



## Heritage Language Speakers Excel at Learning Other Flagship Languages

From 2007 to 2009, the Title VI National Heritage Language Resource Center (NHLRC) at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), conducted a 45-question survey of heritage language speakers<sup>1</sup> who were pursuing postsecondary studies in their heritage languages. The survey objective was to identify students' backgrounds and attitudes about their heritage languages as well as their goals in studying those languages.

One open-ended question sought to solicit the students' perceived benefits of knowing a heritage language: "How has your knowledge of your heritage language affected your experience in school?" One popular response pertained to learning other languages more easily. UCLA Russian Flagship Program Director Olga Kagan (who also heads the NHLRC and was project director for the survey) confirms, "Students found that their home language gives them a clear advantage in learning other languages."

Perhaps reflecting the enduring truth in this finding, a growing cadre of heritage language speakers is studying nonheritage critical languages in Flagship programs. Of 1,060 registered Flagship students, 253 (24 percent) are heritage language speakers. And of those 253 students, 182 (72 percent) are studying languages different from their first language. Four such students are profiled in this article: a heritage speaker of Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi who is studying Chinese; a heritage speaker of Spanish who is studying Arabic; a heritage speaker of Bengali who intends to become fluent in Mandarin Chinese; and a heritage Tagalog speaker who studies Arabic.

Mrinali Dhembala grew up speaking Hindi at home. She was born in the United States but moved to India after completing kindergarten and lived there through high school. Her first exposure



Two featured heritage speakers are studying a nonheritage language in the Hunter College Chinese Flagship Program: Mrinali Dhembala (middle row, left) and Rauful Hossain (middle row, right).

to the Chinese language was in India, after already having learned Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi—all of which she considers her heritage languages. "India is very close to China," she explains, "and China right now is exercising a very important role in the global economy."

Dhembala did not know about The Language Flagship when she applied to Hunter College in New York City as a political science major. About 2 months into her first semester, she learned about the Hunter College Chinese Flagship Program from a professor and immediately knew that it was the right course of study for achieving her goals. Now starting her sophomore year, Dhembala already is thinking about applying for internships. She adds, "Chinese language skills will help me out when I apply for jobs, enhance the chance of getting a job I want and [being accepted] into graduate programs." Asked whether her parents agree with her goals, Dhembala responds, "Indian parents are really supportive. In fact, [mine] pushed me to learn Chinese!" She believes that her heritage language skills give her a clear advantage in studying the Chinese language now and also will help her be a better leader in her future career as a diplomat.

## Results of K–16 Language Enrollment Survey Released

To gain strategic planning insights, The Language Flagship sponsored the most comprehensive survey to date on foreign language enrollment in the United States. The American Councils for International Education conducted the survey and prepared *The National K–16 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey and Report*, all in collaboration with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the Center for Applied Linguistics, and the Modern Language Association. The final report was released at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on June 1.

The Language Flagship provided survey support to locate K–12 students who were studying critical languages—that is, less commonly taught languages for which the demand for proficient speakers exceeds supply—and therefore might progress most efficiently in Flagship or other federal language programs. The Defense Language and National Security Education Office now has access to significant data on K–12 students graduating with language skills and on where critical language instruction is needed. Knowing where critical languages are taught informs future Flagship programs in these languages, specifically in initiatives to articulate K–16 language learning. Because such languages are less commonly taught, the existence of even a few programs may be considered a positive sign.

The study was designed to collect and analyze K–16 foreign language enrollment data as it currently stands in the United States. American



The number of K–12 schools in the United States that offer coursework in at least one foreign language varies widely, from fewer than 10 to more than 100 per state. (Source: *The National K–16 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey and Report*)

<sup>1</sup> The definition of heritage language speaker continues to be debated, in general and for specific languages. All Flagship participants indicate when they join whether they grew up in a household with languages other than English.

Heritage Language ... (from page 1)



COLE TRUITT

Chloe Marette is a heritage speaker of Spanish in the Arizona Arabic Flagship Program.

Born in Phoenix, Arizona, Chloe Marette is a junior at the University of Arizona in Tucson and a heritage speaker of Spanish. During her second semester majoring in Middle Eastern and North African studies, Marette discovered the Arizona Arabic Flagship Program while gathering information about Arabic language offerings. "I didn't know about [The Language Flagship], but I was always interested in Arabic," she admits. "I loved Arab culture in general and began to really enjoy writing Arabic script."

Marette says that her linguistic background has been key to her progress in Arabic. "Knowing Spanish makes learning Arabic much easier. Both languages use grammatical gender and have similar-sounding words," she explains. With the encouragement of her parents, she looks forward to an internship experience that will allow her to use her Arabic language skills in a professional setting during her Arabic Flagship Overseas Capstone year in Morocco. Her career ambition is to become a translator in government or business.

Foreign languages are anything but foreign to Raiful Hossain, who is a junior in the Chinese Flagship Program at Hunter College. "My first language is Bengali, followed by Urdu. And then I learned English and Spanish," he says, noting that he prefers speaking Bengali at home with his parents, especially when expressing emotions. "Of course, the writing systems are different," Hossain says, "but I've become better at Chinese due to my multilingual background."

A Yalow Scholar, Hossain is majoring in biology and intends to become a doctor. Essential to his study plan is to become fluent in Mandarin. "I want to be able to create a sense of comfort with my patients," he explains. "Chinese is one of the top languages spoken in the world and in New

York City. I want to use my language skills to provide the best quality care."

Mairene Pita was born in the Philippines and grew up speaking Tagalog at home. She was exposed to Arabic at the age of 7, when her family moved to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). And 3 years later, Pita was living in Arizona. Now, she is a senior majoring in psychology at the University of Arizona. "We have a language requirement at school, and I thought that given my background, I may as well take Arabic. People came into class to advertise the [Arizona Arabic Flagship Program], and I became really interested when I learned it was the best undergraduate language program in the country."

Pita says that knowing Tagalog gave her the confidence to take on intensive Arabic study and that one of the greatest features of the Flagship program is that "the community is so tight-knit." She envisions a career as a doctor in the Middle East—inspired by her mother, who was a nurse in the UAE.

To learn about the complete survey and review more results, refer to *The Heritage Language Learner Survey: Report on the Preliminary Results*, released in April 2009 (<http://www.international.ucla.edu/media/files/paper.pdf>), or the final published report [Carreira, M., and O. Kagan (2011). The Results of the National Heritage Language Survey: Implications for Teaching, Curriculum Design, and Professional Development. *Foreign Language Annals*, 44(1), pp. 40–64. DOI: 10.1111/j.1944-9720.2010.01118.x].



MYLEA PITA

Mairene Pita is a heritage speaker of Tagalog in the Arizona Arabic Flagship Program.

## Word from Flagship

Sam Eisen  
Director  
The Language Flagship



INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

The Commission on Language Learning of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences endorses The Language Flagship as a model program in its 2017 report entitled *America's Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century*. In this issue of *Discourse*, articles explore how The Language Flagship can increase its reach and impact within current resources.

Experienced, motivated world language learners and heritage speakers in U.S. high schools represent a pool of students who are ready and able to move efficiently into demanding Flagship programs and reach professional proficiency in critical languages during their undergraduate careers. In preparing *The National K–16 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey and Report*, the American Councils for International Education, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Center for Applied Linguistics, and Modern Language Association collaborated to identify where U.S. high school students are studying world languages. The detailed information about critical languages is particularly relevant for planning recruitment and outreach efforts that encourage continued language learning in Flagship programs as well as other academic and federal programs. Similarly, examples of how heritage language speakers in Flagship programs leverage their language experience to attain proficiency in a new critical language reflect the latent skills of U.S. heritage communities.

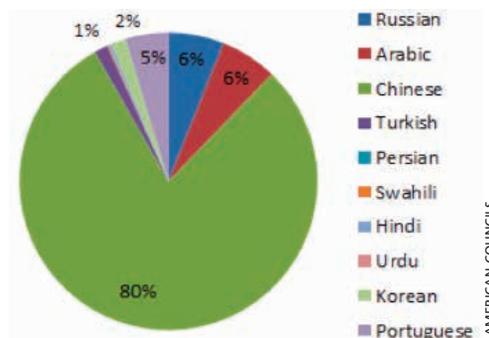
In the long run, Flagship host institutions that partner with business leaders who understand the value of graduates with professional-level linguistic and cultural proficiency will make their programs sustainable. Op-ed author Mark Lyons reports on the cooperation and mutual benefit that can be derived from industry–university partnerships, such as between his company (Alltech) and Western Kentucky University (WKU). This relationship supports a local mission (that WKU function as an engine of economic development for the state of Kentucky) while advancing national security goals (via the WKU Chinese Flagship Program).

Results of K-16 ... (from page 1)

Councils President Dan Davidson says, "We took a multimethod, multimodal, multipronged approach." Results indicate that only 20 percent of K-12 students study a language other than English in school, but enrollment rates vary by state—from more than 50 percent in New Jersey to fewer than 10 percent in Arizona. Furthermore, only 11 states require foreign language study for graduation.

Across the critical languages that are taught in Flagship programs, results indicate that at the K-12 level, Chinese is offered in 48 states, Russian in 33, and Arabic in 29; Portuguese, Korean, and Persian are offered in 11, 10, and 2 states, respectively. Of the 1,145 Chinese programs across the country, 108 are in California, 64 are in Illinois, and 57 are in Pennsylvania. North Carolina leads the nation with 20 Russian programs, followed by Texas with 12 and Pennsylvania with 9. Most Arabic programs are in Virginia (12), followed by 11 in Michigan and 10 each in New York and Texas. Of these programs, those expected to increase the most nationwide relative to programs that currently exist in each specific language are Portuguese (+27.03 percent), Korean (+11.63 percent), and Hindi (+10.53 percent). The greatest net increase nationwide is expected in Chinese programs. "You can see the interest in Mandarin Chinese is growing like no other language," Davidson reports, and the resulting demand for good teachers requires "teaching materials, teachers' training, and what we call professional development for teachers of Chinese."

However, results also indicate that qualified and certified K-12 foreign language teachers are in short supply nationwide. At the report release, ACTFL Executive Director Marty Abbott proposed that because "60 percent of teachers teach within 20 miles of where they went to high school," policymakers should look "close to home" and cultivate teachers from their communities. "Let's talk to our current teachers about tapping students to become language teachers," she suggested.



Across all K-12 students who study one of 10 less commonly taught languages in school, enrollment is heavily weighted toward Chinese. (Source: The National K-16 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey and Report)

## Op-ed: Finding the Right Talent for International Business

Mark Lyons  
Head of Greater China and Global Vice President, Alltech

Growing up as the son of an entrepreneur who had a growing global business, I was taught the importance of language at a very young age. My eyes were opened earlier than most children's are to the myriad languages in our world, and I learned how closely language is tied to culture and to a person's very identity.

Now, having served as Alltech's head of Greater China since 2011, I have observed that the key gap in our ability to reach growth targets and our potential in China comes down to a lack of available talent. Alltech has a tremendous local team in China that has been built over 30 years, but dynamic, internationally minded people are needed at every level of the organization to reflect our company's true multinational identity. Yet finding people who have the right mind-set and skills to integrate into our business is a challenge.

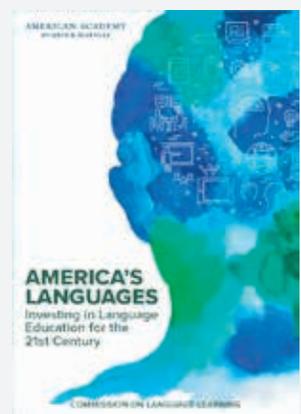
I was pleased to discover that the Chinese Language Flagship Program at Western Kentucky University (WKU) is creating leaders who not only have developed the right language skills but also possess a deep cultural understanding that is lacking in so much of today's talent pool. Alltech has been proud to participate in WKU's Chinese Flagship initiative. We look forward to supporting more students through collaborative programs (e.g., by offering internship opportunities in China) over the coming years.



ALLTECH

### Commission on Language Learning Endorses The Language Flagship

When the American Academy of Arts and Sciences was founded in 1781, its members agreed that language study was critical to the nation's future. In 2014, a bipartisan group of members of the U.S. Congress requested an evaluation of the nation's current capacity in languages. The academy's Commission on Language Learning responded with a comprehensive report and key recommendations. Entitled *America's Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century*, the 2017 report identifies The Language Flagship as a successful model for international study. "Since [the events of Sept. 11, 2001], the integration of overseas immersion into university education has begun to change the way Americans learn world languages," says commission member Dan Davidson, who also is president of the American Councils for International Education. "The Language Flagship, and its 25 participating domestic universities, ... has provided a 'proof of concept' that American students can indeed graduate from college with professional-level proficiency in a second language, regardless of their majors."



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

The *America's Languages* report represents the first national study of language since the Perkins Commission was convened by President Jimmy Carter nearly 40 years ago. Results of the study indicate that the United States is more linguistically diverse today but still lags far behind most developed countries in the number of citizens who are functionally bilingual.

## On the Path to Global Business Success

Nick Ceryak has been studying Mandarin Chinese since seventh grade but attributes his mastery of the language to the Chinese Flagship Program at Indiana University, Bloomington. While Ceryak was in high school deciding where to attend college, a friend suggested that he consider staying in state. Ceryak did his research and discovered that Indiana University offered advanced Chinese study through The Language Flagship. An ambitious college student, Ceryak has been president of the Model United Nations and has maintained a 4.0 grade point average over 3 years with double majors in Chinese and accounting at Indiana University.

Ceryak's long-term career goal is to use the Chinese language skills and cultural competencies developed during his Flagship experience to help American firms build operations in China and to enhance economic relations between the United States and China. He completed a summer internship in management consulting at KPMG's Chicago location after his junior year and is about to begin his Chinese Flagship Overseas Capstone at Nanjing University in China. "[The Flagship program] has amazing students, from all sorts of disciplines and backgrounds. Many of them are also involved on campus, which really motivates me," says Ceryak. Having developed professional-level Chinese skills through the Chinese Flagship Program at Indiana University, Nick will be an advocate for The Language Flagship as he pursues a successful career in international business.



TREVOR OWENS

Chinese Flagship student  
Nick Ceryak

### Flagship Centers

Arabic	Portuguese
Indiana University, Bloomington	University of Georgia, Athens
University of Arizona	Federal University of São João del-Rei, Brazil
University of Maryland, College Park	Russian
University of Oklahoma	Bryn Mawr College
University of Texas, Austin	Portland State University
Arab–American Language Institute in Morocco <sup>1</sup>	University of California, Los Angeles
Moulay Ismail University, Morocco <sup>1</sup>	University of Wisconsin, Madison
Chinese	Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan <sup>1</sup>
Arizona State University	Turkish
Brigham Young University	Indiana University, Bloomington
Hunter College	Azerbaijan University of Languages, Azerbaijan <sup>1</sup>
Indiana University, Bloomington	African Flagship Languages Initiative
San Francisco State University	University of Florida
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa	The West African Research Center, Senegal <sup>1</sup>
University of Minnesota	Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique <sup>1</sup>
University of Mississippi	MS-Training Center for Development Cooperation, Tanzania <sup>1</sup>
University of North Georgia <sup>2</sup>	South Asian Flagship Languages Initiative
University of Oregon	University of Wisconsin, Madison
University of Rhode Island	American Institute of Indian Studies, Jaipur and Lucknow, India <sup>1</sup>
Western Kentucky University	
Nanjing University, China <sup>3</sup>	
Beijing Union University, China <sup>1</sup>	
Korean	
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa	
Korea University, South Korea	
Persian	
University of Maryland, College Park	

<sup>1</sup> Overseas Flagship Center managed by American Councils for International Education

<sup>2</sup> ROTC Flagship Program

<sup>3</sup> Overseas Flagship Center managed by Brigham Young University and American Councils for International Education

### The Flagship Mission

The Language Flagship leads the nation in designing, supporting, and implementing a new paradigm for advanced language education. Through an innovative partnership among the federal government, education, and business, The Language Flagship graduates students who will take their place among the next generation of global professionals, commanding a superior level of proficiency in one of many languages critical to U.S. competitiveness and security.

### What Do We Do?

Flagship Centers offer students intensive language instruction to enhance their academic degrees, graduating students with professional-level language proficiency. Programs include periods of rigorous language and cultural immersion at Overseas Flagship Centers. The Language Flagship also funds a select number of pilot K–12 programs designed to provide an articulated path of language instruction for students from elementary school through college.

Flagship graduates leverage their superior language and cultural skills in various careers, offering an intercultural perspective to employers in the federal and state governments, global businesses, and nongovernmental organizations.



## THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

Creating Global Professionals

### Contact Us

The Language Flagship  
4800 Mark Center Drive  
Suite 08F09-02  
Alexandria, VA 22350

Tel.: 571-256-0702

Fax: 703-692-2615

E-mail: [info@thelanguageflagship.org](mailto:info@thelanguageflagship.org)

Web: [www.thelanguageflagship.org](http://www.thelanguageflagship.org)

To receive copies of *Discourse* as they are published, simply email your name and mailing address to [info@thelanguageflagship.org](mailto:info@thelanguageflagship.org) with "Add me to the Discourse mailing list" in the subject line.