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A Profile of FRINQ Students Whose Home Language Is Not English

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A Profile of FRINQ Students Whose Home Language Is Not English Winter 2011

Over the last several years, the University Studies program has used Freshman Inquiry (FRINQ) survey data to examine the performance of first-generation students, students who enter PSU with low high school GPAs and students who express concerns about their finances. Although faculty and mentors have raised questions about how to support students whose first language is not English, we have not examined those students in a systematic way. Currently, University Studies has little information to inform the discussion about the needs of English language learners (ELL). As a start, this report provides a profile of Freshman Inquiry (FRINQ) students who speak a language other than English in their homes compared with students who speak English in their homes and provides information on topics ELL students have identified as areas in which they need assistance.

Data Source:

Prior Learning Survey: Survey administered during weeks 1 and 2 of fall term. 1090 students responded to the survey (87% response rate).

The FRINQ Prior Learning Survey asked students to report whether their family spoke a language other than English in their home and if so, which language. **35% (386) of students reported speaking a language other than English in their homes.** 12 languages were spoken by 5 or more students (see table).

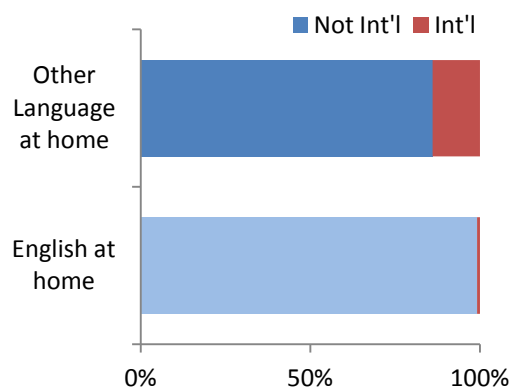
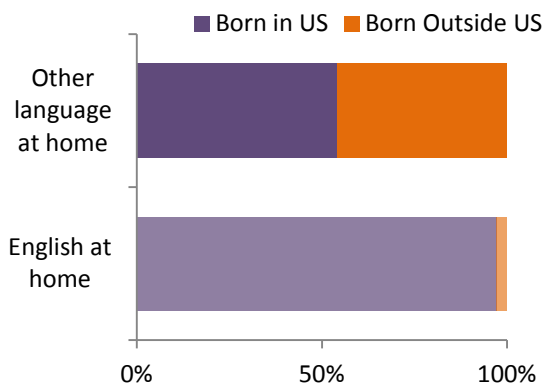
We know that some of our students who use languages other than English are international students and some were born in other countries and have moved to the US with their families. We asked students to identify their birth country and the year they arrived in the US and used PSU student information on international student status to understand the various subgroups that make up our ELL population. Only 14% of ELL students are international students and almost half were born outside the US. This means that **half of those students were born in the US and the large majority are *not* international students.**

Languages other than English in Home

N = 386 – 35%

Spanish*
Vietnamese*
Arabic*
Chinese*
Russian*
Tagalog
Japanese
Farsi
German
Cantonese
Hindi
Romanian

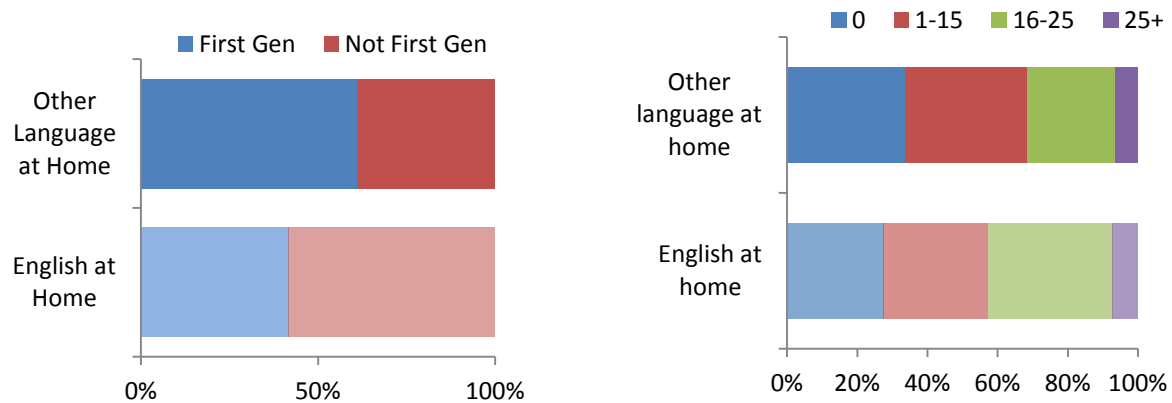
**more than 20 students speak these languages*



Demographic profile

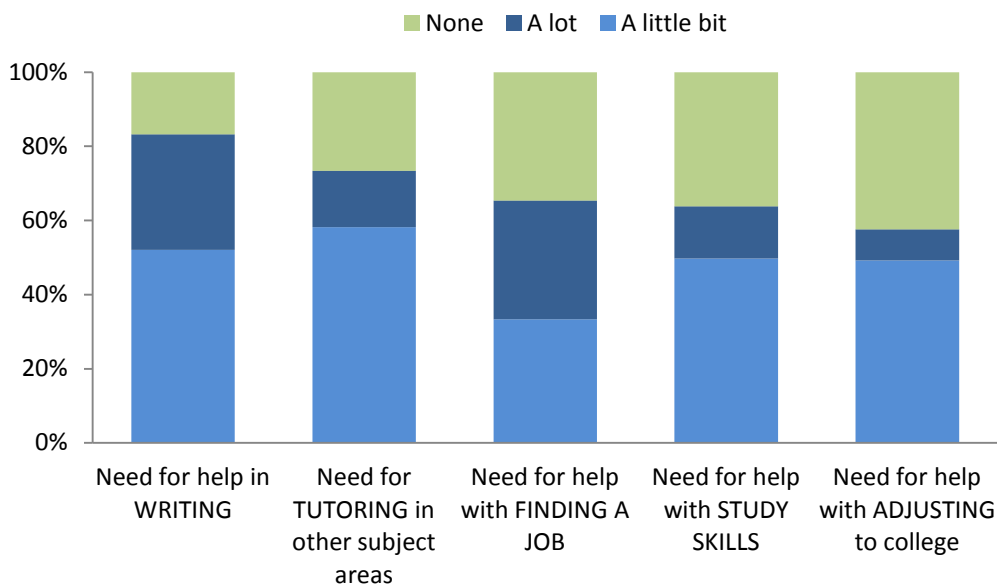
Students who speak a language other than English at home were largely similar to their peers who speak English at home regarding age (over 80% are 19 years or younger) and gender (just over half are female).

Almost 60% of students who speak another language at home were first-generation college students, neither parent earned a 4-year degree, compared to 35% for students whose home language is English. Students whose home language is not English report that they **work fewer hours than students who speak English at home**. One-third will not work at all and another third will work between 1 and 15 hours per week.



Support Needed

The prior learning survey asks a number of questions about student concerns as they enter their first year of college at PSU. The two most frequently cited concerns across all FRINQ students are academics and finances and the groups under examination here followed those patterns closely. A closer look at a set of questions about ELL students' perceived needs for support reveals that **students whose home language is not English report needing the most help with writing and finding a job**. Students reported needing the least help with study skills and adjusting to college. The finding about needing help finding a job may correspond with the finding mentioned above and indicate that these students are not working fewer hours by choice.



Conclusion

This analysis revealed that the group of students enrolled in FRINQ who report speaking a language other than English in their homes is made up of immigrants, US born and international students who speak a wide range of languages. These students are likely to be first-generation college students and work fewer hours than their peers. Academically, writing is expressed as the top area where non-native speakers need support and they also express a need for help finding employment. In order to better understand the experiences and challenges for students who speak a language other than English at home, further research will focus on subgroups within this population in order to identify students who can use additional support.

Beth Hooker, Graduate Peer Mentor and Rowanna Carpenter, Assessment Coordinator wrote this research report.

For questions about University Studies Assessment and Research, contact Rowanna Carpenter, 503-725-3445 or carpenterr@pdx.edu.