

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 including:
 US Customs and Border Patrol
 US Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Defense including:
 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

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 government job application procedures. 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
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
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 in fields such as business, law, or related areas.

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
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 some 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 skills such as working with computers.
Show attention to detail.
Read international newspapers to keep up with overseas developments.

INTERPRETATION/TRANSLATION

Interpretation (Simultaneous & Consecutive)
Business
Conference
Escort/Guide
Judiciary (Court)
Translation
Legal
Literary
Localization
Machine
Medical
Technical

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

Develop aptitude with computers and the Internet. Interpreters and translators who have expertise in a particular area such as law or medicine may find more opportunities.

Develop skills in negotiation.

Learn to work well under stress.

Most people who work in this field freelance. Show ability, initiative and motivation as this is a very competitive field.

SERVICE AND EDUCATION

Translation/Interpretation

Teaching

Tutoring

Educational Administration Including:

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, or law.

AREAS

ARTS, MEDIA, ENTERTAINMENT

Advertising and Marketing
Translation/Interpretation
Journalism/Broadcasting
Photography
Writing
Publishing/Editing
Public Relations
Performing
Film Making
Museum Work

EMPLOYERS

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

- Choose an additional academic area of study to 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.
- Choose which language and culture appeals to you most. Consider the level of foreign language ability you will need to acquire for success in your career. Possible languages to study: Spanish, German, French, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, Italian, Hebrew, Arabic, and Portuguese. Some languages will offer more job opportunities than other languages in various industries or geographic locales.
- Related courses to study include geography, history, civilization, foreign relations, international law, and world economics.
- Plan to attend a private language institute to learn additional languages and cultures.
- 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.
- In general, international positions are competitive and difficult to obtain. Be very 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 ones.