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Author

Buzatu, Anamaría

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The Spanish Language in Californian Colleges and Universities

Anamaría Buzatu
UCLA

ABSTRACT

Spanish is considered the second familiar language in California due to its Californian history, our state's proximity to Mexico and other Latin American countries, continuous Hispanic immigration, and the size of its Hispanic population, which surpasses that of all other states. This article analyzes the number of enrollment in Spanish courses during 2010–2011 academic year and then compared to the ones from other Romance languages (Portuguese, Italian, French, Romanian & Catalan) taught at each college/university campus. The results are quantified and subsequently discussed.

KEYWORDS*: Spanish/Romance languages, MLA Language Map*

1. **INTRODUCTION.** This study shows how Spanish matters in the academic sphere, especially in colleges and universities in California where it is the most popular and sought-after language that is offered and taught. We know that Spanish is considered the second most popular language in California due to its Californian history, our state's proximity to Mexico and other Latin American countries, continuous Hispanic immigration, and the size of its Hispanic population, which surpasses that of all other states. This study will present a description of the methodology used to compare the popularity of Spanish to that of other Romance languages offered and an analysis of the data regarding this language that is spoken and studied in California.

2. **METHODOLOGY.** In order to analyze the Spanish language in California, the following factors are taken into consideration: the languages spoken other than English, the selection of colleges and universities in California, the lower division Romance language courses and the actual enrollment data for one academic year: 2010–2011. The results are quantified and subsequently discussed in the Data Analysis section.

Besides Spanish, five other Romance languages were selected for this study: French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian and Catalan. These all are Latin

based languages and were selected to show that from among all Romance languages offered at colleges and universities in California the selection of the Spanish language reflect student choice of foreign language to study.

Five community colleges (Santa Barbara, El Camino, West Los Angeles, Santa Ana, and Ventura); five California State Universities (Humboldt, Chico, San Jose, Northridge, and San Diego); and five universities of the UC system (UC Los Angeles, UC Merced, UC San Diego, UC Santa Barbara, and UC Irvine) were selected as the main representatives of the public colleges and universities in California. All of these colleges and universities are spread across California to reflect not just one particular area but, rather, the state as a whole.

The following courses in lower division Romance languages such as beginning, intermediate, conversation, reading and composition, intensive and Spanish for heritage speakers are taken by students of any academic major. It should be noted that Spanish courses for heritage speakers are offered at most colleges and universities in California.

For the enrollment data, two factors were taken into consideration: the number of students actually enrolled in the lower division Spanish courses and the comparison of these enrollment numbers with those of other Romance languages offered at each college and university. All of these enrollment data pertain to the 2010–2011 academic year and were obtained via the online Class Schedules. The actual enrollment data (En) were measured against the enrollment capacity (EnCp).

3. Data Analysis

3.1. Languages Spoken. Before analyzing the enrollment data it is important to take a look at the languages other than English spoken by country (United States), by state (California), by county (Los Angeles County) and by city (the city of Los Angeles) according to the MLA Language Map. The MLA Language Map provides information regarding the number, ages, and percentage of speakers of each language in a particular geographic region. It is very important to know the position of the languages spoken because the enrollment data are likely to reflect the situation of the Spanish language in California in parallel with the MLA Language Map. According to data from 2005 American Community Survey of all the U.S. states, after English, Spanish is the most spoken language in California with 28.56%, followed by Texas, with 18.39%, Florida, with 9.39%, New York, with 7.61%, and Illinois, with 4.49%.

In table 1, 2, 3 and 4 Romance Languages by Country, State, County and City, we notice that Spanish is in first place among Romance languages as the most spoken language after English: in the U.S. by 10.71%, in California by 25.80%, in Los Angeles County by 37.89% and in the city Los Angeles by 41.69%.

In the United States	
Spanish	10.71%
French	0.61%
Italian	0.38%
Portuguese	0.21%
Romanian	0.04%

TABLE 1. Romance Languages by Country
Source: MLA Language Map: Census 2000

In California	
Spanish	25.80%
French	0.42%
Italian	0.26%
Portuguese	0.24%
Romanian	0.06%

TABLE 2. Romance Languages by State
Source: MLA Language Map: Census 2000

In Los Angeles County	
Spanish	37.89%
French	0.43%
Italian	0.23%
Portuguese	0.11%
Romanian	0.06%

TABLE 3. Romance Languages by County
Source: MLA Language Map: Census 2000

In Los Angeles City	
Spanish	41.69%
French	0.58%
Italian	0.28%
Portuguese	0.11%
Romanian	0.08%

TABLE 4. Romance Languages by City
Source: MLA Language Map: Census 2000

The MLA Language Map also provides data from the 2005 American Community Survey for the Romance languages in the U.S.

and California as in table 5 and 6. Note that the numbers are slightly larger than the 2000 Census data (Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4) which indicate an increase in the use of Spanish.

In the United States	
Spanish	12.03%
French	0.49%
Italian	0.29%
Portuguese	0.24%
Romanian	0.05%

TABLE 5. Romance Languages by Country
Source: MLA Language Map: 2005 American Community Survey

In California	
Spanish	28.21%
French	0.39%
Italian	0.21%
Portuguese	0.20%
Romanian	0.06%

TABLE 6. Romance Languages by State
Source: MLA Language Map: 2005 American Community Survey

3.2 ENROLLMENT DATA. The results of the enrollment data are quantified and subsequently discussed as shown in the following figures. The actual enrollment data are measured against the enrollment capacity data. All of the enrollment data are based on the 2010–2011 academic year during Fall, Winter and Spring quarters/semesters. The data are taken from the online Class Schedule of each college or university.
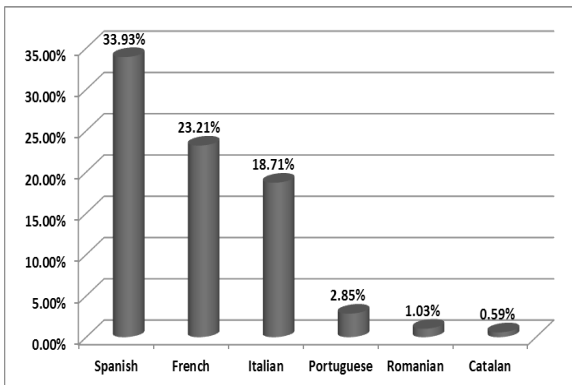

FIGURE 1. University of California, Los Angeles: Romance Languages, 2010–2011
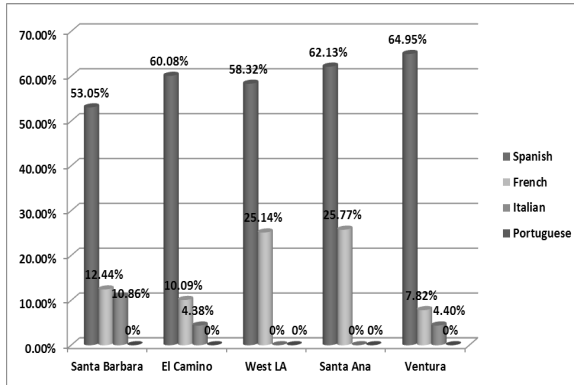Source: University of California, Los Angeles; Class Schedule

Figure 2. California Community Colleges: Santa Barbara, El Camino, West
Los Angeles, Santa Ana, and Ventura
Source: California Community Colleges: Santa Barbara, El Camino, West Los Angeles, Santa Ana,
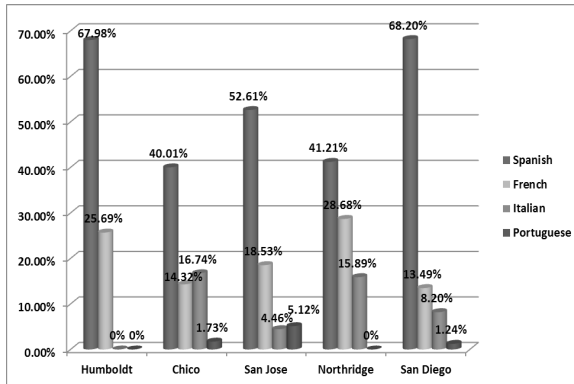and Ventura; Class Schedule

Figure 3. California State Universities: Humboldt, Chico, San Jose, Northridge,
and San Diego
Source: California State Universities: Humboldt, Chico, San Jose, Northridge, and San Diego;
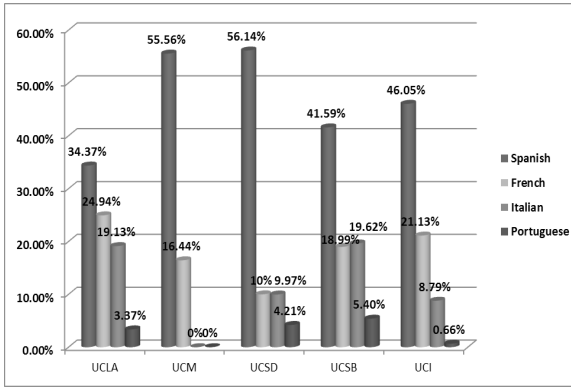Class Schedule

FIGURE 4. Universities of California: Los Angeles, Merced, San Diego,
Santa Barbara, and Irvine
Source: Universities of California: Los Angeles, Merced, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Irvine;
Class Schedule

Figure 1 shows the enrollment data for the University of California, Los Angeles during one academic year: Spring 2010, Fall 2010 and Winter 2011. The first bars of figures 2, 3, and 4 represent the Spanish language followed by other Romance languages such as French, Italian and Portuguese. Above the bar representing each of the Romance languages, there are percentages of actual enrollment from each college or university.

4. DISCUSSION. Three types of institutions such as community colleges, state universities and universities of the UC system were selected as the main representatives to illustrate the position of Spanish as a foreign language course studied in California. Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 showed that, after English, Spanish is the most widely spoken language in the U.S., California, Los Angeles County and the city of Los Angeles. Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4 showed that, compared with other Romance languages, Spanish stands in first position as the most studied language by students of any academic major according to the actual enrollment data from the lower division courses for one academic year: 2010–2011.

5. CONCLUSION. In conclusion, although we know that, after English, Spanish is the most widely spoken language in the U.S., California, Los Angeles County and the city of Los Angeles, the purpose of this study was to show with quantitative evidence from the MLA Language Map and enrollment data that Spanish matters in the academic sphere in the

Californian colleges and universities and is also the most popular and sought-after language that is offered and taught. Interestingly, the actual enrollment data reflects the position of the Spanish language in parallel with the MLA Language Map. Thus, this helps to confirm the importance of Spanish in California. Furthermore, according to the tables and figures, we can predict in the future that Spanish will, most likely, maintain its first position as the most studied language as shown and discussed in this article.

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Class schedule. University of California, San Diego, 16 February 2011.

MLA Language Map Data Center: 2005 American Community Survey. Modern Language Association, 16 February 2011.

MLA Language Map Data Center: Census 2000. Modern Language Association, 16 February 2011.