

TUTORIAL ON EMPLOYABILITY OF LANGUAGES GRADUATES

I. YOUR PROSPECTS

Language graduates have one of the lowest unemployment rates six months after graduation (HESA Jan 07). After vocation subjects like Medicine, Law, Education, MFL are among the most employable.



Linguists are more likely to receive a promotion¹ and earn from between 8 -20% more than your counterparts²

As a linguist you have had to be a self-autonomous learner, determined and committed. You have dealt with the nitty-gritty (vocabulary lists) to work towards a wider vision (advanced levels of target language).

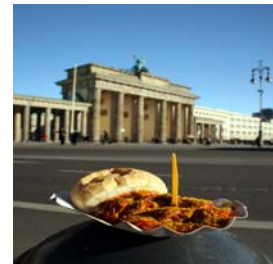
2. AM I OR AM I NOT A LINGUIST?

During your 4 year study you have acquired language skills, but you may not be able to wax lyrical on the subtleties of Voltaire.

You still have a lot to give! 75% of employers see conversation ability in languages as a desirable skill in applicants¹.

3. THE FACTS

- a. Linguists have more creative minds and delay ageing³:Linguists regret less in their adult lives: 66% of adults wish they had learnt French, 63% Spanish, 49% German
- b. Germanophones win! The most widely spoken language in the EU is German (23% compared to English 16%); the most desired language amongst employers is French at 50% and then German 49%¹; the UK export partner, after the US, is Germany; the UK's biggest import partners is Germany.



4. GET THE BEST REFERENCE

- a. Try and mix your references. Can you get one from an academic member of staff and one from a former employer?
- b. Approach your referee with plenty of time for them to write! Some would consider that a week is still a tight deadline.
- c. Give your referee a copy of your CV and the Job Description. Better still, discuss with them what you need highlighted in your reference. It should refer to, but not duplicate, your Personal Statement. Preferably it should take account of some of the 'essential criteria' in the job's Person Specification.

¹ <http://www.cbi.org.uk/pdf/20090406-cbi-education-and-skills-survey-2009.pdf> Emerging Stronger Education & Skills Survey 09

² <http://www.independent.co.uk/student/career-planning/getting-job/its-good-to-talk-how-being-multilingual-can-boost-your-career-969235.html>

³ http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/news/news3653/sum_en.pdf Study on the Contribution of Multilingualism to Creativity

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5. WHERE HAVE ALL THE LANGUAGE JOBS GONE?

Pretty much any job can involve languages and benefit from it. Think outside the box in how to apply your UG experience, language and intercultural skills to your field. P&G, Santander, Apple, HBOS, GCHQ, KPMG have all recently advertised for jobs requiring language skills.

Hot tips for jobs at the moment:

a) Primary school teaching

Primary schools have to establish MFL as a statutory entitlement from 2010. This means that teachers in primary schools have an advantage if they have languages and could teach them, or even be Subject Coordinator.

b) EU interpreting and translating

The EC is desperate for native speakers of English. If you have English + an understanding of 2 other EU languages you could net a very good job with exciting international career prospects. More on interpreting here:

http://europa.eu/interpretation/index_en.htm



NB: the most desirable passive languages are German, French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch and Portuguese.

Translation faces a similar dilemma:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7900276.stm>

6. YOUR YEAR ABROAD WILL MAKE YOU RICH!

According to the report, Global Horizons & the Role of Employers by the Council for Industry and Higher Education in Oct 08, international businesses are increasingly seeking graduates who have global awareness, particularly those who have the initiative to study overseas⁴.

7. WHAT DO EMPLOYERS WANT?

According to a survey of 500 directors in October 2007, when recruiting, 64% of directors said recent graduates' employability skills were more important to their organisation as an employer than the specific occupational, technical or academic knowledge/skills associated with the graduate's degree.

Employers look for: *ability*, suitability, **willingness**, manageability, **PROFESSIONALISM**, problem-solving.

In other words: *can you do it?* Will you fit in? **Are you motivated?** Can you respond well to direction? **WILL YOU BE A GOOD AMBASSADOR FOR THEM?** Can you deal with the unexpected?



⁴ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/oct/16/students-highereducation>

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As a linguist your skills are second to none! Take communication. Thanks to all the group presentations, oral exams, portfolio & précis writing, and liaison interpreting practice you have an excellent vocabulary, can express yourself eloquently and have an empathy with your audience. You are a highly skilled communicator.

8. I AM ALL THE THINGS I DID AT UNIVERSITY

Just like in your UCAS statement, make the most of positions of responsibility, examples of commitment, positive attitudes to teamwork and the task in hand. Reflect on what has taken you from UCAS to graduation. This is not only a good skill to have, but will generate lots of ideas on your own employability.

9. COMING SOON

Postgraduate study opportunities. Ask your tutor or the Director of PG, or the Director of Research.

An extended document on how to apply your UG languages degree to the job hunt.

KEY TIPS

In application...

Sell yourself! Make the most of your degree, the transferable and hard skills it has given you, the experience of your Year Abroad.

At interview...

Use your linguistic analytical skills to answer interview questions properly.

“How do you solve problems creatively?”

- does not just ask for a short answer, it requires a concrete example from your experiences.
- asks for creativity in a solution-focused context (Your Year Abroad will have many examples!)
- contains the hidden question “What do you class as a problem?”

In your career...

It might take time to launch, but you have an advantage with the transferable skills you have honed as a languages UG. Good luck and keep in touch!

Other sources

www.languageswork.org.uk Languages Work

www.cilt.org.uk Cilt, the National Centre for Languages

www.iol.org.uk The Chartered Institute of Linguists

http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/What_do_graduates_do_/What_do_employers_want_/p!efeeekL

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