

Work talk*



* A guide to languages and careers

**Languages
Work**



There are many misconceptions about how languages are used at work. Many think that the only jobs available for language students are in translation, interpreting and teaching – not true. These occupations represent only some of the many opportunities out there in a huge variety of industries. Read on to discover how languages can work for you, and a wealth of information on finding your vocation using languages. Here are three key messages for anyone considering their options:



1. English is not enough

94% of the world's population does not speak English as their first language. 75% do not speak English at all. It's a multilingual world and UK companies are now realising that they need foreign languages to compete when trading internationally. Over 300 languages are spoken in London alone. Public services and local government now recognise the diversity of UK society, and increasingly need languages when serving our communities.

2. A little language can make a lot of difference

There is room for all levels of ability, and opportunities from the switchboard to the boardroom. Although fluency will give the jobseeker more options, basic ability in languages is much in demand as employers seek those capable of communicating with foreign customers or breaking the ice with a few phrases at visits or in a meeting. You can acquire or refresh your basic knowledge in a number of ways:

- evening classes at a local college
- self-study packages
- at home in the family, if their mother tongue is not English
- distance learning
- time spent in the country where the language is spoken
- university language centres
- language learning holidays.

3. Languages improve the quality of your life

In every environment, speaking languages gives you access to a whole new world. Music, the Internet, cultural history, people you would never otherwise have met. This applies in the workplace as much as anywhere else. According to recruitment agencies, salary uplift for those using languages at work can be anything from 8% to 20%, depending on how central languages are to the role. Jobs involving languages have many attractive features:

- travel/overseas placements
- flexible working hours
- opportunities for promotion and new responsibilities.



Who do you want to work for?

Industries which are more globalised in nature and those facing non-English speaking customers offer opportunities for people with language skills. This also applies to companies that are web-based, trading

internationally, or foreign-owned. Industry examples include:

- business services ■ central government
- contact centres ■ engineering ■ financial services
- marketing ■ media ■ technology ■ travel and tourism
- voluntary and charitable sector

Are you experienced?

Languages really come alive when combined with expertise in another field. A bilingual sales manager is a sales manager first and foremost, with the added advantage of foreign language skills. This applies to the

specialist language occupations, too. The ability to translate from French to English is not, in itself, enough; translators may need to specialise in an area such as medical documentation. Here are several ways of coupling industrial experience with your language skills: ■ get some work experience during vacations ■ choose a university course which combines languages with a work-related subject ■ do some part-time multilingual work while at university for an agency ■ get work experience during a gap year before university or during a year/semester abroad ■ take a work-related language course in further or adult education ■ Teach English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in a relevant country.

Are you talking my language?

In the right context, any language can be of use. It will depend entirely on the choice of career path. In the enlarged European Union, those speaking one or more of the languages of the ten accession

countries will enjoy more opportunities than ever before in international trade and European institutions. Recent surveys have shown that the five business languages most in demand in the UK are, in this order: ■ French ■ German ■ Spanish ■ Italian ■ Dutch. In a world context, there is increasing demand for: ■ Arabic ■ Japanese ■ Mandarin/Cantonese ■ Portuguese ■ Russian. In the public service sector and local government in the UK, quite a different range of languages is needed to serve local communities effectively. It includes: ■ British Sign Language ■ Hindi ■ Swahili ■ Turkish ■ Urdu ■ Welsh.

What do you want to do with your languages?

You have a huge array of options open to you. For simplicity we have outlined two routes – occupations with languages and specialist language occupations.

Occupations with languages Practically any job can involve languages, whether it's based in the UK or abroad.

Here are some examples: ■ credit controller ■ journalist ■ market researcher ■ personal assistant ■ recruitment consultant ■ technical helpdesk

Occupations such as those listed above are typical of the majority of jobs where languages are used. Languages may be less pivotal in such careers and are no substitute for the requirement to have specific qualifications or training; for example to be qualified as an accountant, or to have several years' marketing experience. However, it may be virtually impossible to do the job well without an effective working knowledge of the language(s) pertinent to the organisation or job.

Specialist language occupations: ■ interpreter ■ translator ■ Languages teacher ■ language trainer

These occupations are well known but have not stood still in recent years. Telephone interpreting allows instant communication all around the world, while websites need linguists to help them reach their global audience. Other expanding areas for specialist linguists include digital subtitling and dubbing. This route is the most often signposted and can seem most apparent to recent graduates or school leavers. However, they should bear in mind the fact that interpreting (internationally and in the community) and translation are fiercely competitive fields. There is a shortage of Languages teachers, so entry into the profession is a favoured and well supported option.

Where to go next?



We have collected a selection of resources to help you make decisions about languages and your career.

Languages Work

This factsheet is just one part of a product range designed to raise awareness of the value of languages in the workplace and beyond. Other key resources are:

- www.languageswork.org.uk
The information portal for languages and careers.
- Activity folder: materials for use in the classroom by Languages teachers, Careers teachers and Connexions Personal Advisers.
- CD-ROM: includes video clips, live Web links and Languages Work materials for reproduction.
- Careers factsheets: key messages and information for both younger students and for adults.
- Handbook: comprehensive guidance on languages and careers for careers advisers and teachers in all sectors of education.
- Promotional materials: postcards, posters and other materials for use at open days, exhibitions and events.

Languages organisations and websites

- Association for Language Learning / Membership organisation for teachers of modern foreign languages / www.languagelearn.co.uk
- BBC Languages / Site for language learners – test your knowledge on-line and find learning resources / www.bbc.co.uk/languages
- CACDP / The Council for Advancement of Communication with Deaf People / www.cacdp.org.uk
- Channel 4 Languages / Site for language learners – interactive and other learning resources / www.channel4.com/languages
- CILT, the National Centre for Languages / Promoting a greater national capability in languages / www.cilt.org.uk
- Institute of Linguists / Serves the interests of professional linguists throughout the world / www.iol.org.uk
- Institute of Translation and Interpreting / The independent professional association of practising translators and interpreters in the UK / www.iti.org.uk
- Language Advantage / Languages portal with information on careers with languages and on learning languages / www.languageadvantage.com
- Languages for Life / Languages careers website with career profiles of languages graduates from Aston University / www.les.aston.ac.uk/langlife
- Regional Language Networks / Supporting CILT's mission in the English regions, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland / www.cilt.org.uk/rln
- Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies / Promotes high quality learning and language teaching across all UK higher education institutions / www.llas.ac.uk
- University Council for Modern Languages / Membership organisation for higher education language lecturers and associations / www.ucml.org.uk

Careers organisations

- AGCAS / Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services / www.agcas.org.uk
- Careers Europe / The UK National Resource Centre for international careers information / www.careerseurope.co.uk
- Connexions / Offers a range of careers guidance and support for 13–19 year-olds / www.connexions-direct.com
- CRAC / Career development for life / www.crac.org.uk
- Graduate Prospects / Careers advice for graduates / www.prospects.ac.uk
- Institute of Careers Guidance / www.icg-uk.org

Job sites

- BLIS Jobs / The job site for people with languages, maintained by CILT, the National Centre for Languages / www.blis.org.uk/jobs
- EURES / The European job mobility portal / europa.eu.int/eures

An up-to-date list of specialist recruitment agencies and job sites can be found on the Languages Work website.

Course search websites

- BLIS Courses / Language course finder supported by learndirect and maintained by CILT / www.blis.org.uk/courses
- learndirect / Course search for adult learners and careers facility 'Futures' / www.learndirect.co.uk
- The Course Source / Degree-course search engine / www.thecoursesource.co.uk
- UCAS course database / Degree-course search engine / www.ucas.ac.uk
- Ploteus / The European course search portal / europa.eu.int/ploteus

Multimedia resources

- AGCAS / 'Using languages' booklet / Graduate careers publication examining how languages are used in various professions / www.agcas.ac.uk
- Connexions / 'Working in languages' booklet / Publication aimed at 13–19 year-olds with fourteen case studies of jobs using languages / www.connexions.gov.uk
- Edda Ostarhild / 'Careers using languages' book / Includes case studies, tips for getting in and getting on / www.kogan-page.co.uk
- Subject Centre for Languages / 'The Languages Box' / One-stop resource with information on the benefits of studying languages and packs on different languages / www.llas.ac.uk
- BBC / 'Talk the talk' video / How people can use their languages at work and at play, featuring Sir Trevor McDonald / BBC Educational Publishing / T 0870 830 8000
- CILT Cymru / 'Languages Work' video / Case studies of language use for careers in Wales and abroad / www.ciltcymru.org.uk
- Leeds Metropolitan University / 'English is not Enough' video / For school and college students / www.leedsmet.ac.uk/cls
- Newcastle-under-Lyme College / 'What's the point?' video / A hard-hitting video aimed at 14–16 year-olds encouraging them to continue their language studies / T 01782 254 242
- Black Country Pathfinder / 'Talking business' video / Local businesses going global, for school students at Key Stage 3 / www.bcsip.org/pathfinder

For links to all of the above and more besides, plus the full range of Languages Work materials, please visit www.languageswork.org.uk

