Building a Critical Language Proficient workforce: Where are STARTALK alumni now?

Catherine Pulupa, Rebecca Rubin Damari

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To increase the number of U.S. citizens learning, speaking, and teaching critical need foreign languages
Welcome...

Lynn Clark
Joan Micka
Servia Del Villar

STARTALK Program Office, NSA
STARTALK

Program Elements

**Student Learning**
summer language learning experiences for K-16 students

**Teacher Development**
summer professional development for language teachers

**Material Development**
create resources that build an infrastructure to support STARTALK languages
1. Do STARTALK alumni continue to study their STARTALK language following their program experiences?

2. What kinds of impact does STARTALK have on alumni careers, education, and worldview?

3. What kind of careers, especially world language careers, do alumni pursue?
Preview of Results

1. Respondent profiles
2. Impact on cultural worldview
3. Impact on education and career
4. Alumni in the workforce
• Responses collected using online survey platform during spring and summer 2020
• 2985 respondents (6.15% of alumni)
• Every year of STARTALK represented
• Every language represented
18.7% Heritage language learners
13.8% English language learners
64.9% Female
81.3% Had used their STARTALK language since their program
95.3% of alumni report that STARTALK impacted their cultural worldview

L2 alumni: 96.2%
Heritage learner alumni: 90.5%
The 2020 Longitudinal Survey of STARTALK alumni highlights the impact of the program on cultural worldview. The survey revealed that:

- **Helped me better appreciate other cultures**: 82.4% of respondents.
- **Helped me recognize similarities and differences between cultures**: 53.4% of respondents.
- **Helped me feel comfortable being around people of different backgrounds**: 69.7% of respondents.
- **Encouraged me to travel abroad/plan to travel abroad**: 45.6% of respondents.
- **Encouraged me to connect with my own heritage**: 69.7% of respondents.
- **Other**: 82.4% of respondents.

The pie chart visually represents these findings, with L2 (82.4%) and Heritage (53.4%) as the top two impacts, followed by L2 (69.7%) and Heritage (45.6%).
Impact of STARTALK on Alumni Cultural Worldview

- Helped me better appreciate other cultures
- Helped me recognize similarities and differences between cultures
- Helped me feel comfortable being around people of different backgrounds
- Encouraged me to travel abroad/plan to travel abroad
- Encouraged me to connect with my own heritage
- Other

L2 56.9% Heritage 41.2%
L2 65.9% Heritage 39.2%
2020 Longitudinal Survey

Impact of STARTALK on Alumni Cultural Worldview

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- Helped me feel comfortable being around people of different backgrounds
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- Encouraged me to connect with my own heritage
- Other

L2 21.7%
Heritage 73.5%
94.7% of alumni report that STARTALK impacted their education and/or career

L2 alumni: 94.2%
Heritage learner alumni: 94.8%
2020 Longitudinal Survey

Impact of STARTALK on Alumni Education and/or Career

- Encouraged further language study
- Preparation for in-school language classes*
- Improved my STARTALK language proficiency
- Increased my confidence
- Influenced choice of university degree*
- Created more career opportunities
- Influenced my career choices
- Other

66.4%
77.4%
2020 Longitudinal Survey

Impact of STARTALK on Alumni Education and/or Career

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56.1%  
51.7%
2020 Longitudinal Survey

Impact of STARTALK on Alumni Education and/or Career

- Preparation for in-school language classes*
- Influenced choice of university degree*
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- Increased my confidence
- Influenced choice of university degree*
- Created more career opportunities
- Influenced my career choices
- Other

Median Age = 18

22.1%
23.6%
24.1%
Alumni in the Workforce
Alumni in the Workforce

Fields of Work

- Education, training, or library, 13.5%
- Architecture or engineering, 8.3%
- Health care, 7.5%
- Arts, design, entertainment, sports, or media, 7.1%
- Government or public service, 6.8%
- Business or financial operations, 7.8%
- Computers or mathematics, 7.4%
- Food preparation or serving, 6.1%
- Life, physical, or social sciences, 4.6%
- Military or national intelligence, 3.5%
- Community or social services, 3.1%
- Sales, 4.7%
- Legal, 2.4%
- Office or administrative support, 2.1%
- Management, 0.8%
## Alumni in the Workforce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fields of Work</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Education, training, or library</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government or public service</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alumni in the Workforce

Language Proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Mid</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 432
Alumni in the Workforce

World Language Careers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Foreign service</th>
<th>International business</th>
<th>International relations</th>
<th>Military service in a position using a world language</th>
<th>National security / intelligence community</th>
<th>World language education</th>
<th>Translation / interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worked in this Field in the Past</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently Work in This Field</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2020 Longitudinal Survey

Alumni in World Language Careers

85.6% L2 learners
67.1% Had STARTALK language available in school post-program
50.8% Still studying their STARTALK language
Alumni in World Language Careers

Proportion by Language Studied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dari</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swahili</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STARTALK Alumni in World Language Careers

Methods of Post-STARTALK Study

- **45.8%** Postsecondary study
- **38.6%** Self-guided study (apps, reading, videos)
- **31.3%** Pop culture / social media
- **22.9%** In-school (K-12) foreign language courses
- **21.7%** Extracurricular: camps, tutors, heritage schools
Alumni in the Workforce: Federal Careers
Federal Employment Rates Among STARTALK Alumni

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Currently employed by the US federal government</th>
<th>Previously held a job with the US federal government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARABIC</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHINESE</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HINDI</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUSSIAN</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWAHILI</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URDU</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Currently employed by the US federal government

Previously held a job with the US federal government
Awareness of Federal Language Needs Among Alumni in the Workforce by STARTALK Language

- ALL: 54.8%
- ARABIC: 67.6%
- CHINESE: 50.6%
- HINDI: 12.5%
- PERSIAN: 28.6%
- PORTUGUESE: 20.0%
- RUSSIAN: 64.3%
- SWAHILI: 75.0%
- URDU: 33.3%
### Alumni Awareness of Federal Language Needs

**By STARTALK Language Proficiency and Education Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Currently in High School</th>
<th>Currently Pursuing Undergrad. Degree</th>
<th>Has Undergrad. Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I attribute studying and working with STARTALK to helping me win a Fulbright grant to Jordan during which I was able to study both Modern Standard Arabic and dialect Arabic at a post-advanced level and continue to study the language and use my Arabic in my career since.

— 2014, 2016 undergraduate Arabic participant
STARTALK really was the first major springboard in my career & Hindi-Urdu language study. My university did not offer South Asian language classes until my final semester there, and most programs were reticent to give me funding and instruction without any formal training.

STARTALK was challenging and all too brief, but I progressed leaps and bounds in my writing, reading, listening, and speaking. I also formed long-lasting friendships and professional connections which have lasted years into my academic career.

In essence, STARTALK was the first step in a much longer path of Urdu study that included fully-funded immersive programs in India and Pakistan as well as graduate study of South Asia.

– 2015 undergraduate Hindi, Urdu participant
STARTALK was what started me on the road that eventually led to my becoming a world language instructor.
– 2008 high school Chinese participant

I am currently a Cadet at the United States Air Force Academy, majoring in Aerospace Engineering and minoring in Russian.
– 2016 high school Russian participant

My decision to study International Affairs and minor in Arabic Studies was significantly influenced by this program. This has also led to my aspirations to work in foreign policy for the federal government.
– 2017 high school Arabic participant
**Recommendations for the Future**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work with WL departments to strengthen critical language learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Work with heritage language programs to strengthen critical language learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with NSLI-Y, Language Flagships, and State Dept. language scholarships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide more guidance about available means of continued study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide more guidance about paths toward federal language careers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage grant applications in communities with underserved students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STARTALK

Questions

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