

Global Business Languages

Volume 3 *Networking with the Business Community*

Article 2

May 2010

Corporate Recruiter Demand for Foreign Language and Cultural Knowledge

Christine Uber Grosse

Thunderbird: The American Graduate School of International Management

Follow this and additional works at: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/gbl>

Recommended Citation

Grosse, Christine Uber (2010) "Corporate Recruiter Demand for Foreign Language and Cultural Knowledge," *Global Business Languages*: Vol. 3 , Article 2.

Available at: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/gbl/vol3/iss1/2>

Copyright © 2010 by Purdue Research Foundation. Global Business Languages is produced by Purdue CIBER. <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/gbl>

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the [CC BY-NC-ND license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Christine Uber Grosse

*Thunderbird—The American Graduate School
of International Management*

CORPORATE RECRUITER DEMAND FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

INTRODUCTION

Which languages are in demand in international business today? What languages and cultural knowledge do corporate recruiters look for when they hire graduate business students? For years these questions have been open to debate among language and business faculty, career service personnel, and employers. No empirical research provides evidence to support any of the diverse opinions concerning which languages are in greater and lesser demand. The present study examines actual demand for foreign language and cultural knowledge by corporate recruiters at Thunderbird's Master of International Management (MIM) program and the University of South Carolina's Master of International Business Studies (MIBS) program through an analysis of over three thousand job postings from 1995–97. The results show that corporate recruiters seek to hire graduates with knowledge of specific languages and cultures. An analysis of the data compares the number and percentage of job postings for graduates with knowledge of the eight most commonly sought-after languages.

The impetus for this study came several years ago when Thunderbird students (at an open forum) asked faculty which language they should study to become more marketable. Discussion ensued, but it became apparent that no one really knew which languages were most sought after by employers. A recent survey of Thunderbird students' motivation for selecting a foreign language to meet the degree requirement for the Master of International Management revealed that most selected a particular foreign language for economic reasons (Grosse, Critz, and Tuman). No matter which language they studied, almost all stated that they believed knowledge of the language and culture would enhance their em-

Global Business Languages (1998)

ployability, and that the language they chose had economic importance in the global market.

Consistent with the above findings, career services personnel at the University of South Carolina believe that employers value the study of *any* foreign language, not necessarily a *specific* one. They have spoken with many employers who think a student with knowledge of a second language and culture is more likely to have better cross-cultural understanding, an advantage when doing business internationally. The career service professionals felt that the specific language itself was less important than having an openness and sensitivity toward other cultures.

T. K. Bikson and S. A. Law's study gives further evidence in support of the value of an empathetic attitude toward other cultures for international businesspeople. They surveyed human resource experts in US multinational corporations concerning appropriate preparation for international business careers. These business professionals considered cross-cultural understanding rather than linguistic proficiency to be the key to success in conducting business abroad. According to C. S. Fixman's earlier research, executives do not consider foreign language proficiency a necessary skill for the cultural understanding necessary to do business internationally. C. K. Vande Berg analyzes the discrepancy between the academic and business perspectives of what businesspeople need for effective business communication. She notes that academics tend to focus on developing language proficiency in a specific language, while the business community sees a greater need for cultural expertise. One of the reasons for this gap between academic and business perceptions of learner needs is the lack of communication between the two communities, as recognized by N. Hedderich who comments on the typically limited communication between business German academics and German-American corporations.

Other evidence in support of the idea that businesses prefer to hire students with knowledge of different cultures rather than any single specific language came in discussions at the 1996 CIBER foreign language conference held at UCLA. One after another, the invited speakers from the business community emphasized that they could not possibly learn the language of every country they visited, since they traveled to many different places each year. However, they firmly stated that having cultural knowledge about each country gave them a distinct advantage in doing business.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Assuming that knowledge of any foreign language and culture will benefit a graduate business student, the question remains which languages are in demand and to what extent by recruiters. In terms of national enrollments, as well as Thunderbird and South Carolina enrollment in business language classes, Spanish clearly dominates. In the Modern Language Association's 1990 tally of national foreign language enrollments in higher education, Spanish accounted for almost half of the total number (see Figure 1). At Thunderbird in academic year 1996-97, Spanish attracted 39% of the total enrollment of 950, easily passing the other seven languages offered (French 13.5%, German 12%, Italian .01%, Japanese 10%, Russian 5%, Chinese 11%, and Portuguese 6%).

Figure 1¹
Foreign Language Enrollments in
US Institutions of Higher Education
Fall, 1990

Language	1990 Enrollment	% of Total Enrollment
Spanish	533,944	48.0%
French	272,472	25.0%
German	133,348	12.0%
Italian	49,699	4.5%
Japanese	45,717	4.0%
Russian	44,626	4.0%
Chinese	19,490	2.0%
Portuguese	6,211	.5%
TOTAL	1,105,507	

From the corporate point of view, Spanish rates as the second language of business according to an Accountemps survey cited in *USA Today* (1997). The results indicate that 63% of executives surveyed in the 1,000 largest US corporations consider Spanish to be the most important second language of business (see Figure 2). Asian languages captured the second largest rankings: 16% identified Japanese as the second language

¹Source: Brod and Huber.

of business, while 11% cited Chinese. European languages came next, with a small percentage (4%) that considered German, and 2% who believed French was the second most important business language.

Figure 2²
Second Language of Business

What executives of the USA's 1,000
largest companies say is the most
valuable second language in business

Spanish	63%
Japanese	16%
Chinese	11%
German	4%
French	2%
Other/Don't know	4%

When asked to give an impression of which languages were in greatest demand by recruiters at their campus in 1996–97, the Career Services staff for the MIBS program at South Carolina identified Chinese and Japanese. Given the above data concerning foreign language enrollments and what executives consider to be “the second language of business,” one would expect students with knowledge of Spanish also to be highly sought after by the recruiters.

In terms of actual job postings that required or preferred candidates to have knowledge of a particular language, how did Spanish and the other languages fare? This study focuses on the required or preferred languages that appear in job listings posted by corporate recruiters at Thunderbird (1995–96) and the University of South Carolina (1996–97). Whether the employer actually hired a person with the qualifications stated on the job description is beyond the scope of this study. Those records, held by the individual employer, were not the subject of this research, which makes no attempt to comment on the role of language and cultural knowledge in the hiring decision. Rather, the data analyzed in this research provides information on the number of job listings that require or prefer knowledge of a foreign language and culture, in which languages, and in which functional areas such as finance or marketing (in the South Carolina data).

²Source: Hall and Mullins.

METHODOLOGY

Thunderbird and the University of South Carolina were selected for the study because Thunderbird's MIM program and South Carolina's MIBS program consistently rank as the top two international business (IB) programs in the *US News and World Report's* annual survey of "America's Best Graduate Schools," and they are also the largest IB programs. Both require proficiency in a second language. Thunderbird offers instruction in Arabic, Chinese, English as a Second Language, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. South Carolina's MIBS program offers foreign language training in Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish combined with cultural training specific to each region, plus a six-month overseas internship. Foreign nationals may receive advanced instruction in English, and normally intern in the United States. Given the international orientation, reputation, and foreign language requirement of the two programs, it makes sense for corporations seeking managers with foreign language and cultural knowledge to recruit at these institutions. The data from these job postings should give a representative sample of demand for foreign languages and cultural knowledge by companies seeking international managers.

The student body profiles of the two programs are remarkably similar in some areas (see Figure 3). The most important difference to note is the size of the two programs. Thunderbird, the American Graduate School of International Management, focuses primarily on graduate business education. Therefore, it has a larger enrollment than MIBS, one of several programs within the College of Business Administration at the University of South Carolina. Thunderbird enrolled 1,458 students in Fall 1995, in comparison to the MIBS program in 1996–97 that had a total enrollment of 340 students. At both institutions, students have an average age of 27. Their work experience averages 2.6 years at South Carolina and 3.8 years at Thunderbird. Both programs have a similar percentage of male and female students. However, Thunderbird has almost twice the number of foreign students of South Carolina. This difference may be attributed to the fact that Thunderbird is a private institution, in contrast with South Carolina's public status and commitment to serve the citizens of the state.

Figure 3³
Student Body Profile
MIM Thunderbird and MIBS, University of South Carolina

Thunderbird Student Body Demographics, Fall 1995	
Total Enrollment	1,458
Male	62%
Female	38%
International Students	31%
US Students	69%
Average Age	27
Age Range	20–55
Average Work Experience	3.8 years
University of South Carolina, Student Profile, Class of 1997 ⁴	
Total	156
Male	68%
Female	32%
International Students	18%
US Students	82%
Average Age	27 years
Average Work Experience	2.6 years

Figure 4 gives an overview of the employment profile for Thunderbird graduates in 1995–96. This information provides a general idea of the average and median salary range for the student population. At the lower end of the salary range, the figures represent foreign currency translated into US dollars and do not include additional stipends for housing and other benefits. The average salary of \$50,319 represents an 8% increase from 1994–95.

³Source: “Annual Report 1995–1996.”

⁴Source: “MIBS Class of 1997.” Fact Sheet.

Figure 4⁵
Employment Profile of
Thunderbird Students 1995–96

Salary Range	\$17,500–\$144,000
90/10th Percentile of Salary Offers	\$65,800–\$35,000
Average Salary	\$50,319
Median Salary	\$48,000

To design the study, I consulted with James Case, Assistant Vice President of Career Services at Thunderbird, to learn what data was available, how to obtain and interpret it. He provided me with over 2,500 job postings for 1995–96 from three different sources: 1) On-campus recruiters; 2) Alumni Bulletins (for Thunderbird alumni with five years or more work experience); and 3) Graduate Bulletins (for Thunderbird graduates with fewer than five years work experience).

From the MIBS program at the University of South Carolina, Arthur J. Walsh, Director of International Placement, and Jeanette H. Ross, Recruiting Coordinator of International Placement provided access to 479 job postings from 1996–97. From these, I tabulated data on preferred and required foreign languages and the business function of the total job listings.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

I examined the Thunderbird Career Services database from Summer 1995, Fall 1995, and Spring 1996. The database for this twelve-month period includes: 1) 1,153 positions requiring five years or less experience (Graduate Bulletin); 2) 1,222 positions requiring three or more years experience (Alumni Bulletin); and 3) 196 positions recruited for on-campus (On-Campus Recruiters).

The data was entered into Excel spreadsheets and analyzed in terms of 1) overall demand for foreign languages; and 2) demand for individual languages. Information from the graduate, alumni, and on-campus databases was analyzed separately due to some overlap of positions. In other words, the same position appeared occasionally on two or more lists during the same semester. If the same job posting appeared more than

⁵Data is compiled from Summer and Fall 1995 and Spring 1996 Thunderbird graduates. Source: "Annual Report 1995–1996" 22.

one semester, it was considered a separate new listing, since no data existed as to whether it represents an unfilled or additional job.

On-campus job postings follow the format illustrated below by exhibits 1, 2, and 3. Recruiters filled out a Thunderbird Career Services form to standardize the information in a readable format for the job candidates. The fully completed form contains company name, contact person, starting date, job title, language, undergraduate major, job base, relocation, salary, experience required, travel, special requirements, and job description. Normally, the entire form is not completed, which can be interpreted in different ways depending on which information is omitted. For examples of this, see Exhibits 1, 2, and 3. In this study, the omission of a language is interpreted to mean no language is required or preferred for the position.

Initially, the study planned to look at industry, job title, and business function of the postings that required a foreign language and culture. However, the job postings provided insufficient information to tabulate this data. For several reasons, complete information on industry could not be compiled. First, a number of postings came from search firms that did not mention the name of the company or industry. Second, the name of the company, even when supplied, and the job description did not always reveal the industry (see Exhibits 1 and 3). Third, a number of companies covered several industries, and insufficient information existed as to which industry the position was most directly related. Company B in Exhibit 2 describes the *industry* as *other service industry*, which is too vague a label for categorization. Thunderbird students and business professors who were interviewed emphatically indicated that the type of industry was of much less interest and importance to a job search than the job or business function (marketing, accounting, etc.). A job candidate sought work in a specific business function area such as finance, accounting, marketing, or human resources. The industry s/he worked in had far less importance. Whether they found work in telecommunications, manufacturing, transportation, or mining really did not matter that much, according to each business student and professor interviewed (Panzera, Faria, Kelscey, Heathcot, Valencia).

The job postings also did not provide enough specific information in order to analyze the job title and business function. Job titles varied too widely to categorize them with precision. For example, in Exhibit 2, Company B lists the job title as Manager-Corporate Customer Visits,

which could indicate a sales/marketing and/or a management-related position. Job function, e.g. marketing, accounting, finance, management, also was not evident in many cases, which can be seen, for example, with Company A in Exhibit 1 that lists the *job function* as *other*. Some companies had several jobs in one posting, so the function was not evident. At other times, the wording of the job description did not clarify the job function. Because the South Carolina job listings were arranged according to business function, this information was included in Table 7. However, since the information from these listings was calculated on site in Columbia, SC, time did not permit the recording of data on the business functions for the eight different languages. Consequently, the aggregate figures are presented here.

In many cases, employers leave blanks when they do not want to limit themselves to a specific area, such as *undergraduate major* (Exhibit 1) or *salary* (Exhibit 3). Frequently, *salary* is left blank when the recruiter prefers not to be tied to one particular range and chooses to negotiate this with the applicant (Case).

The exhibits below illustrate the variety of ways job postings mentioned foreign language and cultural knowledge requirements.⁶

<p>Exhibit 1 Company A Starting: ASAP Job Title: Strategic Development Manager Job Function: Other Language: Fluent English and conversational German required UG Major: Job Based: Winterthur, Switzerland Relocation: Salary: CHF 115,000 – 120,000 Experience: 3–5 years professional experience preferably in an international environment required. MBA or equivalent required. Travel %: 10% Special Requirements: Must be extremely quick and have excellent social/ communication skills. Please include GMAT score and percentile in cover letter. Also, please indicate industrial area of interest.</p>
--

⁶Source: Thunderbird On-Campus Job Posting, Spring 1996.

Exhibit 1 Company A (continued)

Job Description: Will be responsible for advising corporate executive management on portfolio management and resource allocation; evaluating acquisition candidates within task force assignments; performing corporation-wide business consulting projects and assisting divisional managers in formulating business strategies. Projects will range from strategic planning to operational troubleshooting to industrial marketing concepts.

Exhibit 2 Company B

Starting: Immediately

Job Title: Manager - Corporate Customer Visits

Industry: Other Service Industry

Job Function: Other

Language: 2 (French, Spanish, German, Italian preferred)

UG Major: Business

UG Major 2: Marketing

Job Based: Holtsville, NY

Relocation: Negotiable

Salary: \$41–48K

Experience: 5 years in marketing/communications/sales/travel/ conference planning

Travel %: 10%

Special Requirements: Strong organizational skills, interpersonal skills, initiative

Job Description: Will develop and manage a comprehensive corporate and customer visit program that positively positions Company B as an international, customer-oriented, high technology corporation. Build visitors' confidence in the company's leadership, innovation, customer commitment, and ongoing growth potential. Responsible for agenda development (in conjunction with meeting initiator), speaker recruitment, visit and meeting logistics, and internal and external communications. Primary and key liaison with corporate management and international field sales organization, coordination of product and application.

<p>Exhibit 3 Company C</p> <p>Starting:</p> <p>Job Title: Global Leadership Development Program Associate (Assistant Product Manager)</p> <p>Job Function: Marketing/Sales</p> <p>Language: Japanese, Chinese, or PanEuropean</p> <p>UG Major: Marketing</p> <p>UG Major 2: Business</p> <p>Job Based: Wooster, OH or Hudson, OH (initial assignment)</p> <p>Relocation:</p> <p>Salary:</p> <p>Experience:</p> <p>Travel %:</p> <p>Special Requirements: Demonstrated leadership ability; team player. Prefer multi-cultural background, either originally from or lived in a country outside of the US in Europe, Southeast Asia, and/or Japan. Demonstrated ability to learn and apply knowledge; excellent communication skills, both verbal and written; organized; demonstrated project management skills; computer literate.</p> <p>Job Description: Will serve in management development assignment for one year that may be extended up to two years based on capability and available openings. Assignments will be in business teams as Assistant Product Managers. As Assistant Product Managers, associates will learn how to develop and implement global strategic goals and operating plans for a designated product line and to coordinate the efforts of the business team in accomplishing those goals through utilization of an optimum marketing mix. Duties will vary by assignment; however, all will have measurable goals and a specific work plan. Typical duties include: new product planning and development, trade management, product costing and pricing, customer service, consumer communications and promotion. All participants required to manage individual development plan to completion which includes: actively participate in core skills' development courses and specific self-development activities; achieve specified work/development plans.</p>

The postings that mentioned foreign language rarely indicated the level of proficiency desired. In some cases, recruiters stated “native” be-

fore the language, indicating a preference for a native speaker of that language. At other times, they specified “conversational” showing acceptance of a lower level of proficiency. Company A in Exhibit 1 required “fluent English and conversational German,” while Company C in Exhibit 3 did not mention what degree of fluency was sought in Japanese, Chinese, or European.

The companies did not always specify preference for a specific language. Instead they sometimes indicated a need for competence in an Asian or European language, just as Company C in Exhibit 3 stated a preference for a European language. In addition, a number of companies sought knowledge of any foreign language rather than a specific one, confirming the thesis of the career service personnel at South Carolina. Approximately 6% of Thunderbird recruiters, and 4% of the MIBS recruiters, indicated that they sought *any foreign language*. Another 3% of the recruiters at Thunderbird sought *any Asian language*, while 2% looked for *any European language*. The South Carolina data revealed similar percentages: .05% desired knowledge of *Asian languages*, while 1% sought knowledge of *European languages*.

Languages other than the eight main languages studied in this research fall into the *other foreign language* category. At Thunderbird, *other languages* represent approximately 12% of total foreign language postings; at USC they account for about 7% of the total foreign language postings. *Other languages* sought by recruiters at both institutions include: Arabic, Bulgarian, Czech, Dutch, Farsi, Indonesian, Korean, Malaysian, Polish, Thai, and Turkish. Postings for *any, other, Asian* and *European languages* are recorded in the total foreign language posting figures in Tables 1 and 2. Several languages mentioned by corporate recruiters are rarely taught at US universities such as Bulgarian, Dutch, Farsi, Korean, Malaysian, and Turkish.

More commonly, companies identified one to three specific languages in which they needed employee competence. Occasionally, they indicated whether the language was required or preferred. This distinction is significant, assuming that *requiring* a language means that this factor counts more in the hiring decision than if the language skill is merely *preferred*. When a recruiter identified a language without a descriptor such as *required, preferred, desired, etc.*, it was considered *required* for data tabulation. When the language was described as *preferred, desired, a plus*, it was counted *preferred* in Tables 2–5.

Each mention of a language on a posting was recorded individually for that specific language. Sometimes companies listed more than one foreign language on the position description, when they were recruiting for more than one job, or their requirements were flexible. For example, Company C in Exhibit 3 lists Japanese, Chinese, or European in the language category. The range of languages sought and the job description suggest that the company seeks several Global Leadership Development Program Associates for a management training program, without specifying the number of positions open. None of the postings revealed the number of positions open. Some companies like Citicorp had openings in many regions, and listed over a half dozen languages in which they were interested.

Other employers planned to hire individuals with more than one foreign language, e.g., “Spanish required, Portuguese a plus.” For example, Company B in Exhibit 2 preferred to employ someone with knowledge of two European languages including French, Spanish, German, or Italian.

In listing employment opportunities, South Carolina organized its positions by business area, while Thunderbird did not. The aggregate data for the MIBS program gives a general idea of the major business areas of the job postings there. The information is not divided according to individual language, due to the complexity of the information recorded on site at South Carolina.

DEMAND FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGES BY CORPORATE RECRUITERS

An analysis of the data reveals remarkable similarities between foreign language demand by recruiters at both institutions over the two-year period. Especially striking is the parallel between percentage of job opportunities at Thunderbird and South Carolina that require and prefer knowledge of a foreign language and culture. The findings also show strong similarities in terms of which foreign languages were in greatest and least demand by employers.

Tables 1 and 2 indicate the demand for foreign languages through showing the total number of job postings, and total number with foreign languages at Thunderbird and South Carolina respectively. The figures are shown for each set of data analyzed: in Thunderbird’s case the sets include graduate, alumni, and on-campus recruiter, broken down further

into Summer 1995, Fall 1995 and Spring 1996. Table 2 provides the same data for South Carolina's two data sets of Fall 1996 and Spring 1997.

Both institutions had almost the same percentage of total positions that sought candidates with foreign language and cultural knowledge. More than half the job listings, 56% of the total South Carolina postings in 1996–97 and 57% at Thunderbird in 1995–96, preferred applicants with foreign language skills and cultural knowledge. This percentage was consistent for each of the three databases for Thunderbird, as well as for both time periods of the South Carolina data.

	Total #	Total w FL	% of Total
Graduate			
Sum 95	313	182	58%
Fall 95	412	230	56%
Spr 96	428	247	58%
Total	1153	659	57%
Alumni			
Sum 95	325	181	56%
Fall 95	315	180	57%
Spr 96	582	348	60%
Total	1222	709	58%
On-Campus			
Sum 95	19	12	63%
Fall 95	91	38	42%
Spr 96	87	56	64%
Total	197	106	54%
TOTAL	2572	1474	57%

Table 2
Demand for Foreign Languages by Corporate Recruiters at the
University of South Carolina MIBS Program 1996–1997
Total # of Job Postings and Total with Foreign Languages

	Total #	Total Fls	% of Total
Fall 1996 ⁷	273	153	56%
Spring 1997	206	116	56%
TOTAL	479	269	56%

The percent of total job postings with foreign language required and/or preferred is a useful measure of similarity in the samples from the two institutions, in spite of their size difference. This consistency of percentage over a two-year period at the two programs suggests a national trend where over half of the international business positions require or prefer candidates to have foreign language and cultural knowledge.

Tables 3 and 4 show demand for specific languages by recruiters at Thunderbird. Eight languages emerged as the most frequently cited in the job postings: Spanish, German, French, Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, Russian, Italian (ranked in order of percentage of total job postings). Table 3 shows the number of job postings at Thunderbird that *require* each of the eight major foreign languages, while Table 4 reveals the number of job postings that both *require and/or prefer* the languages listed.

Table 3
Demand for Individual FLs by Corporate Recruiters
at Thunderbird Foreign Languages Required in Job Postings

	FALL 1995			SPRING 1996			TOTAL
	Alumni	Graduate	On-Campus	Alumni	Graduate	On-Campus	
Spanish	60	66	8	121	82	25	362
Japanese	16	30	2	29	35	6	118
German	18	35	6	30	27	1	117

⁷Data for Fall 1996 comes from employment opportunities listed from July 29–December 20, 1996. Data for Spring 1997 comes from posting listed from January 7, 1997–April 18, 1997.

Table 3 continued

	FALL 1995			SPRING 1996			TOTAL
	Alumni	Graduate	On-Campus	Alumni	Graduate	On-Campus	
French	16	24	3	33	26	2	104
Chinese	18	16	2	26	22	8	92
Portuguese	5	9	4	21	17	9	65
Russian	2	8	1	10	12	2	35
Italian	2	3	1	6	2	0	14
TOTAL	137	191	27	276	223	53	907

Table 4

Foreign Languages Required and Preferred in Job Postings at Thunderbird

	FALL 1995			SPRING 1996			TOTAL
	Alumni	Graduate	On-Campus	Alumni	Graduate	On-Campus	
Spanish	70	79	11	156	100	31	447
French	27	44	4	48	41	6	170
German	27	44	8	41	41	7	168
Japanese	21	36	4	36	38	6	141
Chinese	26	19	6	39	23	8	121
Portuguese	15	13	5	41	26	11	111
Russian	2	12	2	15	14	2	47
Italian	7	4	1	12	2	2	28
TOTAL	195	251	41	388	285	73	1233

Clearly, Spanish is the most highly sought foreign language by corporate recruiters, outranking the nearest competitor almost three to one. The major difference between required and required and/or preferred languages lies in the second, third and fourth ranked languages. Looking at the numbers of postings that require a specific language in Table 2, Japanese and German are virtually tied for second place, with French a close third. When both required and preferred languages are combined, French and German vie for second place, with Japanese a close third. In both

tables, Chinese, Portuguese, Russian and Italian maintain the position of fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth places respectively.

The South Carolina figures in Table 5 add perspective, and corroborate much of the Thunderbird data. Here, too, Spanish leads by the same wide margin of almost three to one. German holds second place, while French and Portuguese vie for third. Japanese takes a close fourth place, and Chinese fifth. As in the Thunderbird data, Russian and Italian hold the seventh and eighth positions.

Table 5
Demand for Individual Foreign Languages in Job Postings
MIBS Program, University of South Carolina

Language	FALL 1996		SPRING 1997		TOTAL
	Required	Preferred	Required	Preferred	
Spanish	49	4	43	3	99
German	18	3	15	0	36
French	13	5	7	1	26
Portuguese	8	6	8	3	25
Japanese	15	0	5	1	21
Chinese	5	1	10	1	17
Russian	3	0	3	0	6
Italian	1	0	1	0	2
TOTAL	112	19	92	9	232

To compare the demand for individual languages at the two institutions, it is useful to look at the percentage of total job postings that require and/or prefer foreign language knowledge. Table 6 shows the percentage of postings in four categories: 1) Thunderbird postings that require foreign language; 2) Thunderbird postings that require and/or prefer foreign language; 3) South Carolina postings that require foreign language; and 4) South Carolina postings that require and/or prefer foreign language. In every case, Spanish was the foreign language most in demand by corporate recruiters, while Russian and Italian were in least demand. The figures in Table 6 also indicate that the demand for individual foreign languages remained quite constant over the two-year period at the two institutions. According to these figures, German appears to lead Japanese for second place in three of the four categories. Japanese takes

second place in Thunderbird postings where the foreign language is required. French holds third place in two categories, tying with Japanese in a third, and surpassed by Japanese in Thunderbird postings where a specific foreign language is required. Chinese takes fifth place at Thunderbird and sixth at South Carolina, while Portuguese holds fifth at South Carolina and sixth at Thunderbird.

Table 6
Percentage of Total Job Postings that
Require & Prefer FL Proficiency
Thunderbird and MIBS Program, University of South Carolina

Language	Thunderbird 1995–96		MIBS Program, USC 1996–97	
	% FL re- quired	% FL re- quired or preferred	% FL re- quired	% FL re- quired or preferred
Spanish	40.0	36	45	43.0
German	13.0	14	16	15.5
French	11.5	14	10	11.0
Japanese	13.0	11	10	9.0
Chinese	10.0	10	7	7.0
Portuguese	7.0	9	8	11.0
Russian	4.0	4	3	2.5
Italian	1.5	2	1	1.0
Total # Job Postings	907	1233	204	232

These figures reflect the importance of Spanish in the US, Central, and South America, followed by major languages of Europe. They also attest to the importance of the German-speaking economies in Europe, the size of the French-speaking market, the powerful gross domestic product and trading partner status of Japan, the emergence of China's vast market, and the status of Chinese as the leading Asian language of business. The limited demand for Russian may be a result of the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Table 7 depicts the functional business areas found in job postings for the MIBS program. Most of the job openings were categorized under

finance, marketing, and consulting. Management had the fourth greatest number of positions, followed by human resources and the technical. A relatively small number of positions (12 or fewer) were listed under the following headings: operations, health care, accounting, government, strategic planning, and quality assurance. As mentioned earlier, South Carolina organized its job positions by functional areas, so this information was available in aggregate form.

Table 7
Functional Business Areas in Job Postings
MIBS Program, University of South Carolina

Functional Areas	Fall 1996	Spring 1997	Total
Finance	61	51	112
Marketing	75	19	94
Consulting	50	38	88
Management	35	27	62
Human Resources	14	36	50
Technical	19	3	22
Other	7	7	14
Operations	8	4	12
Health Care		11	11
Accounting		8	8
Government	3		3
Strategic Planning	1	1	2
Quality Assurance		1	1
TOTAL	273	206	479

CONCLUSIONS

This study reflects the present demand for foreign language and cultural knowledge by corporate recruiters at the two leading US graduate schools for international managers. Collected from a two year period at the two different institutions, the data revealed several consistent findings. Slightly more than half of the positions posted at Thunderbird and South Carolina required and/or preferred knowledge of a second language and culture. Eight languages were most in demand: Spanish, German, French, Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, Russian, and Italian. About 40% of all job postings seeking foreign language and cultural knowledge

indicated a need for Spanish. Approximately 13% displayed an interest in hiring employees with German, Japanese or French skills. Chinese accounted for about 10% of total demand for these eight languages, while slightly less than 10% sought applicants with Portuguese. About 4% of these positions looked for Russian, while about 2% sought Italian.

How will this demand change in the next few years? Future studies should continue to track the demand for foreign language and cultural needs of corporations, so the academic community can work to meet the demand, and stay in closer contact with its constituency. One of the most important conclusions from this study is recognition of the urgent need for closer communication between the academic and business communities. The two cannot work in isolation, removed from and independent of each other. Cooperation and communication between faculty and businesspeople are essential for better preparation of students for careers in international business. Business language professors need to know where the students are going upon graduation: to which companies, and how they will use the languages and cultures they study. The more information we have about our students' present and future jobs, the better we can prepare them for their careers. As we show an interest in our business colleagues, and make a greater effort to understand and meet their needs, they will place a greater value on the students we train.

Business language professors can start the process of better communication through working with the Career Services office at their institution. The Career Services Office provides a readily accessible gateway to the business community. Faculty can interact with recruiters, and talk directly with them about their needs. They can study the job postings that recruit students, to gain understanding about the types of jobs students seek, and to visualize them in their new careers. Faculty can ask recruiters: What will our students be required to do? What is the interview process like? How will our students use the foreign languages we teach them? What cultural knowledge do they need to know? What will they be doing on the job? What interaction will they have, and with whom, in the target language?

Through the Alumni Affairs office as well, faculty can get in touch with former students now working in international business to ask them similar questions about their current assignments. Like understanding the demand for specific languages and cultural knowledge, this information

will help business language faculty to prepare students more effectively for careers in the global economy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was funded by a grant from the Thunderbird Research Center. I gratefully acknowledge the cooperation and assistance of James Case, Assistant Vice President of Career Services at Thunderbird, the American Graduate School of International Management. In addition, I thank Arthur J. Walsh, Director of International Placement, and Jeanette H. Ross, Recruiting Coordinator of International Placement for the College of Business Administration at the University of South Carolina for their generous assistance and provision of data. I also appreciate the invaluable help of Jeffrey S. Arpan, chair of international business, at the University of South Carolina and Robert E. Grosse, professor of international business at Thunderbird. Special thanks go to Thunderbird graduate students Dave Panzera, Lucienne Faria, John Kirkscey, and Lynne Kadela for advice and assistance with data tabulation.

REFERENCES

- “America’s Best Graduate Schools.” *US News & World Report* 10 Mar. 1997: 80–83.
- “Annual Report 1995–1996.” *Thunderbird* 51.1 (1997): 18, 22.
- Bikson, T. K., and S. A. Law. *Global Preparedness and Human Resources: College and Corporate Perspectives*. RAND Corporation Social Policy Department Series, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994.
- Brod, R., and B. J. Huber. “Foreign Language Enrollments in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 1990.” *ADFL Bulletin* 23.3 (1992): 6–10.
- Fixman, C. S. “The Foreign Language Needs of U.S.-based Corporations.” *NFLC Occasional Papers Series*. Washington, DC: National Foreign Language Center, 1989.
- Grosse, C. U., M. Critz, and W. Tuman. “The Economic Utility of Foreign Language Study.” Forthcoming in *The Modern Language Journal* (1998).

- Hall, C., and M. E. Mullins. "Second Language of Business." *USA Today* 3 Apr. 1997: B1.
- Hedderich, N. "The Demand for Business German: A Survey of German-American Companies." *Journal of Language for International Business* 8.1 (1997): 41–52.
- "MIBS Class of 1997. Fact Sheet." Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 1997.
- "The Master of International Business Studies Program." College of Business Administration brochure. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 1997.
- Vande Berg, C. K. "Corporate versus Academic Perceptions of the Need for Language Fluency." *Journal of Language for International Business* 8.2 (1997): 16–21.