

LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

The successful global citizen can communicate in two or more languages and has a high degree of intercultural competence. Knowledge of different languages and cultures expands our minds, transforms our experience of the world and brings benefits to local and global economies. Business and international relationships flourish when people from vastly different cultures understand one another. Studying languages and cultures at university level gives you an edge both on a personal level and in terms of your employability.

WHY STUDY LANGUAGES AND CULTURES?

Proficiency in languages is increasingly recognised as being a basic life skill. Some neuroscience research suggests that people who speak more than one language fluently have better memories and are more cognitively creative and mentally flexible than monolinguals. Social confidence also increases when you communicate effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. As most of the world's population does not speak English as a first language, languages and cultures graduates have a practical advantage in the job market. Whether or not your job demands a foreign language skill, the mental agility and other skills it brings can give you that 'something extra' that employers look for in a competitive market.

Information technology has shrunk the world. People communicate easily across cultures from their homes and places of work, actively participating in the issues and events that shape the social, political and economic direction of the world. Young people frequently travel and work in other countries; multinational companies send staff to offices around the world, while in New Zealand we have a richly multi-cultural workforce. A working knowledge of other languages and cultures is a huge advantage because other cultures have very different ways of conducting relationships and doing business.

Apart from English, the business languages most in demand in the European Union are: German, French, Spanish, Italian and Dutch. Worldwide there is



an increasing demand for Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Japanese and Arabic.

Use of the Internet means that knowledge of other languages opens doors to communication and Internet based jobs. Website designers need linguists in order to reach global markets. 'Website localiser' (editing, translating, proof reading) has emerged as a job title. Media groups need linguists for subtitles and dubbing. A steady demand for teachers of English, particularly in European and Asian countries presents opportunities to live overseas and teach English while deepening people's knowledge of local languages.

Career View explores how degrees and courses relate to employment opportunities and to life/work planning. It includes graduate destination information and current employment issues. Your comments and suggestions are always welcomed.

Wellington Careers and Employment.
wgtn.ac.nz/careers

Languages Add Value to Other Degrees

Organisations that operate in the global economy increasingly need personnel with technical or professional skills, plus another language. Add a foreign language to a Tourism degree and the advantage is obvious; however a bilingual marketing manager, human resources consultant or recruitment agent will also enjoy enhanced job opportunities. Many large law and accounting firms are internationally networked and overseas secondments are a possibility quite early in a graduate's career. A second language adds considerably to the professional effectiveness of a young lawyer or accountant in an overseas environment.

A second language can be an extremely valuable research tool. It can broaden the field of study and make it possible to access material published in languages other than English. This is particularly important in the science and technology disciplines, and a big advantage in the study of music, art history, history and politics.

WHAT SKILLS DO LANGUAGE GRADUATES HAVE?

Languages and cultures graduates have all the transferable skills that employers want, and more.

Communication skills: Graduates are effective in communicating ideas and information accurately and precisely, because they are trained to be sensitive to the nuances of meaning contained within the written and spoken word. They are skilled at drawing out the meaning and intention behind other people's ways of communicating, which makes them effective in group situations. Well-developed listening skills are important in all jobs, but critical in those which involve a lot of interaction with colleagues, clients or the public. Graduates have a broad vocabulary and are discriminating in their choice of words and the appropriate tone for different types of communication.

Analytical thinking and problem-solving skills: Trained to process foreign and unfamiliar information in a logical and systematic way, languages and cultures graduates develop a 'can do' attitude to new challenges, which makes for efficient problem solving. They are trained to critically evaluate information for meaning and content, which is important for summarising complex information, report writing and conducting effective discussions.

Mental agility: Languages and cultures graduates are skilled at switching from one mental framework (language) to another quickly and constantly. This develops flexible thinking and the ability to shift with the flow of ideas. People who can 'think on their feet'



tend to perform well in interviews and are valued by employers for their adaptability.

Innovative thinking and creativity: Practice in the 'de-coding' process of translation and language construction means that graduates are skilled at identifying hidden structures and links buried in abstract information. Being able to 'see inside' ideas is the basis of innovative thinking along with intellectual and personal curiosity, and a willingness to step outside what is comfortable and familiar.

Intercultural competence: Languages and cultures graduates demonstrate cultural empathy, which can be essential in certain jobs but also contributes to constructive working relationships in general. The ability to relate with respect and understanding is honed through degree studies that have people and intercultural communication as a key focus.

Interpersonal relationships: In today's highly interactive global marketplace, relationship building and relationship management are core competencies for many positions, particularly higher-level management. Languages and cultures graduates are, typically, tolerant of other people's differences and tend to be interested in how other people live their lives. Work relationships can be as complex as personal ones and tolerance is an asset recognised by most employers. They are also less likely to engage in cultural or ethnic stereotyping. This is particularly important in the 'people professions' such as counselling, health care, education, media, and social or community work.

Attention to detail, high standards of accuracy and discipline: These skills are honed when communicating in the written and spoken word across vastly different languages and cultures. Learning a new language makes your brain work hard. Employers like people with hard-

working brains, good memory and the capacity for sustained concentration.

WHERE DO LANGUAGES AND CULTURES GRADUATES WORK?

Graduates find employment in many sectors. Jobs where languages are the core business include translator, interpreter, languages teacher and lecturer. In other areas languages add value to other work skills. Some organisations offer graduate programmes and internships.

Career fields include public sector research and policy analysis; non-governmental organisations and humanitarian work; advocacy and lobbying; education and development programme planning and/or implementation; management of volunteers; local and international journalism; human resources; immigration and refugee services; travel and tourism work; cross-cultural relations consultancy; public relations and communications; urban planning; international development; public health; community work; English language teaching abroad; local government advisory work.

Translators work with the written word, usually converting a foreign language into their mother tongue. Translators may develop specialist skills in, for example, legal, engineering or medical translation. Knowledge of the institutions, culture, attitudes and practices in the countries where the foreign language is used is also necessary, as are computer skills. An Honours degree in the foreign language is sometimes required. A Diploma in Translation Studies is desirable. Affiliation with the New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters (NZSTI) provides professional and ethical credibility, as does accreditation from the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters, Australia (NAATI). It is possible to sit the NAATI examination in New Zealand. Most translators work in a freelance capacity. The larger translation services, for example the NZ Translation Centre and The Translation Service employ a small number of full time translators and additional translators, as required, on a part-time, freelance basis. Foreign language publishing companies overseas also employ translators to translate technical, fiction and non-fiction works.

Interpreters work with the spoken word and their command of the foreign language must be near perfect. For this reason interpreters really need to have lived for several years in a country where the foreign language is spoken. Community or liaison interpreting helps non-native speakers access legal, health and other social services. Conference interpreting occurs at international conferences and meetings. Interpreters

must be culturally and linguistically accurate, impartial and able to maintain confidentiality as they may work with highly sensitive information. Maturity and life experience are important. Like translators, most interpreters work on a freelance basis so NZSTI affiliation and NAATI accreditation are professionally desirable. [The Ministry of Justice, District Health Boards and New Zealand Police](#) use interpreters and translators, but generally have their own contacts or service contracts with providers of interpretation services.

Public Sector: Government ministries and departments employ graduates in a wide range of positions depending on interests and strengths. While strengths in languages may be an advantage, transferable skills such as analytical thinking and problem solving, attention to detail and communication will be invaluable.

[Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment \(MBIE\)](#) has policy advisor roles in teams that have an international focus; you would also need strong analytical/critical thinking skills. MBIE looks for evidence of educational achievement, extracurricular achievements, personal attributes, work experience, volunteer experience, overseas experience, writing skills, genuine interest in working in policy and/or government, and making a difference for New Zealanders.

[New Zealand Customs Service](#) specifically recruits people with foreign language skills for operational roles, such as for customs officers. In [Immigration New Zealand](#) foreign languages are valuable for immigration officer and business specialist roles in New Zealand, and also for visa officer positions in offshore branches. The [Office of Ethnic Communities](#), in the [Department of Internal Affairs](#), may recruit graduates to entry-level policy analyst roles and coordinator roles in Support Services. After some years' experience, a move to an advisor role is possible. Maturity and strong analytical skills are sought after, and while language and culture skills are not prerequisites these skills may be useful, especially when communicating with ethnic communities.

[New Zealand Trade and Enterprise \(NZTE\)](#) employs people with commercial experience and knowledge of international markets for most of their positions in New Zealand and offshore. Languages are very useful for offshore positions. Business analyst and business support roles in a variety of areas may also be suitable entry-level positions for graduates. Commerce, Law, Economics, International Relations, and Science/Technology degrees are particularly useful and, depending on your interests, may combine with

languages and cultures to give a winning edge. NZTE seeks people who are energised by challenges, are team players and have a proven record of success in previous organisations. Cultural sensitivity and the ability to work with a diverse workforce and customer base are important, alongside proven achievements and success in previous roles.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT):

Language graduates need a postgraduate qualification, (Honours or above) and start as policy officers. Entry is through the annual graduate recruitment programme. A foreign language is also useful in management support positions. MFAT has an annual graduate intake for policy officers to work in the area of Foreign Policy and considers high-performing, well-rounded candidates from a broad range of disciplines. Languages and an understanding of other cultures are an advantage.

The Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) recruits people with a wide range of skills, including foreign language experts. For intelligence analyst roles the ideal candidate may have expertise in, and a Bachelor's or higher degree in, at least one foreign language, ideally an Asian or Middle Eastern language. They may also have expertise in computer science or telecommunications related engineering. Skills sought include excellent oral and written communication, strong research and analysis, and an aptitude for varying levels of technical training. Strong general knowledge and an interest in international political, economic, and security affairs, as well as a broad understanding of New Zealand's offshore interests are also sought.

Tourism New Zealand: Language skills are required for positions within New Zealand and overseas, where it is necessary to speak the local language. Staff arrange trade events and familiarisation tours, and host media from other countries.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs): NGOs are not-for-profit groups, organised on a local, national or international level. Work may involve research, surveys, advocacy, fundraising, giving policy advice to government, designing and/or running programmes and events, communications and publicity, and general administration. Expertise in languages and cultures when combined with other fields of knowledge and skills can be a powerful combination, particularly when working directly with people around the world. NGOs are diverse. Some such as Red Cross, Oxfam, Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Save the Children and World Vision are connected with international organisations.

Trans-Governmental Organisations: Graduates may find roles with United Nations' (UN) agencies such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Food and Agriculture Organization, UN Women, World Bank, World Health Organization and others.

Education Sector: Teachers of languages are in demand worldwide along with a trend towards teaching children a second language at a young age. Language teaching, either in the primary or secondary school systems in New Zealand and overseas, are good career options, as are educational research and policy work.

Teaching at university level usually requires a PhD and a record of academic publication.

Graduates can advance their research and teaching skills by undertaking a Master's degree or PhD and may have the opportunity to tutor undergraduate students. Many students also go overseas to study. Specialised courses for teaching English as a foreign language (TOEFL) are available. A very popular programme, to which many graduates apply, is the JET Programme – Teaching English in Japan run by the Japan Information and Cultural Centre. Although graduates from any discipline may apply, this two-year programme offers students of Japanese an excellent opportunity to use and improve their language skills.

Educational institutions such as universities, polytechnics and secondary schools market educational services internationally. A foreign language is useful for liaison and student services roles. Other roles in tertiary institutions include academic advisors, career consultants, trainers or administrators.

Private Sector: Skills in more than one language can be valuable across many organisations and industries particularly those which have a global focus. Industries that operate worldwide include transport and distribution, travel and tourism, importing/exporting services or products, education, media, publishing and entertainment, finance and banking, professional and research based organisations.

Export and Manufacturing: Large companies such as Fonterra and Air New Zealand, among others, sell products and services overseas. Fonterra sells to more than 140 countries and has offices around the world. When developing, marketing and selling products, a knowledge of the target market's language and culture is very useful. Fonterra runs a two-year rotational graduate programme. When recruiting for its global

GRADUATE PROFILES

sales of ingredients operation, Fonterra looks for people who have strong commercial acumen, are self-starters, achievement focused, have an interest in and respect for people, and curiosity about other cultures.

Public Relations, Communications and Marketing:

Excellent written and verbal communication and interpersonal skills are required as are skills in using social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Industry specific qualifications are an advantage. Target audiences in New Zealand are increasingly multi-cultural so knowledge of different languages and cultures is very useful when constructing and transmitting visual and verbal communications. Entry-level positions such as communications advisor or communications officer may require additional qualifications such as media studies or journalism.

Human Resources Management (HRM) professionals manage all aspects of the employment relationship—from employee recruitment to international employment relations, salaries and wages. Cross-cultural awareness is a plus when managing a multi-cultural workforce both globally and in New Zealand.

Hospitality and Regional Tourism Industries

include adventure tourism, travel industry, hotels, car hire, guided tours and others. Tourism is a major source of revenue for the New Zealand economy. Knowledge of other languages and cultures is a distinct advantage.

JOB TITLES

The following is a sample of job titles taken from our graduate destination surveys. A foreign language is a value-added skill that may set you apart from other applicants even if it is not specified as a requirement for the job.

Academic advisor • analyst • art historian • business analyst • communications advisor • community health worker • community liaison officer • conference organiser • counsellor • customer / helpdesk support • editor • education officer • events coordinator • hotel manager • human resources officer • immigration officer • information officer • intelligence analyst • interpreter • journalist – print, TV, radio • lawyer • lecturer • librarian • market researcher • mediator • policy advisor • public affairs officer • public relations advisor • recruitment consultant • researcher • sales executive • teacher • tour guide • translator • travel consultant • web editor.

David Treacher

Deputy Consul General
New Zealand Consulate-General,
Honolulu



I had studied French, Latin, Japanese and Mandarin in high school and had a strong interest in Spanish and Latin American history and culture.

I really enjoy learning languages. I mostly took Spanish for the sake of enjoyment and to counterbalance the hard slog of my law degree. Learning a foreign language is like unlocking a door to a whole new world of opportunities. It enables us to communicate with and gain an insight into peoples and cultures that would otherwise remain shrouded because of the language barrier. I loved the Spanish and Latin American literature component of the Spanish major. We studied a rich and wonderful kaleidoscope of literature from many different periods, countries and styles, which I would otherwise never have been exposed to.

Through my studies I learned how to communicate with people from different cultures and benefited from the broadened worldview that comes from learning a foreign language since language shapes our thinking and speakers of other languages often approach concepts/ideas from different angles.

I'd never expected to use my Spanish skills in a work context in New Zealand, let alone in my first job after completing my Bachelor of Arts (BA), until I ended up working as local staff at the Mexican Embassy in Wellington while I was finishing my law degree. There I communicated in written and spoken Spanish every day, building on the strong foundation of my studies at Wellington. Speaking a foreign language was an additional strength on my CV for applying to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) where I have been working for almost nine years. My languages background also helped my successful study of the Indonesian language during my first assignment with MFAT.

If you have a passion and talent for languages I suggest you pursue that, and don't dwell on whether you'll be employable at the end of your degree. Foreign language ability will give you a competitive edge in many fields – not only in government and international organisations but also in the private sector, since New Zealand's economic growth will rely on increasing our exports and international commercial partnerships.

Dr Francesca Calamita

Lecturer in Italian
Department of Spanish, Italian
and Portuguese
University of Virginia, USA



I came to Victoria University of Wellington in 2009 to undertake a PhD in Italian Studies under the supervision of Dr Claudia Bernardi. Victoria was my university of choice because of Claudia's area of expertise in women's writing. Dr Sally Hill's research in the representation of mental illness in fictional works provided me with additional expertise. I could not have found a more competent and supportive supervisory team who went beyond the call of duty to make sure I was always able to make progress and grow as a researcher. As a PhD candidate I was a very active member of the School's postgraduate community, and was involved with the organisation of symposia, seminars, workshops and cultural events.

During my time at Victoria I was also given the opportunity to teach language and content courses in Italian and European Studies. Working alongside Dr Marco Sonzogno, whose teaching philosophy, methodology and belief in the pedagogical potential of extracurricular activities I shared, inspired me to develop my own teaching style, materials and activities, placing the needs and expectations of students at the centre of my work. Being part of Victoria's Italian Programme in the School of Languages and Cultures was central to my development, not only as a researcher and teacher but also as a person who cherishes, shares, and fosters the human and professional values of the Humanities.

Since completing my PhD in Italian Studies, I was first a Teaching Fellow in Italian at Victoria and then a Visiting Fellow at the University of London's Institute of Modern Languages Research. In 2014 I was appointed as a Lecturer in Italian Studies with the University of Virginia's Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese.

This journey would not have been possible without the encouragement, inspiration and guidance I received and continue to receive from Claudia, Sally, and Marco.

Lorenz Wright

Political and Public Affairs Officer
High Commission of Canada,
Wellington



After studying French and German at high school, it seemed natural to major in both languages for my BA degree. My enjoyment of the European Languages programme led me to complete an Honours year in French, which broadened my knowledge of Francophone literature and culture.

Studying languages at Victoria was made easy by the wealth of interactive learning material available to students. Class sizes were small compared to my other courses, allowing teaching staff to deliver a much more tailored approach to language learning. This environment made it easy to interact with other students and I got to know many of my classmates well. My lecturers were always available to clarify a grammar point or discuss a particular piece of assessment – a real bonus for students trying to navigate the university environment. I also took part in a number of social activities organised by the student-run French Club, which included involvement in three French language plays.

Along with giving me the tools to express myself in a foreign language, my Arts degree taught me how to think and write critically and honed my research skills. I gained confidence in making oral presentations and learned more about the grammar of my own language.

I've always taken a keen interest in politics and the role language plays in advancing diplomatic goals around the world. Given Canada's proud bilingual heritage, having knowledge of both official languages is a real asset in my current role where I often write, read and speak in French.

I'm a big proponent of following your passions when choosing a university major and strongly encourage anyone contemplating a language course at Victoria to apply. Knowledge of another language is a valuable skill that makes you stand out as a recent graduate in the job market. Add to this a university exchange or teaching assistantship and you give yourself that added advantage when applying for your first job.

Katrina Yelavich Clarke

German teacher
Heretaunga College



I decided to major in German at university because I enjoyed the language and was unsure what I wished to do in the future. I also completed my Graduate Diploma in Secondary Teaching but wasn't 100 percent sure if teaching was for me. After travelling overseas, then working full time for a year, I missed my German studies and applied to do Honours in German at Wellington.

I really enjoyed all of my postgraduate studies. My classes were full of great students who shared the same interests as me but I think the thing that really made it for me was that the classes were small. This meant that most of our learning was done either in German conversation or through in-depth discussion of German literature.

My German language skills improved as did my translation and research skills. I was getting regular practice in conversational German as well as formal writing, which consolidated my knowledge of the structure of the language.

Whilst completing my Honours degree at Victoria I was convinced that I did not want to go back to teaching. I worked part time for Air New Zealand at the airport, which gave me a fantastic opportunity to use my German speaking skills. Following graduation I wanted full-time hours and moved within Air New Zealand to their corporate travel division.

I hated sitting behind a computer every day and missed speaking to customers face to face. But what surprised me the most was that I missed teaching. I missed sharing my passion for German language and culture with students, but most of all I missed speaking German. So I took a leap of faith, handed in my notice and was unemployed for nearly six months before I got a job relief teaching at St Patrick's College, Wellington. I scanned the Education Gazette daily for German teaching jobs and in June 2014 I applied for a maternity leave position at Heretaunga College, where I still am. I took a big risk throwing in a decent full-time job to follow my passion, but it paid off in the end.

I'd advise students to make the most of being around like-minded people because you will get a lot out of the discussions with your classmates and lecturers.

Andrew Grieve

Analyst
Department of Internal Affairs



I decided to study a BA in Japanese and Linguistics alongside my LLB because I had previously studied Japanese at high school for seven years, visited Japan in Year 12 and wanted to continue my studies into the language and culture. I also thought that Japanese could be a good language to help in my career, as Japan is an important Pacific economy and New Zealand's fourth largest trading partner. It probably also helped that Katsudon is delicious...

The great thing about the Victoria Japanese programme is that it isn't just a dry study of grammar and vocabulary. It focuses on immersing its students in the culture of Japan through a range of media stretching from Japanese literature like 吾輩は猫である, which means, "I Am a Cat", to developing listening comprehension by watching dramas and movies. The academic staff are great and really help make learning a language, which is completely different from English, seem quite easy.

Many people find it surprising when I say that the most important things I learned in my Japanese major were not so much to do with the language. Rather, it was the ability to learn about a culture which has a very rich history that is quite different to that of Europe and New Zealand, and along the way learning to have fun while stumbling through a conversation in a foreign language. I think that is probably what has transferred the most into my career in the public sector — the ability to relate to people regardless of their culture and background.

My advice to anyone thinking about doing a major in Japanese is just to do it. It's a great programme with excellent lecturers and if nothing else, you'll have the chance to learn about a culture that is both ancient and modern. You might also learn how to perfect your Tempura recipe!