



LANGUAGES: WORK

A student's guide to careers using languages

There are many misconceptions about how languages are used at work. Many people think that the only jobs available are in translation, interpreting and teaching. But these occupations represent only some of the many opportunities out there for you!

career paths

→ SO WHAT CAN I DO THEN?

There are principally two choices: a job **with** languages or a job **in** languages. You will also find that the specialist language occupations have not stood still: telephone interpreting allows instant communication all around the world and websites need linguists to help them reach their global audience. Other expanding areas for linguists include digital subtitling and dubbing.

Jobs with languages

Here's just a selection of occupations where languages can be very important. There are countless more examples to be found, limited only by the scope of an organisation, as detailed below.

- Credit controller
- Customer support adviser
- Events organiser
- Executive search consultant
- International sales manager
- Market research professional
- Secretary/PA
- Strategic business consultant
- Technical support specialist
- Tourist Information Officer
- Travel courier
- Website localiser

Jobs in languages

In some occupations, languages are central to the job. They are probably the careers that you most readily associate with languages. You will need a perfect command of the foreign language as well as your mother tongue. Each one is very specialised in terms of the working environment and aptitude required to do the job.

- Languages teacher/trainer
- Interpreter
- Translator
- Cultural briefing consultant

Some key facts to consider ...

over **60%**

of British trade is with non-English speaking countries

other European countries are aiming for skills in **3** languages

on average, people who use languages in their job

earn **8%** more than their colleagues

94% of the world's population

do not speak English as their mother tongue

Unemployment among new graduates in the UK in 2000: all UK graduates 5.5%;

Modern Languages graduates

4.3%

companies

AND WHO WILL I BE WORKING FOR?

There are certain types of organisation where languages are of particular value. They fall into one or more of these categories:

- consultancy;
- customer relationship management (CRM);
- education;
- engineering;
- fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG);
- finance and banking;
- language services;
- media;
- pharmaceuticals;
- social and civil services;
- technology;
- transport and distribution;
- travel and tourism ...

... and many organisations that do not fit into any of these categories also make use of languages. You are more likely to find a use for your skills in departments where communication is particularly important, such as **sales, customer support and marketing. IT and finance departments** also commonly make use of languages.



skills

WHAT SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT FOR A LINGUIST?

Well, without doubt the ability to communicate has to come top, but there are lots of ways of communicating! It is well known that employers look for other skills which are common in language speakers and not only used in the context of a second language. Some of these are:

- cultural awareness;
- editing;
- formal and informal speaking;
- knowledge of other countries;
- listening;
- mental agility;
- proof-reading;
- report-writing;
- summarising;
- verbal accuracy.



languages

WHICH LANGUAGES SHOULD I BE LEARNING?

Think carefully about why you want to learn a language. What type of work are you looking for? For engineering, **French** and **German** are very important languages due to the number of businesses from those countries working in this sector. In international diplomacy, languages like **Mandarin** and **Arabic** are of great value. A good tip is to ask an employment agency what languages employers are looking for. A list of employment agencies is included overleaf.

Community languages – such as **Bengali, Turkish, Urdu** – are of particular importance for local authorities and other Government bodies. Your local Citizens Advice Bureau, for instance, will have bilingual staff. **British Sign Language** (for deaf people and those hard of hearing) and **Welsh** (in Wales) are very valuable, especially in the public-service sector.

Languages learnt can be recorded in the *European Language Portfolio* – for details on this, contact CILT.



experience



DO I NEED WORK EXPERIENCE?

A language qualification in its own right will rarely give you the experience to do a job. **Think carefully about gaining work experience which complements your language skills** and is relevant to the kind of job you hope to have (see 'Finding work' overleaf). You might be able to gain work-related skills through participation in an **exchange with a continental school**, by undertaking **work experience with a local company that uses languages**, by going on a **placement to a company during a gap year or on your year/semester abroad at university**. If you are planning to do a degree, many higher education institutions offer combined programmes including a foreign language and there is a wide range of options, e.g. **French and Computer Studies**, **Textiles with Italian**. Interpreting and translation will also probably require you to have specialist knowledge of a particular field or fields, so keep this in mind. This can be developed through professional journals, textbooks and conferences, for instance.

USEFUL RESOURCES > websites | factsheets



BLIS Services

www.blis.org.uk

Information and case studies including careers, jobs and courses, maintained by CILT

Prospects

www.prospects.ac.uk

Careers advice for graduates provided by AGCAS – see contact details overleaf

LearnDirect

www.learnirect.co.uk

Course search for adult learners and careers facility 'Futures'

The Course Source

www.thecoursesource.co.uk

Degree course search engine

Coursefinder

www.ukcoursefinder.com

Degree course search engine

Languages for Life

www.les.aston.ac.uk/langlife

Languages careers website with career profiles of languages graduates from Aston

BBC Languages

www.bbc.co.uk/education/languages

Site for language learners – test your knowledge on-line and find learning resources

Language Advantage

www.languageadvantage.com

Languages portal with information on careers with languages and on learning languages

Your degree in foreign languages ... What next?

Two-page factsheet on careers after graduating in languages

AGCAS/Prospects – see contact details overleaf

Getting into translation

One-page factsheet from the Institute of Translation and Interpreting

See contact details overleaf

Getting into interpreting

One-page factsheet from the Institute of Translation and Interpreting

See contact details overleaf

NVQ units in British Sign Language; Institutions offering interpreting training courses

Two factsheets from the CACDP on becoming a BSL interpreter
CACDP – see contact details overleaf

Modern Foreign Languages in initial teacher education; Studying languages at university

Two information sheets produced by CILT and CILT/Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies respectively

See CILT contact details overleaf

Languages give you an opportunity to ...

... work and travel in different countries

... develop skills of practical use in almost any career

... be able to interact with millions more people all over the world

... gain access to a wider range of information

USEFUL

RESOURCES > organisations | finding work



CILT, the National Centre for Languages

www.cilt.org.uk/careers

020 7379 5101

careers@cilt.org.uk

Promoting a greater national capability in languages

Regional Language Networks

www.cilt.org.uk/rln

020 7379 5101

rln@cilt.org.uk

Supporting CILT's mission in the English regions, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies

www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk

023 8059 4814

llas@soton.ac.uk

Promotes high quality learning and language teaching across all UK higher education institutions

Institute of Translation and Interpreting

www.iti.org.uk

01908 325250

info@iti.org.uk

The independent professional association of practising translators and interpreters in the UK

Institute of Linguists

www.iol.org.uk

020 7940 3100

info@iol.org.uk

Serves the interests of professional linguists throughout the world

Teach First

www.teachfirst.org.uk

020 7665 1451

faq@teachfirst.org.uk

Two-year programme for languages graduates teaching in London schools, simultaneously enabling networking and training in business

AIESEC

www.workabroad.org.uk

Student organisation offering work-abroad programme to graduates for cultural exchange in over 90 countries

Connexions

www.connexions.gov.uk

info@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Offers a range of careers guidance and support for 13 to 19 year-olds

AGCAS

www.agcas.org.uk

Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services

CACDP

www.cacdp.org.uk

0191 383 1155

durham@cacdp.org.uk

The Council for Advancement of Communication with Deaf People

BLIS Jobs

www.blis.org.uk/jobs

The job site for people with languages, maintained by CILT

Angela Mortimer

www.am-international.co.uk

Crone Corkill

www.cronecorkill.co.uk

Eurecruit

www.eurecruit.com

Euro-London

www.eurolondon.co.uk

Language Matters

www.languagematters.co.uk

Multilingual Services

www.multilingual.co.uk

Reed

www.reed.co.uk/multilingual

Talent 4 Europe (jobs abroad)

www.talent4europe.com

TES (for teaching)

www.jobs.tes.co.uk

British Council — Language Assistants

www.languageassistant.co.uk

Council for Work Experience

www.work-experience.org