



# **Communicating in the Flat World: Language in the Era of Globalization**

James Hoadley  
Associate Director  
Center for International Business Education and Research  
Georgia Institute of Technology

When I was growing up, my parents told me, "Finish your dinner. People in China and India are starving."

Today I tell my daughters, "Finish your homework. People in India and China are starving for your job."

Thomas L. Friedman  
New York Times Columnist  
Author "The World is Flat"

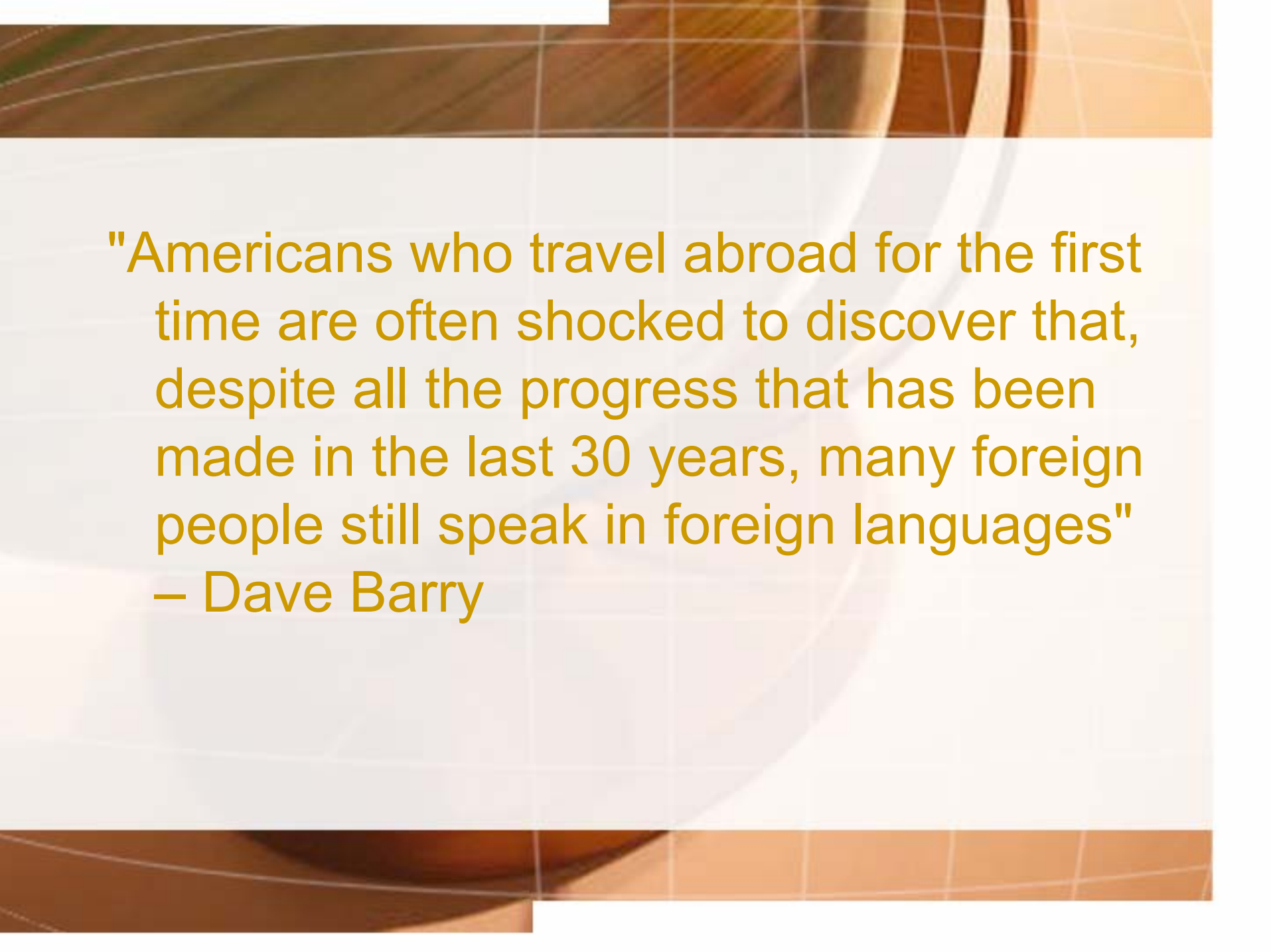
# The New Reality

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, everyone in the world can compete on an equal footing with everyone else. Therefore the difference between success and failure will be the ability to communicate and to understand.

- The importance of English is fading rapidly in the 21st Century
- America's Foreign Language Education is not ready
- We must improve foreign language education at all levels - **Or else...**

# **The Borderless World**

- The End of Walls**
- The End of Distance**
- The End of Time**
- The End of Costs**



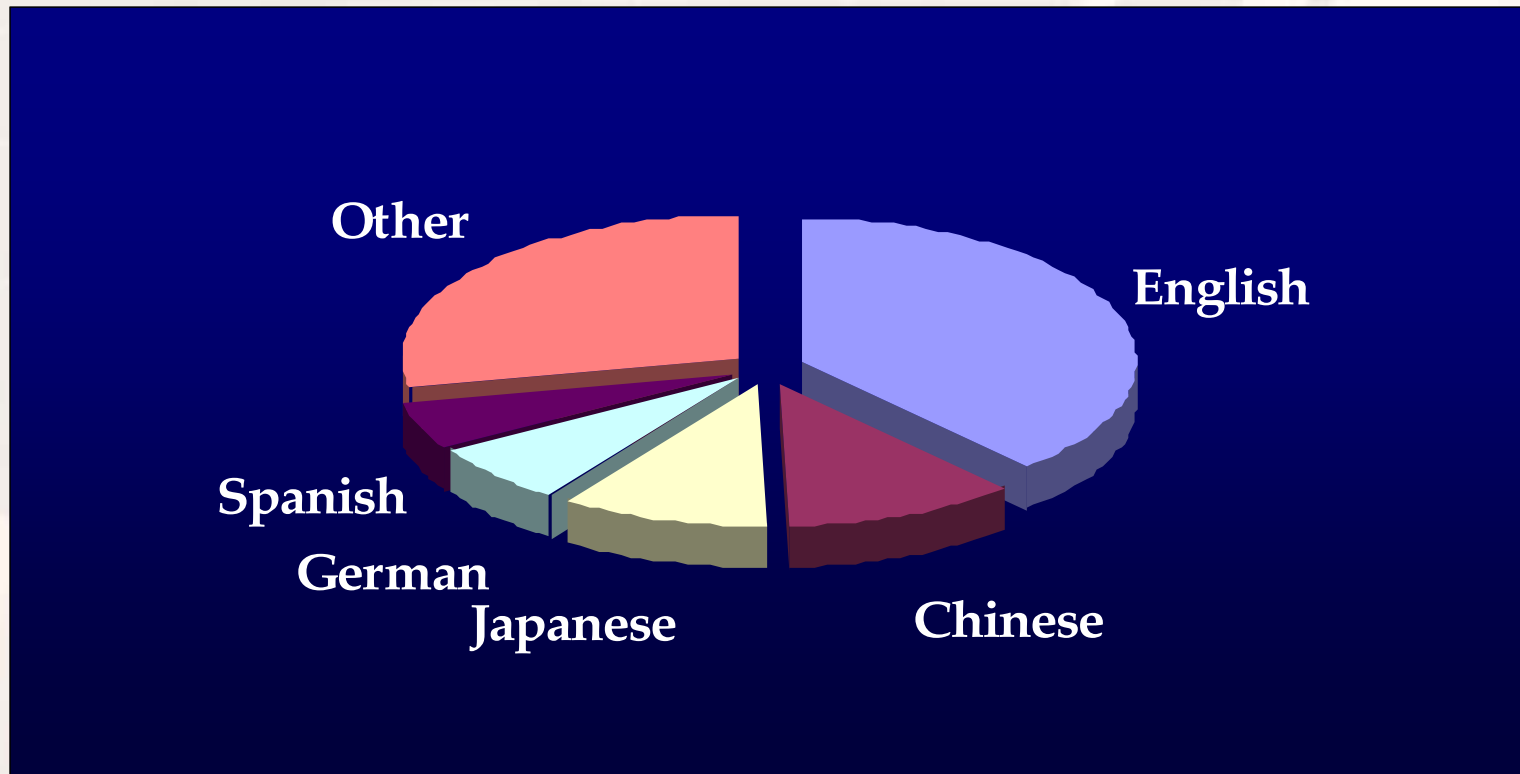
"Americans who travel abroad for the first time are often shocked to discover that, despite all the progress that has been made in the last 30 years, many foreign people still speak in foreign languages"  
– Dave Barry



## Where the Action Is...

- The fastest growing segments of Internet users are in non-English speaking countries.

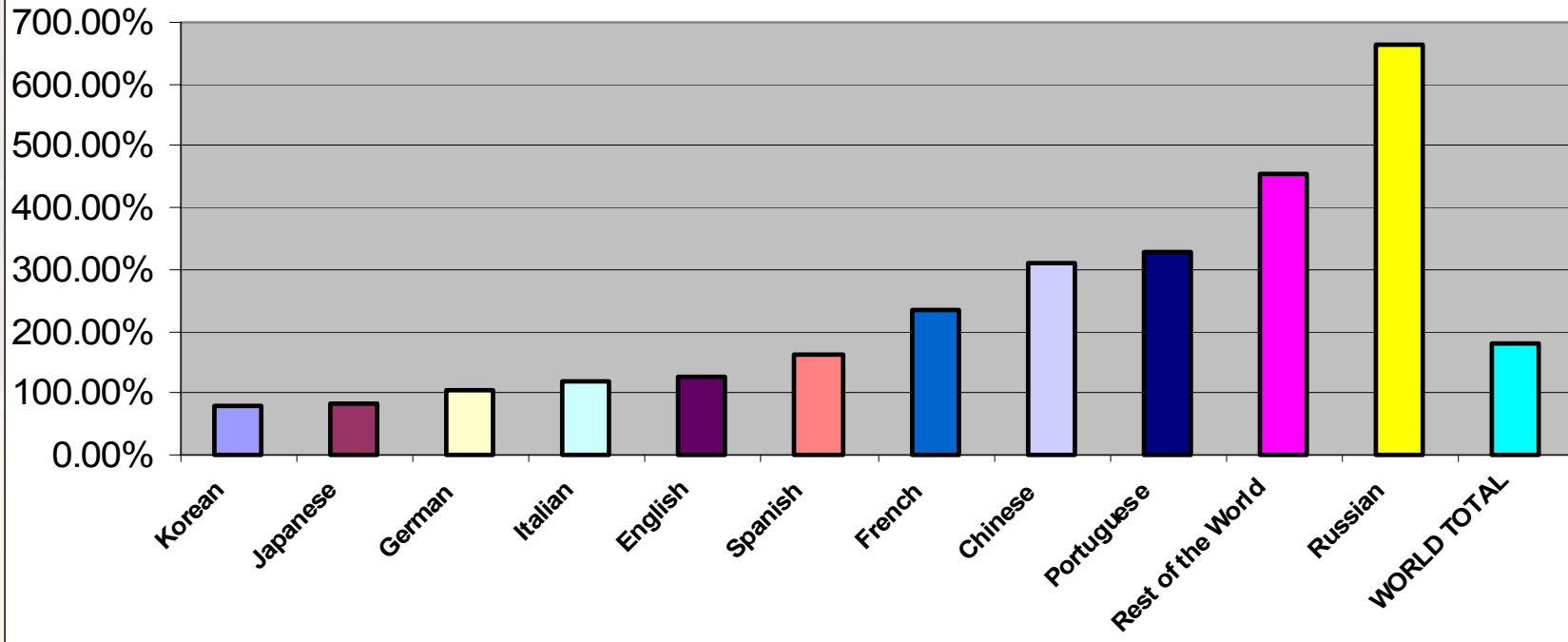
# Internet Language Usage



Source: Google



### Internet Penetration Growth by Language 2000 - 2005



Source: Internet World Stats

The Fading Importance of English

Twenty years ago would you rather have  
been a B-student in Poughkeepsie or a  
genius in Shanghai?

And today?

- Bill Gates

# Hit the BRICs

Fastest Growing Nations for the Next 20 Years

- China
- India
- Brazil
- Russia
- Indonesia

I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown around my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.

Mahatma Gandhi

# The Rise of the Underdogs

- The Open Source Movement has thrown the pace of software localization into overdrive.
- The low cost of IT makes it possible for small language groups to grow their influence.

# Follow the Money

- Most US Multinationals now make the majority of their profits overseas.
- Small businesses also have an unprecedented capability to “go global” very early in their development

# Follow the Money

- Four out of five new jobs in the United States are created as a result of foreign trade. (Source: National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages)

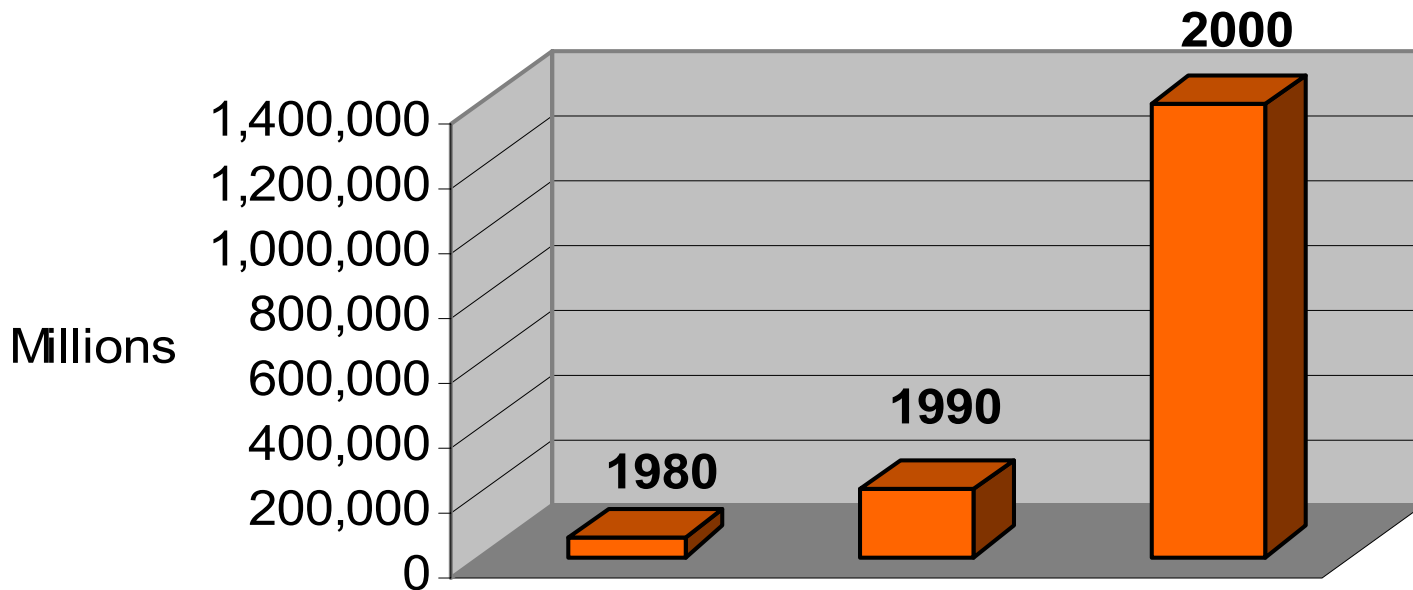


# Follow the Money

- Foreign Direct Investment is steadily increasing
- The largest increases are in non-English-speaking parts of the world
  - In 2004, 58 percent of growth of earnings of US businesses came from overseas.  
(Committee for Economic Development)

# The World is Coming to You!

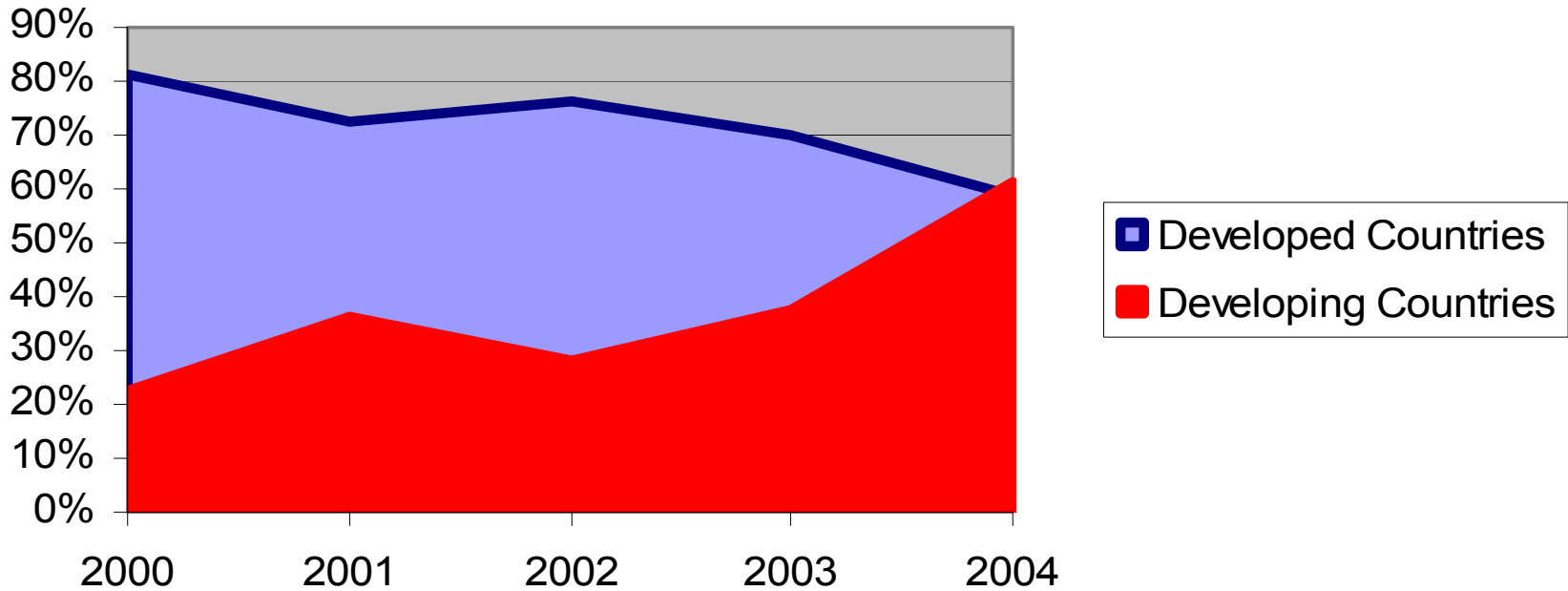
## World Foreign Direct Investment



Source: UNCTAD

# And It's Going Lots of Other Places Too!

## Percentage of Global Foreign Direct Investment



Source: UNCTAD

# America's Foreign Language Education is Not Ready

- Public apathy
- “Resting on our laurels”
- Too little, too late.

# “Ugly Americans”

- American knowledge of foreign affairs has always been low
- America has been culturally and linguistically isolated

# “Ugly Americans”

“If I wanted to recruit people who are both technically skilled and culturally aware, I wouldn’t even waste time looking for them on U.S. college campuses.”

- Executive from a top global corporation (Source :Rand Corporation)

# “Ugly Americans”

- 85 Percent of Americans age 18 to 24 cannot locate Iraq or Iran on a map of the Middle East
- 25 Percent of College-Bound High School Students can not name the ocean between California and Asia
- 37 Percent can't locate China on a map of Asia and the Middle East
- 56 Percent can't find India

Source: National Geographic



# Resting on our laurels

- Americans tend to assume everyone in the world wants to be like them
- Our success has fed this attitude, as everyone else has had to cater to us

# Resting on our laurels

Average number of  
languages spoken  
by American  
Business  
Executives

**1.5**

Average number of  
languages spoken  
by Dutch  
Business  
Executives

**3.9**

Source (Rosen ,Dingh, Singer and Phillips, *Global Literacies*)

# Resting on our laurels

Percentage of  
Young American  
Adults who speak  
more than one  
language

**36**

Percentage of  
Young Swedish  
Adults who speak  
more than one  
language

**89**

Source (National Geographic Society)

# Don't Get Out Much Either

Percentage of  
Young American  
Adults who have  
traveled to another  
country in the last  
three years

**21**

Percentage of  
Young Swedish  
Adults who have  
traveled to another  
country in the last  
three years

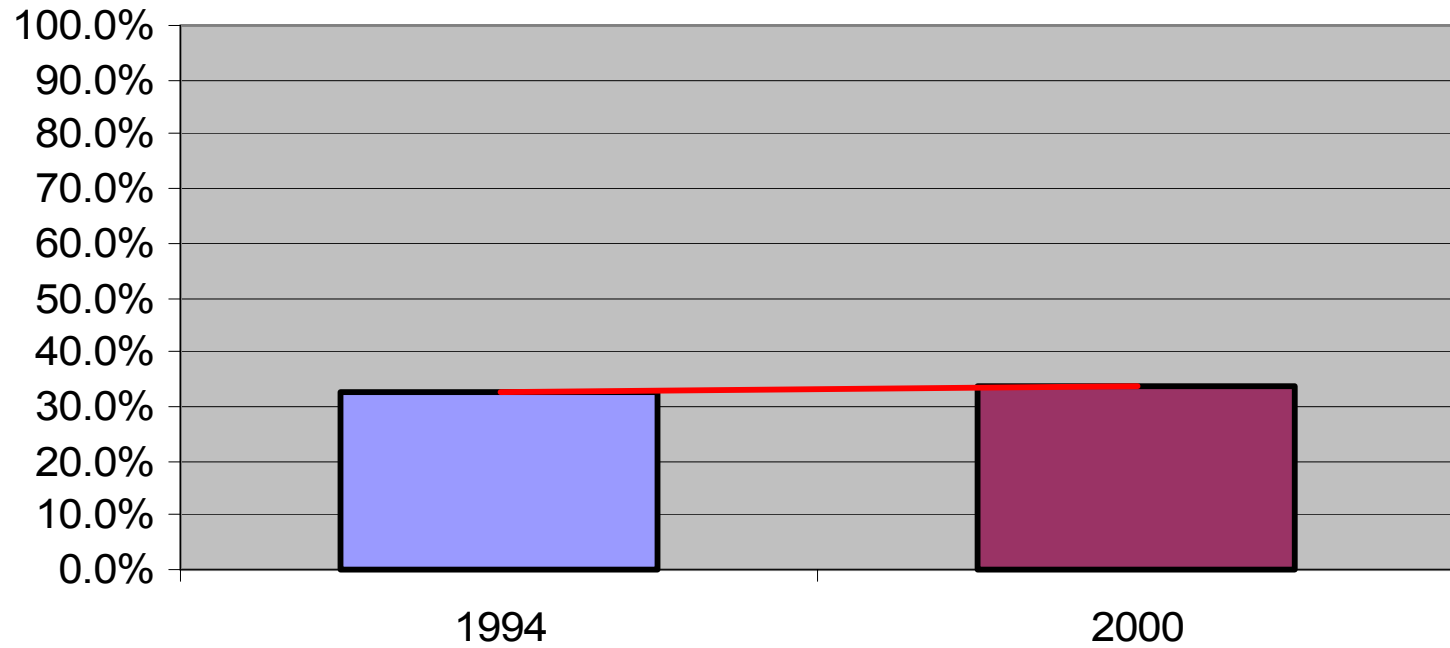
**92**

Source (National Geographic Society)

# Too little, Too late

- Fewer than half of American K-12 students are taking foreign languages
- Those who are studying start late in their academic careers – Junior High School and later

## K-12 US Foreign Lang Enrollments



Source: ACTFL

# What Can We Do?

- Don't count on more money
- Get to students as soon as possible
- Make language education relevant to students' lives



# Early and Often

- Critical Period Hypothesis
  - DeKeyser – Different methods for different ages
- Integrating language into the curriculum

# Keepin' it Real

- Be Creative
- Use real examples
- Keep it fun and engaging

What can we do?

# Conclusion

- English is “just another language” in the flat world.
- America’s current approach to foreign language is dangerously inadequate.
- If we don’t address the problem now, America will be swept aside.

*The Japanese eat very little fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.*

*The French eat a lot of fat and also have fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.*

*The Japanese drink very little red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.*

*The Italians drink excessive amounts of red wine and also suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.*

*Conclusion: Eat and drink what you like. What kills you is speaking English.”*

**-Michael Fitzpatrick**