



**Mixing  
it up\***

\* Combining a language with your chosen university course

**Languages  
Work**



**Whatever you're thinking of studying at university, combining it with a language is well worth considering. Learning languages in higher education is totally different from school: you'll work in smaller groups with like-minded people; enjoy more independence; get teaching that is more geared to your needs; and you'll probably have better facilities to help you learn. Whether it's an entirely new language or one that you've studied before, taking a degree which involves languages will open up all sorts of opportunities in your life at university and in the world of work.**

## **English is not enough**

It's a multilingual world and British companies are increasingly aware of the advantages of recruiting people with language skills. It's true that a lot of people speak English, but most of the world does not – there are over 300 other languages spoken in London alone. The public sector needs people who can communicate with ethnic communities or those with impaired hearing or speech. In the private sector there is a constant need for language skills, whether it's for communicating with colleagues, customers, partners or owners. Wherever you work, languages will be an advantage.

## **A little language can make a lot of difference**

You don't have to aim for total fluency in a language. Language courses at university cater for all levels from total beginner to specialist. Whatever career you subsequently choose to follow, your language skills can be of use regardless of ability. Whether you're meeting and greeting colleagues and customers, managing e-mail exchanges or enjoying international travel, even a little language ability makes a big impact.

## **Languages improve the quality of your life**

In any environment, speaking a language can open the door to a whole new world. Whether on holiday, meeting people at work, socialising or discovering other cultures, your language skills will widen your horizons, create new opportunities and increase your appreciation of what's out there. Not only that – it's likely you'll be paid more too! According to recruitment agencies, salary uplift for those using languages at work can be anything from 8–20%.

## The sales exec

**Georgie studied Geography and Spanish at the University of Leeds. Now a Sales Executive at the publishing company Random House, her language skills are already opening doors.**

I chose Spanish because it's spoken so widely around the world and, therefore, there are so many more opportunities to travel and to get to know the local people of the countries you are visiting. It has helped loads in my current job.

I work in a sales team responsible for overseas markets. When you're dealing with people on a daily basis, it's really satisfying to be able to speak to them in their language and they really appreciate the effort you make. It's particularly important in a sales environment that you understand all the cultural nuances of the people you are dealing with and I really enjoy being able to switch between languages. You need to have really strong customer service skills and be a people person to work in a sales environment, an additional language is the top of the list in that respect. It's a fast-paced environment, but I thrive on that.

## The engineer

**During her Engineering course at Birmingham, Hannah learned some French. The competitive advantage it brought helped her land a job at Arup.**

I studied French as part of my Civil Engineering degree. I had studied it to GCSE level at school and liked the language and culture and I could see it being useful in a work situation in the future. You could also spend a year abroad, which is something I thought I might like to do. I really enjoyed the variety that the French classes brought to my week as the assessment and teaching is different.

As a global company, we have offices and projects all over the world, and I have a number of French colleagues, which means I can practise a lot. It also means that if I work on a project that involves a French partner I can contribute and understand what is going on in meetings.

The engineering course is challenging and gives you a solid qualification, but I felt I had the edge having studied the language units as well when it came time to finding a job. There is so much competition out there, especially with graduate programmes and internships and if you can show that you have an understanding of other cultures and can communicate with them, employers are interested in you.



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**'Language skills offer enhanced recruitment and careers prospects for individuals. Those without language skills are likely to be at a disadvantage within a multilingual company.'**  
**David Way, Director of Skills, National Learning and Skills Council**

## The analyst

Matthew is an analyst with the management consultancy firm Accenture. His language skills are already paying dividends in the international business culture.

I knew that I wanted to study business. I had done an evening course in Italian and decided it would be a good mix. Both courses helped me develop a range of skills which enabled me to get a good job and I'm sure that they will continue to help me throughout my career.

Variety is the best thing about consulting for me. One of the things I enjoy the most is that you can work with a range of clients across different industries and your project can be anywhere around the world. There is a very strong international culture here. Quite often there is a lot of research involved, and I have found that speaking to people in their native language gets me more results – even if it's as simple as finding out who the best person to speak to is.

The languages aspect was good as it gave me a chance to learn something other than pure business and will hopefully give me the opportunity to travel as part of my career.

## The traveller

Whatever you study, you could have access to Erasmus, a European Commission exchange programme enabling students in 31 European countries to study abroad for part of their

degree. This is what Henry says about his experience.

I am a Geography student at Glasgow University, and last year I went to Karl-Franzens University, Graz, Austria for a full academic year. Luckily, because my mother is German, I had no problems with the language. However, I did meet loads of people from all over Europe who came with only a little knowledge of German (one Italian girl I met had done a three-week crash course during the summer). By the end, they were all speaking with confidence in German.

Many people I have spoken to have said they would love to do this, but were put off by the language barrier. It is no problem at all. By the end of the year, you will be able to put in your CV that you have great knowledge of a second language.

Apart from this I had the best time. I have been to seventeen countries in twelve months, and met so many cool people. I could not recommend this enough!

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**'The economic advantage historically enjoyed by native English speakers is set to ebb away as the language becomes a near global basic skill.'**  
**David Graddol, British Council**

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**'Multilingualism is an indicator of general mental ability and an internationalist outlook.'**  
**Chief Learning Manager, Deutsche Bank**

## Be more employable

Add a language to your CV and see off competitors in the jobs market. Here is an indicative list of vocational degrees in the UK which may include or be combined with a language component: ■ Portuguese and Brazilian Studies with Film ■ Business Management in China ■ Publishing and Media with Translation Studies ■ Middle Eastern International Studies ■ Internet Computer Science with French/Spanish ■ Chemistry for Drug Discovery with a Year Abroad ■ Entrepreneurship with French ■ Modern Languages, TEFL and Education ■ Fine Art: New Media with French/German/Spanish ■ Accounting with a Year Abroad ■ Intercultural Communication in Europe ■ Global Marketing ■ Peace Studies and International Relations ■ International Tourism Management ■ Computer Forensics with Study Abroad ■ Film Studies with Islamic Studies ■ International Hospitality Management and Sports Tourism ■ Languages with International Business, Marketing and E-commerce ■ Mathematical Sciences with Study in Continental Europe ■ Law with European Legal Systems with a Year in Spain ■ Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language ■ French with Media ■ French/German/Spanish and International Trade ■ Multilingual Information Management ■ Aeronautical Engineering with a Year Abroad ■ Politics and International Relations with a Year in the Czech Republic ■ French and Law with a Year Abroad ■ French with Media ■ Design Management for Fashion Retail with Study Abroad ■ Scientific, Technical and Medical Translation with Translation Technology ■ Media Studies with a Year in Paris



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**‘Employees with language skills are definitely more marketable and have a greater worth in the labour market.’**  
**Bob Shankly, HR Director, BMW**

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**‘The fact is, businesses are looking for employees with language skills. As globalisation accelerates, the ability to communicate internationally is becoming a pre-requisite for success.’**  
**Miles Templeman, Director General, Institute of Directors**

#### Links

- The Languages Work website provides more detailed information on careers as well as more case studies. [www.languageswork.org.uk](http://www.languageswork.org.uk)
- CILT, the National Centre for Languages has a comprehensive website for all aspects of language learning, including the workplacement toolkit. [www.cilt.org.uk](http://www.cilt.org.uk)
- The Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies' site has materials on the benefits of language learning and the possibilities of university study. [www.llas.ac.uk/resources/resources.aspx](http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/resources.aspx)

#### University courses

- The University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) handles undergraduate applications to study at university. Their website has a flexible search function. Try searching for 'modern languages' or for the specific language or subject that you want to study. [wwwucas.ac.uk](http://wwwucas.ac.uk)
- Aim Higher is a portal for those contemplating entering higher education and provides the necessary information from which to make effective decisions about institutions and courses. [www.aimhigher.ac.uk](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk)
- BLIS Courses lists all UK language courses, searchable by subject, region, college or university. [www.blis.org.uk/courses](http://www.blis.org.uk/courses)
- *The Independent* newspaper has produced an A–Z of degrees. They also have an A–Z of colleges and universities. <http://education.independent.co.uk/higher>

#### Careers

- The Careers Portal contains information on higher education, the lowdown on a range of careers and lists professional organisations that collect information on careers. It also has a job search. [www.careers-portal.co.uk](http://www.careers-portal.co.uk)
- A wide range of other careers publications are available from Trotman Publishing. [www.trotman.co.uk](http://www.trotman.co.uk)
- The Connexions service [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com) offers confidential advice, support and information for 13–19-year-olds and you can contact a personal adviser in your area.

#### Going abroad

- If you are interested in taking a 'gap' year before going to university then you may be interested in this website which gives advice and information on finding short or long term jobs abroad. [www.overseasjobs.com](http://www.overseasjobs.com)
- Language degrees will usually include a period of residence abroad. The Subject Centre website contains a set of webpages all about residence abroad as part of a university degree. [www.llas.ac.uk/abroad/students](http://www.llas.ac.uk/abroad/students)
- The UK Socrates Erasmus Council site has everything you need to know about Erasmus placements, including a student guide and FAQs section. [www.erasmus.ac.uk](http://www.erasmus.ac.uk)

To help you make up your mind about the role of languages in your future studies and career, think about the following:

## Languages



What languages have I studied so far?  
What other languages would I like to study? Why?  
Look at the list of languages available from [www.cilt.org.uk/he/languages.pdf](http://www.cilt.org.uk/he/languages.pdf) Choose one (or more)  
To what level would I want to study the language?  
Basic/Intermediate/Degree?

## Careers



Do I have a future career in mind? What?  
Have I researched it thoroughly?  
How will my choice of study at university equip me for this career?  
Would a language or international experience help my prospects?  
If I do not have a career in mind at present, why should I still keep language learning in mind?  
What else would I like to do in my life where languages might help?

## Courses



What course do I intend to study at university?  
Could I include a language element with it?  
What would be the advantage?  
What universities offer the flexibility to do this?

## Questions



If you are doing this in a group, look at what your friends have written.  
Is it the same? If so, why do you think that is?  
If not, why not?

## Test yourself



Now you've read this, think about what you would do in the following situations.

Imagine you are supporting a group of Year 9 students. They ask you about the usefulness of learning languages. What could you tell them?

You are planning to travel with your friends to the Far East during your gap year. What cultural issues might you encounter and how could you prepare for them?

You are applying for a summer placement with a multinational company. They ask you about your language skills. What would you say?

You plan to take up a place on the Erasmus programme to study at a university abroad for a term. What country/university would you choose and why?

You have the chance of work experience with a local export business. What would you learn and how would you demonstrate that to an employer?

## Further advice

You can get further advice from various places including your tutor, Connexions Personal Adviser, Sixth-Form Director or Careers Teacher, or go to the websites detailed overleaf.  
[www.languageswork.org.uk](http://www.languageswork.org.uk)

