



2008

# Utah Language Skills

(Section 6 of the Utah Business & Economic Profile)

**EDCUTAH**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
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# Utah Language Skills

## OVERVIEW

Utah's workforce has a rare and unique skill set that no other state in the country can boast. The state of Utah has an unmatched number of bilingual residents of all ages. While no one knows exactly how many people in Utah speak a second language, it is far beyond expectations for a state without seaports or close proximity to other countries. Many businesses in Utah utilize this unique quality and implement workers' skills to further their business capabilities and relationships with their clients. Utah's Governor Jon Huntsman is even fluent in Mandarin Chinese, the only Governor in the U.S. with such a skill!

### UTAH LANGUAGE SKILLS STRENGTHS

#### Religion Plays a Part<sup>1</sup>

- With 17 training centers around the world, the Provo Missionary Training Center (MTC) is the LDS church's largest for both instructors and missionaries.
- Provo's MTC offers 1,100 instructors to teach one of 48 foreign languages to more than 24,000 missionaries annually.
- Return missionaries serve in over 165 different countries and return to Utah to make this state their primary residence.

#### Brigham Young University's Unique Student Body<sup>2</sup>

- 77% of BYU's 30,000 students speak a second language and 47% have lived outside the U.S. for at least one year.
- There are over 170 languages spoken by BYU students, according to a 2004 campus survey.
- 31% of the current student body is enrolled in one of the 46 language courses offered and 85% of seniors reported the ability to speak a second language.
- More than 4% of BYU's student body are foreign exchange students studying in Utah, representing over 115 different countries.

### Private Colleges / Universities

Brigham Young University (BYU), located in Provo, Utah, creates a huge impact on Utah residents' foreign language skill set. BYU attributes its high number of bilingual students to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints missionary services. A reported 80% of male and 13% of female students have served missions and returned to Utah for a continued education and for primary residence.

The most current data released by the Modern Language Association (MLA) stated that BYU has the highest student enrollment in Russian classes than any other American university. On average, BYU graduates 35 to 45 Russian majors each year, that's three times the number of graduates at other universities. The MLA also stated that BYU has the most enrollments in Portuguese, Afrikaans, Icelandic, Welsh and Cebuano and the second most enrollments in Spanish. The BYU business school offers classes in 11 different languages, more languages than any other Center for International Business Education and Research school.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

<sup>2</sup> Source: *Brigham Young University*

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