

Bilingual Hispanics in the United States Have Higher Wages than English-speaking Hispanics

Series of Reports by the Telefónica Foundation Indicate Growing Influence of Spanish

- *The income level of bilingual Hispanics is 2.7 percentage points higher than the income of Hispanics who only speak English.*
- *Spanish, either native or learned, will soon be spoken by one in four people in the U.S.*

WASHINGTON, October 29, 2009 — The final study in a series of interdisciplinary reports regarding the value of the Spanish language indicates that the wages of bilingual Hispanics in the U.S. are higher than those of Hispanics who speak only English, suggesting a trend toward greater demand for bilingual individuals in the U.S. labor market.

The three-year study, sponsored by the Telefónica Foundation and titled *Valor Económico del Español: Una Empresa Multinacional* (Economic Value of the Spanish Language: A Multinational Company) was directed by Professor José Luis García Delgado from the University Complutense of Madrid, in collaboration with economists, sociologists, statisticians and language experts from around the world.

Results from the study are being discussed today at a conference at Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) with a panel that includes Javier Nadal, CEO of Fundación Telefónica; Luis Alberto Moreno, president of the IDB; Iñaki Urdangarín, Chairman of Telefónica Internacional USA; José Luis García Delgado, Chair of applied Economics (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) and director of the study; Javier Sancho, Ambassador of Spain to the OAS; Moisés Naím, Editor in Chief, Foreign Policy; Arturo Sarukhan, Ambassador of Mexico to the United States, and Juan Carlos Jiménez, Professor of Applied Economics (Universidad de Alcalá).

Part of the study, conducted by Rodolfo O. de la Garza of Columbia University and Pablo M. Pinto of the University of Houston, shows that bilingualism among Hispanics in the U.S. is associated with higher wages — reversing a finding from earlier studies. This is explained, the authors speculate, by increasing immigration and economic integration with Latin America.

On average, the income level of bilingual Hispanics is 2.7 percentage points higher than the income of Hispanics who only speak English — after accounting for variables like education, occupation and region of employment.

The study also shows that the influence of the Spanish language is growing globally, with more than 100 million people studying the language because it has become the second-most-practiced language in international communications.

“Spanish is spoken by approximately 450 million people, including 37 million in the United States,” said Delgado. “It facilitates Spanish exports in the Spanish-speaking world and generates significant employment opportunities in countries where Spanish is dominant or becoming dominant.”

The study shows that in the last eight years, the number of native Spanish speakers has grown by 9.8 percent—faster than Chinese, French, English and Russian—confirming its potential to generate further opportunities for development and wealth.

The study also shows that Spanish, either native or learned, will soon be spoken by one in four people in the U.S. By 2050, it will continue to be one of the five languages with the most speakers worldwide, on a level equal with or perhaps even surpassing English.

“The challenge for Spanish in the future, however, will not be its demographic growth so much as the spreading of its use as an international language,” said Delgado. “That means its use as a second language must be promoted further, and it must continue to be reinforced as a key tool in diplomacy and business. And perhaps most important, it must continue to grow in the areas of scientific communications and the Internet.”

The Economic Value of the Spanish Language: A Multinational Company includes additional findings that reveal how the use of a common language can double and even triple business transactions and agreements and reduce operational costs, improve access to employment, facilitate higher quality jobs, and promote upward occupational mobility of immigrants. This reinforces the value of the Spanish language and proves valuable both to employees in the U.S. looking to expand their skills in order to stand out in this tough job market and for U.S. companies that already operate in or are looking to expand into new markets.

List of Publications

Fundación Telefónica’s series of interdisciplinary reports consists of 10 books (called Fundación Telefónica Collection).

The books that have already been published include:

- 1. Economía de Español: Una Introducción**
- The Economy of the Spanish Language: An Introduction
- 2. Atlas del español en el mundo**
- Atlas of the Spanish Language in the World.
- 3. La Economía de la Enseñanza del Español Como Lengua Extranjera. Oportunidades y Retos**
- The Economy of Spanish as a Foreign Language. Opportunities and Threats.
- 4. Las Cuentas del Español**
- The Value of the Spanish Language.
- 5. Emigración y Lengua: El Papel del Español en las Migraciones Internacionales**
- Immigration and Language: International Immigration and the Role of the Spanish Language.

The remaining five books, which will be published in the coming months, include:

- 1. El Español en la Red**
 - The Spanish Language on the Internet.
- 2. El Español en los Flujos Económicos Internacionales**
 - The Spanish Language in the Exchange Among Diverse Agents in International Economics.
- 3. El Español y la Industria de las Telecomunicaciones**
 - The Spanish Language and the Telecommunications Industry.
- 4. Las Industrias Culturales en el Ámbito del Español**
 - The Spanish Language in the Cultural and Societal Sectors.
- 5. Valor Económico del Español: Una Empresa Multinacional**
 - The Economic Value of the Spanish Language: A Multinational Company.

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About Fundación Telefónica

Fundación Telefónica helps build the future of the regions in which Telefónica operates and promotes the economic, social and cultural development of these regions through quality education, by using its specific strengths: its extensive customer and employee base, its widespread territorial coverage and its technological skills. Fundación Telefónica focuses on five broad trans-national areas (EducaRed, Proniño, Telefónica Volunteers, Debate and Knowledge and Art & Technology) which interact with one another to find synergies, sharing the strategic focus of education and the application of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). For more information please visit: www.fundacion.telefonica.com.

About Valor Económico del Español: Una Empresa Multinacional

Valor Económico del Español is a three-year investigative project by Fundación Telefónica (in collaboration with ICEI – institute within the University Complutense of Madrid, and other experts in the field) that analyzes the Spanish language and its role in generating development and wealth. The project is directed by Professor of Economics Jose Luis García Delgado. Its goal is to not only quantify the impact of the Spanish language in the economies of Spanish-speaking countries and the impact it has on the world, but also, generate and encourage opinion surrounding the importance and strategic characteristic as an intangible asset for all our societies.

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