Spanish Language Enrollment Trends in the United States
1950 – Present

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Introduction

Since 1950 the face of the United States population has changed dramatically due to increased immigration from Latin America. Dictatorships, revolutions, economic crises, and recessions in developing Latin American states in addition to proximity and opportunity can begin to account for the tremendous rise in Latinos across the fifty states. As a result, the United States is now the second largest Spanish speaking country in the world after Mexico with 46.9 million speakers according to the 2010 National Abstract of Statistics (“Table 10,” 2008). In the US, the term Spanish speaking includes native Spanish speakers, bilingual speakers, and Hispanic heritage speakers. This work will investigate how the growth of the Latino population and the increasing number of Spanish speakers in the US has affected Spanish foreign language enrollments and offerings in the United States since 1950 and the extent to which the national trends and impacts are reflected in a local school system and community.

Background

The idea for researching the status of Spanish in the United States came from undergraduate research conducted in 2008 about the status and study of English as a foreign language in Buenos Aires, Argentina (Aldrich, 2008). In August 2008, the city of Buenos Aires announced that beginning in 2009 all students would begin learning English in the first grade instead of the fourth grade (“Habrá inglés,” 2008). Many countries around the world have realized not only the importance of studying a foreign language, but the younger the better. The United States, however, still lacks any kind of national policy on foreign language education. In the European Union, for example, all but two countries (Ireland and Scotland) require the study of foreign language, most beginning in elementary school (“The benefits,” 2007). Proficiency in a second language has been proven to “benefit both individual learners and society” (“The benefits,” 2007, p. 2). For individuals, studies show that foreign language study promotes “academic progress in other subjects and abstract and creative thinking” and “enhance[s] a student’s sense of achievement, help[s] students score higher on standardized tests, and enhance[s] career opportunities” (“The benefits,” 2007, p. 1). In addition, “a multilingual workforce enhances America’s economic competitiveness abroad and promotes tolerance and intercultural awareness” within society (“The benefits,” 2007, p. 2).

Immigration, Population, and Fertility

Since the first European settlement of North America, the face of American society has been diverse and comprised of immigrants. Beginning in the 1960s however, one demographic has dominated: Latinos. In 1950 about 6,841 legal immigrants arrived per year from Mexico compared to about 190,000 per year in 2008 (see Figure 1). Central American immigrant numbers also increased over time from 2,151 people per year in 1950 to 47,700 people per year (not including those from Belize and Costa Rica) in 2008. Mexican immigration to the United States is of course the highest due to the country’s proximity, but in recent years the number of South American immigrants entering the United States has surpassed the number of immigrants from the next closest region in proximity, Central America; in fact, the number of immigrants

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1 There continues to be a debate about the use of the terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” in the United States. For the purposes of this paper the terms will be used interchangeably.
In terms of total immigration to the United States, Latin American immigration numbers are higher than any other region in the world. In 2008, approximately 119,100 Europeans, 105,900 Africans, 383,600 Asians, and 426,400 Latin Americans immigrated to the United States. As evident in Figure 1, Mexicans have historically dominated immigration numbers from Latin America. More individuals from Mexico immigrate to the United States per year than individuals from any other country in the world; approximately 190,000 Mexicans immigrated to the United States in 2008 compared to 80,300 people from China ("The statistical abstract: Earlier editions," 2010). As shown in Figure 2, the national origins of the foreign born population since 1960 indicate a change in immigration patterns; the red bars in the graph represent the leading country in number of foreign born individuals and the countries are listed below each bar. In 1960, the majority of the foreign born population was from European countries with the exception of Canada. The foreign born populations were more diverse in 1980 including Cuba and Mexico along with Italy, Germany, and Canada. By 1980, however, the number of foreign-born Mexicans in the US was more than double the number of foreign-born individuals from the four other leading countries. Also in 1980 in terms of national immigration statistics, the number of Mexicans entering the United States per year surpassed all other Latin American regions. In 2000, Mexican immigration was almost double the number of immigrants...
arriving from South America and more than five times the number of immigrants arriving from Central America. A complete change occurred from 1960, when foreign-born individuals were born in mostly in European countries to 2000, when the majority of foreign born individuals were born in Latin American and Asian countries. Foreign born individuals from Mexico led the top five countries of foreign-born populations in the US, which mirrors national immigration trends in which Mexico also dominates. In 2000, there were approximately 7,841,000 foreign-born Mexicans living in the United States compared to 1,391,000 Chinese foreign born (“The statistical abstract: Earlier editions,” 2010).

Figure 2

![Bar chart showing top five countries of foreign-born population living in the US by year]


Latin American countries have a long history of economic struggles and underdevelopment especially during times of political hardship including numerous coups d’états, revolutions, and dictatorships which make escaping or emigration one of the best options. Forced immigration in search of better opportunities often separates families, which can be particularly difficult for Latinos because the Hispanic culture emphasizes the importance of family. The continued increase of Latin American immigrants can partly be attributed to changes in US immigration policies and also the desire of many immigrants for family reunification. A series of immigration laws passed in the 1950s allowed for family reunification of foreign-born populations to increase in the United States. The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1952 gave an immigrant quota preference to relatives of US citizens and aliens (“Legislation 1941-1960”). In 1955 there was a notable Latin American immigration increase (in Figure 1), compared to the 1950 Latin American immigration data; perhaps the new immigration policy contributed to the increase. Another immigration act in 1959, “facilitated the entry of fiancé(e)s and relatives of alien residents and citizens of the United States by reclassifying certain
categories of relatives into preference portions of the immigration quotas. This was designed to assist in reuniting families both on a permanent basis, through the amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, and through temporary programs” (“Legislation from 1941-1960”). In the decade following the 1959 Act, immigration from Latin America to the United States moderately increased. Amendments to the INA in 1965 abolished quotas based on race or ancestry and established quotas based more on the number of immigrants allowed per region (“Legislation from 1961-1980”). Visas were to be given out on a first come first serve basis with a seven point preference system “for relatives of U.S. citizens and permanent resident aliens (for the reunification of families)” (“Legislation from 1961-1980”). In addition, of the two groups of people exempt from the numerical restrictions, one of them included immediate family members of US citizens (“Legislation from 1961-1980”).

As Latinos continued to migrate every year and the population base of Hispanics in the United States expanded, the existence and dependence on Latino social networks increased. Culturally, Latinos are collectivists and the role of the group in accomplishing mutual goals is very important. As a result, Latinos prefer to stay together in networks and communities if at all possible. This sentiment when applied to immigration indicates a push for reunification of families and groups in the new country. Leading immigration theories suggest that:

- an individual’s likelihood of migrating is increased if he or she is related to someone with prior migrating experience or is connected to someone living in the destination country.
- The presence of a network reduces the cost associated with migration and eases adaptation into a new culture. Once these networks have begun, they tend to get increasingly stronger and, over time, migration becomes institutionalized in sending communities (Garcia, 2005, p. 5).

Specifically in terms of the Hispanic culture, the above theory resonates with their strong family values and the importance of communities in their societies. For now, it appears as though the movement of people and families to the United States will persist because of the already established strong Hispanic population base and the fact that Latin American countries continue to struggle with leftist governments, limited access to quality education and healthcare, and unforeseen disasters such as the 2010 earthquakes in Haiti and Chile.

A strong contributing factor to the rise of the Hispanic population in the United States in addition to immigration is fertility rates. In 2002 the fertility rates of non-Hispanic whites were 1.8 and 3.0 for Hispanics (Huntington, 2004, p. 34). Currently, minority births make up almost half (48%) of all births in the United States, and 2010 is hypothesized to be the “tipping point” year when minority births outnumber births to whites (Yen, 2010). Many Hispanic women in the United States, particularly first generation immigrants, are at the prime childbearing age and tend to have more children than women of other races. By race in 2008, 52% of children born were to whites, 25% to Hispanics, 15% black, 4% Asian, and another 4% were multiracial (Yen, 2010).

As a result of both immigration and fertility rates, the “Hispanic population is projected to nearly triple, from 46.7 million to 132.8 million during the 2008-2050 period,” according to the US Census Bureau (Bernstein & Edwards, 2008). Also during 2008-2050, the Hispanic percentage of the “nation’s total population is projected to double, from 15 percent to 30 percent. Thus, nearly one in three U.S. residents would be Hispanic” (Bernstein & Edwards, 2008).
Immigration and Foreign Language Enrollments in the US

As immigration and reasons to immigrate to the United States have changed over time, the motivations for teaching and learning a foreign language in the United States have also experienced changes. Language learning in the United States was historically associated with the prestige of previous *linguas franca* and the process of analyzing a language such as Latin or Classical Greek; goals for language learners were more humanistic than practical (Celce-Murcia, 2001, p. 3). In discussing the decline in foreign language enrollments in the United States, Gouldner (1981) cites an emphasis on teaching foreign language literature rather than focusing on practical uses of foreign languages for a job or career. Gouldner (1981) identifies this tendency as “academic snobbery.” As a result of this attitude, students became disinclined to take a foreign language unless it was required. Students were less interested in “cultural frills” causing a decline in postsecondary enrollments nationwide; college students in particular sought practical skills applicable to finding a job or career.

The learning of Spanish in the US is now associated with a utilitarian purpose (good for career, to communicate with people in the US) in addition to general interest in the language, culture, and travel. Beginning in the 1980s, language for specific purposes (LSP) courses began to gain widespread acceptance in universities in the United States partly because of a 1980 report sponsored by the President’s Commission on Foreign Language and International studies (Grosse & Voght, 1990, p. 36). The report stated that “linguistic skills are a plus when combined with professional knowledge in fields such as engineering, business, and nursing” (Grosse & Voght, 1990, p. 36). The shift to utilitarian purposes of language learning began to take hold in the United States and picking the most useful language for US society became increasingly important as well. The top two reasons in 2006 for students believing in the importance of foreign language learning according to a study investigating perceptions and beliefs of college students were for cultural understanding and individual job/career success (Price & Gascoigne, 2006, p. 388). While the United States is a multicultural country, the Hispanic culture has a noticeable presence over other cultures in various regions in the US, and speaking Spanish is an increasingly important skill for the US job market since 34.6 million Americans speak Spanish at home (“The statistical abstract: Earlier editions,” 2010). As a result of a shift in demographics, it appears that national enrollment trends in foreign languages have changed as well to focus on the most practical language.

Spanish study is now considered better preparation in the United States than French, for example, because throughout the country the increased populations of Hispanics have not assimilated to the United States as fast as other immigrant groups in the past, perpetuating the strong existence of Hispanic communities and the use of the Spanish language (Huntington, 2004, p. 36). In many areas of the United States today, for example, the strength of Spanish is evident through bilingual customer service call centers, Spanish radio stations and newspapers, bilingual billboards, and bilingual labels on millions of products sold in the US from shampoo to spaghetti sauce. This alone could have contributed to the increased motivation to learn Spanish within American society.
National High School Enrollment Trends

Offerings and enrollments in foreign languages vary across the United States by state, county, and even town districts. Since there is no national policy or requirement for teaching foreign languages, the decision of which languages to offer, how many languages to offer, and how many levels to offer, often depends on teacher availability, demographics, economics, and even popularity. In terms of all high school students, the percentage enrolled in a foreign language of the total student body has been increasing since 1948. In 2000, 43.8% of all US high school students were enrolled in a foreign language as compared to 1948, when only 21.7% of all US high school students were enrolled. However, as evident in Figure 3, there was a significant decrease in high school foreign language enrollments from 32% in 1963 to 22% in 1982.

Figure 3

There are a number of possible explanations for the decline in foreign language enrollments between 1963 and 1982. One reason has to do with important world events, which have historically impacted language enrollments. For example, in 1915 German foreign language enrollments comprised 24% of all foreign language enrollments, but in 1922, German accounted for only .6% of all foreign language enrollments in the US (Draper & Hicks, 2002). The Great War, or World War, I had a strong impact on renewed nationalism and ethnocentrism which changed peoples’ attitudes toward studying German. In the first half of the 20th century, an Americanization movement occurred that “created this unusual deep-seated phenomenon: a historical cultural barrier to the learning of another language in a land of great ethnic diversity.”
Aldrich 8

(Wiley, 2007, p. 253). This negative sentiment has permeated the American identity and education system throughout the 20th century.

McKay & Wong (1988) describe what they call “nativist times” in the history of foreign language teaching when “the established native-English speaking segment of the American population, for various domestic and international reasons, perceives relative newcomers to the land as posing a threat to its interests as well as to the entire nation’s political unity and spiritual health” (McKay & Wong, 1988, p. 379). The decline for all foreign language enrollments between 1963 and 1982 can be interpreted as a period of nativist times because Americans were negatively influenced by the debacle of Vietnam, the economic recession of the 1970s, and a sense that the US had lost its strength on the world stage. Such factors helped infuse a greater sense of nationalism and isolationism which gave birth to the first constitutional amendments proposed in 1981 to try to make English the official language of the US (McKay & Wong, 1988, p. 379). A strong sense of nationalism influenced attitudes toward foreign languages; “one language is necessary for national unity” (Wiley, 2007, p. 253). The proposed amendments to the constitution and the establishment of a national organization in 1983 “committed to promoting the use of English in the political, economic, and intellectual life of the nation” are considered the beginnings of an English-only Movement in the United States (McKay & Wong, 1988, p. 379).

Another explanation for changes witnessed in high school foreign language enrollments over time pertains to college entrance requirements. In an article about Spanish education written in 1988, the author mentions the utilitarian use of a foreign language for college bound students for entrance or graduation as well as the fact that high school students often picked Spanish because they viewed it to be more useful than other languages (Klein, 1988, p. 172). In 2008, approximately 26% of all colleges and universities in the United States required foreign language for admission (Barnwell, 2008, p. 236). Even if a student’s choice school does not require foreign language, high school study of a language is commonly believed to enhance a student’s ability to compete against other candidates for admission. As such, 91% of high schools in the United States have offered foreign languages at least since 1997 (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2008, p. 1).

Although more than half of US high school students still do not study a foreign language, of those students who do study a language other than English, Spanish is statistically chosen more often than any other language; Spanish has represented over half of all foreign language study in high schools since the mid 1970s. As Figure 4 shows, whereas around 38% of all students enrolled in foreign language were studying Spanish in 1948, in 2000 68% of all students enrolled in a foreign language were studying Spanish. In Figure 5, the foreign languages enrollments in 2000 are shown by language in a pie chart which demonstrates the overwhelming status of Spanish as a foreign language compared to the enrollments in other languages. There are a variety of reasons why Spanish enrollments as a percent of total foreign language enrollments have continued to increase over the past several decades. With the decline in both offerings and enrollments of many other foreign languages and the rise of Spanish, one can almost see an evolutionary survival of the fittest scenario occurring with foreign language teaching. Further discussion of this theme will follow with the introduction of the national No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, but for many schools across the United States that have chiseled down their foreign language programs to only Spanish, economics is a key factor. Economics is
important because when foreign language programs are reduced or cut, many students are left with few foreign language options thus disproportionately inflating the enrollment status of the remaining languages, which most often is Spanish. In addition, there is a false “widespread belief – which has now attained the status of an urban legend – that Spanish is the easiest foreign language to learn” (Lipski, 2002, p. 1248).

**Figure 4**

![Figure 4](image)

1. Data from Draper & Hicks, (2002).

**Figure 5**

![Figure 5](image)

1. Chart and data from Draper & Hicks, (2002).
National foreign language enrollment trends indicate that since 1948 both the number of the students studying a foreign language in the United States and the number of students specifically studying Spanish have increased. However, the number of students progressing to advanced levels of foreign languages in high school is dismal; “one in three students who begin Spanish discontinue it within one year. This becomes almost two out of three who drop the language after the second year and rises to 90 per cent of students discontinuing Spanish before they reach the fourth year, the stage at which they might be expected to be acquiring a worthwhile proficiency in the language” (Barnwell, 2008, p.236). In essence, compared to the number of students enrolled in Spanish, very few leave high school with a useful competence in the language.

**College Trends**

Similar to high school foreign language enrollment trends, Spanish as a percent of total college enrollments in a foreign language has increased (see Figure 6). In addition, the number of foreign language enrollments in college and the number of undergraduate degrees conferred in Spanish since 1949 have increased slightly, but also suffered a significant depression in the 1970s and 1980s as shown in Figures 6 and 7. The decrease in college foreign language enrollments and the number of undergraduate Spanish degrees conferred mirrors the decline in overall high school foreign language enrollments in the United States during the same time period (see also Figure 3).

**Figure 6**

Figure 7

Like high school enrollments in Spanish, enrollments in advanced Spanish courses in college are lower than in introductory courses; “the ratio of modern foreign language course enrollments to all postsecondary registrations in the United States stands at 8.6 language enrollments for every one hundred total registrations; for enrollments in advanced modern language classes, the figure falls to 1.4 course enrollments per one hundred total students” (Furman, Goldberg, & Lusin, 2007, p.4). However, in both secondary schools and postsecondary schools, Spanish has been the most commonly taught language since the mid 1970s.

The increased enrollments in Spanish at the college level compared to the languages of French, German, Italian, and American Sign Language are graphed in Figure 8. The clear rise of Spanish postsecondary foreign language enrollments is seen beginning in 1970 when Spanish enrollments surpassed French enrollments for the first time. Since colleges and universities are not linked to economics and the NCLB Act to the extent of high schools, Spanish enrollments at the college level perhaps more accurately portray an increased interest in Spanish over time. As mentioned previously, foreign language study in high school is often linked to graduation or entrance requirements for college whereas only a limited number of colleges and universities require foreign language study. At the postsecondary level in Figures 6-9 a clear decrease is evident during the 1970s and 1980s in total foreign language enrollments, specific language enrollments, and foreign language undergraduate degrees conferred.
Figure 8

Postsecondary Enrollments in the Most Commonly Taken Language Courses (Other than English), 1960–2006

1. Chart and data from Humanities Resources Online.

Figure 9

Spanish, French, and German Undergraduate Degrees Conferred 1949–2007

1. Data from Degrees in French, German, Italian, and Spanish conferred by degree-granting institutions, by level of degree: Selected years, 1949–50 through 2006–07.
There are several explanations of the decline in foreign language enrollments at the postsecondary level during the 1970s and 1980s. First, the end of the baby boom resulted in the decline of postsecondary enrollments throughout the 1970s and 1980s. As the number of students declined, the number of students enrolled in foreign language also declined. Second is the continued existence at the college level of the previously discussed attitudes and motivations for the decline in high school foreign language enrollments, but to a greater extent. Students in college are more concerned about their future careers and job opportunities than high school students. The increased push for “relevance” in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in sentiments considering foreign language education as irrelevant to studies necessary to find a job (Gouldner, 1981). This was fueled by “academic snobbery” that emphasized literature and did not yet take account of practical, utilitarian uses of the language (Gouldner, 1981). More students would not enroll in a foreign language requirement unless it was required and since what was being taught was not considered relevant, attitudes for the abolition of the foreign language requirement increased (Gouldner, 1981). According to two surveys conducted in the 1970s to gather data about college students’ beliefs about foreign language requirements, “the majority of respondents felt that the foreign language requirement should be abolished” (Price, J., & Gascoigne, C., 2006, p. 384). Third is the fact that language enrollments are influenced by world politics, and during periods of nativism as seen in the 1970s and 1980s, a renewed sense of nationalism spread throughout the United States and pushed for a monolingual national identity; a 1979 article in the New York Times noted the ironic decline of interest in foreign languages as the need for them in the United States was growing (Primeau, 1979, p. 118).

**Elementary and Middle School Trends**

While the percentages of high school students studying foreign languages have increased since the mid 1980s, economic fluctuations in both rural and urban areas along with the shortage of foreign language teachers have resulted in decreased offerings in public middle schools and elementary schools, thus creating very unequal access to quality foreign language classes for younger students. Despite the proven benefits of starting foreign language studies at a younger age rather than adolescence or later, foreign language offerings in public elementary schools decreased (as seen in Figure 10) from 31% in 1997 to 25% in 2008; middle school foreign language offerings decreased from 75% in 1997 to 58% in 2008; and high school offerings remained constant at 91% during both 1997 and 2008.
The evident decreasing trend that exists for public elementary and middle school foreign language offerings is most likely linked to economics. Elective programs in school budgets are often the first to be cut when the economy of a region confronts a poor fiscal year or the dynamics change completely. According to a national 2008 survey, “schools in rural areas and schools whose students were of lower socioeconomic status (SES) were less likely to offer foreign language classes. In addition, the percentage of private elementary schools offering foreign language instruction (51%) was more than three times that of public schools (15%)” (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2009, p. 1-2). In most school districts across the US, school budgets are approved by the constituents. When times are economically tough, or populations and the average income of an area change, tax priorities change and educational programs are cut.

**NCLB ACT**

In addition, during the 1997-2008 period of decline in foreign language offerings, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed in 2001 and enacted in 2002 by President George W. Bush. The NCLB Act had nationwide negative implications for the teaching of foreign languages in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. NCLB has four essential measures:

1. **Accountability.** States are required to establish a definition of student proficiency in the core academic subjects of reading/language arts, mathematics, and science through prescribed indicators and set a timetable to bring all students in all subgroups up to the defined levels of proficiency by 2013-2014.
2. **Testing.** States must develop and administer annual tests that define the proficiency that all students are expected to reach in
reading/language arts, mathematics, and science.

3. **Teacher Quality.** Public elementary and secondary school teachers who teach core content areas are required to be "highly qualified," which is defined as having full state certification, holding a bachelor's degree, and having demonstrated subject matter competency as determined by the state under NCLB guidelines.

4. **Scientifically Based Research.** The NCLB Act requires that all educational decisions be informed by scientifically based research as defined in the legislation. The NCLB Act funds for Reading First Grants, for example, are to be used for methods of reading instruction backed by scientifically based research (Rosenbusch, 2005, p.251).

In the spring of 2003 the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Language (NECTFL) conducted an electronic survey to gather data on perceived foreign language cuts. The 165 school districts that responded represented 10 of the 14 member states, and 81% of the respondents were from the states of New Jersey Pennsylvania, and Maine. The results indicate what was later found to be a national trend in a 2008 survey; NCLB was strongly correlated with the cutting back, or eliminating in some cases, of foreign language programs: 22% of responding schools indicated cuts in their FL programs (K-12); 39% reported a reduction in class time of FL (K-12); 24% indicated elimination of foreign language teaching positions; and 22% reported the elimination of one or more foreign languages in their school/school district (Rosenbusch, 2005, p. 253). In an open-ended question asking about the possible motivation for the cuts, 75% of the 93% that responded indicated multiple reasons. The most frequently cited answers include: insufficient funds (43%), lack of administrator support (18%), and state testing (14%), “which they clarified to be testing of reading/language arts or mathematics, or both (as required by the NCLB Act)” (Rosenbusch, 2005, p. 253). A more recent national survey of foreign language teaching conducted in 2008 by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) found that:

Approximately one third of public elementary schools and secondary schools with language programs reported that their foreign language instruction had been affected by the federal NCLB education legislation. Comments from survey respondents suggested that NCLB’s focus on mathematics and reading instruction had drawn resources away from foreign languages because they are not included in the law’s accountability measures (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2009, p. 6).

**Immigration and Foreign Language Enrollments**

To better understand a possible relationship between Latin American immigration and foreign language enrollments in the United States, data was collected, grouped, and graphed together in Figure 11. Notable years include 1968, when Latin American immigration was predominantly from the West Indies (145,000 of a total of 222,000). Judging from the unstable political climate of the 1960s in the West Indies, most of the immigrants were likely Cuban or Dominican. There was a general increase in foreign language enrollment during the 1960s following the launch of the first Russian satellite, Sputnik, in 1957. This increase was quickly followed by an almost equivalent decline in the 1970s and 1980s as the desire for “relevance” diminished the importance of foreign language study. During the foreign language enrollment decline it appears
that on average immigration remained constant save for another one year spike in 1978. In the mid 1980s foreign language enrollments began to climb again and immigration began to surge in the early 1990s; both significant increases continued throughout the 1990s and 2000s. While foreign language enrollments are not necessarily shown to be tied to Latin American immigration, it is evident at least since the 1990s that foreign language enrollments and immigration numbers increased at a similar rate.

**Figure 11**

![Graph showing Latin American Immigration vs. Percent of Total High School Students Enrolled in a Foreign Language 1948-2008]

1. Data from “The statistical abstract: Earlier editions.”
2. Data from Draper & Hicks, (2002).
3. The data points of enrollment numbers per year are the diamond shapes.
4. A trendline connects the data points to show the moving average and fills in the gaps in the data with estimates based on previous data.
5. *West Indies is comprised of only Cuba and the Dominican Republic specifically starting in 1975.
6. **Central American data does not include Costa Rica and Belize in years 2005 and 2008.

**Immigration and Spanish Language Enrollments**

Latin American immigration graphed with Spanish as a percent of total foreign language enrollments in Figure 12 shows several time periods of mirrored trends. From 1968 to 1975 Spanish enrollments increased from just fewer than 40% of all FL enrollments to about 53%. The huge spike in immigration in 1968 could have helped propel Spanish enrollments in the US. In 1978, both immigration numbers and Spanish as a percent of total FL decreased until the early 1980s. During the late 1980s, Spanish enrollments began to increase again along with a noticeable surge in immigration in the 1990s and throughout the 2000s. As the immigration pool has been predominantly Latino since the mid 1970s, it is evident that Spanish has become the most popular language offered and studied in public high schools. There are numerous other cause and effect relationships that could explain Spanish’s rise to power in the field of foreign
language teaching, but as demonstrated in Figure 12, the popularity of Spanish generally appears to reflect increased immigration since the mid 1960s.

**Figure 12**

![Graph showing Latin American Immigration vs. Spanish as a Percent of Total High School Foreign Language Enrollments 1948-2008]

1. Data from “The statistical abstract: Earlier editions.”
2. Data from Draper & Hicks, (2002).
3. The data points of enrollment numbers per year are the diamond shapes.
4. A trendline connects the data points to show the moving average and fills in the gaps in the data with estimates based on previous data.
5. *West Indies is comprised of only Cuba and the Dominican Republic specifically starting in 1975.
6. **Central American data does not include Costa Rica and Belize in years 2005 and 2008.

**Marietta Case Study**

A limited case study of Marietta, Ohio was conducted to investigate which, if any, national trends of foreign language enrollments are reflected in an average small town. Understanding foreign language trends on a local level could reveal local attitudes toward learning a foreign language that may not be noticeable on a national scale. Given the time provided to conduct research, Marietta, Ohio was chosen because of its proximity to the researcher’s university. In addition, the Hispanic population and foreign language programs at the public schools were easily accessible. Demographic and economic statistics provide an important context for the Marietta area and its educational system, community, and socioeconomic climate.

Marietta is located in the south eastern corner of Ohio on the West Virginia border. Parkersburg, West Virginia is approximately fifteen minutes over the border from Marietta. In the 2000 Census data available, the survey grouped Marietta, OH and Parkersburg, WV areas together. Since 1960 the population of the Marietta-Parkersburg area has grown from 130,020 people to 151,237 people in 2000 (“Parkersburg-Marietta, WV-OH Population growth”). The Marietta-
The number of existing households in the Marietta-Parkersburg area and their yearly income are important to understand as local economics have a specific impact on the Marietta school system. In 2000, 61,424 total households in the Marietta-Parkersburg area responded to the Census survey about their economic situation based on their 1999 income. The chart below breaks down the households in the area per income range and their percent as a representation of the whole.

**Household Income, 2000 (1999 Income)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Households</td>
<td>61,424</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $9,999</td>
<td>6,692</td>
<td>10.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000 - $14,999</td>
<td>5,164</td>
<td>8.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000 - $24,999</td>
<td>10,479</td>
<td>17.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 - $34,999</td>
<td>9,429</td>
<td>15.35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the 1999 incomes available for the Marietta-Parkersburg area, the poverty status was also determined from the Census in 2000. Poverty Thresholds take into account several factors including income, family size and structure. In 2000, the Poverty Threshold for a US family of four including two related children was $17,463; however, Poverty Thresholds are misleading because they do not provide an accurate picture of what a poor family’s life is like. According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, most families would have to make twice their assigned Poverty Threshold ($34,926) in order to provide their children with basic necessities, such as housing, food, and healthcare” (‘Parkersburg-Marietta, WV-OH Poverty by age’).

When applying the 2000 Poverty Threshold to the Marietta-Parkersburg area and doubling it, the number of households making less than $34,999 that could be considered in poverty depending on their family structure is 31,764 or 51.71% of all households.

The methodology of the Marietta case study consisted primarily of interviews and surveys. Interviews were conducted with local education administrators at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, foreign language teachers at the high school, and local Hispanic residents. Anonymous surveys were conducted at the high school with students over 18 years of age enrolled in Spanish, parents of students enrolled in Spanish as a foreign language at the high school, and students studying Spanish at Marietta College for either a minor or major in the language. All qualitative research in Marietta is particularly limited and by no means represents the entire educational system or Hispanic communities of Marietta, or Ohio.

Beginning at the elementary level, the principal of Washington Elementary School in Marietta, OH was interviewed in December of 2009. The school has approximately 362 students in grades K-5 with an estimated 2% diversity rate. Foreign languages are not offered at the school and have not ever been offered that the principal knew of. When asked why foreign languages are not offered, he responded that foreign languages are not required and the state does not test foreign languages. Also, there is no funding. In Marietta there is a levy system in which the school boards have to ask the public to cover the budget of operation costs; with an estimated 51% of the population in or near the poverty line in the Marietta-Parkersburg area, levies involving economics and taxes are often difficult to pass. According to the principal, the elementary school is always looking for additional ways to cuts costs, not increase them by adding foreign language programs. The principal indicated that he did not perceive a strong expressed desire for foreign language in the elementary school, but was aware that Marietta residents were not happy about the foreign language cuts that occurred at the Marietta Middle School about five or six years ago. In January 2010, however, a volunteer program began to offer Spanish lessons at Washington Elementary School for 30 minutes after school several days a week. The parent who offered to teach is a Marietta community member from Peru who later
agreed to an interview. While there are only 15 spots in the program, according to the principal over 100 students indicated interest and are on a waiting list (personal communication, December 7, 2009).

According to an interview with the principal at the Marietta Middle School, there are approximately 670 students there, with less than 10% estimated diversity. The school previously offered foreign language but it was cut about five to six years ago which did upset many parents. The principal mentioned that if they could offer any foreign language classes the next day that they would be able to fill them without hesitation. In his opinion, both parents and staff would love to have more foreign language offered, but right now there are no resources, which is partly self inflicted he said because of state testing in reading/language arts, math, and science; the state testing is required by the NCLB Act. Due to resources, the Middle School is essentially down to the nuts and bolts of course offerings; the only electives offered are choir and band (personal communication, December 10, 2009).

At the Marietta High School there are about 950 students including vocational students. There are seven black students, nine Hispanics, three Asians, two American Indians, and ten multi-racial students. The principal was surprised to realize that the school had more Hispanic students enrolled than black students. Foreign language is not required by the high school for graduation, but is necessary for graduation with honors, or a foreign language class can fulfill a required one credit category for graduation that includes a number of other class options for students to take; most students who take a foreign language are college bound. In the opinion of the principal, there is not a particular demand in the community to learn Spanish because the community lacks a large Hispanic population and because “the state of Ohio has been cracking down on illegals that drive to the stores etc.” Unless there is some kind of surge in Hispanic population in the area, he does not anticipate a change in the current situation (personal communication, December 9, 2009).

The high school currently offers Spanish and French foreign language classes, but will be eliminating French in the 2010-2011 school year. There are approximately 390 students currently enrolled in the four levels of Spanish offered and about 30 students enrolled in the French III/IV combined class. Spanish course offerings are divided into 15 different class periods while French numbers are only sufficient to fill two class periods. With 420 students (or 44% of the high school population) enrolled in foreign language, the Marietta High School reflects the exact 2000 national average for the percentage of high school populations enrolled in a foreign language as seen in Figure 3. Spanish makes up 93% of the foreign language enrollments compared to the national average of about 68%, which is most likely disproportionately affected by both the lack of interest in French (only 30 students) and the fact that Spanish offerings outnumber French. Consistent with the national trend, more students at the Marietta High School are enrolled in introductory courses versus advanced courses in foreign language; there are six sections of Spanish I with 166 students, five sections of Spanish II with 146 students, two sections of Spanish III with 32 students, one section of combined Spanish III/IV with 32 students, and one section of Spanish IV with 14 students (personal communication, December 9, 2009).
Only within the last decade has Marietta High School significantly reduced foreign language programs. Research at the high school library with the school’s yearbooks revealed that in 1950 the school offered Latin, French, German, and Spanish, along with two different Latin Clubs, two German Clubs, a French Club, and a Spanish Club. In the 1960s a Spanish National Honor Society appeared as well. In the 1980s Russian offerings and a Russian Club began at the school bringing the total of languages offered to five. In 1985 the school offered French, German, and Spanish clubs. In 1990 the only clubs remaining were the Spanish Club and National Honor Society, which is still true in 2010. The 1990 yearbook also mentioned a number of financial troubles in Marietta and the inability to pass levies to increase school funding. Voters had defeated five levies and students and families marched in Marietta to try to boost support. The levies continued to fail and the school board was eventually replaced. Students had to undertake fundraising campaigns throughout the 1990s to support extracurricular activities at Marietta High School (see Appendixes D, E). The trend of the decline in language clubs and organizations is significant because it mirrors the national decline of other foreign language enrollments, reduced offerings in a variety of foreign languages at the secondary level, and the rise of the Spanish language having the most offerings and enrollments (personal communication, March 15, 2010).

Responses of the three foreign language teachers at the high school indicate changing attitudes toward foreign language over time. They all indicated that recent enrollments in Spanish have been particularly high, but did tend to fluctuate over time. School politics were cited several times by the teachers for reasons why students tended to prefer one language or one teacher over another as the easiest option, since many were not interested in taking a foreign language. In the teachers’ opinions, the causes for changes in the foreign language trends in the high school include fewer offerings of other languages, changes in parent attitudes, and economics related to national testing; many students are known to be of lower socioeconomic status and an emphasis of school funds on improving test scores has redirected funds away from foreign language programs. The teachers made clear that every year they have to fight to keep sections of the foreign language classes if they are not “full enough”. The teachers also indicated that a large percentage of their students are not particularly interested in taking Spanish. In terms of French however, the teacher did note that the students consistently expressed a higher interest in French culture than did some of her Spanish students in their reasons for taking the language (personal communication February 8, 12, 22, 2010).

High School Student Survey

The results of anonymous surveys of nine high school students enrolled in Spanish at Marietta High School were informative, but limited. The survey questions can be found in Appendix A. Only nine high school students above the age of 18 enrolled in Spanish courses were able to participate. Such a limited number of participants can by no means represent the whole, but the open ended responses were more thoughtful than anticipated and are important to note what high school students, even a limited group, think about foreign language education. When asked why they were studying Spanish, four students mentioned a requirement for college or to graduate with Honors from the high school, three mentioned the ability to speak Spanish as being useful because many people speak it in the United States and around the world and it will be useful in the future, and two students mentioned a genuine interest in the language and culture for studying abroad or traveling. Only one student had travelled to a Spanish-speaking country
All nine students agreed that Spanish is useful in the United States. Their attitudes about Spanish in the US correspond to the increased utilitarian motivation for studying foreign languages in the US during the past few decades and the shift of foreign language teaching to focus on communicative competence rather than grammar memorization. In response to what influenced the students’ interest in Spanish the most, six of nine students (66.7%) answered that requirements exerted “Great Influence” on their choice, while five students (55.6%) identified “Future Career” as having “Some Influence” on them. All nine students also indicated that the “Media” had “Some Influence.” The majority of students responded that “Friends” and “Parents” had “No Influence” on their interest in Spanish. When asked to provide additional comments on foreign language education, two students responded that there should be more languages and one student said more offerings are important to get more students interested and excited about languages: “If a student is required to take a foreign language they do not want to take they will refuse to learn and work.” Another student commented that “foreign language teachings of English appear to be much better than American teachings of foreign languages.” Three other students mentioned that foreign languages need to start being taught at a younger age. Their cited reasons include that most Europeans are at least bilingual (native language + English) and that it would be easier to learn at a younger age. Another student cited the cultural benefits of learning a foreign language, writing, “Since we live in such a small town, it is important for us to know about other cultures before we leave for college.”

**Marietta College Student Survey**

An additional survey was conducted of Marietta College students majoring or minoring in Spanish for their undergraduate degree (Appendix B). Forty-two students responded to the survey and two of those students identified themselves as native speakers of Spanish. The surveys are not meant to represent the majority of college students, but rather provide insight into their specific motivations for foreign language study and Spanish in particular. The questions asked on the Marietta College survey are almost identical to those asked on the high school student survey for comparison. First of all, 33 students (82.5%) studied Spanish for four years during high school. The length of time Spanish was studied in college greatly varied as the survey was not administered to one particular age group and included students in various stages of completion of their major or minor. Sixteen students (38.1%) indicated their genuine interest and love for the language and culture as their primary reason for studying Spanish. Fourteen other students (33.3%) specifically mentioned that they were studying Spanish for a particular use in the future such as a job or to generally increase their potential opportunities. Other reasons college students listed for studying Spanish include the language’s presence in the United States, millions of Spanish speakers in the US and abroad, improved verbal skills, and to expand their mind.

Similar to the high school student respondents, all of the college students surveyed felt that Spanish is useful in the United States. The open-ended responses were again very interesting and helpful for the college student survey. In terms of the question about Spanish in the US there were several notable additional comments; one student commented that “Sometimes
[Spanish is useful in the US]. There is not usually much need for me to speak Spanish in the US,” which contradicts another response, “I am from Philadelphia, which is very multicultural, so speaking Spanish could help in day to day experiences.” It would be interesting to know where the first student is from; is s/he from a small mostly rural area like Marietta, Ohio? In addition, students said that “The Hispanic culture plays a huge role in the US; socially, culturally, and economically,” and “Spanish is the second language spoken in this country. It is important the Americans start recognizing diversity.” More than half of the college students had not yet traveled to a Spanish speaking country, but all students expressed interest in using their language skills abroad.

The majority (88.1%) of the college students surveyed responded that they will continue their Spanish studies after graduation. Similar to the high school student survey, most college students indicated that their parents had “No Influence” on their interest in Spanish. For the college students, 28 students (66.7%) said that “Future Career” had “Great Influence” and foreign language being “Required” had “Some Influence;” the inverse was true for the high school students, for whom “Future Career” had “Some Influence” on their interest and foreign language being “Required” had “Great Influence” on their interest to study Spanish. The differences between the college and high school responses are explained by the utilitarian shifts in motivation for learning a foreign language and the proximity of graduation for the college students who need to find jobs and know Spanish is useful for the US job market.

The additional comments about foreign language education provided an outlet for many of the respondents to complain about the status of teaching foreign languages in the US and even specifically the Modern Languages Department at Marietta College. Responses include, “It [FL education] needs to be expanded upon in the US! Our stereotype is one of ethnocentrism, egoism, and ignorance,” “Learning about another culture heightens one’s knowledge of the working world and helps them to better interact in a globalized environment,” “it should be mandatory in schools that way students will completely benefit from it,” “I wish I had started learning a foreign language at a younger age. I feel that I would be more comfortable speaking Spanish and also that I would be able to learn multiple languages rather than just focusing on trying to be bilingual for 8 years,” “I think that there should be state-mandated minimum requirements for foreign language education. Some schools do not require their students to learn a foreign language, and I believe that it’s such an important and useful skill that schools would be remiss to not require it,” and “Hire another professor, make the major/minor more inclusive of what other schools are able to offer their modern language students. Marietta’s program is SEVERELY lacking…but that is not a fault of the professors we have now!!”

Parent Survey

A letter about an online survey for parents (see Appendix C) was sent home with Marietta High School students enrolled in Spanish which resulted in 34 online responses and two requests for a paper copy which they filled out and returned. For two reasons, this survey is also a limited portrait of parent attitudes toward foreign language. First, the survey was conducted online and not all families have internet access. Second, as seen through their responses those parents that did respond tend to be the more involved, well traveled, and perhaps more educated parents in the Marietta area. According to one of the teachers at the Marietta High School, the
socioeconomic status of families in the area also influences the attitudes and perceptions of the students toward foreign language education. For many years Marietta was a thriving industrial region and factory jobs were common and passed down through generations. If there is a sentiment among low-income residents of geographic immobility for their entire career and the expected lifetime of their children as well, then foreign languages are seen as unnecessary to the Marietta job market and therefore unimportant; if students are not college bound, many see no need for foreign language (personal communication February 8, 12, 22, 2010).

When asked about why their student was enrolled in Spanish language classes, many respondents cited a variety of reasons, but at least 22 of the 36 parents (61.1%) mentioned a school requirement to graduate or get into a college. As mentioned earlier, the percentage of colleges and universities actually requiring foreign language study in high school is low (26%), although the perception continues to permeate attitudes and motivations toward language study. Only three parents cited that their child had a genuine interest in learning a foreign language. Another six reasons cited were general statements about their student’s future such as that Spanish is useful in the United States or is useful for traveling. Seventy-two percent of the parent respondents had studied a foreign language at some point in their lives and of the 26 who had, 15 studied Spanish, 4 studied German, and 5 studied French.

In reference to foreign languages specifically offered at the high school level, 77.8% of the respondents would like to see the number of foreign languages offered increase. Eight respondents said they would like them to remain the same. The additional reasons offered in support of an increase include that “more exposure is better,” “we need to be more competitive with other schools,” “our children should be offered options – I don’t believe a levy will be passed until the curriculum at the high school is increased,” “benefit for employment,” and “we are in a global [society] and therefore need to treat our children’s education as such.”

The parents were more divided in responses to a question about whether or not the number of class periods and/or the levels of instruction of foreign languages should increase, decrease, or remain the same; 52.8% said they should increase while 47.2% said they should remain the same. Expanded reasons provided include “I’ve been told there are too many students in each of the Spanish I classes,” “There is currently only one Spanish IV class offered. In order to get that class, a minimum of 18 students had to sign a petition saying they would be interested in such a class. While I understand the cost constraints, if there are students who wish to learn, the school should not deny them the opportunity based on small class sizes,” and “Marietta High School has lost foreign languages. We need to offer additional class periods and additional languages to the students to enhance their chances in our global economy.”

Only five respondents reported that they would not like to see foreign language offerings at the elementary or middle schools and two additional respondents left question marks. The remaining 29 parents wanted to see an increase, and the majority who did referenced the fact that languages would just be easier at a younger age and therefore attract more lasting interest in other cultures. Some of the notable responses include, “yes, I sent my sons to a private elementary school because Marietta public schools did not offer sufficient opportunities,” “Yes! Students learn best when they are young. The younger the better for learning a foreign language,” and “No too difficult for them.”
When asked which language they would choose if their child could study any foreign language, the majority of parents chose Spanish. Five parents chose Chinese, and two parents chose German, French, and American Sign Language, respectively. Those who chose Spanish cited the US population and job markets for utility of the language; Chinese in particular was chosen by some parents as being necessary for the economy, globalization, and trade.

The final question of the survey asked the respondents to relate the degree to which they and their families interact with Marietta’s Spanish speaking community. Almost 53% said they never interact with the Hispanic community, 33.3% indicated that they only interact with them at a business, 8.3% said they were acquainted with someone from the community, and 5.6% said they were good friends with someone from the Spanish speaking community. In the space for additional comments, seven respondents wrote that they didn’t know any Spanish speakers, did not have a reason or opportunities to interact with anyone from the Spanish speaking community, and did not speak Spanish. Several people said that they knew Hispanic families because their children were friends with Hispanic children and others indicated knowing Spanish speakers from community involvement such as exercise classes. Three parent respondents indicated that their only interaction with the Hispanic community was during meals out at the local Mexican restaurants in Marietta, Las Trancas and Tampico.

The Hispanic Community in Marietta

In Marietta specifically, the Hispanic community is most numerous and centered around the two Mexican restaurants in town. Including Parkersburg, there are at least nine Latino culture restaurants in the Marietta-Parkersburg area (not counting the fast-food chain Taco Bell) with the majority being Mexican restaurants. In Marietta, fifteen Hispanic residents were interviewed who work at either Las Trancas or Tampico to learn about their life in Marietta and what challenges they face, if any. Immigration and legal status being a delicate topic, the interview questions were limited to basic if not vague questions to avoid discomfort of the interviewees or their managers; all interviews were conducted in Spanish. While the qualitative results are limited, the lack of interaction between the Spanish-speaking residents and the Marietta community is truthfully represented.

Of the 15 respondents, 13 were from Mexico, one from Honduras, and one from El Salvador. As evident through the Marietta-Parkersburg statistics, Mexicans make up the majority of the Hispanic residents in the area, which reflects the national trends of immigration, Mexicans being the majority by far, on a local level. When asked what their hobbies were in their free time to try to get a glimpse at their community involvement, the majority responded that they do not have much time for anything besides work; most of them work 12 hours a day six days a week, which adds up to 72 hours per week; some mentioned working out, playing soccer, and watching TV/movies. Three respondents stated that they had completed some college, four had completed high school, four had completed middle school and/or some years in high school, and four had completed basic elementary school or less; one respondent could not read or write since he left school before completing the third grade. Eight of the fifteen interviewees had never studied English, one had learned English from the street, four had studied a basic level of English, and one had studied English for five years or more. Nine of the Hispanic interviewees have family in
the Marietta-Parkersburg area; however, the majority said that most of their family remains in their home country (personal communication, January 2010).

Many of the Hispanic residents who work at the restaurants think Marietta is a nice place to live. While some indicated they think Marietta is boring and lacks a lot of things to do, they also said that Marietta is a very quiet, peaceful, and safe place, which appeared to be important to them. Very few respondents demonstrated any knowledge of community events or opportunities; one interviewee mentioned attending St. Mary’s Church and the Church as a source of community information. The St. Mary’s Catholic Church offers a monthly mass in Spanish. Several respondents mentioned that they would be interested in a place in the community where they could learn more English. Someone associated with the Church supposedly began teaching English in 2010, but more information was not available. The interviewees also mentioned that they had heard of English programs in the past, but were never able to attend because of their scheduled hours at work. Two of the Hispanics were interested in improved soccer field facilities in Marietta and another interviewee wanted to see a store for purchasing Latino food. One respondent commented that Marietta is a good place to work and there are nice people, but also many ignorant people. Another interviewee appeared frustrated with Marietta when he said that there need to be more activists that are willing to help orient and provide information to new residents and foreigners in particular; few community resources are dedicated to helping Hispanics (personal communication, January 2010).

Other community members that were interviewed include a married couple from Peru and Uruguay, respectively. They have two children that attend the Marietta city schools and have lived in Marietta for about eight years. The woman is teaching the Spanish after-school classes at Washington Elementary School; she is currently working on her Bachelor’s of Arts degree at Marietta College and wants to obtain a license to teach Spanish. One of her dreams is to open a language center in Marietta to be able to provide a better service to more students who want to learn a foreign language. Her idea was inspired by the 100 students who are on the waiting list to join the after-school Spanish class. For now, she conducts the program on a volunteer basis for the benefit of the children; “they are so enthusiastic and some do already know some Spanish words from programs like “Dora the Explorer” on the Nickelodeon TV channel.” However, from her experience as a parent and teacher after school, she said that many parents in the area do not seem to care particularly about learning languages and many wrongly assume that she does not speak English. She and her husband are primarily in Marietta because of his job as an engineer, but she would like to move back to Peru or Uruguay, or a US city where there are more Latinos so she could bring her family here and they would feel comfortable (personal communication, January 28, 2010).

The husband offered a number of opinions about Marietta and his view of the education system. He said that life in Marietta can be difficult because he does not share the same traditions and culture with the majority of the town’s population and it is hard to get used to the different traditions. However, there are some advantages to living in Marietta that are more difficult to find in other cities such as a sense of security. It is a good place to raise children, and it is affordable; a common person can buy a house without a problem. He thinks that the people in Marietta are very friendly, always saying “Hi,” but it is obvious that there are few Hispanics; they are very easy to identify in Marietta (personal communication, February 6, 2010).
In terms of the education system, he generally believes that it is better in other countries such as Peru or Uruguay (or perhaps it used to be when he studied), and his wife agreed. His main argument was that parents have to complement the education their children receive and parents in the United States wait and want the school system to do everything. Parents have to pass on the education to raise good children. His comments were interesting and relevant to the Marietta school system because of the economic situation in the area. The less involved parents do rely on the school for complete education of their children which forces the reallocation of resources in the area to the NCLB testing subjects and away from “irrelevant” subjects such as foreign language. The education system in Marietta and the US is not bad, he said, just acceptable. While no American wants to hear from a foreigner that the education system is just acceptable, when it comes down to economic priorities, education is hardly ever number one, especially for low income residents. He believes that the future of the country lies in the efforts of both the parents and the teachers (personal communication, February 6, 2010).

The interviews with the Hispanic community in Marietta demonstrate that Hispanics have a very marginalized role in Marietta, Ohio. As a result, the community is lacking the resources that some Spanish speakers need. The Americanized presence of Spanish speaking Hispanics is seen when entering Tampico or Las Trancas, but community members return to the 98% white community as soon as they finish their meal. Due to the lack of integration and lack of a noticeable Hispanic presence in the community, Spanish language enrollments at the high school are not impacted by Latinos; the main source of influence on foreign language enrollments in Marietta is economics. This suggests that while national trends for foreign language enrollments and Spanish language enrollments have increased with Latin American immigration rates since the late 1980s, rural areas and/or small towns such as Marietta with few Hispanic residents have not seen an increase in relevancy for learning the Spanish language. There are many cities across the country that have large populations of Spanish speaking Hispanics which probably increases the relevancy of learning Spanish in those areas, thus increasing enrollments. Notable increases in Spanish enrollments in larger cities may overshadow the distorted increase in Spanish enrollments that are probably found in many small towns such as Marietta. The increase in national Spanish enrollments is mirrored in Marietta, but not because of increased relevancy from large populations of Hispanic immigrants or Latino residents. The number of students enrolled in Spanish has increased at the Marietta high school due to the reduction in languages offered; when there is only one language offered at a school the enrollment numbers will see a distorted increase.

Interviews with Hispanic workers at the restaurants were relevant not only to foreign language enrollments, but also to reveal areas in Marietta where change is needed to help and to recognize the growing diverse population. As migrants continue to stay in Marietta, the impacts of their settlement will soon be evident. This is supported by a 2007 article in USA Today, which stated that the arrival of new Hispanic immigrants to the Appalachian region, which includes Marietta, OH, is expected to increase; “Hispanics are now streaming into historically homogenous, overwhelmingly white West Virginia and other parts of northern Appalachia, including western Pennsylvania, southern New York and Ohio” (Smith, 2005). Jeffrey Passel, from the Pew Hispanic Center in Washington, DC, said that many southeastern states had almost no immigrants 15 or 20 years ago, but once the arrival of immigrants begins, “it draws on
immigrants in other areas in the U.S. and eventually sets up strings in migration, usually back to Mexico” (Smith, 2005).

By word of mouth the existence of jobs and economic opportunity in Appalachia has spread and translated to a growth in diversity. Since 2000, nearly half of the new 321,000 residents to Appalachia were minority, with 80,000 of those being Latinos and racial and ethnic diversity is on the rise (Smith, 2005). Changes in demographics have slowly crept up on many rural white areas of Appalachia and problems arise with healthcare and education as local institutions are not prepared for the explosive growth (Smith, 2005). So far in Marietta, diversity is easily ignored due to the “lack” of diverse residents creating a gap in not only the foreign language offerings, but education for students whose first language may not be English. As this gap in education widens in Marietta because of economics, Hispanics are continuing to migrate to small towns slowly increasing the pressure on its institutions to recognize their existence and needs. One Hispanic worker emphasized their needs in his concern about wanting activists and people willing to help the Hispanics in Marietta. If the marginalized role of Hispanics continues as more immigrants arrive, challenges that Marietta is not prepared for will arise beyond the education system.

Conclusions

The focus of this investigation was to understand how the growth of Hispanics and Spanish speakers in the United States has affected Spanish foreign language enrollments and offerings since 1950 and the extent to which the national trends are reflected in a local school system and community. On a national level there were various periods of decline in foreign language enrollments that did not mirror the steady increase of Latin American immigrants. However, there were also some noteworthy patterns since the late 1980s of a significant increase in Latin American immigration and foreign language enrollments, particularly Spanish.

When these trends were investigated in the Marietta, Ohio school system, the existing Hispanic population appeared to have no effect on the foreign language enrollments. The major sources of influence on foreign language enrollments in a small town such as Marietta were found to be the economics of the region and the NCLB Act. From the Marietta parent surveys, major support for foreign language was indicated. However, when it comes time to vote for school system levies, these knowledgeable and supportive parents are either not the majority or are not willing to open their wallets, or both. When foreign language is not seen as relevant, which it is not when considering the Marietta job market and the “nonexistent” Hispanic population, it is hard for local citizens to imagine a practical use for foreign language.

A shift in motivation to study a foreign language in the United States was revealed, and increased diversity in the United States has diminished “academic snobbery” and increased relevancy of foreign language learning resulting in high utilitarian motivation and increased enrollments. The existence of utilitarian motives behind foreign language learning was found in Marietta High School students and Marietta College students. The high school students primarily noted that foreign languages are required for college, and college students indicated that foreign language is important for the job market.
The Marietta case study discovered areas of improvement for foreign language teaching. Several high school and college students indicated an interest for change in the foreign language teaching styles away from a textbook approach toward conversation. While there are approximately 1,345 people who speak Spanish at home in the Marietta-Parkersburg area, there are currently no programs in Marietta established to utilize the native language resources found in the community perhaps because hardly any Marietta resident realizes their growing numbers. A mutual learning opportunity is evident as many Hispanics want to improve their English and students in the Marietta area want opportunities to practice Spanish. Practical application of foreign language skills is needed on a national level as well because the national trend shows that many students abandon foreign language study after the introductory levels and those students who do study Spanish for four years in high school often do not obtain a useful communicative competence.

One of the most pertinent findings of the research was the link between the Hispanic community, NCLB, economics, and foreign language enrollments, particularly in Marietta, Ohio. Culture and languages are often viewed as irrelevant in terms of education and the job market in Marietta because of high poverty levels, the push for improved education in state-tested content areas, and short-sighted white nativist attitudes. The existence of diversity in Marietta is ignored as well as the resources Hispanic residents may have to offer the community. As a result, foreign language offerings have decreased in Marietta High School from five languages with thriving clubs and honor societies to only one foreign language in the 2010-2011 school year: Spanish. As the relevancy for Spanish continues to grow in cities across the US because of more Latin American immigrants, and more languages are cut in rural areas because of economics, national Spanish enrollments will continue to increase.
References


Appendix A

Marietta High School Student Survey about Spanish

1. How old are you?
   - 18
   - 19
   - 20
   - [ ] Other (please specify) 

2. Gender:
   - [ ] Male
   - [ ] Female

3. How many years have you studied Spanish?
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5+

4. Why are you taking Spanish?

5. Have you traveled to a Spanish speaking country?
   - [ ] YES
   - [ ] NO
   - [ ] If YES please specify which one(s):

6. Are you interested in traveling to a Spanish speaking country one day?
   - [ ] YES
   - [ ] NO
7. Do you think Spanish is useful in the United States?
☐ YES
☐ NO
Please explain:

8. Do you think you will continue your Spanish studies after high school?
☐ YES
☐ NO
Please explain:

1. What has influenced your interest in Spanish the most?

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10. What other comments do you have about foreign language education?
Appendix B

Marietta College Student Survey about Spanish

1. How old are you?
   - [ ] 18
   - [ ] 19
   - [ ] 20
   - [ ] 21
   - [ ] 22
   - [ ] Other (please specify)

2. Gender:
   - [ ] Male
   - [ ] Female

3. How many years have you studied Spanish?
   - [ ] 1 year
   - [ ] 2 years
   - [ ] 3 years
   - [ ] 4 years
   - [ ] High School
   - [ ] College
   - [ ] Other (please specify)

4. Why are you taking Spanish?

5. Have you traveled to a Spanish speaking country?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] If Yes please specify which one(s):
6. Are you interested in traveling to a Spanish speaking country one day?  
☐ YES  
☐ NO  
Please explain:__________________________________________

7. Do you think Spanish is useful in the United States?  
☐ Do you think Spanish is useful in the United States? YES  
☐ NO  
Please explain:__________________________________________

8. Do you think you will continue your Spanish studies after graduation?  
☐ YES  
☐ NO  
Please explain:__________________________________________

2. What has influenced your interest in Spanish the most?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>No Influence</th>
<th>Some Influence</th>
<th>Great Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Career</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. What other comments do you have about foreign language education?
Appendix C

Marietta Parent Survey about Foreign Languages

1. How many children do you have in the Marietta Schools?
   [ ] 1
   [ ] 2
   [ ] 3
   [ ] 4
   [ ] 5+

2. In your opinion, why are your child(ren) taking a foreign language class?

3. Have you ever studied a foreign language?
   [ ] Yes
   [ ] No
   If Yes please specify which one(s):

4. Have you ever traveled abroad?
   [ ] Yes
   [ ] No
   If Yes please specify where:

5. How important do you believe foreign language is to your child’s education?
   Not Important  Somewhat Important  Important  Very Important
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foreign Language is:</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Would you like to see the number of foreign languages offered in the Marietta High School:
- ☐ Increase
- ☐ Decrease
- ☐ Remain the same

Why?

7. Would you like to see the amount of class periods and/or levels of instruction in foreign languages in the Marietta high school:
- ☐ Increase
- ☐ Decrease
- ☐ Remain the same

Why?

8. Would you like to see more foreign language offerings at the local elementary schools or middle schools? Why or why not?

9. If your child could study any foreign language at all, which one would you choose? Please explain briefly.
10. Please relate the degree to which you and your family interact with Marietta's Spanish speaking community:

☐ Never
☐ Only at a business (for example, a restaurant etc)
☐ Acquainted with (for example, members of same church or other group etc)
☐ Good friends

Please explain:
Appendix D

Image 1 – A few paragraphs and images from the 1990 Marietta High School yearbook describing financial struggles.

SCHOOL FUNDING CREATES PROBLEMS

Fundraisers became familiar projects for students who wanted their extracurricular activities to remain afloat. Voters had defeated five levies since the first appeared on the ballot in November, 1987. This levy consisted of an 8 mil bond issue combined with an 8.5 mil operating levy. The bond issue would have funded building repair, including a massive renovation of the middle school, while the operating levy would have created $12.6 million to cover the costs of teacher salaries, new textbooks, sport programs, and group activities. It was defeated by a margin of 3238 votes.

Since then the bond issue has been taken off. The goal was to sacrifice the building repair in hopes of gaining much-needed extra money to fund the school system. Unfortunately, this change still did not produce a victory for the school levy. When the most recent levy approached in August, both parents and students launched a major effort to gain public support. Countless letters appeared in the newspaper, pro-levy signs sprang up in numerous yards, and pro-levy supporters joined forces for a parade and rally in downtown Marietta.

Anti-levy activist Merv Wendelken led the strong force that opposed any new tax increases. To demonstrate his protest, he spoke out against the school board and the superintendent and placed his famous "NO LEVY" signs throughout the area.

As the votes came in it was evident that it was going to be close largely due to the tremendous effort of the levy supporters. But again, the levy went down with 3815 for and 4057 against. Funding for sports and other extracurricular activities became non-existent and students undertook a multitude of fundraisers to support their activities and pay their advisors.

Shortly before the last levy defeat, Superintendent George Kingsmore announced his retirement beginning at the end of the 1989-1990 school year. The board that existed before the levy was also replaced by a new board consisting of Reverend Don Schuler (president), Doug Wendelken, Merv Wendelken, Megan Krivchenia, and Gwen Noe. No one knows when or if the new board will place another levy on the ballot, but until it does, fundraising projects will continue into the 1990’s.

**Students, athletes, and parents marched through downtown Marietta to encourage people to "VOTE YES."**

**Board members included ROW 1: President Don Shuler, Doug Wendelken, ROW 2: Megan Krivchenia, and Gwen Noe. Merv Wendelken was absent when the photo was taken.**

**Many levy opponents supported Merv Wendelken’s election to the school board.**
Appendix E

Image 2 – Photos of students fundraising for clubs in the 1990 Marietta High School yearbook.