

AMERICANS & LANGUAGE

**PART II:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
OF THE ANGLOSPHERE**

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“What do you call a person who speaks two languages?”

Bilingual.

“What do you call a person who speaks three languages?”

Trilingual.

“What do you call a person who speaks one language?”

An American.

As explained in Part I of *Americans & Language*, the ability to speak English is an asset in the global marketplace. More importantly, English fluency is the master key in an English-speaking nation such as the United States. With this in mind, it is hard to believe that the link between Americans and a single language derives from some ultra-nationalistic pride or a xenophobic rejection of other languages.

In the end, an American’s reliance on a single language may be the product of an intelligent cost-benefit analysis, balancing the vast amount of subjects available to study with their usefulness toward future employment and greater opportunity. An American who wishes to study medicine in the United States is far better off taking additional science classes such as biology and chemistry instead of opting for classes in foreign language study. Similarly, a student interested in teaching mathematics would be better served choosing math-related electives than additional classes in French or German. For Americans who plan to live and work in the United States, a focus on English allows for maximum opportunity within education.

The language connection is not the only such case. Much like learning a foreign language, owning a vehicle increases opportunity for most Americans. Owning a personal vehicle allows a person to get to and from work, to go shopping and run errands, to travel and visit faraway attractions. The conveniences offered by a vehicle explain why 92 percent of all American households own at least one [1]. Due to the lack of public transportation options, the rate of household vehicle ownership in rural states and counties likely approaches 100 percent.

There is one major exception to America’s high vehicle ownership rate: New York City. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, more than half of the households in the most populous city in the United States do not own a car [1]. In the heavily congested borough of Manhattan, home to more than 1.5 million people, the rate of car ownership is below 25 percent [1], or almost one-quarter of the national rate.

In a high-income, high-ambition area like Manhattan, this anomaly is not due to the inability to afford a car or lack of aspiration to own one. According to the 2000 Census, the per capita income in Manhattan was \$42,922, almost double that of the average American (\$21,587). Nearly half of the residents of Manhattan over the age of 25 have a bachelors degree or higher (49.4 percent), more than double the rate among all Americans 25 and older (24.4 percent) [2]. So why do Manhattan residents lag in car ownership rates?

The answer zips along and under the streets of the Big Apple. With all residents of Manhattan falling within the extensive cradle of the nation's largest public transit system, there is no need for the expense or hassle of owning a car in an urban environment. While residents may desire a car to allow them further freedoms, the gain of minimal opportunity often does not outweigh the costs (purchase, maintenance, gas, parking) and time (purchasing a car, finding a parking space) involved. According to the Census, Manhattan residents do not suffer greatly by their choice of passing up a car – the average commuting time to work for Manhattan residents is only five minutes longer than the average commuting time to work for all Americans, 30.5 minutes vs. 25.5 minutes [2].

If the majority of Manhattanites choose to forego vehicle ownership after weighing the perceived freedoms of a car versus the perceived drawbacks, what can this tell us about an English-speaking American's desire to learn a foreign language? Could it be that an avoidance of foreign language learning is simply a decision made from a cost-benefit analysis? Or are Americans completely out of whack with the rest of the English speaking world?

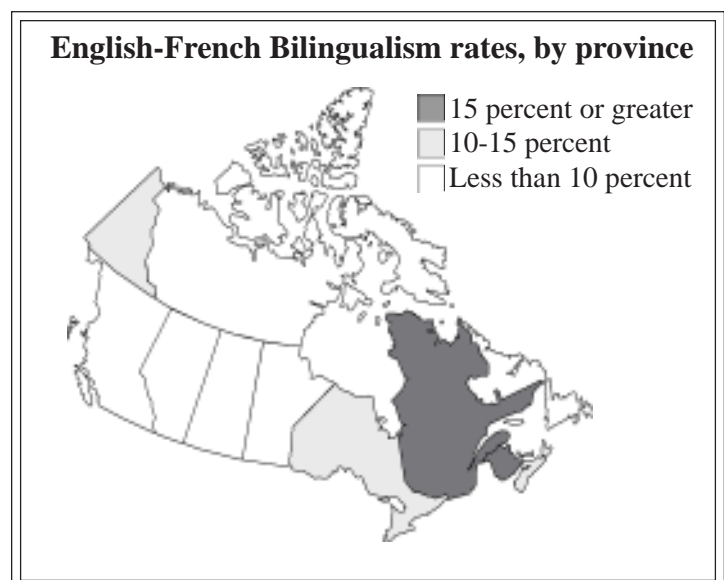
In order to better understand whether monolingualism in English is simply a misplaced perception of Americans, Part II of *Americans & Language* will analyze language learning in four major English speaking nations: Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Ireland. We found that when it comes to rates of second language learning in these other predominantly English-speaking nations, the story is much the same as it is in the United States. In every case, rates lagged far behind countries where English was not the predominant language, such as throughout the majority of Europe.

While specific ambition or cosmopolitan aspirations may drive some toward fluency in an additional language other than English, the expense and effort required does not justify the value for the majority. Let us begin the examination in Canada, the northern neighbor of the United States.

Canada

English and French may both be official languages of the Canadian government, but for many of the Canadian people there is no such equality. According to Statistics Canada, only 5.2 million of the nation's 29.6 million residents (17.6 percent) in 2001 spoke both English and French well enough to hold a conversation [3].

The fact that only one-in-six Canadians is English-French bilingual is further undermined by the concentrated location of these bilingual individuals. Of the 5.2 million Canadians fluent in both French and English, 3.2 million, or 60 percent, lived in Quebec or New Brunswick, home to just 25 percent of the nation's population. The reality that bilingualism is a local phenomenon, rather than a nationwide one, is evident from examining English-French bilingual rates within the individual provinces.



Rates of English-French Bilingualism in Canadian Provinces

<u>Province</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Bilingual*</u>	<u>Pct.</u>
Quebec	7,125,575	2,907,700	40.8%
New Brunswick	715,715	245,870	34.4%
Ontario	11,285,545	1,315,715	11.7%
Nova Scotia	897,570	90,265	10.1%
Manitoba	1,103,700	102,840	9.3%
British Columbia	3,868,870	269,365	7.0%
Alberta	2,941,150	202,905	6.9%
Saskatchewan	963,150	49,000	5.1%
All other provinces	733,760	43,915	6.0%
<i>QC and NB only</i>	<i>7,841,290</i>	<i>3,153,570</i>	<i>40.2%</i>
<i>All exc. QC and NB</i>	<i>21,793,745</i>	<i>2,074,005</i>	<i>11.5%</i>
<i>Canada Totals</i>	<i>29,635,035</i>	<i>5,227,575</i>	<i>17.6%</i>

* - English – French Bilingual, i.e. able to hold a conversation in both English and French.

[Source: Statistics Canada, Population by knowledge of official language, by province and territory, 2001]

When Quebec and New Brunswick are excluded, 88.5 percent, or nearly eight-ninths of the Canadian population can hold a conversation in English, but not in French, including 96 percent of the residents of Newfoundland, 95 percent of those in Saskatchewan, 92 percent of Albertans and 90 percent of British Columbians. New Brunswick, population 715,715, has more English-French bilinguals than the combined total of New Foundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Nunavut, Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories, even though these seven provinces and territories have 3-1/2 times the population.

But this is only half the bilingual picture. In order to get a more complete view of multilingualism in Canada, we must also examine proficiency in languages other than English and French. According to Statistics Canada, there were 6.4 million Canadians who met proficiency standards, i.e. self-reporting the ability to hold a conversation, in a non-official language of Canada in 2001 [4].

With 5.2 million Canadians bilingual in French and English, and another 6.4 million being proficient in a language other than these two, this brings the rough total of bilingual Canadians to 11.6 million. We must then subtract the 450,000 Canadians who are proficient in a language other than English or French, but not proficient in either English or French, i.e. most likely monolingual in their native language [3]. The approximate picture of bilingualism in Canada is therefore:

Proficient in English and French	5.22 million
Proficient in a language other than English or French	+ 6.40 million
<u>Monolingual in a language other than English or French</u>	- <u>0.45 million</u>
Total Multilingual Canadians	11.17 million

It must be noted that while there are Canadians who would be double-counted in this equation because they are proficient in English, French and a third language, there are also Canadians who are not counted in the equation at all because they are proficient in two non-English, non-French languages. Through our data analysis, we determined that these values are small and would likely cancel each other out. In the end, we emerge with a rough figure of 11.17 million out of a population of 29.6 million, or a bilingualism rate for Canadians of 37.7 percent.

Given that more than 80 percent of Canadians cannot hold a conversation in both of the native languages of their nation, and more than 60 percent are monolingual in a single language, Canada hardly paints a picture of a multilingual citizenry. Could it be that a person who speaks only one language is, more often than not, a Canadian?

Australia

Like the United States, Australia has tried to balance the importance of English learning for domestic success with the addition of international language study in its school curriculum [5]. Also like the United States, Australians demonstrate low rates of proficiency in languages other than English. The reason for the low rate of language learning is best explained in a Dec. 2002 review of the commonwealth's "languages other than English programme:"

Few people appear to be opposed to the notion that languages other than English (LOTE) has a legitimate place in the Australian school curriculum. What is contentious though, is whether LOTE should be a mandatory study in the curriculum for all students, and if so, when should study begin and end, and at what standards and expectation should apply to that learning.

It is true that many other countries teach English as part of their curriculum, and that is far more likely for them to be able to communicate in English than it is for most Australians to communicate in another language. It is also true that English is one of the official languages of many international organisations, such as the OECD, the United Nations, the Olympic movement and so on, and in certain industries (aviation, for example). Anecdotally at least, much of the world's business transactions and global investments appear to take place in English. It is the language of law, science, technology and technological communication. The majority of Internet websites are in English or offer English versions [5].

Since neither the Australian Bureau of Statistics nor nationwide polls in Australia have studied the matter among the general population, the number of Australians proficient in more than one language is unknown. However, there are substantial reasons to believe that the number is quite low.

First, more than three-quarters of Australians are native-born [6], meaning that they would have little or no exposure to another language at home. Second, half of all migrant Australians speak only English, and another ten percent speak only their native language, according to the Australia Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs [7].

Third, there appears to be low levels of foreign language learning in the schools. In 2000, fewer than one-in-seven Australian high school seniors were enrolled in foreign language classes, a rate virtually unchanged over the previous five years [5]. Fourth, Australia is an island, making it more difficult for individuals from other nations to immigrate there. Unlike the United States, which shares land borders with Mexico and Canada, and Great Britain, which is connected to the rest of Europe via a tunnel, entry into Australia requires travel by plane or boat, slowing the arrival of languages other than English to a trickle.

For these primary and countless secondary reasons, Australians are an overwhelmingly English-speaking people. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, more than 92 percent of native-born Australians speak English at home. Of the remaining 7.8 percent of the native-born population, 761,000 are bilingual in both English and a language other than English.

Linguistic proficiency among native born Australians		
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Pct.</u>
Speak English at home	12,571,169	92.2%
Speak a language other than English—		
—and speak English very well/well	761,311	5.6%
—and speak English not well/not at all	91,328	0.7%
Not stated/unknown	205,877	1.5%

[Australian Bureau of Statistics, Table X07, Birthplace by proficiency in spoken English by sex].

If there is any portion of the Australian population that could be expected to be bilingual, it would be Australia’s immigrants, which comprise about 25 percent of the country’s population, or five million people. However, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, even Australia’s immigrant population continues the English speaking trend.

Of the 11 leading countries of origin of Australian immigrants, the rates of English fluency are extremely high among all of them, exceeding 60 percent in all but one case and 75 percent in all but three cases. Moreover, the percentage of immigrants from these nations who speak English at home is also startling. More than half of all German-born Australians and Dutch-born Australians speak English as the predominant language in the household.

English Speaking Ability of Immigrants to Australia, by nation of origin			
<u>Nation</u>	<u>Immigrants</u>	<u>Pct. who Speak English at home</u>	<u>Pct. who are English fluent*</u>
United Kingdom	1,036,245	98.6%	99.9%
New Zealand	355,765	93.3%	99.5%
Italy	218,718	16.6%	77.6%
Vietnam	154,831	2.5%	57.3%
China	142,780	4.3%	61.0%
Greece	116,431	7.2%	67.9%
Germany	108,220	54.4%	98.4%
Philippines	103,942	27.8%	97.5%
India	95,452	48.0%	97.0%
Netherlands	83,324	63.0%	98.9%
South Africa	79,425	86.9%	99.8%

* Speak English at home, or speak English well or very well.
Percentages exclude individuals whose language proficiency was not stated.
[Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Table X07, Birthplace by proficiency in spoken English by sex].

The fact that nearly half of Australian immigrants were born in English-speaking nations such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, the United States, South Africa, Philippines and India explains that while they may be new to the country, they are not new to the language spoken in the country.

Of Australia's 4.5 million (4,465,863) immigrants whose linguistic proficiency is known, 2.0 million (2,023,067) speak a language other than English at home. Of these 2.0 million, 1.6 million (1,582,557) speak that language and speak English very well or well [8]. Therefore, for the Australian population which does not speak English at home, the bilingual totals are:

Australian born	761,311
<u>Foreign born</u>	<u>1,582,557</u>
Total	2,343,868

We have already ascertained that the rate of foreign language learning in Australia is low. If we take the draconian assumption that *none* of the Australians who speak English at home are bilingual, we are left with a nation of 2.3 million bilinguals in a population of 18.8 million, or 12.5 percent. What is ironic about this number is that it is almost identical to the percentage of United States residents who meet the same criteria, that is speak a language other than English at home and speak English very well or well (12.1 percent) [9].

Though the Australian Bureau of Statistics does not provide data on bilingual rates of native Australians who speak English at home, the above examination of Australian society gives us a rough indication. Given what we know, including the lack of interest in second language learning among Australian students, and the common English speaking nature among most of its citizens and many of its migrants, existing facts indicate that this rate is not high.

In the end, Australia's rate of bilingualism is highly unlikely to exceed 30 percent of the nation's population. With more than two-thirds of the population fluent in only one language, perhaps a person who speaks only one language is an Australian?

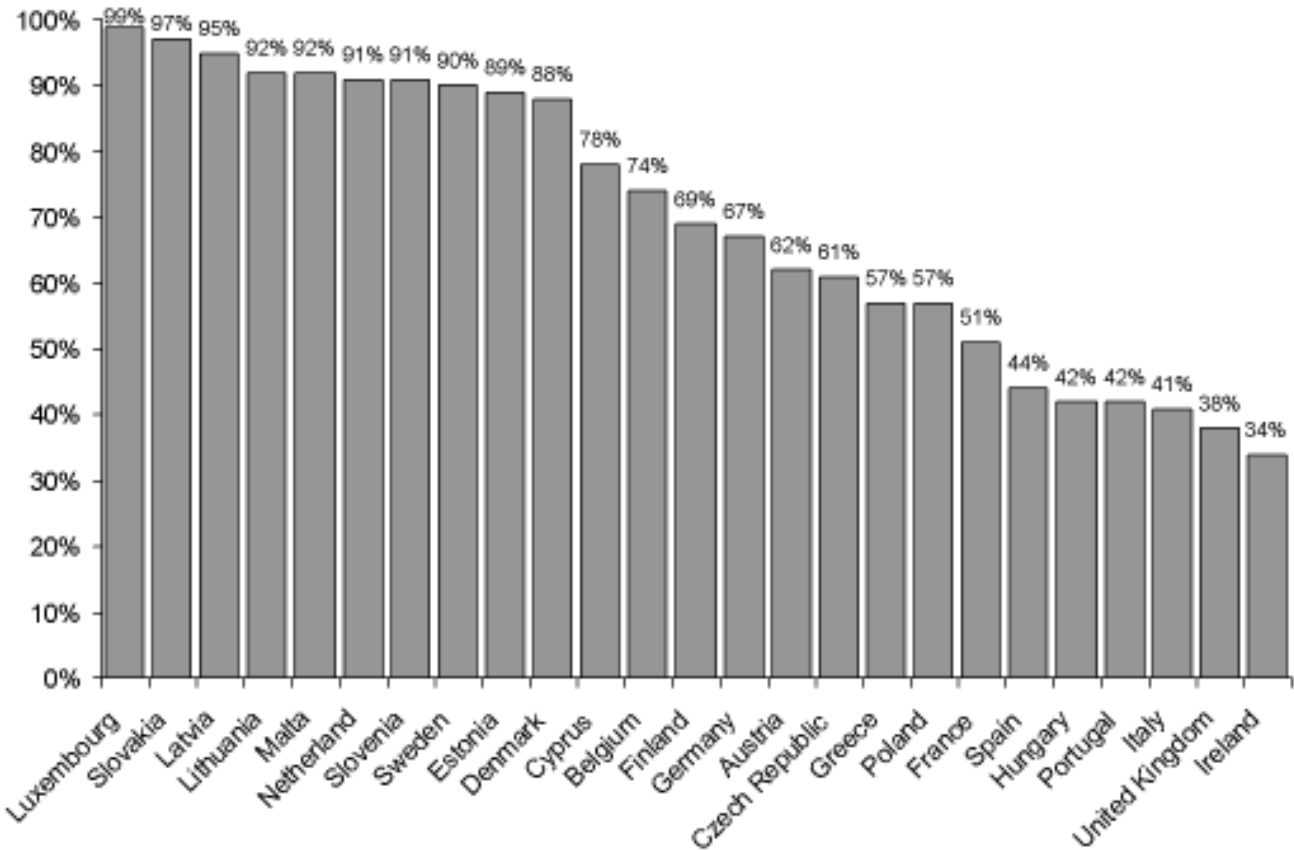
United Kingdom & Ireland

Multilingualism in Europe

When people truly want to beat up the "stupid American" and his lack of proficiency in foreign languages, they compare him to a European. "We need to be more like Europe," foreign language proponents often suggest, pointing out that "Europe" mandates foreign language learning throughout school. Unfortunately, those willing to ridicule the American aren't disclosing which "Europe" they're talking about.

According to the Nov. 2005 Eurobarometer survey, 56 percent of the residents of the EU can have a conversation in at least one language other than their mother tongue. Nine nations have a population where 90 percent or more of its residents can do so. But while "Europe" may be a hotbed of bilingualism, the nations with English as the predominant language did not meet that standard. Those two nations – the United Kingdom and Ireland – placed next-to-last and last, respectively, among the 25 existing EU nations before the 01 January 2007 EU expansion [10].

Percentage of the population in each of the EU25 nations that speak a language other than their mother tongue well enough to hold a conversation



[Source: Eurobarometer 64.3, Q48b-d, Nov. 2005]

Let us take a closer look at the two predominantly English speaking nations of Europe. English is the common, though not official, language of the United Kingdom, and the most widely spoken of the two official languages of Ireland. 94 percent of Ireland residents have English as their mother tongue, as do more than 92 percent of those in the United Kingdom. An additional five percent of Ireland residents and seven percent of U.K. residents speak English, “well enough to have a conversation,” bringing the percentage of residents with English fluency to 99 percent in each country [11, 12]. No other nation among the 27 members of the European Union had more than two percent of its population with English as their mother tongue [11].

Meanwhile, data from the Eurobarometer demonstrates that in nations where English is not a common language, residents are clamoring to learn it. In some nations, the level of English proficient residents is higher than in world nations where English is an official language. According to the Eurobarometer survey, 89 percent of Swedes, 88 percent of Maltese, 87 percent of Dutch, and 86 percent of Danes were proficient in English “well enough to have a conversation” [11]. The high rates of English proficiency don’t stop there — English is the most widely known foreign language in 18 of the 25 EU nations where it is not the most common mother tongue. Six of the seven exceptions are all former nations of the Eastern bloc; Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria [12]. In all six of those countries, English is the second most widely spoken language outside of the mother tongue.

Most widely spoken languages other than the mother tongue in the EU25 nations where English is not the most common mother tongue



[Source: Eurobarometer 64.3, Nov. 2005, Question D48T]

Upon examination of the foreign language learning data for European nations, it rapidly becomes clear that the majority of Europeans are not attracted to the mere idea of “learning other languages” as much as they are attracted to the idea of learning English. By and large, EU residents are expanding their linguistic knowledge in English with the hope of getting better jobs and earning higher incomes, not choosing a language simply to become more “worldly.”

When EU residents were asked what they considered to be the two most useful languages to learn for their own personal development and career (other than their mother tongue), English was the most popular answer in every current and aspiring country in the European Union except Luxembourg. In five countries – Cyprus, Denmark, Malta, the Netherlands and Sweden – more than 90 percent of those surveyed called English one of the most useful languages for an individual to learn. Eight other nations recorded figures in the 80 percent range [13].

In addition, those surveyed by the Eurobarometer were asked what languages (other than their mother tongue) would be most useful for children to learn. Again, English was the most commonly cited language in every nation except Luxembourg, and by even more astounding margins [14]. More than nine-in-ten respondents in 13 EU nations called English one of the two most useful languages for children to learn, including 99 percent of Swedes, 98 percent of Cypriots, and 96 percent of Greeks and Slovenians. Every other nation except Luxembourg and aspiring EU members Romania and Turkey had more than eight-in-ten respondents call English the most useful language for children to learn. Indeed, European parents want bilingualism for themselves and their children, and they want that second language to be English.

Reasons for Learning

Just as there is a similarity between the language that most Europeans want to learn for themselves and the language they want their children to learn, there is also a similarity between the nations of Europe for the reason to learn new languages. When asked for the main reasons for learning a new language, 32 percent of those surveyed in the EU25 nations prior to 01 January 2007 said that the new tongue would be useful for work [15]. In Cyprus and the Netherlands, half of all respondents cited use in their current job as an important

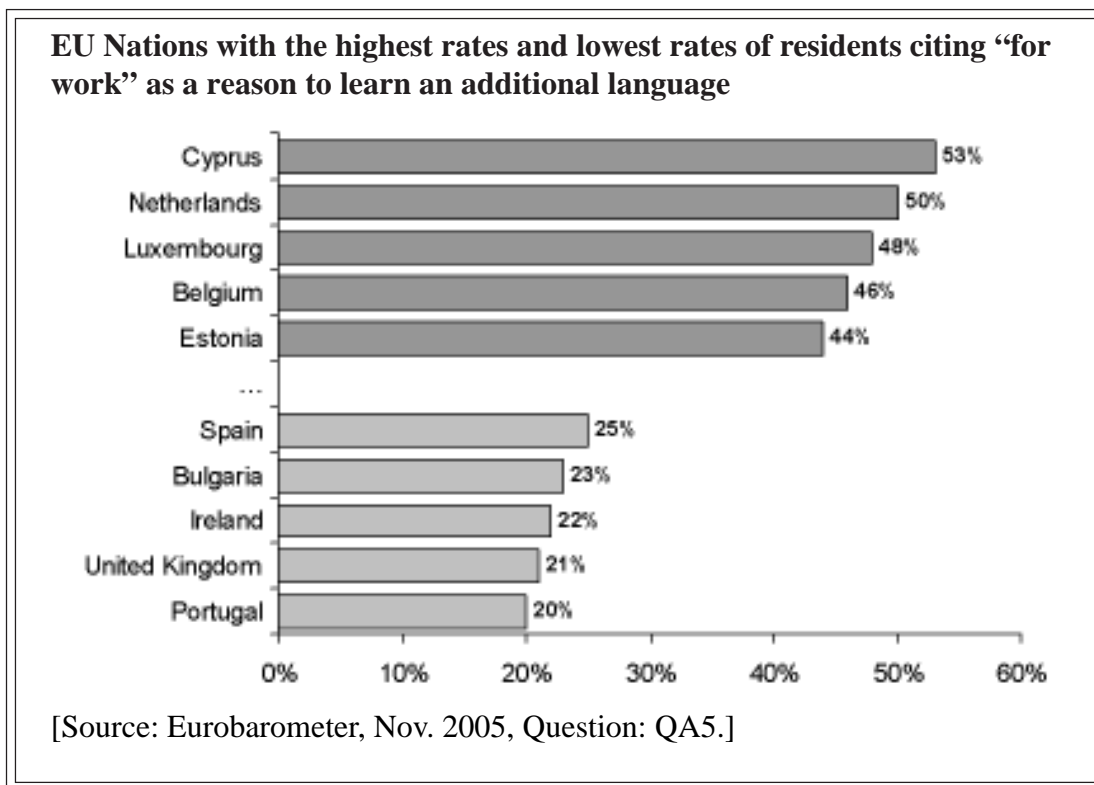
Language most commonly cited by residents of European Union and prospective European Union nations as the most useful for themselves to learn and the language most useful for their children to learn, excluding their mother tongue

	<u>Themselves</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Pct.</u>
Austria	English	72%	English	84%
Belgium	English	83%	English	88%
Bulgaria	English	65%	English	87%
Croatia	English	77%	English	82%
Cyprus	English	94%	English	98%
Czech Republic	English	70%	English	89%
Denmark	English	94%	English	94%
Estonia	English	76%	English	94%
Finland	English	88%	English	85%
France	English	82%	English	91%
Germany	English	81%	English	89%
Greece	English	74%	English	96%
Hungary	English	62%	English	85%
Italy	English	80%	English	84%
Latvia	English	74%	English	94%
Lithuania	English	87%	English	93%
Luxembourg	French	81%	French	83%
Malta	English	91%	English	90%
Netherlands	English	94%	English	90%
Poland	English	72%	English	90%
Portugal	English	59%	English	90%
Romania	English	64%	English	64%
Slovakia	English	72%	English	87%
Slovenia	English	78%	English	96%
Spain	English	73%	English	85%
Sweden	English	97%	English	99%
Turkey	English	83%	English	72%

[Source: Eurobarometer 64.3, Nov. 2005, QA2a and Eurobarometer 64.3, Nov. 2005, QA2b]

reason for learning a new language. In fact, in every country except three, “use at work” was among the three most commonly cited reasons for learning a new language. The exceptions? Spain, the United Kingdom and Ireland.

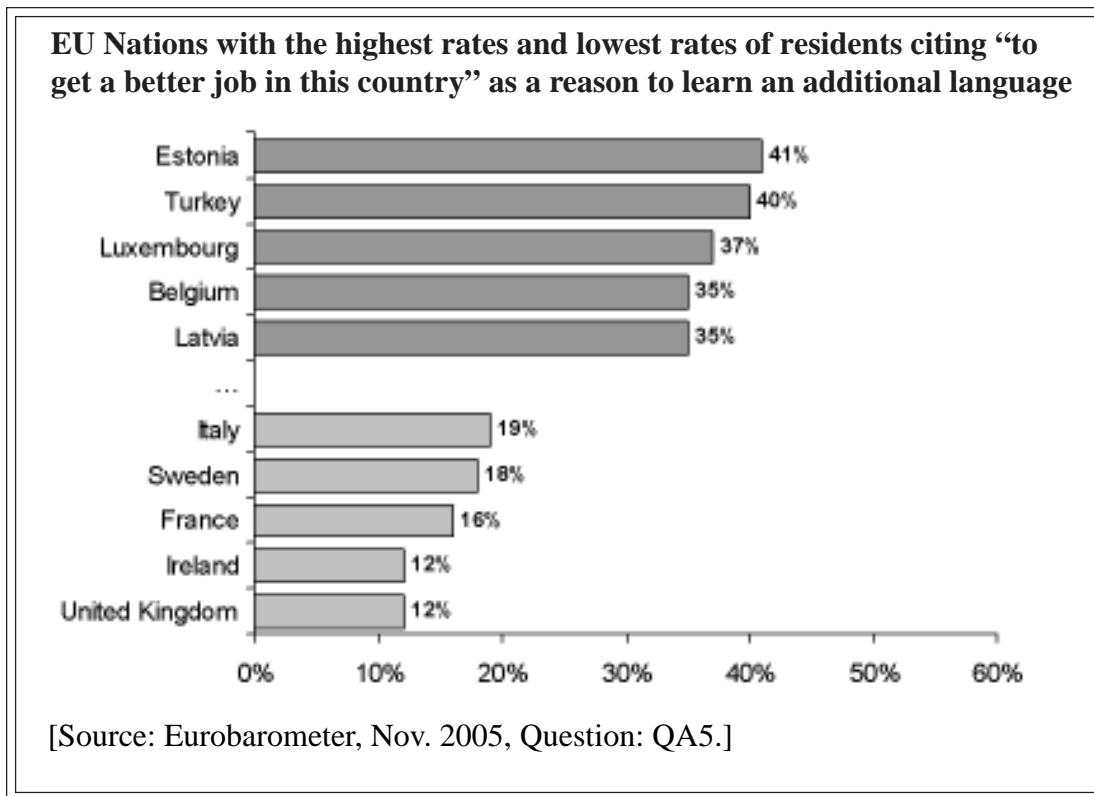
While one-in-three members of EU25 nations were mentioning work as a motive for additional language learning, the rate in the United Kingdom and Ireland was only marginally above one-in-five. The nations with the five highest and five lowest rates appear in the table below:



This should come as no surprise. If one already knows English, the language of nearly all international business, only small gains can be made through learning an additional language.

The differences between native English speaking Europe and the other nations did not stop there. Nearly one-in-seven members of EU25 nations cited “to be able to study in another country” as a reason for learning a new language. The rate of this response in the United Kingdom and Ireland ranked third-to-last and seventh-to-last, respectively. Better than one-in-six members of EU25 nations cited “to know a language that is widely spoken around the world” as a reason for learning a new language. The rate in Ireland and the United Kingdom tied for sixth-to-last in this category. Seven percent of EU25 respondents called being “able to use the Internet” as a reason for foreign language learning. The rate in the United Kingdom and Ireland tied for last place among EU nations [15].

But perhaps the greatest illustration of the need for a foreign language in non-native English-speaking countries is illustrated in the percentage of respondents to the Eurobarometer survey who cited “to get a better job in” their home nation as a reason for learning a new language. Across the board, nearly one-in-four EU25 residents said that foreign language learning would help improve their opportunities at home. Opinion was vastly different in the United Kingdom and Ireland, where fewer than one-in-eight residents cited this choice, placing these nations last in the EU. The top five and bottom five nations in terms of residents citing getting a better job at home as a reason to learn a new language were:



So why are U.K. and Ireland residents learning foreign languages? The majority of language learners are doing it for foreign trips and personal satisfaction, as shown below.

Top three reasons for learning new languages, United Kingdom

- 1. To use on holidays abroad 45%
- 2. For personal satisfaction 25%
- 2. To understand people from other cultures 25%

Top five reasons for learning new languages, Ireland

- 1. To use on holidays abroad 50%
- 2. For personal satisfaction 25%
- 2. To be able to work in another country 25%

[Source: Eurobarometer, Nov. 2005, Question: QA5.]

To be fair, “use on holidays abroad” was the most common answer throughout the EU25 nations, and personal satisfaction placed in a strong tie for third. However, the differences in the rates by which these factors were reported were much slimmer than in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Here are the top three reasons for learning new languages in Germany, Hungary, and overall in the EU25.

Top three reasons for learning new languages, Germany

1. To use on holidays abroad	44%
2. To use at work	42%
3. To be able to work in another country	29%

Top three reasons for learning new languages, Hungary

1. To use at work	31%
2. To get a better job in Hungary	23%
3. To be able to work in another country	21%

Top three reasons for learning new languages, EU25

1. To use on holidays abroad	35%
2. To use at work	32%
3. To be able to work in another country	27%
3. For personal satisfaction	27%

[Source: Eurobarometer, Nov. 2005, Question QA5.]

Just as in Australia and much of the United States, residents of the United Kingdom and Ireland are simply not in need of foreign language skills. While they may desire to learn a foreign language for personal satisfaction or a trip outside the country, they do not require one for day-to-day life.

Frequency of Foreign Language Use

To determine the degree to which bilingual skills are *necessary*, we can examine data from the Eurobarometer question on the frequency of foreign language use. If residents of these English speaking countries were truly in need of foreign language fluency for business and employment opportunity, we would expect they would be using these tongues on a daily basis, much like India natives who work in New Delhi call centers or Tokyo bellmen who work in hotels catering to foreign tourists.

According to the data, 26 percent of those surveyed in the EU25 nations use a language other than their mother tongue “almost every day.” Within these nations that were members of the European Union prior to 2007, only five had rates at 20 percent of the population or lower that used a language other than their mother tongue nearly every day [16].

European Union nations with the lowest rates of the population speaking a language other than their mother tongue “almost every day”	
Austria	18%
United Kingdom	17%
Ireland	15%
Greece	11%
Portugal	11%
[Source: Eurobarometer. Nov. 2005, Question QASD 3a.]	

When the information undergoes a more thorough examination, the rates of daily bilingual use in the United Kingdom and Ireland drop further. In the U.K., seven percent of those who said they use a language other than their mother tongue on a near daily basis were non-native English speakers using English. The most common non-English languages were Spanish and French, each used by one percent of the population daily. In Ireland, five percent of the daily bilinguals were non-native English speakers using English. Another two percent were people using Ireland’s other official language, Gaelic. The only other language with even meager daily use was French, used by two percent of the population.

Outside of the United Kingdom and Ireland, the use of a second language on a near daily basis occurs at much higher rates. More than half of the residents of Denmark use a second language “almost everyday,” as do 48 percent of Dutch residents and 44 percent of Swedes. However, this statistic comes with an asterisk. In nearly every EU nation, the most common second language used is English.

Again, 26 percent of residents across the EU25 nations spoke a language other than their mother tongue. For 12 percent of the population, this language was English. The next most popular second language was German, at 3 percent. English was the most common second language used “almost everyday,” in 20 of the 25 nations. In the five nations where it did not place first – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Spain – it placed second or third.

Furthermore, in the 80 percent of nations where English was the most common foreign language used on a near daily basis, English speakers often constituted the majority of speakers of more than one language. In Denmark, where 51 percent of the population used a language other than their mother tongue on a near daily basis, English was the most commonly used second language for 44 percent of Danish residents. In Malta, 52 percent frequently used a second language, 43 percent listed English. The respective percentages were 37 and 25 in Finland, and 31 and 28 in Cyprus.

The sidebar on the right demonstrates how common English is among the second languages used by Europeans daily. In Sweden, 39 percent of the population uses a knowledge of English in everyday business. This figure is almost ten times the amount of the second most common language used daily by native Swedish speakers, German. In the Netherlands, the difference is almost as great - 38 percent of native Dutch speakers use English daily, compared to just seven percent who use German [16].

Most common languages used “almost every day” in selected European Union countries, outside of the mother tongue, and the percentage of the population using these languages	
<u>United Kingdom</u>	
English	7%
Spanish	1%
French	1%
<u>Ireland</u>	
English	5%
Gaelic	2%
French	2%
<u>Germany</u>	
English	15%
German	9%
Russian	2%
<u>Sweden</u>	
English	39%
Swedish	4%
German	2%
<u>Netherlands</u>	
English	38%
German	7%
Dutch	3%
<u>France</u>	
English	9%
French	5%
Three tied at	1%
<u>Greece</u>	
English	8%
Russian	1%
French	1%
[Source: Eurobarometer. Nov. 2005, Question QASD 3a.]	

The low levels of foreign language usage don't end with languages used constantly. The Eurobarometer survey also asked residents of the European Union if they spoke a language other than their mother tongue "often but not on a daily basis." More than one-quarter, or 27 percent, of the residents in the EU25 countries spoke a second language with this frequency. The United Kingdom and Ireland ranked tied-for-last in the percentage of residents who spoke a language other than their mother tongue often.

European Union nations with the lowest rates of the population speaking a language other than their mother tongue "often but not on a daily basis."	
Ireland	16%
United Kingdom	16%
Portugal	17%
Greece	18%
Spain	19%
[Source: Eurobarometer. November 2005, Question QASD 3b.]	

In the United Kingdom and Ireland, the languages used "often" vary widely. In other EU nations, the language used "often," like the language used "almost everyday" is disproportionately English. The table below shows the most common languages other than the mother tongue used "often" in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and several other European Union Nations.

While 41 percent of UK residents and 25 percent of Irish residents use a language other than their mother tongue "occasionally," for purposes such as vacations or with foreign visitors, this is hardly an example of need, much like a Manhattanite's desire to get out of a town for a single weekend is not indicative of the need to purchase a car. Individuals who need languages for rare, specific occasions would be much better served with a dictionary or phrasebook than a comprehensive English class, just as a New York City resident looking for a weekend escape would likely opt for a rental car over his/her personal vehicle.

Most common languages used "often, but not on a daily basis" in selected European Union countries, outside of the mother tongue, and the percentage of the population using these languages					
<u>United Kingdom</u>		<u>France</u>		<u>Italy</u>	
French	4%	English	11%	English	8%
Spanish	2%	Spanish	4%	French	3%
<u>Ireland</u>		<u>Germany</u>		<u>Netherlands</u>	
French	4%	English	18%	English	24%
German	2%	French	4%	German	22%
<u>Denmark</u>		<u>Greece</u>		<u>Sweden</u>	
English	18%	English	13%	English	20%
French	5%	French	2%	German	4%
[Source: Eurobarometer. Nov. 2005, Question QASD 3b.]					

The decision on whether to take language classes, or any class for that matter, is one based in large part on need and to a lesser extent on desire. An aspiring chemist must take additional chemistry classes to advance in his/her chosen profession, while a chemistry hobbyist may choose to attend extra classes in order to further his/her knowledge in the subject. For a person seeking work in banking, law or music, there is no need to advance in the subject of chemistry.

The same is true in language. While residents of Sweden and the Netherlands may need to learn English as a second language for everyday use, residents of the United Kingdom and Ireland simply have no need for second language knowledge to conduct daily business. In fact, the need for second languages for most of these native English speakers is limited to “occasional” events, such as holidays and vacations.

Even the British educational system has come to realize that additional language study may be less valuable than other subjects. Unlike the Australian government, the British government is not developing programs to increase the level of foreign language learning programs in the United Kingdom. In fact, the government recently *relaxed* standards related to second language learning in British schools. In 2004, the British Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, which governs the nation’s standard high school program, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), declared that learning a language other than English is optional for students age 14 and older [17].

If foreign language learning was seen as a critical need in the United Kingdom, just as English is seen as a critical need in so many non-English speaking countries, we would expect that the relaxing of foreign language learning standards in the United Kingdom from mandatory to optional would have little effect. After all, the “optional” nature of some classes does not keep students from interests in so many subjects, including art, business, and technology.

In the case of foreign languages in the United Kingdom, however, the number of students taking second language programs plunged. Back in 2004, when the classes were still mandatory, three-fourths of GCSE students took the standardized tests in this subject. In 2007, only one-half of GCSE students took the foreign language standardized exam [17]. This sharp decline underscores the perceived need for languages other than English in British society. Like the relationship between New York City residents and car ownership, most British students do not anticipate that the benefits of learning an additional language will outweigh the opportunity costs of classes foregone in the pursuit of foreign language fluency.

In the end, the November 2005 Eurobarometer leaves us with an accurate picture of bilingualism in the United Kingdom and Ireland. It hardly matches the idea of a “bilingual Europe.” At 38 percent and 34 percent, respectively, these two nations fall within the same range of bilingualism as Canada (~38 percent) and Australia (~30 percent). A person who speaks two languages is still bilingual. But the majority of Britons and Irish, just like Canadians and Australians could fill in as the punchline of the joke.

Conclusion

In a nation where English is the dominant language, the employment and financial incentive for learning another language is minimal. In Part I of *Americans & Language*, we explored this truth in the primarily-English speaking United States. The examination in Part II of *Americans & Language* demonstrates that the same is true for many other English dominant nations, such as Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and Ireland.

In these English speaking countries, those with English fluency already have command of the language that will provide them job and educational opportunities in that nation and the majority of the rest of the world. To many, additional languages are like a dessert after a five-star meal – nice, but not necessary. Hence, the rate of bilingualism among the native born is quite low.

Many of the bilinguals in predominantly English speaking nations are not bilingual by choice, but by necessity. Bilinguals most often tend to be immigrants from countries where English is not the common language, and as such, they must learn English to survive in an English-dominant country. German or Gujarati might be useful languages in some countries, but they will not provide a means to making a living in Canada, Ireland, the U.K. or Australia.

While rates of bilingualism may be higher in non-English dominant nations, these figures are overwhelmingly influenced by the desire to learn English. Few Europeans are selecting second languages for the sole purpose of learning another language, they are selecting English in order to obtain better jobs and better opportunities.

If the United States was a French speaking nation or a Spanish speaking nation, we would likely find that rates of bilingualism would rival those of most European countries, due to the fact that Americans would be clamoring to learn English. However, given that more than 90 percent of Americans speak English, the language of global business, commerce and politics, they can hardly be criticized for being as monolingual as the residents of other major English-speaking nations throughout the world.

Footnotes

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