

Bilingualism

**Chamber Weekly CEO/Business Leader Poll
by COMPAS in the *Financial Post*
for Publication December 1, 2003**



**COMPAS Inc.
Public Opinion and Customer Research**

1.0. Introduction

The Federal Government has recently strengthened its policy with respect to hiring and promoting bilingual staff. COMPAS asked business leaders about language policy and training in their organizations and about the benefits of knowing a second language.

Business leaders believe that individuals derive a great deal of benefit from knowing a second language. In fact, half of respondents say that people who speak more than one language are more likely to find employment more easily. Many say that those who speak another language are more culturally sensitive and more likely to get better paying jobs.

In fact when looking for potential staff, respondents say that bilingualism (English and French) is a consideration, with bilingualism in a second language other than French slightly less.

With respect to offering language training or assistance in their own organizations, almost 2 in 5 organizations from our business leader panel say they offer language training or assistance. French is the most common language but those organizations who do offer training tend to offer assistance for more than one language.

Looking to the next decade of business in Canada, respondents say that English will be the most important language for Canadian Industry.

Those are the principal conclusions to be drawn from this past week's FP/COMPAS web poll of CEO's and business leaders under the sponsorship of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

2.0. Applicants Benefit Greatly From Second Language

According to business leaders, there are a number of benefits to being bilingual. Specifically, more than half (55%) of respondents say people who speak more than one language are more likely to find employment more easily, as shown in Table 1. Nearly half say that bilingual people are more culturally sensitive.

Table 1: (Q4) Thinking of people you know who speak fluently more than one language, which if any of the following apply? Please check all that apply. People who speak more than one language are ...

	%
More likely to find employment more easily	55
More culturally sensitive	47
More likely to get better paying jobs	32
More creative	14
Often smarter	12
Work harder	5



None of these apply	26
Don't know or no opinion	3

Note: This is a multiple response question (i.e. respondents are allowed to choose more than one answers.) For this reason the percentage when added may be greater than 100%.

The ability to speak both French and English (4.2), or having fluency in another language (3.9), are assets that business leaders give moderate consideration when selecting candidates, as seen in Table 2.

(Q1) As you may know, the Federal Government has recently strengthened its policy with respect to hiring and promoting bilingual staff. Using a 7 point scale where 7 means a lot and 1, the opposite, when selecting candidates to what extent do you consider [ROTATE]

	Mean	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	DNK
Bilingualism (French and English) an asset	4.2	22	11	15	12	11	13	16	0
Fluency in another language an asset (French and Other)	3.9	16	9	15	19	11	16	14	0

3.0. Those Businesses That Invest in Language Training Invest in More than One Language

Most companies (63%) do not help staff learn other languages, but those businesses that do tend do so for more than one language, as shown in Table 3. French the most common language for staff training, with ¼ of respondents' companies providing French language training assistance.

Table 3: (Q3) Does your company provide language training or help to subsidize training for staff for ... please check all that apply

	%
No language training or help to subsidize training	63
French	26
English	10
Spanish	8
Chinese	2
German	2
Other	10
Don't know or no opinion	4



Note: This is a multiple response question (i.e. respondents are allowed to choose more than one answers.) For this reason the percentage when added may be greater than 100%.

Business leaders see French language skills as being mildly valuable for business. Respondents regard the ability to speak French as being highest when considering the Canadian industry in general (3.6), with it's value diminishing slightly when they think about their sector (mean 3.4) and their organization (3.2), as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: (Q2) Using a 7 point scale where 7 means very valuable and 1, the opposite, how valuable are French language skills for [ROTATE]

	Mean	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	DNK
Canadian industry in general	3.6	5	7	17	22	17	21	9	0
Your sector	3.4	12	14	5	11	14	12	31	0
Your organization	3.2	12	8	14	10	9	11	37	0

4.0. English will be the Language of Canadian Business for the Next Decade

English will be the language of Canadian Industry for the next decade, according to business leaders, as shown in Table 5. Chinese, French, and Spanish follow tightly with one another in second, third and fourth place respectively.

(Q5) Thinking about the next ten years, please rank the following languages in terms of importance for Canadian Industry. Please use each number (1,2,3,4,5,6) exactly once.

	Ranking	Mean
English	1	1.6
Chinese	2	3.1
French	3	3.4
Spanish	4	3.8
Japanese	5	4.4
German	6	4.7

Note: This is an order-ranking question, thus answers are arranged from highest ranking (lowest mean score) to lowest ranking (highest mean score).

5.0. Methodology

The *National Post*/COMPAS web-survey of CEOs and leaders of small, medium, and large corporations and among executives of the local and national Chambers of



Commerce was conducted November 26-28, 2003. Respondents constitute an essentially hand-picked panel.

Because medium and small companies are more numerous in the economy and hence among Chamber membership, the actual respondents in this consultative panel are drawn more from these strata than from the stratum of the largest companies. Because of the small population of CEOs and business leaders from which the sample was drawn, the study can be considered more accurate than comparably sized general public studies. In studies of the general public, surveys of 133 are deemed accurate to within approximately 8.5 percentage points 19 times out of 20. The principal and co-investigator on this study are Conrad Winn, Ph.D and Tamara Gottlieb.

