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The United States has been characterized as "uniquely monolingual." We have seldom found it necessary to carry on business in languages other than English. What we have so often ignored however, is the resentment from other countries that accompanied the elevation of English to a kind of universal language.

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Today the United States is trying to turn around a \$27 billion trade deficit. It appears that we have successfully negotiated a new multilateral trade agreement, still to be ratified by Congress. But success at the negotiating table and the opening of markets abroad will redound to our benefit only if we pursue those markets with a vigorous export policy. Congress is now working on legislation to liberalize the Export Administration Act to lessen the bureaucracy and make exporting more attractive to business. But there are other important aspects to export promotion.

How can we expect to penetrate markets abroad with products made for our own culture? The inability to communicate in other languages not only hinders social rapport with prospective clients or consumers. It also hinders one's ability to comprehend the complexities of other cultures and to analyze potential markets. Yet most businessmen still assert that language proficiency is unimportant--even for their representatives who live abroad.

The technology gap is narrowing. Nationalism, frequently expressed in the Third World as anti-Americanism, is growing. It does not take much imagination to see that between competitive products, many Third World clients will opt for the label that is not made in the U.S.A. Granted, most of this antagonism is directed at our foreign policy which still views the world in terms of an East/West confrontation. But it is not helped by the "ugly American" image that still prevails due in large part to our failure to grasp other languages and cultures.

We must develop a national policy on foreign language which will have as its ultimate goal the development in all facets of American life of citizens who can understand and communicate with their counterparts throughout the world. Language study must start early enough in the educational process to make this a realistic goal and eliminate the possibility of its being seen as a burdensome requirement for college admission. Language programs must also be coordinated with cross-cultural studies to make the learning process meaningful and useful. By the time a young person embarks on a career, particularly in the international sector, a second language should become an accepted and required tool of the job.

I think U.S. business can reap benefits in terms of new markets and trade surpluses if its representatives abroad are as verbal in the country's language as they are in the language of business. The issues addressed by this panel may be the most difficult the Commission has to face for foreign language proficiency because the need/has not yet been recognized by most of the business community. I pledge whatever assistance I can give to turn this around. I am convinced that without cooperation from the business community, the work of this Commission will have minimal impact in erasing our monolingual image.