

The Demand for Early-Career Hires with Language and Culture Skills in the United States

**Preliminary report
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What are “global competencies”?

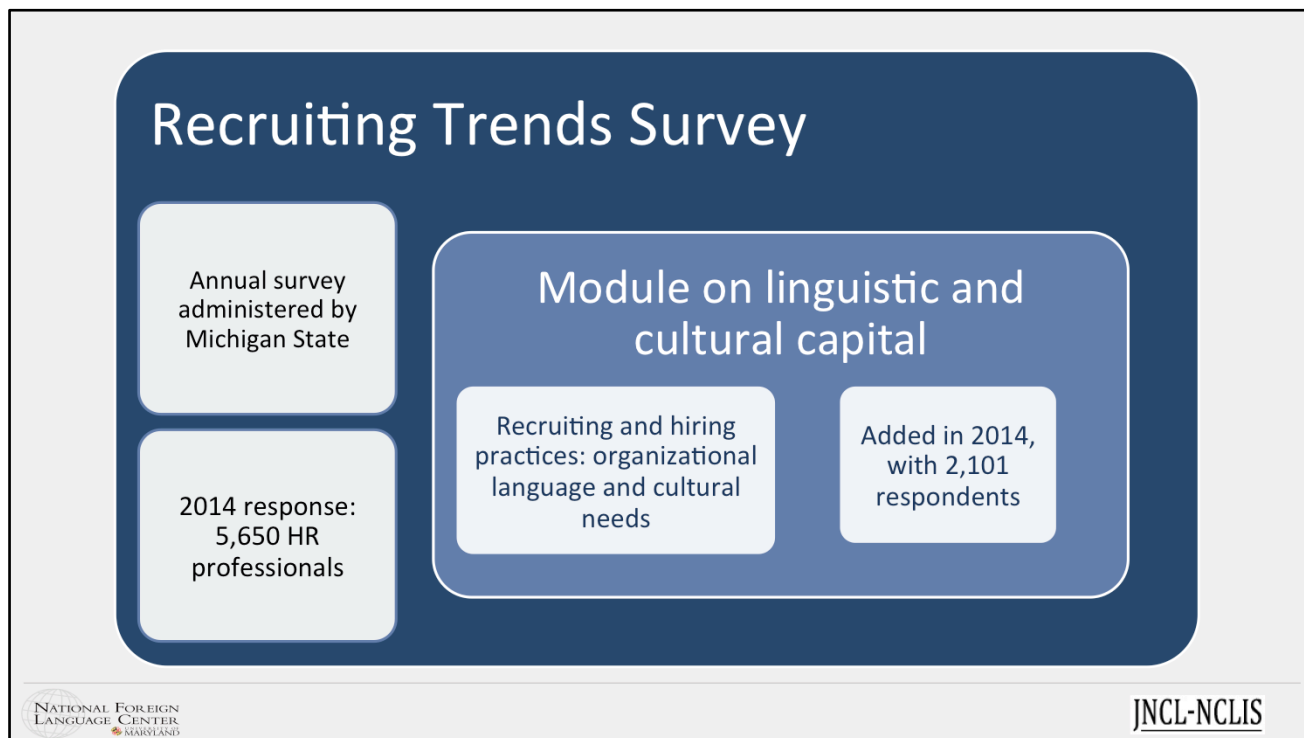


A number of different organizations and entities have weighed in on the relationship between language needs and cultural needs in the workforce, but there is limited information about the demand for globally competent professionals—that is, the educational qualifications and skills that are most sought by employers, the tasks that globally competent individuals are expected to perform, and the contexts in which such skills are required.

This survey is part of a larger project to understand employers' stated needs for a multilingual and culturally competent workforce, not just in the US, but also in other countries.

Research questions

1. To what extent do companies value employees who are able to work effectively with customers, clients, and businesses across a range of different countries and cultures?
2. To what extent do these organizations specifically value foreign language (FL) skills and international or multicultural experience (IME) in their new hires?
3. Which economic sectors value FL skills and IME the most?
4. Which corporate tasks are more likely to require FL skills or IME?
5. Which academic majors are sought in combination with FL skills or IME?



Recruiting Trends Survey

Administered by the Collegiate Employment Research Institute at Michigan State

Unlike previous studies of the business demand for language skills that targeted senior executives, this survey targeted HR professionals, who can speak more directly to actual hiring practices.

Large, medium, and small companies and organizations

Every state except Vermont

Private, non-profit, and government sectors (federal, state, and local)

Organization characteristic variables

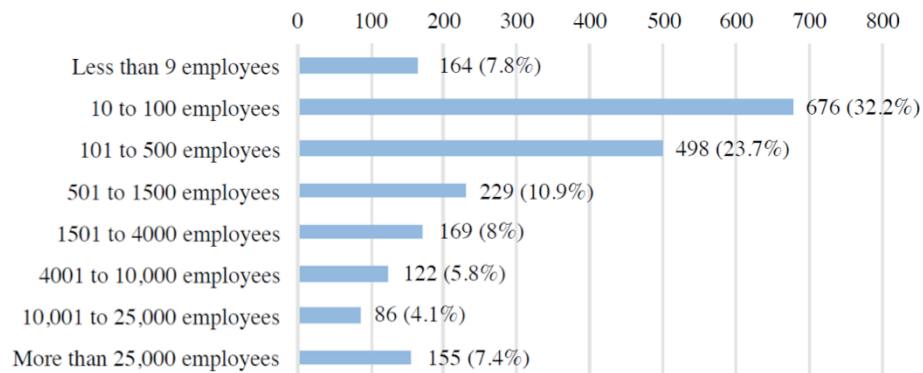
- ❖ Size
- ❖ Economic Sector
- ❖ Position Type
 - Positions with “a global dimension” for which they would “hire young adults with less than 5 years experience.”
- ❖ Fields of Study recruited from

In addition to questions specifically about language and culture needs, as part of the larger survey we also have this information.

Economic sectors operationalized by the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS)

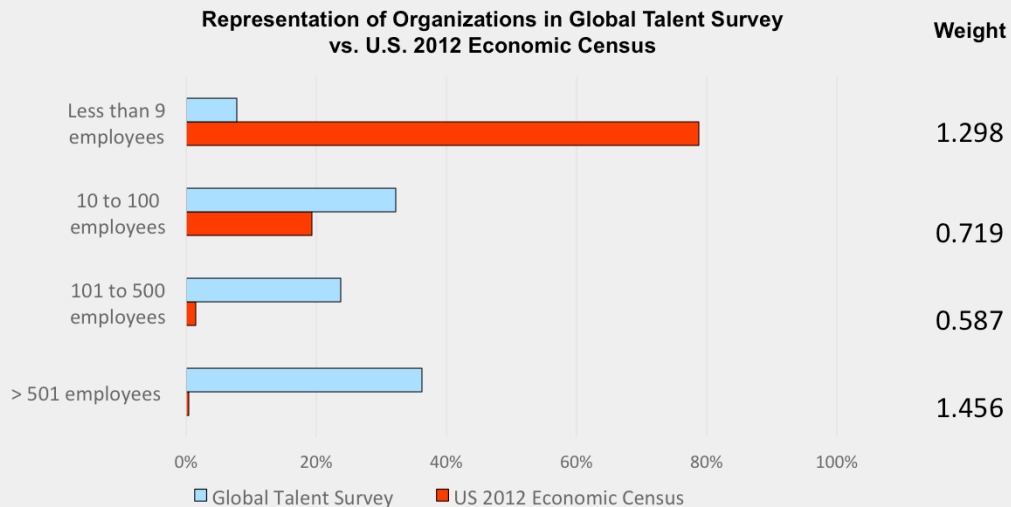
Number of employees

Please indicate the number of employees
in your organization or company



This is the distribution of the response to the module on linguistic and cultural capital.

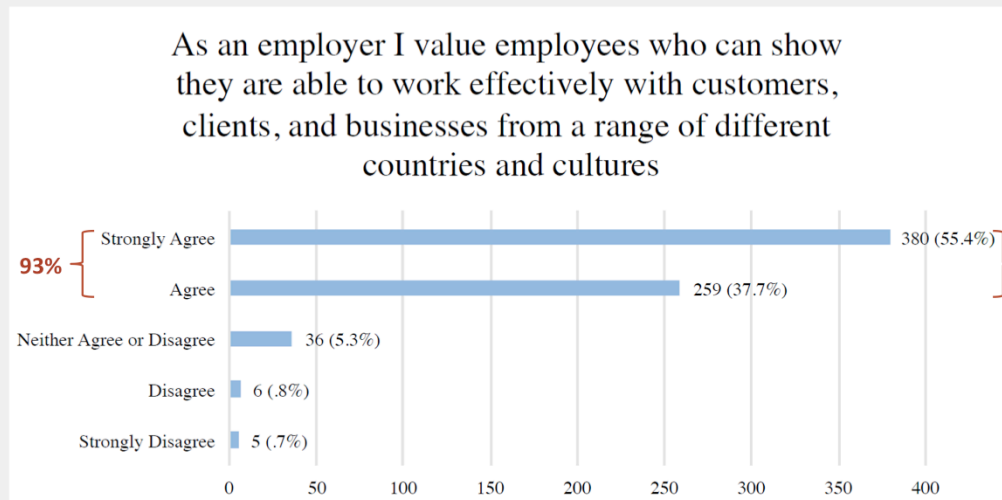
Data weighting



While the 2012 census showed that 79% of companies had fewer than 10 employees, in this sample only 7.8% of the respondents were from organizations that had fewer than nine employees (n.p.). Similarly, the U.S. Census showed that only , while in this sample 36.3% of the respondents represented organizations that employed 501 people or more (2012a, n.p.).

Rather than simply weighting cases according to the number of organizations of a given size in the U.S. Census, it was decided to weight cases by the percentage of employees in the census who were employed by organizations of a given size. For example, according to the U.S. Census, while only 0.3% of organizations had more than 500 employees, those organizations employed 52.7% of American workers (2012a, n.p.). Four size categories were established for weighting purposes: nine or fewer employees, 10 to 100 employees, 101 to 500 employees, and 501 or more employees. **Responses from each category were weighted appropriately so that results would reflect more accurately the impact of employer preferences on the American workforce.**

How much do companies value global competence?



How much do companies value FL skills and IME in new hires?

Survey Items:

Does your organization have a recruitment strategy which:

Identifies foreign language skills

Specifies levels of foreign language competence

Records the candidates' capability in first language other than English

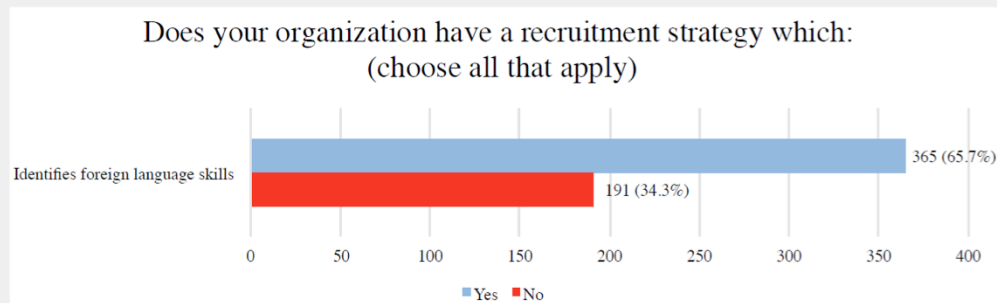
Gives advantage to multilingual candidates

Gives advantage to candidates with international experience

Gives advantage to candidates with multicultural experience

In your organization, do new hires need to speak at least one language other than English?

Value of FL skills in new hires

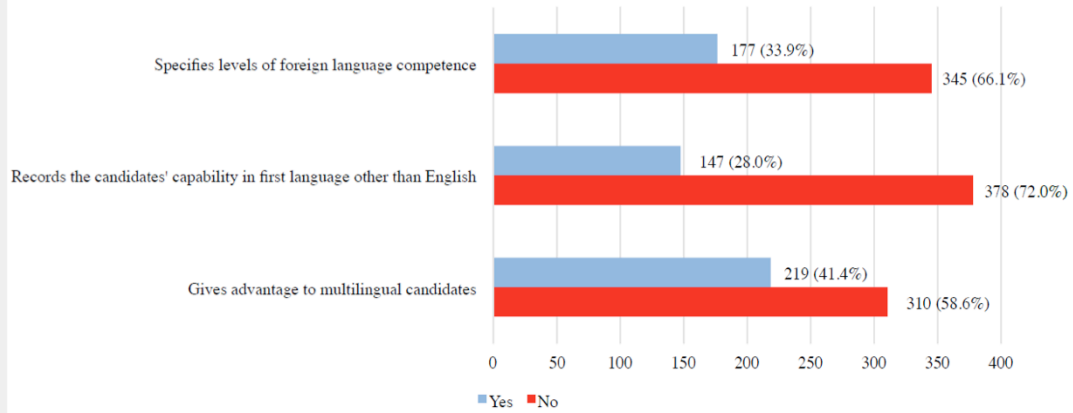


❖ Options: Yes / No / Don't know / Not Applicable

Starting with FL skills. A majority of respondents DO have recruitment strategies that identify foreign language skills at some point in the process.

Value of FL Skills in New Hires

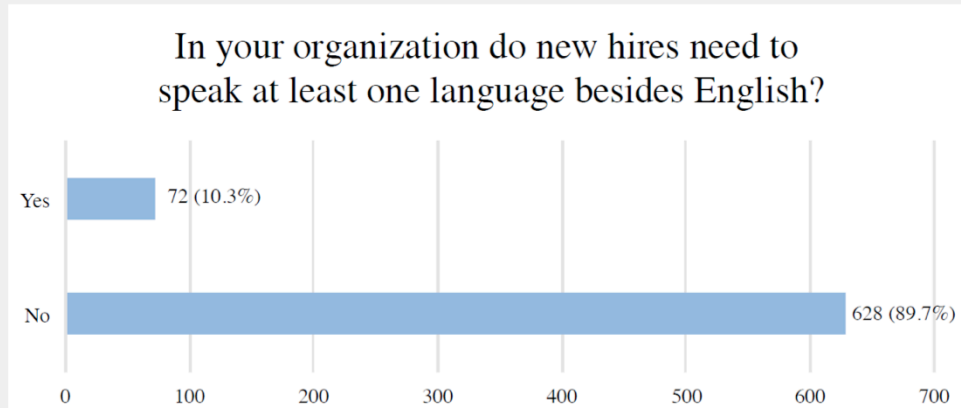
Does your organization have a recruitment strategy which:
(choose all that apply)



❖ Options: Yes / No / Don't know / Not Applicable

When asked more specifically how FL skills are accounted for in the hiring process, trend is reversed here. Most respondents do NOT have specific strategies for accounting for FL skills in the hiring process.

Value of FL Skills in New Hires



❖ Options: Yes / No

Most orgs did not require new hires to speak a FL

Value of IME in New Hires



Going back to the survey stem about recruitment strategies...most organizations did not give advantage to candidates with international or multicultural experience.

Which sectors value FL skills the most?

Economic sector operationalized by NAICS category.

FL IME Agriculture and Natural Resources	Professional and Scientific Services
Mining and Oil and Gas Exploration	FL Administrative Services
Utilities	FL IME Educational Services
Construction Manufacturing	FL Health Care and Social Assistance
Wholesale Trade	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
Retail Trade	IME Accommodation and Food Services
Transportation and Warehousing	IME Nonprofit Organizations
FL Information Services	Repair And Maintenance/Personal Care Services
Finance and Insurance	FL Government and Public Administration
Real Estate and Leasing Services	Not Classified Above

Analysis type: Pearson's chi-square analysis

Fisher's exact test used when contingency tables had less than five values (lowering reliability)

Holm-Bonferroni correction run to control for family-wise error (false positive/type-I error)

Sectors labeled "FL" were more likely to respond "yes" to one or more FL-related questions. Sectors labeled "IME" were more likely to report giving advantage to candidates with international and/or multicultural experience.

Which corporate roles are more likely to require FL skills or IME?

Survey Item: If you are hiring a young adult with less than 5 years of experience for a position with a global dimension, what types of positions would these most likely be? Check all that apply.

FL IME	Linguists (Translators/Interpreters)		Quality Assurance
FL IME	Project Managers	FL IME	Marketing
IME	PR/Communications		Analysts
	Application Developers	FL IME	Customer Service
	Localization Engineers	FL IME	Vendor Management
FL	Sales		Recruitment/HR

Positions labeled “FL” indicate that employers hiring for those positions were more likely to respond “yes” to one or more FL-related questions. Positions labeled “IME” indicate that employers hiring for those positions were more likely to report giving advantage to candidates with international and/or multicultural experience.

Which academic majors are sought in combination with FL skills or IME?

Survey Item: Please indicate which academic majors you seek for your talent pool for full-time employment.

FL Agriculture, natural resources & environmental sciences	FL IME Education
FL Arts, humanities, and social sciences	Engineering
Business	Physical and biological sciences
FL Communication sciences	FL Health sciences
Computer science, information technology	FL IME Social services

Fields of study labeled “FL” indicate that employers hiring graduates of those fields were more likely to respond “yes” to one or more FL-related questions. Fields of study labeled “IME” indicate that employers hiring graduates of those fields were more likely to report giving advantage to candidates with international and/or multicultural experience.

Discrepancy between valuing globally competent employees and prioritizing FL skills in hiring



93% value employees who could work effectively with an intercultural and international clientele. And yet...



66% Identify FL skills in the hiring process



41% Give advantage to multilingual candidates



34% Specify levels of FL competence



28% Record candidates' capability in a first language other than English



10% Require new hires to speak at least one language besides English

Discrepancy between valuing globally competent employees and prioritizing IME in hiring



93% value employees who could work effectively with an intercultural and international clientele. And yet...



34% Give advantage to candidates with **multicultural** experience



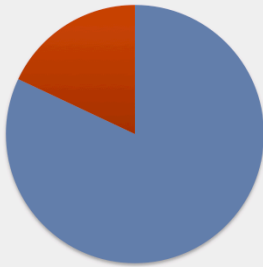
22% Give advantage to candidates with **international** experience

Some possible explanations for the discrepancy

- ❖ Unclear survey item
 - “In your organization, do new hires need to speak at least one language besides English?”
- ❖ Real or perceived low rates of supply
 - HR experience reflected in hiring practices
- ❖ Failure of language-qualified candidates to understand the labor market

Real or perceived low rates of supply: HR managers may find a lack of qualified job applicants with the language skills they would like, so they do not reward (and thus do not attract) those applicants.

Government and public admin sector



4/5 identify
FL skills as
part of the
hiring process



3/5 document L1
other than English
and FL levels **and**
give advantage to
multilingual
candidates

- ❖ Government and public administration organizations seek highly proficient speakers of other languages, but do not prioritize multicultural or international experience.

Organizations providing services

**Document
or give
preference
for language
skills**

Administrative sector
Education sector
Healthcare sector
Information services
Agriculture, natural resources

Social services students
Education students
Health services students
**Agriculture, natural resources, and
environmental sciences students**

Education sector
Agriculture, natural resources
Non-profit sector

Social services students
Education students

**Document
or give
preference for
international/
multicultural
experience**

Service industries, service positions, and fields of study relating to the two were much more likely to be associated with prioritizing FL skills and/or IME

Organizations providing services

Services require significant personal interaction and communication with clients and customers from a variety of backgrounds

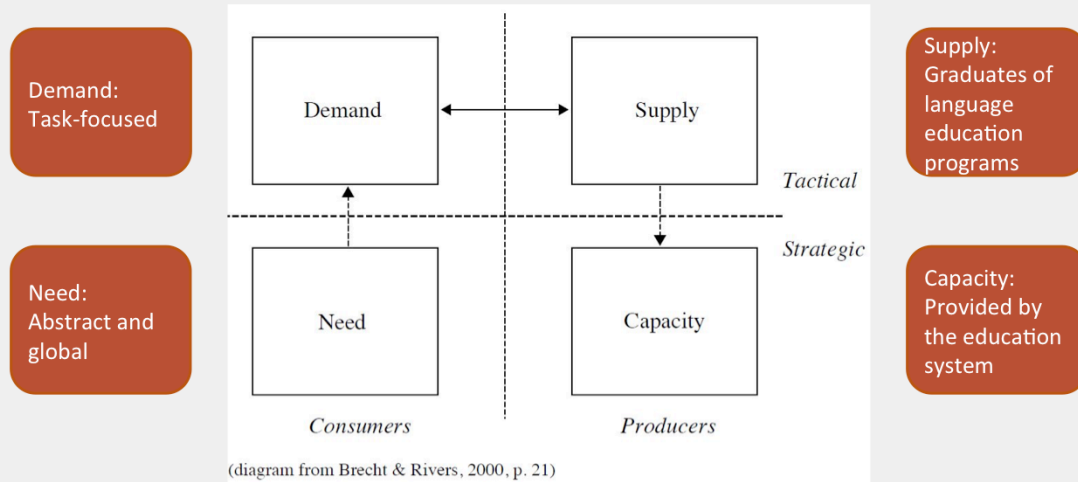
The service industry accounts for over 80% of the U.S. economy

Recommendations for K-16 educators

1. **Develop** more relevant professional content, e.g. language for business, education, and health care.
2. **Encourage** and incentivize students in other majors to study language.
3. **Accommodate** the scheduling and specific content needs of non-majors who seek to maximize their hiring potential by adding competencies in another language.

Additionally, students (particularly those focusing on education or social services) should be made aware of the professional benefits to having multicultural experience—besides the intrinsic benefits.

Economic framework for interpreting results



Study limitations

Lack of clarity in
the wording of
some survey
questions



No information
about the
languages or
types of
experience that
are of greatest
interest to
employers

Summary

- ❖ Concrete evidence of the demand for a multilingual, culturally competent workforce
- ❖ Room for growth in employers' prioritizing language and culture
- ❖ Particular need in service industries and service positions
- ❖ A variety of college majors are sought in conjunction with language skills and international experience

Also see:

Damari, R. R., Rivers, W. P., Brecht, R. D., Gardner, P., Pulupa, C.,
& Robinson, J. (2017). The Demand for Multilingual Human
Capital in the U.S. Labor Market. *Foreign Language Annals*.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12241>