

Editorial Board: Chinese, not Spanish, is language of future

Spanish seems to be the second language of choice in America. But given the economic impact of China, Mandarin Chinese should be the first second language.

By [Malinda Osborne](#) ([Contact](#))

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One trend KU students can ill afford to miss out on is learning a second language.

En vogue right now is Spanish. Our generation seemingly has been cognizant of this concern since we were in kindergarten learning how to count to diez. Now more than ever, with the increased presence of Latino culture coming to the North American scene, more bilingual individuals are desired in various professions — from marketing to hospitality or politics — in order to reach this continually burgeoning demographic.

Looking further down the line, however, there's another language that will be taking over as the one to learn: Mandarin Chinese. Just to give you some idea of the importance China has even within our own local community, the country bought more than \$300 million in Kansas goods and services last year — making it the third leading buyer — according to the state Department of Commerce.

Luckily, if you have contemplated learning the most widely spoken language in the world in anticipation of the growing financial and cultural exchange between the United States and China, the University of Kansas is already way ahead of you. Much to the University's credit, it is well-poised to accommodate the growing interest in Chinese culture, especially because of the soon-to-be-established Confucius Institute at the Edwards campus. The institute, which partners with China's Ministry of Education, is part of a network that plans to create a total of 100 similarly named institutes worldwide. Currently only four exist. It will offer Chinese language instruction, training Chinese language teachers and promoting outreach programs on Chinese culture.

Here on the Lawrence campus we have the Center for East Asian Studies, founded in 1959. Now with a total of 51 faculty members, 25 of which are entirely devoted to the center, it has gained an impressive reputation throughout the nation. KU students can earn bachelor's or master's degrees in Chinese language and literature or Chinese language and culture or take courses on China in various departments and schools. Not to mention students also have the option to study abroad or get involved in a direct exchange program in the People's Republic of China for a year, semester or summer. And just recently, the Office of International Programs announced the opening of the competition for three direct exchange scholarships with partner universities in the People's Republic of China.

To date, only 90 students are enrolled in the four levels of Chinese language offered. However, this number is sure to increase in the coming years, thanks to the University's forward thinking and continued increase in relations with China. But why not get started now? There's nothing like being ahead of a trend.

— Malinda Osborne for the editorial board

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