
BOOK REVIEW

Book Author: Kathleen Stein-Smith. **Book title:** *The U.S. Foreign Language Deficit: Strategies for Maintaining a Competitive Edge in a Globalized World*. **Year of Publication:** (2016). **Publisher:** Fairleigh Dickinson University Teaneck, New Jersey, USA. **Book pages:** 123 pp. **Book ISBN** 978-3-319-34158-3

Reviewers: *Forough Rahimi^a, Gholam Hossein Shahisavandi^b

^aEnglish Language Department, School of Allied Medical Sciences, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran.

^bIran Department of Foreign Languages, Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran.

Kathleen Stein-Smith's *The U.S. Foreign Language Deficit: Strategies for Maintaining a Competitive Edge in a Globalized World* is an attempt to outline a comprehensive and organized model for one of the recent trends in the field of teaching language and the importance of language.

In the preface section of her book, Kathleen Stein-Smith, points to one of the most significant is the impact of foreign language on intelligence and ability in a variety of settings. The book examined the extent of the U.S. foreign language deficit, its impact, and required measures. It goes on to affirm that multilingualism enables the communication between the UN's linguistically and culturally diverse Member States within the meeting rooms and halls of the UN. By promoting tolerance, multilingualism also ensures increased participation of all Member States in the organization's work, as well as greater effectiveness, better outcomes and more involvement.

This book is divided into three parts. Parts I and II are divided into three chapters and part III is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter, the writer describes the current status of languages in the United States. For example, she explains:

According to a Gallup poll, only 25% of Americans possess the ability to conduct a conversation in a language other than English. According to the Modern Language Association (MLA), only 8.1% of U.S. college and university students are enrolled in a course in a language other than English, and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) reports that only 18.5% of K-12 students study a foreign language. (p. 39)

This is mentioned to be the main problem for immigrants, and international university students like UN employers. Then she illustrates the history of language and language usage and languages that are spoken within the U.S. The role of languages in the media (film, fiction and bilingual celebrities), the influences of other languages (loan words in English) are discussed.

The second chapter illustrates that the foreign language deficit has had a negative impact on the economy of the United States and national security, and on the careers of many monolingual English-

speaking Americans. In addition, it negatively impacts the ability of many Americans to enjoy world languages and cultures to the fullest, at home or during travel, and to effectively navigate local multilingual and multicultural communities. In an increasingly globalized world, Americans are increasingly isolated due to their inability to communicate directly with others and are limited to understanding literature, media, and music only in translation. She maintained that according to a 2001 Gallup poll, only 25% of Americans reported the ability to hold a conversation in another language. In summary, most Americans are not proficient in a foreign language, and despite this realization, budget constraints are resulting in decreasing opportunities at all levels for students to study another language, and enrollments continue to decline.

In another part, she discusses the global Anglophone foreign language deficit. This reluctance to learn another language is significant in the U.S. Although the U.S. is globally weak in terms of foreign language skills, it is not alone, closely followed by the United Kingdom (UK) and other English-speaking countries, all of which suffer from the global Anglophone foreign language deficit. In this chapter, the writer talks about the impact of the foreign language deficit and writes:

It has been reported that the lack of Arabic linguists contributed to the failure of the U.S. to prevent the 9/11 attacks, and the recommendations of the report of the 9/11 Commission included linguists in U.S. government agencies and departments. Later, Edward Snowden's document leaks included information on the shortage of personnel fluent in Middle Eastern languages and Chinese in U.S. intelligence agencies. (p. 58)

The next part of this chapter is about The Economic Impact of Foreign Language And Global English. Kathleen Stein-Smith illustrates the relationship between other languages and global English with a few selected examples about global English, global travel, localization and internet languages, exports, foreign-owned companies.

In the chapter, Kathleen Stein-Smith illustrates while American nationality and economic security are critical to all citizens, our individual careers are also important to us individually. Foreign language skills can be a considerable career asset, providing the professional edge in a broad spectrum of careers. In addition to this ongoing public conversation about the importance of foreign language skills for American nationality and economic security, the importance of foreign language skills for individual careers cannot be overstated. Foreign language skills open the door to a wide range of career and employment opportunities, from language services and education to the government, military, business, and the private sector. Careers in the export sector and foreign-owned companies operating within the U.S. are also part of the broader employment picture that needs to be considered. In this part, the book has some examples and anecdotes and articles that aim at highlighting this part and some advice for foreign language educators to know which foreign language skills are needed in the workplace. So, this is very important for educators to consider these points.

Then she talks about foreign language skills and transnational careers. She says that people learn languages for a variety of reasons, but for many, career and professional employment and advancement are the motivation. Foreign language skills can form the core of a profession in language services or

language education and can enhance a number of professions, including but not limited to, import-export, tourism, fashion, the fine and performing arts, culinary arts, publishing, and so on.

Chapter 4 deals with the importance of foreign language skills in international education and education for global citizenship. It says the ability to communicate in other language is a global competency in the workplace, in the classroom, and in a globally mobile world. Much has been written about the importance of business and technical foreign language skills in the workplace, but multilingualism is increasingly important in education and for global citizens in an increasingly interconnected world.

Then she illustrates language for international education with some examples and explains this debate by some examples and articles. Then explains multilingualism as a global competency, the ability to communicate in other language is a global competency in the workplace, in the classroom, and in an increasingly globally mobile world. Some examples about the UN, EU, the usages of foreign language skills, global lingua franca and some articles are seen in this part. Then she tries to elaborate education for global citizenship for those who wish to play an active role as engaged global citizens. Cultural differences, foreign language skills in the U.S.-the U.S. foreign language deficit versus global citizenship, the European Union and multilingualism, multilingualism and sustainability are other points that she deals with.

Chapter 5 deals with a brief history of foreign language learning in the United States, a nation of immigrants, but relatively few Americans speak a foreign language. Only 25% of Americans feel capable of holding a conversation in another language, but without recent immigrants and their children, this number falls to about 10%. The next part talks about learning a foreign language as an independent self-directed learner, who wants for those who have finished their traditional education with studying or learning another language, there are opportunities for classroom learning on campuses, in community schools and other organizations, and sometimes in the workplace. It mentions that people have always been able to study and learn foreign languages independently on their own, but technology has made independent self-directed learning much more available, more effective, and easier, especially for the adult learner and mentions the ways people can learn a language. Books and language learning packages combining books, CDs, and online resources are available.

Chapter 6 deals with developing foreign language capacity in the U.S. It says conventional foreign language education may not be the only way to increase the number of Americans with foreign language proficiency. Heritage language and immersion programs may be able to reach an additional population of learners with a greater potential to achieve proficiency more rapidly. According to this, for example, it is logical to assume that Spanish-speaking learners have a relative advantage when studying another romance language, and numerous courses exist based on facilitating learning of the new language by building on the similarities between Spanish and Italian, Portuguese, or French.

Chapter seven highlights the fact that it is essential to reverse the U.S. foreign language deficit, and in order to do so, a strategic social campaign is needed. There are many things learners can do to encourage the study of languages in their homes, their classrooms, or their communities, whether they

live in a small town or a major metropolitan area. This part says that there are several strategies for parents, teachers, and school administrators. In this part, the most important factor to consider is motivation. There are several samples to illustrate this part. The writer considers two major aspects to the lack of motivation: the objective reality that English is, indeed, a widespread language both within the broad expanse of the U.S. and beyond; and the subjective lack of interest among many people in another language and culture.

Chapter eight deals with the needs of adult learners, the role of technology in foreign language learner, immersion and heritage language learners, ESL, and—very importantly multilingualism as a global trend. It says that the most significant trend in foreign languages in the U.S. is the collaborative language enterprise partnership, with foreign language education, government, and business working together to effectively address the U.S. foreign language deficit and to ensure a sufficient supply for foreign language skills among Americans. There are several examples of education and technologies to illustrate this part. Multilingualism as a global trend and English as a second language: ESL and ESP are discussed and illustrated in this chapter.

Chapter nine deals with getting students interested in foreign languages and keeping them interested. It says that motivation and keeping students interested in foreign languages are two important factors in learning other languages. Once learners and potential learners of all ages are interested, opportunities would need to be available with flexibility for adult and non-traditional learners, offering flexible schedules and locations and maximizing the use of technology to empower all interested in learning a language. Then the book illustrates motivation and refers to some researchers like Zoltan Dornyei and Lambert and Gardner.

Chapter ten deals with encouraging signs and points that the ability to use more than one language is widely considered to be an important workplace skill. Then Kathleen Stein-Smith talks about the seal of biliteracy, learners' language strategies, promotion and advocacy, multilingualism and creativity, multilingualism and emotional intelligence or (EQ) and defines them one by one.

Chapter eleven deals with the resurgence of foreign language in the United State. It explains that the resurgence of foreign languages would enhance economic and national security and provide increased employment opportunities to Americans in a wide range of professions in education, government, and business, including foreign language education and language services. Several examples illustrate these parts. The book also refers to technology that has already changed the ways of learning languages.

The final chapter illustrates the U.S. language paradox. It refers to the reluctance of native English language speakers to learn another language while living in a nation of immigrants. This has posed a challenge to the U.S. in an era where English may be considered as the global lingua franca, and where foreign languages are increasingly in demand in the global workplace. It talks about campaigns of foreign language learning and their positive impact on employment and careers in many areas and says that the U.S. foreign language deficit is a serious threat to our economic and national security.

Conclusion

This book has outlined a model for one of the recent trends in the field of teaching language and the importance of language very comprehensively. The role and significance of communication and effective communication in the globalized and interconnected world are brought into the spotlight very differently and professionally. One highlighted part is the important role of language and communication in career and professional employment as well as international education.

The comprehensive materials about the U.S. foreign language deficit give its readers a complete picture of the status of the language and the associated problems. The writer has effectively referred to several elements, strategies and factors in need of consideration due to their importance. The authors believed that this deficit affects our ability to effectively navigate the globalized world and our own multicultural and multilingual society. The book at hand contains a high amount of detailed factual information from various aspects of the topic, which helps the readers gain a better insight into, and develop a deeper understanding of, the issue.

The careful analysis and review of the book at hand revealed that this is an invaluable source of knowledge about language and communication that enjoys certain unique features which differentiates it with other works in this area. The most intriguing positive point about this book is highlighting the practical implications of language learning to such important domains as education and career development. The final sections serve the function of consciousness rising and critical thinking. It is a call for Americans to have an eye on foreign language learning and makes the audience think about foreign language deficit as a serious threat to their economic and national security. The information provided in this book is well-organized, comprehensive, and easy to understand which, based on the reviewers' idea, can be the reason it should stand out amongst other sources. The book can serve as a useful source for graduate and postgraduate students interested in how language is used in the world and can be of interest to scholars and practitioners working in the field of language teaching, foreign language deficits and strategies.