

Considering...Using Languages

Introduction

Only 6% of the world's population speak English as a first language. 75% do not speak any English. Having the ability to communicate in a language other than English is therefore a useful, practical asset, valuable in a multi-lingual world and in many occupational sectors and job roles. For example, language skills are important in facilitating business relationships in a global job market; in helping you to look for work elsewhere in the world; for aiding communication among colleagues/customers/clients with different language backgrounds; for helping you to connect with different cultures.

Thinking about your language skills

- With which languages are you familiar?
- What degree of fluency do you have in each (written and/or verbal)?
- Do you need to develop these further in order to use them professionally? If so, how might you do this?

Thinking about how you might use these skills

- Do you want to make your language skills the focus of your career?
- Do you see your language abilities as additional skills which you hope to use in the course of your everyday job?
- Is using languages not really key to your career plan, but you would hope to be able to make some use of your skills?

Researching careers where you might use your language(s)

- You might start by researching different industry sectors. Is there a particular sector which interests you? Research the possibilities for using your language skills within this sector. What are these job roles? See Prospects – [job sectors](#).
- Even if your degree is not in a modern language, visit Prospects [What can I do with my degree...in modern languages?](#), for suggested careers where another language is needed or is useful
- Alternatively, you might have a particular job role in mind. Research the sectors and organisations in which you might find these job roles and consider whether these would allow you to use your languages. Think about the company's business partners and subsidiaries – will languages be valuable in communication with such organisations? See Prospects – [job profiles](#).

Think widely and prepare to be flexible. Seize opportunities to use your language skills and let your employer know that you are keen to do so.

Think about what other skills you may need

- Language skills can be an asset, but employers are also looking for other competencies – teamwork, project management, leadership, resilience and commercial awareness – investigate ways of developing these whilst you are at university to develop your [employability](#)

Work experience

- Fluency in a language and, equally important, cultural awareness and resilience are likely to be developed during time lived in a country where that language is spoken. There are opportunities to live and work abroad both during your degree and as a graduate. You may be on a degree programme which includes a year abroad, but for other students there are also opportunities to [study abroad](#).
- During vacations or after graduation you could consider travelling/living abroad - doing voluntary or paid work; teaching English abroad; taking study courses abroad. All will help you to develop both your language skills and cultural sensitivity
- For further information and ideas see [Taking time out](#) and [International work](#)
- Check our general advice on [work experience and internships](#) in the UK.

Job opportunities

Specialist language occupations

In addition to fluency in a language, specialists possess and use their knowledge of the culture, history, politics and business aspects of a country or a minority community in which the language is used.

The main roles for specialists would be translation; interpreting; language teaching. These require many more skills than the ability to speak one or more languages.

See Prospects for more information on [translating](#) and [interpreting](#).

The [Institute of Translation and Interpreting](#) offers student membership, [careers information](#), and has a bi-annual publication, *ignITION*, for those starting out in their career.

Find out about [teaching](#) on our job sector pages. You could teach the language(s) you have studied to speakers of English, in schools or in further/higher education, or teach English to speakers of other languages. The second option does not normally require any knowledge of your students' language, as teaching is carried out entirely through English, but your language skills could often be helpful, especially for working abroad.

Working abroad

10% of UK languages graduates obtain their first job after graduation outside the UK. This compares with less than 2% of graduates overall. Few of these roles are graduate level jobs; most recent graduates working abroad teach English as a foreign language (which can be a long-term career).

A specific degree or postgraduate qualification *may* be preferred, eg business/marketing for a marketing post; language skills will be the secondary consideration. It can be harder for new graduates to enter graduate level jobs abroad than they might expect to obtain in the UK. In the UK, languages graduates can easily enter careers in business and finance which would only be open to graduates with business-related degrees in most other European countries.

It is usually easier to join a graduate training scheme with a UK (or foreign UK-based multinational) employer in this country, and then move with them to another country after two or three years, than to get onto an equivalent scheme abroad. Non-EU countries have work permit and visa regulations that may prevent or limit you obtaining employment. When the UK leaves the EU, this could also have an impact on UK citizens' right to work in other EU countries.

Further opportunities for using languages

There is a demand for people who speak languages other than English in a business, eg HR and finance; marketing, advertising and PR; art, design and media; government; retail and sales; travel and hospitality; tourism and heritage; transport and distributions – in fact, in most sectors languages can be a valuable and auxiliary aid.

Although your language skills may not necessarily be the main factor in whether you are a successful applicant for a job; they may help to differentiate you from other candidates. It may be less easy for employers to develop the language skills their employees require than it is to develop other skills (eg accountancy, IT skills) in linguists! Employers also appreciate the competencies of adaptability and cultural sensitivity that languages graduates acquire when they have spent a year abroad.

Graduate schemes

Below are some examples of employers with graduate schemes that may require language skills or offer the chance to work in other European countries. However, as noted above, many other employers will be able to make use of your languages or could offer the chance to work for them in another country, at some point during your career.

- [Diageo European Graduate Programme](#)
- The [Diplomatic Service](#)
- [EasyJet European Graduate Programme](#)
- [EU Institutions](#)
- [Goodyear Dunlop European Graduate Programme](#)
- Government Communications Headquarters ([GCHQ](#))
- [Reckitt Benckiser](#)
- [Red Bull Graduate Programme](#)
- The Security Service [MI5 careers](#)
- [Sony careers](#)
- [O2 graduate careers](#)

European employers in the UK

It may be possible to identify European employers who may have vacancies either in the UK or abroad for UK nationals with European language skills. The following websites may provide company lists:

- [Austrian Trade Commission](#)
- [Franco-British Chamber of Commerce & Industry](#) (charges for information)
- [German Industry UK](#) represents 250 companies in the UK with a German majority shareholding
- [German-British Chamber of Industry & Commerce](#)
- [Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry for the UK](#)
- [Spanish Chamber of Commerce](#) in Great Britain
- [British-Swiss Chamber of Commerce](#)

Specialist recruitment agencies for linguists

- [iAgora](#) international jobs and internships
- [ABL Recruitment](#) roles from translation and interpreting to sales, customer service and secretarial
- [Corinium Language Associates](#) tutoring, translation and interpreting
- [Euro London Appointments](#) multilingual recruitment specialists
- [Europe Language Jobs](#) multilingual job roles across the UK and Europe
- [French Recruitment](#) focus on business related jobs, but welcome candidates with non-business background
- [French Selection](#) variety of job roles, mainly UK-based for French, German, Spanish, Russian and Italian speaking professionals
- [Lingo24](#) translation agency whose site includes advice on careers in translation, case studies and useful links
- [Multilingual Vacancies](#) variety of roles
- [RWS Group](#) patent and specialist translation services company which regularly recruits graduates interested in a language-based career
- The [Association of Translation Companies](#) has a list of members
- [Top Language Jobs](#) largest European network of language recruitment websites, where leading language recruitment agencies and employers promote their permanent, temporary and contract language jobs
- [The Language Show](#) held every autumn in London (online in 2020) includes a Careers Zone where you can meet a range of graduate recruiters.

Please note: The websites listed here are not intended to represent a comprehensive list. Careers and Placements cannot be held responsible for the content of external websites.

©Careers and Placements September 2020

york.ac.uk/careers

UoYCareers

