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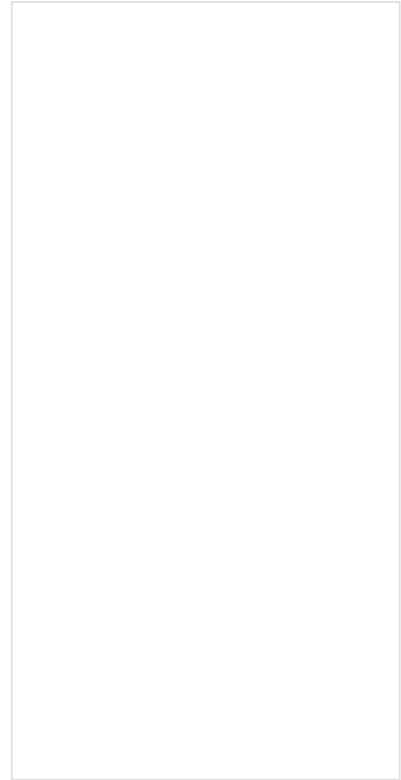
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By Susanna Kim

Sep 1, 2011 11:16am

Top 3 Useful Foreign Languages for Business Excludes Spanish

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What are the top three most useful languages for business after English? Surprisingly, Spanish didn't make the cut despite being the official language of 20 countries and spoken by over 329 million people, according to [Bloomberg Rankings \(http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-08-30/mandarin-chinese-most-useful-business-language-after-english-1.html\)](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-08-30/mandarin-chinese-most-useful-business-language-after-english-1.html).

Not surprisingly, Mandarin Chinese is the most useful language for business after English, spoken by 845 million people in the world's second-largest economy, China.

French (no. 2) and Arabic (no. 3) follow, with Spanish ranking fourth. Russian, Portuguese, Japanese, German, Italian, Korean, and Turkish followed.

To create the list, Bloomberg Rankings identified the 25 languages with the greatest number of native speakers, then narrowed the list to the 11 official languages of G20 countries, excluding those that designated English.

French is spoken by 68 million people worldwide and the official language of 27 nations. Arabic, which is spoken by 221 million people, is the official language in 23 nations, according to Bloomberg.

Bloomberg notes their list differs from the top foreign languages studied in U.S. colleges in 2009 from the [Modern Language Association \(http://www.mla.org/pdf/2009_enrollment_survey_pr.pdf\)](http://www.mla.org/pdf/2009_enrollment_survey_pr.pdf), published in December 2010.

Spanish topped that list with 864, 986 enrollments, dwarfing French which followed next with 216, 419 (no. 2), German (no. 3), American Sign Language (no. 4), Italian (no. 5), Japanese (no. 6), Chinese (no. 7), Arabic (no. 8), Latin (no. 9) and Russian (no. 10).

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Maybe Spanish didn't make the cut in other parts of the world but if you live in California like I do, you better know how to speak Spanish or you won't be able to communicate with a good portion of the population. And more importantly, you better know how to speak Spanish in California if you want to get hired and work!

POSTED BY: MARY SMITH | SEPTEMBER 1, 2011, 7:50 PM 7:50 PM

We are not just talking about California though. Globally, French is spoken on every continent, and while it is the official language of 27 nations, it is a vehicular language, used as a means of communication, in many, many more. In countries where French may be considered a second language it carries a special status in that it is widely used by intellectuals or educated elites for academic or cultural purposes.

POSTED BY: MARY BLAIN | SEPTEMBER 2, 2011, 7:33 AM 7:33 AM

I think that German should be in a better place

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According to The French Language Initiative (a partnership between the Embassy of France in the U.S. and the American Association of Teachers of French) there are over 200 million French speakers in the world, not 68 million! I think this statistic might not account for all the speakers in Africa who learn French as a second language, but use it fluently in their daily life. I would be interested in learning more about the discrepancy between the 68 million and 200 million!

POSTED BY: KSW | SEPTEMBER 2, 2011, 7:20 PM 7:20 PM

Not only that, French is growing exponentially as schools and infrastructure expand in francophone Africa.

POSTED BY: TV | SEPTEMBER 2, 2011, 8:18 PM 8:18 PM

French is spoken by at least 300 million people worldwide, if you count those who speak it as a second language.

POSTED BY: NICO SALLEMBIEN | SEPTEMBER 2, 2011, 10:43 PM 10:43 PM

French is NOT spoken by 68 millions "worldwide", it's just nationwide. Big mistake, Ms Kim!

POSTED BY: ROXANE | SEPTEMBER 3, 2011, 11:48 AM 11:48 AM

French has 65 million people in France alone. Add part of Belgium (5M), Switzerland (2M) Canada (7-8 M)..... Plus add Africa and other people all around the world who use it as a second language, or language for higher education and you are closer to 200 Millions.

Ms. Kim, culture, and not only windshields, can blind...

POSTED BY: ME | SEPTEMBER 3, 2011, 10:04 PM 10:04 PM

Business: Spanish speaking country's economies are stagnating, and have been for decades. If we look at South America, the country with best prospects is Brazil (which uses Portuguese); The only Spanish speaking country with better economic prospects is Mexico. As for French, it's in an even worse situation. French economy isn't doing well, and as for the other French speaking countries, they are in an even worse position. It is an exaggeration to say that French is spoken on five continents. In reality, French is almost unknown in Cambodia, Laos an Vietnam, so there goes



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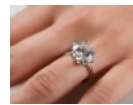
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one continent; It's spoken in South America only in the territories that are part of France, and in North America in Quebec. So, the reality is, there is Quebec, France, and a couple of African countries. Now Arabic: Arabic varies drastically between the countries, and there is also the fact that apart from oil, there is little on offer economically (particularly because of the instability). So what's left? Essentially, Chinese (specifically, Mandarin), as well as other East Asian languages. Portuguese gets some points thanks to Brazil. Mexico, perhaps, rescues Spanish from being in the position of French (which is really no longer useful for business, as a result of poor economic prospects of countries it is spoken in).

POSTED BY: SZ | SEPTEMBER 5, 2011, 7:13 AM 7:13 AM

Specifically on Korean and Italian, just to give an example: Italy's economy is in a miserable state, and has poor prospects. To place Italian ahead of Korean (South Korea has excellent prospects, as do all East Asian economies) is ridiculous.

French and Spanish: I really don't know which of the Francophone countries' economies warrant placing French ahead? Spanish at least has Mexico (and little else), but French has nothing. European economies are now in a slow, but sure, state of decline, and unfortunately, neither French, German OR Italian have much behind them.

Arabic: Certainly not ahead of Spanish, or some of the other languages. Arabic speaking countries are going through serious turmoil, and their prospects aren't ideal. There is also the problem of wildly varying spoken varieties..

There's also the fact that most of the people you'll meet there (at least in the business field) will know some English. That isn't the case in East Asia. Be sure that the moment China overtakes the US, their interest in Chinese will wane. They have already shown that their interest in English is nothing more than a product of their pragmatism. It's just a temporary tool.

POSTED BY: SZ | SEPTEMBER 5, 2011, 7:27 AM 7:27 AM

WHAT ABOUT HINDI? This is an official language of India – of the G20 countries – which also happens to be one of the largest and fastest growing economies in the 21st century. No offense intended whatsoever, but how could Turkish and Italian possibly be more important to global commerce than Hindi?

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