, educational policies, and economic needs mirrors broader trends in the U.S. Far from supporting Maine's growth in the global economy, this disengagement undermines the state's efforts to become a leading participant in an economy based on creativity, technological innovation, and cosmopolitanism. In this section we focus on the state of linguistic diversity in Maine in the context of broader U.S. trends in language acquisition. We provide a snapshot of language learning in the U.S. and then focus on specific language trends in Maine.

Currently, only 50 percent of U.S. high school students take a foreign language, and the majority never progresses beyond the introductory level, leaving a serious shortfall in capable speakers of other languages (Stewart 2007). As a result of NCLB, more and more K-12 school systems are reducing language programs or cutting them entirely (Committee for Economic Development 2006). In higher education, the numbers are similarly low. Welles (2004) reports that only seven to nine percent of university and college students have enrolled in any modern language class, a number that has remained consistent over the last 25 years. Similarly, Siaya and Hayward (2003) write that only 27 percent of higher education institutions include foreign language requirements for all students.

Maine is no exception to these statistics, and the state's inability to graduate large numbers of fluent speakers of other languages from its schools and its state university system does not bode well for the establishment of a robust, diversified, technology- and tourism-based global economy. In this interconnected, multicultural world, monolingual graduates will face greater difficulty in participating in the global economy. Indeed, recent research indicates that employers place emphasis on hiring graduating college students who understand global issues and their future implications, appreciate U.S.'s role in the world, and understand cultural values and traditions (Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc. 2006). Seventy-three percent of employers surveyed expressed the need for college graduates who can help to ensure the U.S.'s ability to compete in a global economy (Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc. 2006).

Although populations from Maine to California are becoming increasingly diverse, monolingualism and standardized testing are still regarded as the engine of social development, stability, and equity.<sup>2</sup> The contentious debates surrounding the role of English as the official language of the United States are usually steeped in anti-immigrant rhetoric and divorced from rational discussions of equitable education for minorities (Schmidt 2002). Some of the most spirited defenses for the central position of English are pleas for maintaining a bulwark of Western civilization against the rising tide of multiculturalism.<sup>3</sup>

Although Maine has a strong French cultural heritage, according to the Modern Language Association's (MLA) language map ([www.mla.org/map\\_single&source=county](http://www.mla.org/map_single&source=county)) only five percent (63,640) of the state's population identify as French speakers. Similarly, only one-tenth of one percent (1,182 individuals) of the state's population reports proficiency in a Native American language. These statistics do not specify proficiency levels and assume speaking rather than writing and reading competency. Overall, only eight percent of Maine residents identify as speaking a language other than English compared with 18 percent nationwide. In New England, according to the MLA language map, only nine percent of New Hampshire and six percent of Vermont's population identify as speaking a language other than English compared with 19 percent in Connecticut and Massachusetts.



Overall, only eight percent of Maine residents identify as speaking a language other than English compared with 18 percent nationwide.

In recent years, Maine has experienced dramatic changes in its population through the resettlement of refugees and new immigrants. The state's schools serve close to 5,000 ELLs from more than 100 language groups, who, in a few years, will become active participants in the state's economy. The state's newcomer populations are concentrated in the southern part of the state, especially in Portland and Lewiston. Children of these recent immigrants often qualify as ELLs based on their performance on standardized tests. It is unfortunate that the languages of these diverse communities are viewed as burdens rather than assets. As centers of linguistic diversity in Maine, Lewiston and Portland can offer the state invaluable resources. In addition to newcomers from across the globe, many students from the Franco-American and Wabanaki communities qualify as ELLs. Yet, many districts



TABLE I: Language Instruction in the University of Maine System

Institution	Languages	Highest Level/Degree Available
University of Maine	French	Minor, B.A., M.A., M.A.T.
	Spanish	Minor, B.A.
	German	Minor, B.A.
	Latin	Minor, B.A.
	Modern Languages (a combination of German and French or Spanish)	B.A.
	Romance Languages (a combination of French and Spanish)	B.A.
	International Affairs	B.A.
	Critical Languages	Primarily self-instructional, first year only
University of Southern Maine	*French	Minor, B.A. in French Studies
	*German	Minor, B.A. in German Studies
	*Spanish	Minor, B.A. in Hispanic Studies
	*Russian	Minor, B.A. in Russian Studies
	International Studies	B.A.
	*Foreign Languages	B.A., M.A. option in Foreign Language for Extended Teacher Education Program
	*Latin and Greek	Minor, B.A. in Classical Studies (advanced proficiency) or Classical Humanities (intermediate proficiency)
	Italian	Elementary
University of Maine at Augusta	French	Intermediate
	Spanish	Intermediate
	Russian	Elementary
University of Maine at Farmington	French	Minor & Concentration (for B.S. in Elementary Education)
	Spanish	Minor & Concentration (for B.S. in Elementary Education)
	International Studies	B.A.
	Chinese	Elementary
	Russian	Elementary
University of Maine at Fort Kent	French	Minor, B.A.
University of Maine at Machias	Spanish	Elementary
	French	Elementary
University of Maine at Presque Isle	French	Minor, Concentration (for B.A. in Elementary and Secondary Education)
	International Studies	B.A.
	Russian & East European Studies	Elementary

\* denotes interdisciplinary language degrees

servicing these students lack highly qualified teachers, approved Lau plans, and infrastructures for English as a Second Language (ESL) education. Likewise, individuals with competency in French and Wabanaki languages are significant to Maine's cultural heritage and its future development.

The politically fraught concept of bilingual education has received positive attention in Maine over the past 20 years, but this effort has remained isolated and has lacked widespread support.<sup>4</sup> This is especially evident in the U.S. Department of Education's shift under NCLB from the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA 1974–2001) to a new office focused on English-only education, the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). In Maine, currently two districts in Aroostook County operate bilingual French/English immersion programs (Madawaska School District and MSAD #24 Van Buren). MSAD 52 (Turner) operates a small Spanish bilingual program that provides Spanish language assistance on a need basis. Beatrice Rafferty and Indian Township Schools (under Maine Indian Education) provide Passamaquoddy language instruction and Passamaquoddy heritage language/bilingual retention instruction and support. These are currently the only programs of their kind in Maine's public school systems.

At the university level, the University of Maine System has experienced gradual reduction and elimination of language programs, a process that affects both foreign language and bilingual education efforts across the state. As Table 1 illustrates, the state has little if any capacity to prepare students for even basic proficiency as defined by the Foreign Service Institute in the currently defined critical languages of Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Hindi, and Farsi. (See sidebar, page 62 for time to proficiency guidelines.) The University of Maine System's capacity to educate students in French, Spanish, and German often does not allow students to move beyond basic proficiency levels in these languages. In fact, only the flagship campus offers a full B.A. with all required courses offered in the target language. Since language courses, like music courses, are performance based, the ratio of instructor to student should remain low compared to other subject areas in order to yield success. What is clearly missing from this already compromised list is any

comprehensive study of the critical languages identified by the U.S. State Department. Aside from the small interdisciplinary Russian studies B.A. offered at the University of Southern Maine, which is not proficiency-based, Russian and Chinese are only taught at the elementary level.

If the state's university system is for the most part unable to support language instruction past the intermediate proficiency level,<sup>5</sup> how might school districts across the state support education of critical languages? The University of Maine System is currently not in the position of training students (and thus future teachers) in Chinese even at the most basic language proficiency levels, much less at higher levels, and there is no support at all for Arabic, Hindi, or Farsi. Even if students receive instruction in a critical language in high school, the state university system is not able to build on this basic knowledge. For those students who recognize the value and importance of becoming proficient in a language other than English, college and university students have only limited options for public education in the state and must leave Maine to pursue degrees at institutions of higher education that offer critical languages.<sup>6</sup>

With funding increasingly diverted from world languages as a result of NCLB standardized testing, K-12 students have less access to foreign language instruction than students in other countries. Keatley (2006) writes, "There is mounting evidence that the impact of NCLB, including high stakes testing in reading and mathematics, has resulted in a number of state and district boards concentrating their efforts and resources in the subject areas to be tested to the detriment of other subjects, such as foreign languages." Furthermore, decreasing fiscal support for arts and humanities subjects divests students of models to understand and appreciate other cultures. This extends to the university level where students either do not have the second language instruction they need or have never availed themselves of study abroad options. Some choose never to learn a foreign language at all. Despite the continued importance of global communication and Maine's role in the global economy, the dearth of support for language study makes it increasingly difficult for students to prepare themselves for a future role in Maine's global economy.

### The Foreign Service Institute's Ratings of Language Difficulty

*(Hours required for S3 General Professional Proficiency in Reading and Writing)*

#### Category I:

##### **Languages closely related to English**

- 23–24 weeks (575–600 class hours)
- Examples: French, Italian, Spanish

#### Category II:

##### **Languages with significant linguistic and/or cultural differences from English**

- 44 weeks (1,100 class hours)
- Examples: Burmese, Croatian, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Khmer, Persian (Dari, Farsi, Tajik), Russian, Serbian, Turkish

#### Category III:

##### **Languages which are exceptionally difficult for native English speakers**

- 88 weeks (second year of study in-country) (2200 class hours)
- Examples: Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Japanese, Korean

#### **Other languages**

- German: 30 weeks (750 class hours)
- Indonesian, Malaysian, Swahili: 36 weeks (900 class hours)

Source: National Virtual Translation Center (2007)

instruction to achieve general professional proficiency in reading and writing in languages linguistically most closely related to English, and up to 1,300 hours for languages that are not. The sidebar shows the Foreign Service Institutes estimates of average hours to S3 Professional Proficiency (S5 representing native speaker competency).<sup>8</sup> Given the way language teaching is currently structured, this means that the average undergraduate language major who has had some exposure to a second language in secondary school will have completed less than 670 contact hours before graduating. Without study abroad programs, it is virtually impossible for the state's public institutions of higher education to adequately prepare students for the global economy. Of the state's public institutions of higher education, only the University of Maine requires that students even meet 670 hours, much less exceed this level of exposure before graduating in more than one language relevant to the state's economy: French, German, and Spanish. We have not even begun to establish a framework for responding to the State Department's needs for critical language instruction.

Graduates who have acquired advanced language proficiency have learned far more than new sets of grammatical rules and words. Apart from linguistic sophistication, effective communication in multicultural and international contexts includes a functional knowledge of social conventions and an understanding of etiquette, body language, and culture-specific values. Bi- and multilingual individuals come to understand their own cultures' relationship with others, learn to step outside of their own social frame of reference, and become mediators between two cultures (Byram and Risager 1999). They also learn to analyze the meaning of actions, customs, and practices and can situate them within webs of meaning (Geertz 1973) and thus attain the flexibility to interact successfully with people from cultures whose languages they do not speak. Indeed, cultural literacy is key to economic development: "The success of multicultural teams is becoming critical to success in the global marketplace. American companies lose an estimated \$2 billion a year due to inadequate cross-cultural guidance for their employees in multicultural situations" (Committee for Economic Development 2006). Maine must invest time

### LANGUAGE EDUCATION: A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

Unfortunately, in this era of instant gratification, there is one great problem with learning a second language: it takes time and commitment to become proficient. Despite the proliferation of instructional programs that claim to make German easy, teach you Chinese in three weeks, or enable you to download Arabic directly to your brain,<sup>7</sup> the Foreign Service Institute has determined that it takes native English speakers a minimum of 575 to 600 hours of intensive

and resources in public education to support language education if it wants to support its students to become literate, engaged global citizens. Governor Baldacci's establishment of the Maine International Relations Planning Committee moves in the direction of securing more support and creating stronger infrastructures for language education (Baldacci 2007).

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STEPS

As the Committee for Economic Development argues, "To have a citizenry that is knowledgeable of world regions, global issues, and foreign cultures, as well as conversant in other languages, we will need to strengthen the curriculum of the K-12 education system as well as that of our colleges, universities, and professional schools" (2006: 25). While we understand that the current economic situation of the University of Maine System and Maine's public school systems prohibit wide-ranging development in the area of language, we do believe that the systems can take some important steps toward developing an infrastructure across the state. Maine's educational policies and support for languages as a vital part of higher education and K-12 need to keep a long-term, instead of sporadic short-term, effort. The newly revised Maine Learning Results provide a meaningful pathway towards greater levels of language proficiency across K-12 education. However, the state's public university system will require more investment in its infrastructure. Investments in higher education have the advantage of creating a trickle down effect for Maine's K-12 public schools. Comprehensive and better training of more language teachers will create positive returns for the K-12 system. Models such as The Language Flagship that design, support, and implement advanced language education through innovative partnerships among the federal government, educational institutions, and the state's business community can inform future directions for Maine (The Language Flagship 2008). Based on this and other models of success (see sidebar, page 64), we recommended the following:

- The University System should consider re-instituting a language requirement for all undergraduate programs.
- Programs whose graduates contribute heavily to the growth of Maine's global economy should require at least intermediate, if not advanced, levels of competency in at least one other language. Programs such as economics, international business, international affairs, engineering, communication, journalism, marketing, new media, public administration, advertising, and resource economics, among others have much to gain for their future graduates by implementing language requirements.
- High school guidance counselors and university academic advisors should encourage students to consider a double major including a foreign/world language or at least a minor in another language.
- The University of Maine System campuses should create and sustain study abroad programs as these provide intense, in-depth opportunities for students to learn language in cultural context and establish relationships with people in other countries.
- Maine's high schools and universities should adopt the concept of in-depth studying of a world region in order to understand the complexities involved in intercultural and international interactions.
- More K-12 public schools should consider implementing language programs at the elementary school level and offering more advanced courses for middle and high school students.
- Community-based learning in university classrooms should support K-12 language classes. Coursework at the university level can require students' involvement in supporting K-12 language learning in area schools through curriculum development, direct instruction, design of Web sites, collection and dissemination of authentic target language materials, and coordination of language immersion experiences.

### Models of Excellence in Language Instruction in the U.S.

Models of excellence in language instruction do exist in the U.S.: Louisiana, Hawaii, Oregon, Maryland, Minnesota, and Virginia support a variety of highly successful language immersion programs in their school districts. According to the Center for Applied Linguistics, factors contributing to high language attainment numbers in these states include the promotion of heritage learners, strong university collaborations with local school districts, and local district initiatives (Lenker and Rhodes 2007). Alaska, which serves as a model for a large, rural, and sparsely populated state, has developed educational standards and funds extensive native and world language instruction. As a result, Yu'pik programs support the bicultural identities of speakers in robust language communities, and Tlingit and Haida instruction revitalizes indigenous language communities. The state's Chinese, Japanese, and Russian programs aim at creating a bilingual, cosmopolitan citizenry through K-12 immersion. In 2007, the Anchorage school district launched a German immersion charter school, recognizing the fact that 60,000 German-speaking tourists choose Alaska as their destination annually.

- While ensuring that existing language programs continue to receive support, the University of Maine System should build programs for the study of languages deemed critical to national security and economic development. This requires language instruction beyond the elementary level.
- Universities should target federal and foundation funding designed to implement and improve language instruction such as the U.S. Department of Education's Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP), The Language Flagship, America COMPETES, the Ford Foundation, the Blakemore Foundation, the Japan Foundation, and many others.

While these goals might seem lofty, other states have demonstrated extensive success in implementing language programs across the curriculum (see sidebar, this page). Just to cite a few examples: Michigan State University initiated the development of a Center for International Business Education Resources (CIBER), which, according to its Web site ([ciberweb.msu.edu/about.asp](http://ciberweb.msu.edu/about.asp)), provides support and resources for institu-

tions and faculty interested in developing international business curricula. As a model for numerous institutions across the country, this program establishes working partnerships between institutions of higher education and businesses. Maine's institutions are eligible for funding and support through CIBER. Delaware's Department of Education is analyzing the state's capacity in international education across K-16 and post-graduate levels. Governor Baldacci's International Relations Planning Committee could play a key role in moving the state forward. Professional development tracks for teacher training require focus on international topics and have helped to integrate international studies across the curriculum. In New Jersey, students are required to study world history and culture for at least a year, and they must demonstrate proficiency equivalent to the American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages' (ACTFL) intermediate level in a language other than English upon high school graduation. Maine's newly revised Learning Results articulate the same goal for all Maine students. Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction curriculum guide, integrated into state learning standards, requires that teachers provide instruction in international content across all subjects and levels (Committee for Economic Development 2006).

### LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AS A DRIVING ECONOMIC FORCE: MAINE'S UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

The joke quoted in the beginning of this essay calls attention to the fact that the U.S. is the only industrialized nation that routinely graduates students from its schools and universities who lack second language proficiency. The connection between the goal of internationalization and world languages becoming required in schools and higher education remains tenuous at best. According to Don Reutershan (personal communication, May 13, 2008), world languages specialist at the Maine State Department of Education, the revised Maine Learning Results became Rule Chapter 132 in October 2007, and K-12 implementation of world languages is required by the end of the 2007–2008 school year by state statute (Maine Revised Statutes Title 20-A). The education establishment's efforts to

create conditions necessary to develop a critical mass of proficient speakers are moving the state in the right direction. State Education Commissioner Susan Gendron has developed memoranda of understanding with China, Spain, and France to collaborate on educational issues and programs, and the state became a member of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills in July 2007. But in order to develop a thriving global economy, sustainable support for in-depth, well-articulated language study is crucial.

Maine can choose to recognize and embrace its growing diversity, valuing language as an asset, or it can continue to ignore and even suppress linguistic (and by extension) cultural diversity. Banks (2006) argues that diversity enriches the state, because it provides alternative ways to solve societal problems and view the world. Seen from this vantage point, the potential to grow a creative, dynamic workforce is tremendous, and Maine's future rests in the state's ability to capitalize on this opportunity. A workforce that can leverage diversity as a resource improves its ability to problem solve and generates a multiplicity of ideas and attitudes that will lead to creativity and innovation (Cox 2001).

As the Committee for Economic Development (2006) eloquently states, "the day has long passed when a citizen could afford to be uninformed about the rest of the world and America's place in that world." The future of Maine's global economy rests in the state's ability to produce culturally and linguistically literate citizens, and this must begin with a solid grounding in language instruction. Only then, can Maine "flourish in the global marketplace" (Marquardt 1999). After all, most of the world's children speak more than one language. Why should Maine's children be left behind? 🐟

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**Laura Lindenfeld** is assistant professor in the Department of Communication and Journalism and the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, University of Maine. Her scholarship focuses primarily on cultural policy and American media. Together with Gisela Hoecherl-Alden, she currently co-directs Project Opportunity, a U.S. Department of Education professional development project that supports teachers and teaching personnel working with English language learners in public schools throughout Maine.



**Gisela Hoecherl-Alden** is associate professor of German at the University of Maine, where she has been on the faculty since 2001. She has published on anti-Fascist exiles, national identity in post-Wall Germany, intercultural communication and issues of second language acquisition. She is currently working on cultural policy and the German media as well as community-based instruction for engaged humanities and ecological sustainability.

### ENDNOTES

1. For detailed trade mission reports see the "Resources" page of the Maine International Trade Commission's Web site ([www.mitc.com/](http://www.mitc.com/)).
2. When E. D. Hirsch Jr., a former English professor who now runs the foundation [coreknowledge.org](http://coreknowledge.org), published his now-famous checklist (Hirsch 1987) designed to test whether a citizen had attained cultural literacy necessary to ensure effective participation in American society, he was not envisioning the term in the sense of intercultural language and communication abilities. The list reflects white middle-class (male) and high culture values, and is thus exclusive not only of multiethnic cultural diversity but also

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other segments of white America. Arguments like Hirsch's resurfaced during the 2006 immigration hearings in Congress, where it was deemed the immigrants' responsibility to learn English well enough to have access to government, despite the fact that the level of English required for naturalization is much lower than the level of English needed to make sense of tax or voter registration forms.

3. Seen in a socio-historical context, Hirsch's (1987) and also Bloom's (1987) best-selling reactions to increased postmodern plurality and diversity coincide with the end of the Cold War, growing globalization, and resulting mass migrations. Their dualistic Cold War-dictated worldview promotes an image of minorities and immigrants who adapt to and assimilate into or reject the dominant society and whose "otherness" often appears as a stark contrast to Western values and can thus be coded as un-American.
4. Bilingual education involves learning in two different languages. There are different forms of bilingual education. Transitional bilingual education programs (students receive instruction in their native tongue until they mainstreamed into English only classrooms), dual-language bilingual programs (students learn all subjects in both languages, there is no mainstreaming), and the less common method of developmental bilingual education programs (extended education in students' primary language with integration of English) operate with different pedagogical approaches.
5. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) defines four levels of language proficiency: novice, intermediate, advanced, and superior. The four language skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking are assessed to determine proficiency level. An intermediate speaker, for example, can sustain longer segments of connected discourse in a target language, but cannot produce hypothetical language. For more information see [www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org).
6. We deliberately focus on the state's public institutions of higher education, as the vast majority of students at these institutions consist of in-state residents. The University of Maine System's student body is made up overwhelmingly of in-state students (84 percent of students at the University of Maine). In contrast, the state's three largest private colleges, Colby, Bates, and Bowdoin, have extremely high rates of out-of-state students (Bates—89 percent, Bowdoin—88 percent, Colby—90 percent), most of whom leave the state after completing their undergraduate studies.

7. The formulations come from software advertisements, for example, [www.claritas.lux](http://www.claritas.lux), which claims to use software that lets its users learn the language of their dreams by downloading it directly to their brain.
8. The Foreign Service Institute defines five levels of language proficiency: non-proficient (1); limited proficiency (2); general professional proficiency (3); advanced professional proficiency (4); and functional native proficiency (5).

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