LANGUAGES

If you have more than one language to a high level, then regardless of your degree subject you can turn your skills into a career in the languages industry. The main job roles are as a translator or interpreter.

Working as an Interpreter

An interpreter conveys into another language the spoken word of others. Mediums include conference interpreting and consecutive interpreting. Large international organisations such as the EU and UN have permanent interpreter roles and tend to be very selective, recruiting for language areas every few years, in what's known as an 'open competition' (the same applies for translator recruitment at these bodies). Outside these employers most interpreters work freelance, where a postgraduate qualification in interpreting is essential. Potential employment scenarios range from interpreting a business meeting or conference speech, to working for the police or immigration services.

Working as a Translator

A translator converts written content from one language to another ensuring the original meaning is conveyed accurately. Documents mostly come from a commercial, technical or scientific background though could be educational or literary. Translators usually need to have an excellent knowledge and of course understanding of two or more languages. A relevant postgraduate course is usually required or at least highly advantageous. There are far more full-time posts for translators than for interpreters. As well as working for international organisations such as the UN and EU, translators can work in a range of companies, for public bodies, specialised translation agencies, and on a freelance basis. Freelance translators are likely to specialise in a particular area (e.g. Law, Finance).

Other Language-Industry Roles

Other than translation and interpreting, the language industry includes a range of less common roles including that of lawyer-linguist (specialist work usually for Law graduates), languages teaching, intelligence work, customer service, editing and research.

Key resources

Prospects.ac.uk/ job-profiles/translator – comprehensive summary of routes in, ideas for gaining experience, vacancy sites and qualifications.

Prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/interpreter – as above, but for interpreters.

Translatemedia.com/careers/how-to-become-a-translator/ – written by a translation agency.

Languagecareers.un.org/ website – full information about working in languages for the UN.

EU Careers (epso.europa.eu) – a guide for entry-level graduates, explaining how 'competitions' work for their recruitment.

EU Traineeships (epso.europa.eu) – paid internships of around 3-5 months, explore opportunities in different departments of the EU: some of which have their own translation or interpreting teams, others using a central service.

Institute of Translation and Interpreting (iti.org.uk) – professional association with directories of language service businesses and guides on becoming a translator or interpreter.

Capitatranslationinterpreting.com/careers – much UK public sector work is now outsourced to firms such as Capita, some interpreters are recruited directly by UK immigration services (gov.uk).

ProZ.com and Aquarius.net – freelance translation job sites.

MI5.gov.uk/careers/opportunities/language or gchq-careers.co.uk – information on working in intelligence using language skills.

Languagematters.co.uk, Eurolondon.com, en-gb.toplanguagejobs.com and Multilingualvacancies.com – examples of language specialist recruitment agencies.

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