

FOREIGN LANGUAGE

What can I do with this major?

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

GOVERNMENT

Translation/Interpretation
Language analysis
Linguistics
Diplomacy
Civil service
Foreign service
Immigration/Naturalization
Customs
Intelligence
Security and protection
Law enforcement
Journalism/Broadcasting

Federal government organizations including:
Overseas aid agencies
Intelligence and law enforcement agencies:
 Federal Bureau of Investigation
 Central Intelligence Agency
 Drug Enforcement Administration
Department of State
Homeland Security:
 US Customs and Border Patrol
 US Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Defense:
 US Armed Forces
 National Guard
 National Security Agency
Department of Commerce
Agency for International Development (USAID)
Peace Corps, VISTA, Americorps
Library of Congress
Voice of America
US District Courts
United Nations

The government is one of the largest employers of people with foreign language skills. Consider studying a critical need language for the greatest number of opportunities.
Complete an internship with a federal agency and maintain a high GPA to be a more competitive candidate.
Learn application procedures for applying for government jobs. Plan to apply early and inquire frequently about job vacancies.
Review special hiring authorizations to be hired and to advance more quickly.
Participate in campus organizations and activities that promote interaction with international students.
Attend a specialized school that teaches foreign languages for additional training.
Live abroad and gain knowledge of politics and economics to prepare for a career in this field.
Increase knowledge of geography, history, and international affairs.
Join the armed forces as a way to get experience.
Consider earning a graduate degree for more job opportunities.

INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

Translation/Interpretation
Banking/Finance
Sales
Customer services
Manufacturing
Logistics and transportation/Supply chain mgmt.
Engineering/Technical
Computer and software services
Research

Banks and financial institutions
Import/Export companies
International companies including:
 Foreign firms operating in the US
 US firms operating in foreign countries
Manufacturers:
 Automobile
 Retail stores
 Environmental firms
 Consulting agencies

Supplement coursework with business classes or earn a business minor.
Develop international competency by living and working abroad and by interacting with international students on campus.
Get involved in student organizations and seek leadership roles.
Research which companies do business with the countries in which your language of study is spoken.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE CONTINUED

Operations management
Consulting
Importing/Exporting
Administrative services
Advertising and marketing
Human resources
Law

Sports organizations
Telecommunications companies
Computer and software firms
Advertising agencies
Professional associations
Law firms

Be prepared to start in a position in the US working for a firm with an overseas presence. Very few entry level positions are available in international business.
Some jobs will require graduate degrees (e.g., business, law, etc.).

TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Translation/Interpretation
Airline services
Management
Booking and reservations
Travel services/Guidance
Ecotourism

Tour and excursion companies
Travel agencies
Hotels/Motels
Resorts
Restaurants
Airlines/Airports
Cruise lines
Railroads
Bus lines
Car rental agencies
Convention centers
Chambers of commerce

Take courses in hotel/restaurant administration or recreation and tourism management.
Get a part-time job in a hotel or restaurant to gain experience.
Spend time abroad to learn about various cultures and traditions.
Brush up on your knowledge of geography.
Consider attending a travel and tourism school.
Develop office management and technology skills.
Maintain a travel blog.
Show attention to detail.
Read international newspapers to keep up with overseas developments.

INTERPRETATION/TRANSLATION

Interpretation (Simultaneous and consecutive)
 Business
 Conference
 Escort/Guide
 Judiciary (Court)
Translation
 Legal
 Literary
 Localization
 Machine
 Medical
 Technical
Lexicography
Steganography

Freelance
Educational services
Business services
Government agencies
Healthcare organizations
International organizations
Nonprofit and social service organizations
Courts
Publishers
Libraries

Develop fluency in a second language. Seek out any opportunity to converse with native speakers to better learn the language.
Learn a third language for increased job opportunities. Some languages such as Middle Eastern or Asian ones are in more demand than others.
Gain experience through internships or volunteering.
Seek certification or accreditation from an interpretation/translation organization.
Being bilingual does not automatically qualify one to serve as an interpreter or translator.
Learn to listen to one language while speaking another at the same time.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

INTERPRETATION/TRANSLATION CONTINUED

Gain experience with computers and relevant software programs.
Interpreters and translators who have expertise in a particular area such as law or medicine may find more opportunities.
Develop skills in negotiation and the ability to work well under stress.
Most people who work in this field freelance. Show language expertise, initiative, and motivation as this is a very competitive field.

SERVICE AND EDUCATION

Translation/Interpretation
Teaching
Tutoring
Educational administration:
 Student affairs
 Study abroad programs
 International houses or cultural centers
 International student services
Linguistics
Civil service
Social work
Mission work
Library science
Health services
Counseling
Nonprofit or public interest law
Research

K-12 schools, public and private
Universities/Colleges
Pre-schools
Professional language schools
English language institutes
Overseas dependents' schools
Foreign study exchange programs
Libraries
Adult education programs
Religious and volunteer organizations
International organizations
Law enforcement agencies
Social service agencies
Nonprofit organizations
Hospitals

Obtain state teacher licensure for K-12 teaching.
Earn a graduate degree for college or university teaching opportunities.
Develop superior written and oral communication skills in the English language including proper sentence structure and comprehensive vocabulary.
Minor or double major in another subject that you could also teach.
Get experience as a teaching assistant or tutor.
Become familiar with the cultural base of your language (literature, art, politics, etc.) as well as with cultural traditions.
Consider teaching English as a foreign language (overseas). Research courses and certifications for teaching English to non-native speakers.
Volunteer with government programs such as VISTA or community programs such as ESL classes.
Work abroad through volunteer programs or missions.
Plan to take both written and oral examinations to become an interpreter.
Notify local hospitals, schools, and chambers of commerce of your availability to translate or interpret for international visitors.
Earn a graduate degree in a field of specialty (e.g. Student affairs administration, counseling, law, etc.).

AREAS

ARTS, MEDIA, ENTERTAINMENT

Advertising and marketing
Translation/Interpretation
Journalism/Broadcasting
Photography
Writing
Publishing/Editing
Public relations
Performing
Film making
Museum work
Fashion

EMPLOYERS

Museums
Foreign news agencies
Book publishers
Newspapers
Magazines
TV networks
Radio stations
Film companies
Recording companies
Internet media companies
Advertising firms
Design firms

STRATEGIES

Learn about the customs and culture of the country in which your language of study is primarily spoken.
Supplement coursework with related classes (e.g., journalism, photography, art, etc.).
Spend time studying or working abroad.
Complete one or more internships in your field of interest.
Work at campus and local newspapers or radio and television stations.
Read international newspapers to keep up with developments overseas.
Listen to foreign broadcasts.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Supplement the foreign language, preferably one that requires a high degree of technical skill. Most people with foreign language ability use those skills to assist them in a different career field such as business, education, journalism, law, etc.
- Consider which language and culture appeals to you most and the level of foreign language ability you will need to acquire for success in your career. Possible languages to study (e.g., Spanish, German, French, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Hebrew, Arabic, Iranian languages, Indic languages, Turkic languages, etc.). Some languages will offer more job opportunities than other languages in various industries or geographic locales. Some are considered critical needs and will offer the most opportunities.
- Study related or adjacent courses (e.g., geography, history, civilization, foreign relations, international law, world economics, etc.).
- Attend a private language institute to learn additional languages and cultures.
- Utilize a number of learning methods to develop language fluency. Combine listen and repeat drills, textbooks, audio lessons, and learning apps.
- Travel to a foreign country or study abroad in international exchange programs to develop your language skills and international/intercultural competency.
- Study and practice your foreign language skills by reading foreign newspapers, magazines, and books.
- Seek opportunities to interact with international students on your campus or members of your local community. Host international students, join relevant student organizations, and participate in international campus events.
- Watch foreign movies and listen to foreign broadcasts to maintain your fluency.
- Volunteer your language skills to churches, community organizations, and programs that work with people who speak your target language.
- Correspond with someone from a foreign country.
- Contact professional associations and read their publications to learn about job opportunities.
- Research job postings on the Internet to get an idea of jobs in which knowledge of a foreign language is useful.
- Participate in summer programs, co-ops, and internships to improve your skills.
- Network with others in the field to learn about job opportunities.
- Obtaining international positions is competitive and difficult. Be proactive in developing the skills and experiences international employers seek.
- Get your foot in the door in domestic positions because many international employers promote current employees into international positions.