Tertiary enrollments for Foreign Languages and English, the growth of social sciences language-studies and non-language-centered humanities, and the "Language-Arts continuum"1

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Abstract
This paper first reports on a survey of U.S. government statistics on college enrollments in language-centered humanities courses (foreign languages [FL] and English) and correlated awarded degrees. It traces total enrollments and awarded degrees over time, and compares the growth/decline of specific foreign languages. It then explores the declining proportion, among all awarded degrees, of those in FL, those in English, and those in FL and English combined, and notes a fairly consistent correlation over time of the respective numbers of FL in relation to English, despite the broader shifts and other variegation. The paper also explores data for two adjacent fields: (i) non language-centric humanities, notably music and art; (ii) language-centric fields outside the humanities, notably Communication. Both these domains have grown proportional to all fields, and overwhelmingly in proportion to FL and English. The paper concludes that the widespread general notion of the "decline of the humanities" is imprecise to the point of being misleading. While the language-centered humanities present a grave long-term decline, the humanities are better understood as a terrain of divergent specific fortunes. Separately, language study has shifted – numerically if not conceptually – from being humanities-centered to social sciences dominated. The paper concludes with a speculative interpretation of the above. The idea of a language-arts continuum, widely used in elementary and secondary education, is presented as possibly useful to characterize a long-term process whereby the humanities, and aesthetics, retain a certain prestige in the educational mission, but traditional language disciplines are displaced, and lose their former hierarchical dominance in a new continuum of expressive modes which articulate subjectivity. The tertiary "language-arts continuum" conceptualization is posited but not further developed.

Keywords: foreign language teaching; English literature; higher education enrollments; humanities and social sciences; language-centered humanities; non-language-centered humanities; language-centered social sciences

Faculty in English and foreign language (FL) departments are understandably concerned with enrollment decline. Yet English and FL have had very different experiences at the structural level, with FL departments sometimes razed, whereas English departments remain secure even if they lose some professorial slots. This article examines the statistical record to explore enrollment changes over the last half century. Somewhat surprisingly, the numbers of English and FL degrees correlate fairly consistently, suggesting a real vocational affinity for students despite the great difference between the respective learning curves and agendas. The preponderance of language-centered disciplines in the decline of humanities, however, is also clear: the situation is worse than it appears for English/FL, while other sectors, notably art and music, have actually grown substantially. Further, language-study is not so much eroding as undergoing a disciplinary repositioning toward the social sciences, particularly Communication. This article examines this continuum of the arts, the traditional language disciplines and social science language disciplines, by adopting, in the tertiary context, the elementary and secondary school concept of "Language Arts," in which this web of interrelated disciplines is already formalized.

Various statistical studies, commissioned regularly or specially by the MLA and other scholarly entities have documented declines in enrollment and awarded degrees. Other reports have addressed the related issues of increasing dependence on adjunct faculty and the job market for new PhDs in MLA disciplines. The data used here for awarded degrees is from the Department of Education's National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), accessed through its interactive web platforms; the enrollment data is
generally from published MLA reports or extracted from the searchable MLA Language Enrollment Database, 1958–2016.²

The major policy position responses by the MLA remain its 2007 and 2009 reports (MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages 2007; MLA Teagle Foundation Working Group 2009) reports, together with related special issues in MLA-based journals. Given the amount of time elapsed since then, it is notable that these 2007 and 2009 reports have not really been superseded (reflected in their ongoing prominence in the MLA Surveys, Reports, and Other Documents webpage). Further, whereas one would have expected a massive follow-up in the critical literature, the response has been somewhat intermittent. Finally, though the 2009 MLA report is concerned with language in general, its relation to literature, and the centrality of both in liberal arts education, more responses seem to have come from the FL side and fewer from English. This pattern is presumably a consequence of the greater sense of trauma on the FL side resulting from program closures and forced departmental restructurings. In reality, enrollment declines are just as problematic on the English side.³

MLA's Profession has provided a forum for responses to these and related issues.⁴ Among them, Eric Hayot's article, "The Sky is Falling," posted in May 2018, is a particularly succinct alert to a calamitous conjunction of quantitative and qualitative issues, and has already been cited by a wide range of scholars. Hayot refers readers to publications of interest in the statistical record, notes disturbing numbers in both the English/FL job market and enrollments, contrasts the situation and interests of the different hierarchical tranches of language-centered studies (graduate [grad]; undergraduate major [UG]; general ed [GE]), and speculates on the causes of enrollment decline (attributing it principally to funding policies) and possible consequences. Hayot concludes that we are in a crisis situation (for graduate students a material crisis of jobs; for grad program faculty, an ethical crisis in continuing to operate in traditional modes despite the lack of prospects for graduate students). He recommends reforms such as diversifying the content agenda of PhD English/FL training, and for UG and GE, teaching in broader terms rather than per narrow disciplinary methodologies, and experimenting with new interdisciplinary curricular modules. Hayot's concern is with the Humanities in general (not just English/FL). While some of Hayot's observations and recommendations take up points already laid out in the MLA Task Force on Doctoral Study in Modern Language and Literature (2014), his ethical imperative argument has added urgency.

This article seeks to complement Hayot and other reports and commentaries by focusing on the traditional language-centered Humanities, i.e., the MLA disciplines (henceforth, "language-letters") in the comparative context of related disciplines inside and outside the humanities.

This requires three adjustments of perspective:

(i) within the Humanities, differentiating language-centered disciplines (English/FL) from non-language-centered disciplines (fine arts; philosophy, religious studies, liberal studies, etc.);

(ii) addressing language or discourse centered disciplines housed outside the Humanities in the social sciences (notably communication, but also linguistics), together with ethnic and area studies;

(iii) borrowing the K-12 concept of "language-arts" as a term to cover the continuum from the fine arts through the traditional language humanities and on to the related communication and cultural identity fields of the social sciences.

The adoption of this "Language-Arts" cluster (illustrated schematically in Figure 7) may at first seem odd to MLA's tertiary-level constituency. In terms of conceptualization, the cluster's epistemological coherence is approximate; certain pragmatic considerations come into play, whether statistical (regarding available data) or marketological (regarding majors which are thematically proximate to English/FL and which might divert prospective students). The "Language-Arts" cluster as used here includes these sectors:
(i) the fine arts: these are comprehended within the humanities, though some institutions treat them autonomously, as is marked in awarded degrees by the MFA vs MA distinction

(ii) the traditional humanities language-disciplines (English and FL, with each covering both language and literature),

(iii) area and ethnic studies (e.g., "Latino studies," "Southeast Asian studies," etc.): these often exist as interdepartmental programs involving social sciences and humanities; they are included as fields which could divert students from a traditional language-literature major associated with an ethnicity/region/ etc.⁵

(iv) "Communication" (sometimes pluralized): though this social science discipline also deals with systems logistics and non-verbal semiotics, and connects to extraneous disciplines like business, it particularly addresses discourse efficacy and thus language pragmatics (in contrast with the language-letters focus on aesthetics); Communication originally emerged from the humanities, and still values eclecticism over specialization; it is understood here as a language-centered field which competes with the aspirations of language-letters to afford a liberal arts education.⁶

Some humanities fields have been excluded from the present discussion, notably philosophy, religious studies and liberal studies: despite their sometimes intense attention to language (and icons), their prime objects of inquiry are distinct. The same applies for various culturally-inquisitive interdisciplinary and interdivisional programs such as Gender studies. Additionally, the working assumption here is that these fields are less likely to significantly divert potential students from humanities-language disciplines.⁷

Pursuing language-centeredness rather than the full humanities paradigm, enables us to isolate a particular decline in the language-centered disciplines within the general humanities enrollment decline, and also to map the persistence of language study by following its development outside the humanities. This study summarizes statistical findings and accompanying interpretations, then presents the data with notes on methodological issues and limitations, and lastly returns to the interpretive points with a view to stimulating further reflection and discussion by English/FL professors.

Key findings and the respective interpretations are listed below, separated in the table so as to acknowledge and underscore the speculative nature of the latter. The data is not presented in the form of a scientific experiment designed to validate a central hypothesis; rather, the findings emerged organically from broad scrutiny of long-term enrollment and degree data, proceeding by induction rather than deduction. Readers may well make divergent interpretations.
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<th>Finding</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
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<td>(i) the pattern of degrees of FL to English is surprisingly consistent over time (Figure 2)</td>
<td>(i) in terms of appeal to students, English and FLs constitute an organic whole based on traditional humanities values such as those espoused by the MLA (2009), despite the substantial qualitative and experiential gaps between their learning agendas</td>
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<td>(ii) a tracing of the fortunes of individual FLs reveals both variation (the long rise of Spanish, the recent gradual rise of Asian languages, the bump in Arabic after 9/11), and, conversely, an overall pattern of decline, gradually, and particularly in recent years (Figures 3 &amp; 4)</td>
<td>(ii) since neither long-term demographic nor punctual changes of circumstance for individual FLs outweigh the general trend to decline, this decline is attributable to their collective qualitative aspect as &quot;language-letters&quot; disciplines</td>
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<td>(iii) the greatest decline in awarded degrees within the humanities occurs in language-letters; conversely, non-language humanities (principally arts and music) have grown (Figures 5 &amp; 6)</td>
<td>(iii) the general idea of the &quot;decline of the humanities&quot; is imprecise; the quantitative losses of the humanities are moderate, but comprehend contrary trends for distinct constituent components among which &quot;language-letters&quot; are the preponderant negative</td>
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<td>(iv) whereas enrollments in language-letters decline, language study has grown in non-humanities language-centered disciplines (notably Communication) (Figures 5 &amp; 6)</td>
<td>(iv) language study endures, but its gravitational center has shifted, from the language-letters continuum from linguistic prescription to literary stylistics, toward an instrumental communication focus</td>
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The "decline of the humanities" re-framed as a decline in traditional language studies : patterns in numbers

The following data regarding tertiary enrollments and degrees awarded (bachelor's, master's, doctorate) derives from the publicly available resources of the NCES.6 The data can be mined autonomously on web platforms. For ready reference purposes, the NCES also publishes annually various customized data extraction tables in the Digest of Education Statistics. Certain Digest tables are annum-specific, others cover long periods (often about a 50 year period from the late 1960s or early 1970s to the late teens). Two distinct data phenomena should be kept in mind: raw numbers (e.g., of degrees awarded), which tend to rise across the board due to extraneous external factors (increasing population and college attendance), and the changing proportion of the total that a given discipline occupies over time. This proportion is termed "participation" here. Participation reveals the discipline's upward or downward position respective to other disciplines, i.e., its institutional fortune.

A vital caveat is that the data is never really "raw" – the data-tagging systems are complex, and marginally compromised by contradictions which slowly emerge between the taxonomy at the time of initial design versus the accretion of new or modified categories; for certain disciplinary fields, different NCES databases use classifications which, if not contradictory, are sufficiently inconsistent as to impede analysis; in both pre-prepared tables and autonomous data-mining, the basic data-collection samples vary (different government organs receive data from somewhat different "total" sets ["populations"] of educational
institutions); finally, as with most statistics, for various reasons anomalies appear which, if isolated
injudiciously or selectively, are susceptible to rhetorical manipulation. The vast mass of data does,
however, allow for discernment of general patterns especially if long time periods are used. Unless
otherwise stated, the degree data in the following tables derive from a customized search of NCES data of
all awarded degrees (bachelor's, master's, doctoral) from 1966-2015, accessed using the now retired
WebCASPAR interface in 2019; a composite data table is provided in an appendix.

Both English and FL degrees dropped over time as proportions of all degrees (the "participation
rate"). Their combined total participation was 7.2% in 1966 and 1.6% in 2015, a drop of 78% Nevertheless,
the raw number for both grew fractionally over that period, due to the increased total student population, by
15% for English and 12% for FL; over the same period the total number of degrees in all fields grew by
245%.

Figure 1: English & FL degrees participation (proportion of all fields)

As Figure 2 shows, the numbers for FL relative to English track with a surprising degree of correlation
despite various moderate medium-term spikes and slumps over this 50-year period: FL degrees are always
fairly close to the mean of 26% of English degrees.
For English, enrollments are statistically anchored both by its obligatory lower division status (composition), and by its obligatory status in high school (future English school-teachers major in English at college). Given this, the fairly consistent English/FL correlation is somewhat surprising. The hypothesis here attributes the consistency to intrinsics rather than extrinsics: the language- and literature-centric content common to the traditional cultural agendas of English and FL.

Regarding FLs, collectively and individually, we should expect greater enrollment and degree volatility than for English. Student populations for FL are skewed by immigration, heritage language political events, cultural trends, and by changing degree-completion requirements (FL as obligatory or not). Because of immigration (which affects heritage speaker enrollments directly, and traditional non-heritage FL offerings indirectly), Spanish has become so dominant as an FL that two charts are needed to display the numbers. In the first (Figure 3), we see the decline of French and the rise of Spanish. In the succeeding table (Figure 4), French and Spanish are removed so as to better show various middle tier languages. Both tables show the decline in the last decade of virtually all FLs (including Spanish) in terms of absolute numbers (Korean is an exception; conversely, Arabic, which rose dramatically in the decade after 9/11, has since then also declined). Since total enrollments (in all disciplines) continued to grow over this recent period, the decline in participation for the FLs is even more drastic. Yet for English, the contemporaneous participation decline (measured above in degrees rather than enrollments) is slightly worse than for FLs. 11
Figure 3: College enrollments in eight notable FLs

Figure 4: College Enrollments for 6 middle-tier FLs: 1970-2016
Turning to the language-versus other related “Language-Arts” sub-streams, the fine arts (principally music and art) have become numerically more important than other humanities. Area and ethnic studies, despite initially small numbers, grew from about 10% to almost 50% of the FL value from 1966 to 2015. In the category of language-centered social sciences disciplines, Communication is predominant. Unfortunately, Communication is grouped in much NCES databases with the unrelated and now statistically small field of Librarianship; as the numbers cannot be split, they are presented together. Linguistics, though quantitatively insignificant, is included here due to its conceptual relevance. All these fields together constitute the language-arts cluster at the tertiary level.

Figure 5: Tertiary Language-Arts: degrees awarded 1966-2015

As noted above, the combined total participation of English/FL fell from 7.2% to 1.6% from 1966 to 2015, while the combined participation of the tertiary Language-Arts cluster only dropped from about 11% to 8%. Within the Language-Arts cluster, FL/English dropped from 63% to 21% participation, i.e., from dominant majority to minority status, while the cluster’s other streams grew inversely from 37% to 79%. Perhaps more remarkably, the total participation of these other streams (in all degrees) grew from 4.2% to 6% (a participation increase of about 40%). Thus, in the era of the rise of STEM and the financialization of the university, the Language-Arts total participation decline of 27% consisted of a 78% decline in traditional humanities language-disciplines offset by a 40% increase in the other related fields (Figure 6).
The 2005-2015 decade presents not only a sharp decline in total participation for English and a moderate decline for FL, but also a slight decline for other Language-Arts reversing their prior steady growth. It is unlikely, then, that, buoyed by the "other related" fields the total participation of the Language-Arts cluster will rise in future. What we can say, however, is that within Language-Arts, traditional humanities language-disciplines have been in continual proportional decline. In fact as long ago as the 1970s, English/FL became statistically secondary to the other related fields. While not discussed here, the same is true of English/FL in relation to all humanities (i.e., including fine arts and non-language-centered disciplines such as philosophy, religion and liberal studies, and including area and ethnic studies, but excluding communication). From 1971-2017, English/FL went from 59% to 27% of the humanities total. This is not just an enrollment trend but also to some extent a reality in society at large. If we look at the adult post-education population in terms of degrees awarded, using Census data, in 2017 the number of persons with a degree in "Visual and performing arts" was roughly equivalent to the combined number with either English or Foreign Languages.15

Interpreting the data

Because of the growth of fine arts and communication, this "tertiary Language-Arts" cluster is in a process of disciplinary re-orientation rather than decline. In the following diagram (Figure 7), the circle volumes and font sizes are consistent with the data previously reported. In the spheres for the later point
(2015), the three major sectors – English/FL (grouped together), Arts & Music, and Communication are characterized in relation to verbal language: for English/FL the interest in language is aesthetic and prescriptive; the Communication interest is instrumental; arts and music are fields of non-verbal aesthetics. The disciplines are also mapped to a horizontal axis as humanities and social sciences so as to show the increasing participation of the social sciences. Area and ethnic studies (the small "A & E "circle in the 2015 portion) are classified as being on the cusp between divisions. Evidently, these qualitative descriptors are subjective.

Figure 7: shifting patterns for the tertiary Language-Arts cluster inside and outside the Humanities

This tectonic shift within Language-Arts may be the key to understanding an apparent contradiction: on the one hand, the sense within MLA ranks of a concrete enrollments crisis which would seem consonant with the general abstract theme of the "decline of the humanities", on the other, the surprisingly moderate drop in the humanities' overall participation (in awarded degrees) from about 17% in 1971 to about 14% in 2017 (NCES, Table 318.20, Digest 2018).

Hayot’s interpretation of this data probably resonates with the attitudes and suppositions of many MLA members. He notes that “the number of overall majors in the humanities has been fairly steady since the mid-1970s." He rejects as a fantasy the pessimistic take "that we are the remaining survivors of the historic rear guard," and concludes that "the overall institutional position of the humanities is relatively historically stable." Hayot underscores the cyclical nature of crises of English/FL job listings and
enrollments, and connects these to funding issues (economic downturns; rising tuition costs; increasing proportions of international, students who, as non-native speakers of English, are indisposed to invest in English-intensive reading and writing majors). In general, Hayot posits these quantitative and circumstantial causes, and rejects qualitative hypotheses for the drop in English and humanities' majors: "These financial and structural factors outweigh many other recent explanations, which have tended to focus on cultural issues (...) most of these explanations don't hold water." Hayot is apprehensive, however, that "the humanities may have become disconnected from the general ups and downs of university funding." He advocates that humanities professors "shift and adapt to new ecosystems," teaching graduate students skills outside the traditional repertoire of literary research, and, with general education students, addressing the "big human questions," doubling-down on interdisciplinarity (for example with philosophy and history) and cross-divisionality (with sociology, art history, anthropology, economics, psychology, etc.).

When the data is re-cast to isolate the traditional humanities language-centered disciplines, it reveals that the episodic nature of particular downturns is outweighed by the greater pattern of continuous decline. The counterpoint of the rise of the related fields (i.e., non language-letters) explains in part the apparent stability of the humanities (through growth in fine arts, complemented to some extent by growth in interdisciplinary humanities fields). This shift suggests changes in the relative qualitative appeal of specific sectors of the Language-Arts continuum, which is further complexified if we include language study in the social sciences, as proposed here.

An important caveat is that the concept of the Language-Arts cluster derives from the K-12 context, in which it exists as a formal curricular articulation (in the Common Core Standards and elsewhere), whereas it does not at the tertiary level. The trends identified (toward fine arts and communication, at the expense of prescriptive language) are of course not present in K-12 "English Language Arts" guidelines, which are in line with the traditional spirit of the humanities, proposing the cultivation of aesthetic, persuasive and analytic language competence, though perhaps with more cultivation of self-expression than of prescriptive language. In K-12 language arts, language expression is to be complemented by artistic expression (principally visual) and by critical thinking, particularly in addressing societal questions, i.e., with content points anchored in social sciences. The corresponding English Language Arts Standards include within them History/Social Sciences, sometimes under the rubric of "literacy." This concept is also developed in the MLA Teagle Foundation Working Group report (2009). The theme of literacy – as both literal, i.e., language-based, and also figurative, as in deciphering the codes and the selective dispositions of symbolic power – implies an assimilation of the social sciences by a creative and critical humanities, which, as a form of disciplinary colonization, is the reverse of the tertiary colonization of language by the social sciences documented here. Regarding the balance of science and arts in K-12 education, it is not insignificant that progressives have had some success in modifying STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) to STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics). Though this is encouraging for humanism, the omission of letters is ominous.

It is beyond the scope of this article to include an epistemological characterization of tertiary Language-Arts, but were it formalized, we would not necessarily expect it to replicate the K-12 conceptualization. Still, the recourse in this article to a schema from a lower tier of education may well be consonant with a downward pressure on the hierarchy of literary methodology in the turn toward interdisciplinarity. This manifests at the graduate and upper division levels with the greater integration of social science issues of identity politics and of analytic methods for mixed-media aesthetic artifacts, and in GE courses in attempts to broaden appeal by invoking a sensibility which is more humanist and less literary.

If, for its part, the cognitively challenging task of FL acquisition has also become less tenable with a new generalist humanities, this would seem to demand a distinct explanation – unless the key to both the English and FL declines is their focus on prescriptive language aesthetics. Such a hypothesis is supported
by the quantitative data but certainly not proven qualitatively. The present findings simply show the growing strength of the fine arts in creative expression and the increasing participation of social science approaches to language rhetoric, at the expense of the traditional language-centered disciplines within the humanities. Still, the statistically-based perusal of language study undertaken here reveals aspects of the erosion of language-letters majors which are more concrete than the “decline of the humanities” specter. Perhaps, instead of feeling hemmed in by the advance of STEM, we should ask students who chose a discipline which is proximate to language-letters (but is not language-letters) about their motivations, and we should reflect on how the contents of our disciplines appeal to emerging interests and shifts in the collective imagination. Statistics are better at explaining what than why, or what than “What.”

NOTES


2 On the MLA side, see Goldberg, Looney and Lusin 2015; Looney and Lusin 2019. See also the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS) commissioned reports by White, Chu and Czuikko (2014), and by the Commission on Language Learning (2016), for tertiary and secondary levels respectively. On adjunct faculty, generally, see Coalition on the Academic Workforce (2012); for English/FL, see MLA Task Force on Doctoral Study in Modern Language and Literature (2014) and MLA Office of Research (2017); on Spanish (of interest as the dominant FL), see Colburn (2017).

3 Among the responses in MLA-related journals, see especially the “Perspectives” dossier in The Modern Language Journal, 92.2 [2008], edited by Heidi Byrnes, which included a new statement by the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages [2008]), together with diverse critical responses by MLA professors; see also The Modern Language Journal, 98.1, (2014, also edited by Heidi Byrnes), and the dossier “Ten Years after the 2007 Report: Proceedings from Two Sessions at the 2017 MLA Convention,” in ADFL Bulletin 44.2 (2018). Lomicka and Lord (2018) provide a good list of the most significant direct responses. See also the ongoing related work of some professors involved with the MLA committees of the reports (e.g. Kramsch 2014).

4 In Profession, see most recently the Fall 2019 “Humanities Rx” issue, and on adjunct teachers, the Fall 2018 issue.

5 Ethnic studies likely skew more to language-humanities and area studies (especially in the earlier configurations of the field in the 1960s and ’70s) more to social sciences; these two categories are grouped in the NCES data used and thus also grouped as displayed here; they are included in the Language-Arts cluster here because of the importance of identity group sensibilities and their influence on choice of major (for example, opting for “Latino” / “Chicano” studies, once these become available, instead of the traditional “Spanish” path).

6 The patriarch of communication studies in the U.S., Wilbur Schramm, had a PhD in American literature, and founded the Iowa Writers’ Program and headed the School of Journalism at the University of Iowa, before moving on to Communication Research at Iowa and then Stanford. An overview of inter-related fields within communication studies (particularly sociolinguistics) is provided in The Oxford Handbook of Language and Society (Garcia, Flores, and Spotti, 2017). The exposition of O’Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery and Fiske’s Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies (1994) is more oriented to humanist cultural studies; the repertoire of key terms has considerable overlap with those of literary theory and criticism, and rhetoric, as well as ideological theory (for example, the Frankfurt School). For an informal, eclectic account of the U.S. history of the field from a social science perspective which also address humanities, see Calhoun 2011. The relation and relevance of Communication to the Humanities is directly addressed from various angles in a special issue (19.2, 2019) of the Review of Communication, entitled “In Defense of the Humanities: What Does Communication Studies Give?”; see particularly the introduction by the special issue guest editor Mari Lee Mifsud (Mifsud 2019); this issue illustrates particularly the connection to rhetoric.
Statistics for these non language-centered Humanities were also studied but do not greatly impact the present findings. In general these fields present patterns of growth/decline which are less negative than for language-letters, but also less positive than for arts and music (and Communication). See, further, note 13. Since the exclusion is also based on the marketological aspect of diverting students from English/FL, it should be noted that there is no statistical basis for the inferences as to the discretionary decisions made by students before they choose a major.

The NCES is a sub-office of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) within the Department of Education. NCES data extraction tools are sometimes assembled and housed in other Federal government arms, including the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) and National Science Foundation (NSF), which have certain core functions focused only on sciences, but also educational statistics tools which mine NCES data and extend to all fields, including the humanities. The statistical tools emerge as publicly available in the context of each organ's overall mission, with the result that there is a wider repertoire of data reports on the hard sciences than on humanities and social sciences. There is no single total data repository whose only mission is the objective provision of statistics without the filter of the thematic bias of a host-organ. Until 2019, the main extraction interface tool used for studies covering all fields was the "Web-based Computer-Assisted Science Policy Analysis and Research" tool (called WebCASPAR), but WebCASPAR has been phased out and is unavailable; as of the time of writing, the replacement to new extraction tools such as the NCSES Table Tool was still in transition. Another related data extraction platform for autonomous operation (customized searches of raw data), the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) is currently accessible but only for data starting in 1997. The overall system of resources cannot easily be mapped in a hierarchy of what belongs to what; rather it is a best described as a resource web of varying institutional sponsors, data-sets and extraction tools.

Each datum is tagged per criteria anticipated as significant by the data-base designers (for example, student gender; conversely, international versus domestic status, or native language are not available; ethnicity is generally not available in the data sets used here but is sometimes mapped in certain other reports, etc.). Fields of study are coded in tiers of increasing specificity (with 2, 4 and 6 digit codes); fields of study are named per norms existing over time, and may change (for example, "French language and literature" versus "Francophone studies," "Women's Studies" versus "Gender Studies;" East Asian Languages [incorporating various languages] versus "Korean" [which was not initially an autonomous category, but became one]). Categorization of certain disciplines, especially interdisciplinary one, into umbrella fields may be based on judgment calls in the data-base design phase (for example, classification of Chicano or Latino studies as a social science or para-humanistic field); sometimes these calls can be manually recast by a data extractor, sometimes this may be impracticable due to data display constraints consequent to the initial data-tagging.

Degrees/Awards Conferred (NCES population of institutions), NCES, via WebCASPAR. The initial extraction is for all listed degree fields. Derivative findings here focus on Humanities or on language-centered fields inside and outside the Humanities: Communication is the main non-Humanities language-centered discipline; interdisciplinary programs are sometimes inscribed in Government statistics within the Humanities (for example, Latino Studies as an outgrowth of Spanish) and sometimes within Social Sciences. Though "Area studies" interdepartmental programs are often classified within social sciences at universities because more social science than humanities departments are represented in them, they are generally now grouped by the NCES with ethnic studies, within the humanities; however, in the older NCES database tagging they were grouped among social sciences.

Using Spanish as an illustrative a couple of points should be made. Until recently, increased immigration increased the "heritage language" student population, while increasing concern with serving the community led to a steadily increasing range of FL Departmental offerings oriented to them. As a conventional FL for non-native speakers, Spanish has replaced French as the default FL and emerged as the "National Foreign Language" of the U.S. (Alonso 2007). On other fronts: Italian enjoyed a long growth phase from about 1980 to 2010, apparently attributable to cultural interest rather than external factors; immigration and/or Pacific Rim cultural awareness has led to the growth of East Asian languages and Korean has emerged as a peer to Chinese and Japanese, presumably due to immigration (i.e. as a heritage language), together with Korea's economic rise and its sponsorship of U.S. tertiary Korean studies.

The NCES classification "Arts and Music" goes back furthest so is used here. Other terms (e.g. "performing arts") roughly overlap. The status of certain related and growing disciplines, notably Film...
and TV, is difficult to discern. Regarding humanities disciplines distinct from both fine arts and language-centered disciplines: history, despite its great traditional importance in humanities, is classified with social sciences by the NCES; this is consonant with the elective option by most history departments to enlist in the social sciences and not the humanities division (if such a distinction is made administratively at the institution); history is excluded from this study. The numbers for philosophy, religious studies, liberal studies and other hybrid humanities are generally small, though in some cases growing; they are also rather complex to unravel statistically due to asymmetric mapping in different NCES databases; for simplicity, they are omitted here, so as to focus on the Language-Arts cluster. Finally, anthropology, though traditionally housed in social sciences, deals with subjective and creative cultural identity and thus should perhaps be comprehended in the Language-Arts cluster. It grew about 600% from 1966-2015; its raw number of degrees in 2015 (12,534) was about 58% of FL and 17% of the English/FL total. While its inclusion would strengthen the argument made here, it is excluded from consideration, based on the assumption that it would not likely divert students from the language-centered disciplines.

13 The annual issues of the NCES Digest (the latest of which is Digest of Education Statistics: 2018, released in Dec. 2019), include Tables 322.10, 323.10 and 324.10, which report respectively Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees. This allows for derivative generation of composite values of all three degrees; the composite values are used in this article. In these tables, Library science is separate from Communication, which is grouped with journalism and related programs. The 1971 ratio of Library science to Communication was about 66% of the combined total; in 2017 it had dropped to 5% (4,994 versus 104,521 degrees respectively).

14 Linguistics here means pure linguistics such as is practiced by a "Department of Linguistics." The linguists of specific languages housed in FL departments generally identify as social scientists (and so use APA rather than MLA style, for example); regrettably, this is invisible in the present data representation (and generally in NCES data).

15 The 1971-2017 figures for English/FL as a proportion of the humanities are taken from the NCES 2018 Digest (see also note 10). These are the most recent readily consultable statistical publications. Regarding the Language-Arts cluster, and as a complement to the 1966-2015 findings otherwise reported in this article, it appears that in the 2-year interim (2015-1017) the English/FL downward trend has become exacerbated. Communication has slowed to pace of growth on par with total growth (no participation change), and Arts and Music ("Visual and performing arts") has, continued its 2015-2015 decline (i.e., at a slower loss rate than English/FL).

Another NCES Digest table (see NCES 2018, Table 104.50) uses Census data (American Community Survey [ACS], 2017; the sample population is about 71,000 people) and tracks adults per their Bachelor's degree, and provides this data: Communications and communications technologies, 3.9%; Visual and performing arts, 4.1%; English language and literature 3.2%; Foreign languages, literatures, and linguistics, 1.0%. The content breakdown of "Communications" versus "communications technologies" is not clear; as this data is based on an entirely different survey with its own categories, it is mentioned here merely anecdotally, to buttress the surprising finding that Visual and performing arts graduates are roughly as numerous as English/FL combined. With regard to fine arts, it should be noted that while the 1966-2015 data used here constitutes a growth rate of 452%, this rate is tweaked upward by an sharp increase (77%) in the 1966-1970 period; the aforementioned alternate NCES data-tracking from 1971-2017 (in the 2018 Digest) shows a growth of only 193%. However, during that same initial period English/FL also enjoyed an exceptional, though more moderate upward spike of 43%.

16 Area and ethic studies are omitted in 1970 as they would be too small to see; for the same reason, linguistics is excluded from both time points. 1970 was used as the starting point rather than 1966 for reasons of viewability; the 1966-2015 changes are more extreme; Communication (and social sciences) were even smaller portions of the whole in 1966.

17 Regarding the interdisciplinary programs, patterns are most easily perused for the period 1971-2017 in the aforementioned NCES Digest 2018 tables, 322.10, 323.10 and 324.10. One category of significant growth in that source is for miscellaneous interdisciplinary humanities (there classified under "Liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities"), which grew from 8,398 to 46,421. This percentage rise of 453% is in part due to the original small base; in raw numbers, and perhaps of more importance, the 2017 value is close to that for English (50,911); from 1971-2017, this category went from 30% to 210% of the respective FL values. Philosophy is both a small field and difficult to isolate and track due to changing database inclusions with or exclusions from religious studies, which itself is distinguished in the cited Digest tables from...
"Theology and religious vocations." A related cultural curio is that while still small, this last field seems to have grown much more than the "Philosophy and religious studies" category, though still below the total average growth rate.

18 Regarding English Language Arts Standards Common Core Standards, for an overview of the range of disciplinary bases, see Pearson (2013); see Zunshine (2015) for a critical analysis of the balance of literary and informational reading. On the MLA's vision for tertiary training for K-12 teacher preparation, see Franklin, Laurence and Welles (1999). STEAM is essentially a bottom-up movement by progressive educators, for example in certain charter schools. The A in the STEAM acronym is for Arts, and this usually means creative more than critical arts, and visual rather than verbal media. However, when the acronym is spelled out on websites promoting the concept, the A is sometimes transposed as "(liberal) arts," i.e., with parenthetical inclusion of the larger humanities meaning of "the arts.". Liao (2016) provides a compact overview of STEAM. The US Department of Education is beginning to promote STEAM to a limited extent in its more formal and substantial STEM sub-sections.
Appendix: Data set of raw & inferred data

Degrees awarded (Bachelor's / Master's / Doctorate): Focus: Language-Arts (English; foreign languages [FL]; related fields. Data source: NCES. Data retrieval tool WebCASPAR

Notes: for concision, this table shows individual years, in 5-year increments; the graphs illustrating degree data use this sub-set; the original data set has values from all years in the period. The values shown in the "Total" column at right are from the full data set of all years; "Change, 1966-2015" indicates the final year value relative to the first year.

<table>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totals from all degree fields</td>
<td>683,019</td>
<td>1,037,329</td>
<td>1,259,400</td>
<td>1,271,978</td>
<td>1,311,062</td>
<td>1,425,375</td>
<td>1,618,377</td>
<td>1,759,707</td>
<td>2,088,220</td>
<td>2,424,160</td>
<td>2,749,224</td>
<td>124,467,009</td>
<td>413%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Languages</td>
<td>19,244</td>
<td>26,969</td>
<td>23,584</td>
<td>14,762</td>
<td>13,350</td>
<td>15,375</td>
<td>17,881</td>
<td>18,328</td>
<td>20,828</td>
<td>24,462</td>
<td>21,646</td>
<td>979,465</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English and Literature</td>
<td>46,148</td>
<td>66,254</td>
<td>58,411</td>
<td>39,740</td>
<td>39,155</td>
<td>53,839</td>
<td>60,628</td>
<td>57,927</td>
<td>61,796</td>
<td>61,445</td>
<td>52,977</td>
<td>2,793,015</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Music</td>
<td>27,405</td>
<td>48,777</td>
<td>54,840</td>
<td>59,323</td>
<td>56,333</td>
<td>60,534</td>
<td>76,863</td>
<td>92,688</td>
<td>123,669</td>
<td>138,522</td>
<td>151,354</td>
<td>4,070,292</td>
<td>452%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and Librarianship</td>
<td>8,242</td>
<td>14,789</td>
<td>30,945</td>
<td>36,466</td>
<td>50,774</td>
<td>61,834</td>
<td>64,874</td>
<td>70,405</td>
<td>91,320</td>
<td>102,987</td>
<td>117,078</td>
<td>2,981,551</td>
<td>1321%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area and Ethnic Studies</td>
<td>1,829</td>
<td>3,038</td>
<td>4,913</td>
<td>3,843</td>
<td>3,962</td>
<td>6,028</td>
<td>7,323</td>
<td>7,905</td>
<td>9,024</td>
<td>10,291</td>
<td>10,040</td>
<td>320,180</td>
<td>449%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistics</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>1,106</td>
<td>1,237</td>
<td>1,294</td>
<td>1,313</td>
<td>1,390</td>
<td>1,488</td>
<td>1,893</td>
<td>2,656</td>
<td>3,455</td>
<td>77,141</td>
<td>711%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Derived Data | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total (from the above selected fields only) in selected years | 103,294 | 160,494 | 173,799 | 155,371 | 164,868 | 198,923 | 228,959 | 248,741 | 308,530 | 340,363 | 356,550 | 11,221,644 | 245% |
| Total English & FL in selected years | 65,392 | 93,223 | 81,995 | 54,502 | 52,505 | 69,214 | 78,509 | 76,255 | 82,624 | 85,907 | 74,623 | 3,772,480 | 14% |

| Focus on FL as proportion of FL | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| FL as proportion of English + FL | 29.4% | 28.9% | 28.8% | 27.1% | 25.4% | 22.2% | 22.8% | 24.0% | 25.2% | 28.5% | 29.9% | 26.0% | -1% |
| Focus on Broader Language-Arts - adds (to FL & English) Arts and Music; Communication and Librarianship; Area and Ethnic Studies; Linguistics | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| Broader Language-Arts cluster as proportional of all fields | 11.4% | 11.3% | 9.8% | 8.4% | 8.2% | 9.2% | 9.2% | 9.3% | 8.4% | 7.7% | 9.0% | |
| Focus on FL + English as a proportion of broader Language and Arts fields | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| FL as proportion of language arts larger cluster | 18.6% | 16.8% | 13.6% | 9.5% | 8.1% | 7.7% | 7.8% | 7.4% | 6.8% | 7.2% | 6.1% | 8.7% | -67% |
| English as a proportion of language arts larger cluster | 44.7% | 41.3% | 33.6% | 25.6% | 23.7% | 27.1% | 26.5% | 23.3% | 20.0% | 18.1% | 14.9% | 24.9% | -67% |
| FL with English as a proportion of language arts larger cluster | 63.3% | 58.1% | 47.2% | 35.1% | 31.8% | 34.8% | 34.3% | 30.7% | 26.8% | 25.2% | 20.9% | 33.6% | -67% |

| Focus on broader Language Arts cluster excluding FL with English, in relation to all fields | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Broader Language-Arts cluster as proportion of all fields | 11.4% | 11.3% | 9.8% | 8.4% | 8.2% | 9.2% | 9.2% | 9.3% | 8.4% | 7.7% | 9.0% | |
| English with FL, as proportion of all fields | 7.2% | 6.6% | 4.6% | 2.9% | 2.6% | 3.2% | 3.1% | 2.8% | 2.5% | 2.1% | 1.6% | 3.0% | -30% |
| Broader LA cluster, excluding FL & English, as proportion of all fields | 4.2% | 4.8% | 5.2% | 5.4% | 5.6% | 6.0% | 6.0% | 6.4% | 6.8% | 6.3% | 6.1% | 6.0% | 45% |
| English as a proportion of all fields | 5.1% | 4.7% | 3.3% | 2.1% | 2.0% | 2.5% | 2.4% | 2.1% | 1.9% | 1.5% | 1.1% | 2.2% | -78% |
| FL as proportion of all fields | 2.1% | 1.9% | 1.3% | 0.8% | 0.7% | 0.7% | 0.7% | 0.6% | 0.5% | 0.8% | 0.7% | -78% |
WORKS CITED


---. "Table 318.20: Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctor’s Degrees Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions, by Field of Study: Selected Years, 1970–71 through 2016-17." [nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_318.20.asp](nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_318.20.asp)

---. "Table 322.10. Bachelor’s Degrees Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions, by Field of Study: Selected Years, 1970-71 through 2016-17" [nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_322.10.asp](nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_322.10.asp)

---. Table 323.10 Master’s Degrees Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions, by Field of Study: Selected Years, 1970-71 through 2016-17. [nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_323.10.asp](nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_323.10.asp)

---. Table 324.10. Doctor’s Degrees Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions, by Field of Study: Selected years, 1970-71 through 2016-17. [nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_324.10.asp](nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_324.10.asp)

---. Table 104.50. "Persons Age 25 and Over Who Hold a Bachelor’s or Higher Degree, by Sex, Race/ethnicity, Age Group, and Field of Bachelor’s Degree: 2017." [nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_104.50.asp](nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_104.50.asp)


