Languages

Information and advice for those interested in careers in languages

Aimhigher...
Sussex

Languages
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Whether you're in the first few years of secondary school or coming to the end of your school or college years, you will already have made or will soon be making decisions about your future. This leaflet is for those interested in careers with languages and will give you an idea of opportunities in this area and advice about what to do next.

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Languages
The overview

Unlike other areas of work, language is not so much a sector or industry but rather a tool that people use. One way of thinking about it is that some people use language as the main part of their work, for example teaching or translating language, and some use it as a smaller part of their job which might be anything from business to travel and tourism to technology. So whether you love speaking foreign languages, want to be an interpreter or teach, or want to be part of a multi-national company where you need to speak more than one language every day, it's likely you are interested in work that involves languages.

So what's attracting you to working with languages? And how much do you know?

For example, do you know the answers to these questions:

How much do you think you'll earn?

What kind of places might you work and who with?

What kind of hours might you have to put in?

How hard is it to get a job and are you the kind of person that suits this kind of work?

These are all important questions to answer! Think about what's important to you.

For starters did you know?

- People are much more likely to do business if they are spoken to in their native language.
- Learning a foreign language helps your English and communication skills too.
- German, followed by French are the most in demand languages, but Spanish is also highly valued along with Italian and Dutch, Japanese, Mandarin, Cantonese and Russian. Arabic languages and Portuguese are also sought after as the countries where these languages are spoken have developing economies.
- Studying languages also helps you to understand other cultures, a skill which employers look for.
- There are more people in the world who do not speak English compared to those who do.
- Conversational language skills are valued by 74% of employers. In fact, across all businesses it is one of the most requested skills. Currently 49% of employers are disappointed with graduates' foreign language skills.
- Depending on your other skills and qualifications, languages can lead you into all sorts of professions from business to law to creative sectors.
- Languages are about communication so you have to like working with people.
- Having more than one language means you have more options of where in the world you can work.

* Source: The National Guidance Research Forum (**www.guidance-research.org**) and the National Centre for Languages (**www.languageswork.org.uk**).

Languages
What kind of jobs are there?

As mentioned above – using languages in your work can be split into using one or more languages daily as your specific job or using languages as part of your work. The following information will help you think more about what you would enjoy most.

Languages as the main part of your work

Translation and Interpreting

Translators change the written word from one language to another. They may work for lots of different projects or concentrate on a particular area such as medical or legal professions for which you may need specialist knowledge. Translators will often have a degree or professional training, although an area that does not require qualifications but instead a native level of a foreign language is proofing the on screen text of computer games.

Interpreters change the spoken word from one language to another in situations where people don't all speak the same language. They may work during conferences with lots of people where you have to use special equipment, or as a go between for just a few people. The public service sector in the UK requires speakers of a range of languages such as Gujarati, Hindi, Panjabi, Swahili, Urdu and Welsh in order to communicate with local communities. Visit **www.iti.org.uk** under the 'getting started' banner for further information or go to **www.iol.org.uk**.

Teaching

Teaching requires both a passion for teaching and for your subject and it can be a hugely rewarding job. You can specialise in teaching languages in school, college, university, or in the community. Teaching usually requires a degree either in the language you wish to teach or another subject plus extra training. The government offers grants for secondary teachers of modern languages.

Another option is to teach English as a foreign language to foreign students, usually in a language school. This requires a month long training course and sometimes a degree as well. You can find out more information about teaching at **www.primarylanguages.org.uk**, **www.tda.gov.uk/get-into-teaching.aspx** (click on the modern foreign languages banner) and **www.britishcouncil.org/new/learning** (look under teaching, teaching English).

Job title: English language teacher/EFL teacher

What do you do: I teach English to 18-year-olds in a central Tokyo technical college. I also teach English to business people in their offices.

What's the best and worst thing about what you do? The best thing is seeing my students' English improve, and knowing that I helped them. I also really enjoy working out the best way to teach a wide variety of students. The worst? - being a long way away from my family and friends. Also, living and working within a very different culture is rewarding, but it can be stressful when you have to deal with it every day.

University course studied and where: BA Linguistics (Sussex), MA Applied Linguistics (Sussex).

A-Levels/equivalent: Trinity College TESOL Certificate and an Access course in humanities and social sciences.

Were the subjects you studied relevant to what you do now? Yes, absolutely. The TESOL Cert covered all the basics of teaching English, and the degree and master's taught me a lot about language and language acquisition. The access course just got me into university without A levels, which was useful in itself.

How did you decide what you wanted to do? I left school after my GCSEs and got a job flipping burgers at Wetherspoons. I didn't really know what I wanted to do, but one day my cousin told me he was going to do a CELTA course. He convinced me to do the TESOL at the same time so we could compare notes. I did the TESOL course, and totally by accident I found that I loved teaching and that I was really interested in languages (grammar, pronunciation etc.). After my course I taught English in the UK for a couple of years, continued to enjoy it and decided to take my career further by going to university. After university I could have gone to teach pretty much anywhere in the world. I decided on Japan because I'd been studying Japanese martial arts for a long time already, and Japan is really the best place for Japanese martial arts! Plus, the pay here is comparable to, or better than the pay in the UK. You won't get that if you teach somewhere like Thailand or Eastern Europe.

What do you recommend for someone interested in this career? I suppose an outgoing personality would be useful, but it's not essential. You have to be comfortable with standing up in front of a group of people and being the centre of attention, but you can get used to that even if you're naturally shy. As for study, it depends on what your aims are, if you just want to experience living abroad for a year or two before starting another career, don't waste your time and money on a teaching course. There are plenty of companies that hire unqualified native English speakers and train them on the job. If you are interested in a career in teaching English though, a CELTA or TESOL is a must as a starting point. Beyond that, degrees in linguistics and/or TESOL, diploma level teaching qualifications, PGCEs, and even PhDs in linguistics or education will all improve your prospects. For work experience, there are plenty of international summer schools for teenagers in every major city in the UK. It's fairly easy to get a temporary job as a teacher or activity leader. Doing this might help you decide whether or not teaching English is for you. Plus, the pay's usually much better than your average summer job!

I'd also point out there are loads of initial teacher training courses out there, and a lot of them are quite good. But the Trinity College Certificate in TESOL and the Cambridge CELTA are the ONLY courses that are recognised pretty much everywhere. I've met people who've spent over 1000 pounds on intensive 4 or 5 week courses, and worked really hard on them only to find that no employers recognise their certification. It's kind of sad because a lot of the alternative courses are actually pretty good, but really it's TESOL or CELTA only.

What would you have done differently if anything? Nothing really, I think I did things the right way - before moving to Japan and starting my career properly I got qualified, possibly over-qualified. It's easy to get an English teaching job without qualifications, but career progression can be very hard. By getting the qualifications first, I just needed to build up my level of experience and then doors opened for me.

What next? I'm starting a new job where I'll be teaching at an international school, preparing Japanese 15 to 18-year-olds for university study in the UK and the USA. In a couple of years, I'm planning on heading back to the UK to do a PhD in education. After that I'd like to teach at a university, maybe in Japan, or maybe Spain, Italy, Hong Kong...

Languages as a secondary part of your work

The need for languages crosses all different types of industries and jobs, from companies that operate internationally, to a local service that caters for foreign residents; you could find yourself working for a range of organisations. These are just some of the possibilities that having two or more languages can offer.

Government There are various government departments which specifically use language skills. The civil and diplomatic services offer positions as well as institutions as part of the European Union. See **http://faststream.civilservice.gov.uk** for further information.

Engineering and technology Languages are necessary for the sales and marketing aspects of engineering and technology firms. International consultants, people working in logistics (importing and exporting and distribution of goods), and technical writing are other areas where more than one language is beneficial. Within the technology industry computer programmers also use computer languages specifically designed to create software. Have a look at **www.skillset.org/careers** for more information.

Marketing and media Marketing is all about appealing to as many people as possible in order to sell a product or service so more than one language helps you do this. Working in the media (such as journalism or television production) may also take you out of the country in order to communicating in foreign languages.

Travel and tourism From air cabin crew to hotel management to travel agents a second or more language is an asset.

Voluntary and charitable sector Languages are essential when providing aid overseas, from teaching to medical support.

One thing to consider is that across all areas of work the most likely jobs available for people with language skills are within sales, customer support, human resources (the department in companies that looks after the employees), bilingual (speaking more than one language) personal assistants and secretarial work, marketing, information technology and research. So you might like to consider whether these areas interest you.

Where might you work?

Teachers of languages will likely work in educational establishments such as schools, colleges, universities and language schools. For other jobs it very much depends on the type of work you are doing – you could end up anywhere from a medical tent in Africa to travelling between international offices to working for web based company.

Job title: Recruitment Consultant

What do you do: We are paid by customers to find people with specific (and quite niche) skillsets and experience for technology companies in Europe.

What's the best and worst thing about what you do? The best is the variation, interacting with people from different cultures on a daily basis and learning about new technology. You are dealing with people all day and sometimes they do not want to move jobs or are not interested in specific companies, which can be frustrating especially if there are only a few people in Europe who have the right skills and experience.

University course studied and where: University of Sussex: BA English with Italian - with a year in Italy as part of the course.

A-Levels/equivalent: English Literature, Psychology, Theatre Studies.

Were the subjects you studied relevant to what you do now? I wouldn't have got my job if I didn't speak Italian. Plus the experience of living abroad helped me communicate with people of different cultures and languages more easily. My A-level in Psychology helped me to understand peoples' motivations better.

How did you decide what you wanted to do? I didn't have a clue what I wanted to do when I left university, however I did know that I wanted to use my languages and work with people. I fell into my current job through starting in market research for a headhunting company and then slowly developed into a consultant. I got the job through a graduate recruitment company who matched what I enjoyed to my current job. Although it wasn't the career I had imagined it ticked all the boxes and has helped me pay off some debt!

What do you recommend for someone interested in this career? You need to be target driven (interested in selling) and be able to deliver in short time scales. In terms of personality traits you need to be persistent and resilient as you encounter obstacles daily. You also need to enjoy working with people - a nosey streak helps as well! I would recommend a degree which includes a language as it helps you communicate with people whose first language isn't English a lot better, plus it shows potential employers that you are dedicated and driven by committing yourself to a degree. Aside from that, it is quite an easy profession to enter - however, it is always worthwhile getting work experience during your studies.

What would you have done differently if anything? I would have probably learnt additional languages.

What next? There are many possibilities however the most likely are to move into a management role or move into sales or human resources.

British Sign Language

There are over 100,000 users of British sign language (BSL) as their first language in the UK, plus those who use it who are not hard of hearing. Roles that use BSL include teaching or support work at schools for the hard of hearing, as well as interpretation services. You can find out more about learning BSL at **www.bda.org.uk/bsl-academy**.

Speech and Language Therapy

Speech and language therapists help treat people who have trouble communicating. Although they don't necessarily use foreign languages, their job often focuses on how to improve language ability, so if you are interested in language and supporting people in a therapeutic setting this may be the role for you. Have a look at **www.nhscareers.nhs.uk** for more information.

Linguistics

Linguistics is the study of human language; both history and how it works. People who study linguistics may go on to work in medical, forensic and technological fields and many more. See **www.llas.ac.uk/linguistics/2346** for more information.

Q. I'm about to choose my GCSEs and I am really enjoying learning Spanish and French at school. Should I do them both for GCSE and where might they lead?

A. When choosing GCSEs it's important to consider what you enjoy as well as thinking about what might be useful for your future. If you enjoy languages it's a good idea to keep them up as they'll be harder to come back to later and being able to speak a variety of languages will open your options further. Finding out what sort of role would suit you best involves a combination of self reflection, research and work experience. For starters have a look at **www.languageswork.org.uk** for jobs with languages for inspiration. Also **www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/south** has information specific to the south of England such as events you can get involved with.

Job title: Xbox Customer Service Escalation Specialist for EMEA

What do you do: We take care of cases where a customer is not satisfied with the support they have received from phone or online technical support. Once it has reached us, the complaint cannot go further as we are the head of Europe, Middle East and Africa.

What's the best and worst thing about what you do? You get to see various scenarios every day, often very convoluted and complicated cases which involve international law and you have to figure out the best possible solution. The worst thing is that you have to face sometimes very angry customers.

University course studied and where: BSc Physical Geography at the University of Reading.

A-Levels/equivalent: German, English Language, Biology and Geography.

Were the subjects you studied relevant to what you do now? To be honest – not really!

How did you decide what you wanted to do? I have always wanted to work in Conservation and Wildlife Management, hence I will be returning to University to complete my Masters (MSc), however, I ended up in this very well paid job because of my language skills. I learnt languages by visiting countries, it also helps that my mum speaks six. I also studied at school – German A-Level and Spanish GCSE. But really, speaking to people is how I learned and how I realised I really enjoyed it. I speak German fluently and Spanish as a second language. Languages open up a whole world of opportunities.

What do you recommend for someone interested in this career? Learn as many languages as you can! You have to be adaptable, inquisitive, have good problem solving skills, be able to interact with all sorts of people and show initiative.

What would you have done differently if anything? I would have done my Masters directly after I finished my degree, the gap can be slightly difficult to bridge after being employed for four years.

What next? Back to University to study and another personal goal for me is to learn Italian next.

Languages
Qualifications you need to progress

So how do I become a...?

Now you have a bit more of an idea about some of the different roles using languages, you might wonder what you need to study to do them.

It can be hard while you are at school to think about which subjects are best for your future plans. You might ask how you can make decisions now when you're not sure what you want to do. This is why it is a good idea to think about and research into areas that might interest you so that you can make sure you keep as many options open as possible.

As we discussed, the variety of jobs using languages means you need to research carefully about what areas of work might interest you to ensure you take the right subjects. Firstly, if languages interest you it's sensible to take at least one for GCSE. Some schools offer more than one at GCSE, and sometimes introduce a new language during the GCSE years, so do check what's available to you. Then you need to think about what you might like to use languages for.

In some jobs there are specific entry requirements which means you may have to study certain subjects to a required level. It is important if you have a particular career in mind that you check what these requirements are so you know what to aim for. Some good places to visit for inspiration are **www.whystudylanguages.ac.uk** and **www.languageswork.org.uk**. You may also like to look at **https://nextstep.direct.gov.uk/PlanningYourCareer** which has more general careers information in the job profiles section as well as other useful career planning information.

It is also very important is to combine your studies with as much relevant work experience as you can – more of that later.

Fast forward to the future

Natasha enjoys languages, IT and maths. Right now she doesn't know about the career options open to her. By exploring future ideas the decisions she has to make now will become easier.

So Natasha should:

- visit the recommended websites above and below and see if there are particular jobs that stand out
- then find out more about them on **https://nextstep.direct.gov.uk/PlanningYourCareer/JobProfiles**

You can also do a search for languages on the next step website job profiles

If you are having trouble thinking about your future and the steps you need to take try working backwards! For example, Natasha is 13 and is just starting to consider what subjects she'd like to study at GCSE. She is a native speaker of Korean and is also learning German and French at school which she enjoys. She has had some thoughts about her future and likes the idea of maybe working for the government but doesn't know what sort of work is possible. She knows she likes languages, she also enjoys IT and maths lessons.

Higher Education

Websites such as **https://nextstep.direct.gov.uk/PlanningYourCareer/JobProfiles** will give you an idea of the type of qualifications necessary for the jobs that interest you.

After researching on the **www.languageswork.org.uk** website Natasha came across a factsheet with information for people who have native language skills other than English (see factsheets – use it or lose it). She noticed there was a link to GCHQ, the Government's Security and Intelligence Agency, Natasha discovered that they recruit people with foreign language skills. They also look for mathematicians and IT specialists (see **www.gchq-careers.co.uk/Students-and-graduates**). Depending on the role Natasha went for a university degree may be needed. The website **www.ucas.com** has all the higher education courses available in the UK which you can browse through for ideas. Remember, every university is different.

School years

Natasha is 13, so needs to think about GCSEs before her A-Levels and university. One way of checking which subjects are needed for specific university courses is on the www.ucas.com website. Checking the entry requirements of courses that interest you (these are listed in every course's entry profile) will help you choose the right subjects to study at A-Level or equivalent and help you be aware of what grades you need to aim for. Because Natasha is fluent in Korean she does not need a degree in the subject, however, she may like to gain a qualification to demonstrate her ability. Visit www.assetlanguages.org.uk and click on the learners menu for further information. Also, if she is interested in becoming a linguist it is a good idea for her to continue with at least one of her languages at school as she can offer more language skills and increase her ability to learn more. Working with maths or IT requires degrees in those subjects so it is also sensible to take them at A-Level or equivalent.

Now!

Natasha needs to make sure she does very well in key skills in maths and English as well as the subjects that interest her and that she might like to continue with. Even if Natasha decides in the next few years that working for the government is not for her these subjects will keep open other possibilities that interest her. She should make sure she has explored her interests and options as much as possible and to do this regularly as she may develop new interests.

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What should I be thinking of now?

Taking your GCSE options?

If you are under 13/14 then you are probably thinking about or doing GCSEs or their equivalent. It is very important to make sure you gain key skills in maths and English as these will make sure any options you are interested in will stay open. Other than taking languages you are interested in, consider what subjects you enjoy and also which will be important for your future. For example, if you are interested in science then either the double award or if possible all three separate sciences would be useful. Remember, it can be hard to restart subjects later on (and some schools won't allow it) so it's a good idea to think what you might be interested in post 16 as well.

Considering college / 6th form options?

For those interested in languages it's important to consider which subjects will provide evidence of your ability. While focussing just on languages post 16 may be suitable for some students, you might find specialising too much will limit your future choices, so think carefully about your interests. Remember, language is a living subject. While studying is important it's also worth spending time abroad in countries that speak the languages you are learning or want to learn. Some schools offer exchange programmes where you can spend time with a foreign family. This is an excellent opportunity to improve your language skills and your understanding of the culture of the country you visit.

The following higher and further education providers are based in Sussex:

University of Brighton **www.brighton.ac.uk**

University of Chichester **www.chiuni.ac.uk**

University of Sussex **www.sussex.ac.uk**

The Open University **www.open.ac.uk**

Bexhill College **www.bexhillcollege.ac.uk**

BHASVIC **www.bhasvic.ac.uk**

Central Sussex College **www.centralsussex.ac.uk**

Chichester College **www.chichester.ac.uk**

City College Brighton and Hove **www.ccb.ac.uk**

Northbrook College **www.northbrook.ac.uk**

Plumpton College **www.plumpton.ac.uk**

Sussex Coast College Hastings **www.sussexcoast.ac.uk**

Sussex Downs College **www.sussexdowns.ac.uk**

Varndean College **www.varndean.ac.uk**

Worthing College **www.worthing.ac.uk**

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What next?

After school or college it can be hard to know what the best next steps will be. If you are keen to stay in education there are around 50,000 courses to choose from in over 300 institutions. Some of these courses prepare you for a particular job (these are called vocational courses) while others provide a more general education.

University courses range from courses where you focus on one language or more, or you can combine a language with another subject – if you have an idea about a future career may be the right choice for you. See **www.studyinglanguages.ac.uk**, **www.whystudylanguages.ac.uk** and **www.ucas.com** for further information. Try searching language courses to get an idea of the variety on offer. You might also like to explore the Erasmus website at **www.britishcouncil.org/erasmus.htm**. This is an initiative that helps British students study for their degree abroad by providing grants (money to help you study) and support.

Some people prefer a more vocational route into a profession. This means rather than studying before you work you have a more hands on approach earlier on in your training. While it is possible to do apprenticeships that might utilise language skills (such as leisure, travel and tourism) they can still be quite difficult to get hold of. Have a look at the national website **www.apprenticeships.org.uk** and the Sussex based one **www.apprenticeships-in-sussex.com**.

All FE colleges in Sussex have access to a career website called **www.talkingjobs.net** currently until November 2012, so ask careers staff for the log in details. Here you have the opportunity to view video interviews of a range of professionals talking about their work and how they got into it.

Make sure that you are also aware of the UCAS points you need for courses that interest you, as you may need to aim for particular grades in the subjects you are taking (see the UCAS points box for more information). Universities will also require personal statements where you write about why you are suitable for the course you are applying for. They will look for evidence of your interest and dedication to the course and where it may lead in both your academic studies and also evidence from out of school activities such as work and volunteer experience.

The next steps section on the following page will help you in your decision making.

UCAS points – what on earth are they?

UCAS stands for the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. The qualifications you study and the grades you achieve in those subjects at school or college are turned into points which allow you to enter higher education. Universities and higher education colleges will ask for a certain number of points and often specific grades in certain subjects in order for you to gain entry to the course of your choice. For more information on your qualifications and UCAS points they could 'earn' visit **www.ucas.ac.uk/students/ucas_tariff**.

It is worth getting to know the UCAS website at **www.ucas.com**. Click on the Student section to find out more about UCAS points and have a look at the courses available and the universities that offer them in the course search section. Also the entry profiles of each course will tell you what the course will cover, what career opportunities it may lead to, and what kind of student it may suit; which will all help you decide if it is right for you. If in doubt contact the university direct.

Languages
Next steps

OK, so now what? Hopefully this pamphlet will have given you some ideas about the possibilities in languages. But your job is not done yet! In order to discover the most suitable, satisfying and enjoyable path for you as an individual you need to open your eyes to opportunities and try out as many as possible. Try these next steps and see where they take you!

Explore possibilities through research

Think about the subjects you are studying now and which ones you enjoy most. Research any possible ideas you may have for your future to check if there are particular subjects you should consider studying. There is a lot more information, advice and guidance out there to help you on your journey, along with the websites mentioned throughout this pamphlet the following websites will start you off:

General career research, tools and information

https://nextstep.direct.gov.uk/PlanningYourCareer
Great for finding out about different types of jobs, what they are like and the qualifications needed. Check the Job Profiles section for career inspiration.

www.prospects.ac.uk
Another excellent job search website. It also has a section that helps you think about what different subjects will lead to. Go to Careers Advice – Options With Your Subject.

www.guidance-research.org
Labour market intelligence (information and statistics) about languages.

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www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk
Lots of resources and information about working with languages.

www.languageswork.org.uk
The National Centre for Languages' careers with languages website offers lots of excellent information.

www.llas.ac.uk
The Languages Linguistics Area Studies has a wealth of information, including 700 reasons to study languages.

www.whystudylanguages.ac.uk
Provides advice and information about studying languages throughout school.

www.studyinglanguages.ac.uk
Written by current undergraduates, this website gives you advice on studying languages at A level and going on to university.

These are just some of the websites that can help you in your research. There are many more, but remember – not all information online is correct.

Also there are people that can advise you such as teachers, school careers adviser, Aimhigher representatives, parents and carers and friends, as well as those you meet in work experience. All will have valuable advice to contribute to help you in your decision making process, but remember – some advice may be more impartial (for example your parents may have a more biased view of your future than a careers adviser).

Sample your ideas with work experience

One way of seeing if your dream job won't actually turn out to be a nightmare is through work experience. Work experience is valuable for many reasons but perhaps most importantly it gives you the opportunity to see the reality of your dream.

Some other reasons why work experience is great:

- It helps you become industry ready. This means when you get your first job you are able to hit the ground running because you already have an understanding of the industry and what's expected of you. Work experience will provide you with your first introduction to your area of interest.
- It helps you meet people in your area of interest. This means you have contacts (people that can help you) and are able to network (communicate and find more people to help you secure more work experience or your first job).

Think about the kind of environment you'd like to work in and it may be worth trying out a variety of experiences to get an idea of what you do and don't like. For example, if teaching interests you contact local schools and language schools to see if you can shadow a teacher. Websites such as www.do-it.org.uk and www.volunteering.org.uk may have some options.

Also look out for community initiatives and the council website in your local area as you may be able to help out if you have a community language. If you are offered a placement make sure you make the most of it: speak to as many people as possible, offer to help and get involved. If you are seen as someone who listens and wants to be as 'hands on' as possible you are likely to be asked back, or at least gain some excellent references.

Content created by Miranda Glavin
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