

LANGUAGE STUDIES

2010

Foreign language studies do not always lead to a career in teaching. That path, which passes through the gate of the CAPES teacher-qualification exam, continues to attract a large number of students. But language students have other options, as well—among them translation and interpretation, management, communication, and international trade and marketing. To prepare for careers outside teaching, students are advised to consider a double major such as languages and law, languages and international business, or languages and management.

The two most common language tracks in academia lead to two distinct career categories: teaching and business. Today, translation, interpreting, and teaching offer fewer opportunities than they once did. But fortunately language graduates are of interest to many businesses.

Field: Language and literature

Also see the following profiles: French proficiency, communication, management, international relations, humanities, tourism and hotel management.

ORGANIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

In the universities

The two most common language tracks in academia lead to two distinct career fields: teaching and business. Those fascinated by languages and working toward a *licence* in literature and language must make a choice between the concentrations known as LLCE (*langues, littératures et civilisations étrangères*; foreign languages, literatures, and civilizations) and LEA (*langues étrangères appliquées*; applied foreign languages). In LEA, students take two languages—as applied to law, economics, or management—all with a view toward a career in the business world. LLCE tilts toward translation, the study of literary masterpieces, and the acquisition of analytical, grammatical, and cultural competencies. In France, a literary *baccalauréat* and good grades in French and languages are usually required for admission to LLCE programs.

For future teachers: the LLCE concentration

The LLCE option is for students who have already achieved proficiency in a modern language and wish either to teach it or to work in the language as a translator or interpreter. Most LLCE students, many of whom are interested in literature, go on to take the CAPES. LLCE resembles the study of literature, but in a foreign language. The curriculum includes grammar, written and oral expression, vocabulary, comprehension, linguistics, phonetics, literature, and history. Note that students who do not like to read, write, or study texts in their own language are unlikely to like doing so in a foreign language!

Depending on the institution, early specializations are possible in comparative literature, civilization, documentation, literary translation, and several other areas. Students who have earned the *licence* may move on to a teacher-training institution to prepare for the primary or secondary teaching exam. Note, however, that the number of teaching positions has shrunk for German, Italian, Russian, and Arabic, and in general for languages other than English and Spanish.

A third option, LCR, for *langues et cultures régionales*, prepares students to teach France's regional languages.

For future translators and interpreters: the LEA concentration

The career-oriented LEA curriculum enables students to acquire competency in two modern languages, as well as economics.

Geared to prepare graduates for the business world, LEA teaches students to master and apply a pair of modern languages, such as English-German, English-Chinese, or English-Arabic. Many different combinations are available, but not all institutions offer the same selection. Instruction is focused on using the language in a professional context, such as administrative correspondence, specialized translation, accounting, economics, computer science, or law. Admission often depends on passing a test of proficiency in the two chosen languages. More and more universities are an optional third language.

From among the specializations available at the *licence* level students choose one that matches their career goals: business and management, communications, specialized translation, and so on.

The curriculum necessarily includes time abroad—in some universities a period of work or study abroad is a precondition for receiving the licence. Translation is a good choice for students who have a literary streak but do not want to teach literature. But would-be translators must not be afraid of long and intense study. Translators—literary, technical, legal, and so on—obviously play a key role in promoting understanding of written communications.

Whether they work for an exporter that needs to make itself understood in its target markets, or for a publishing house, they must command a great deal of objectivity (as well as knowledge and good judgment) if they are to reproduce the original text faithfully in the target language. Translation is no longer a matter of searching one's brain for just the right word. Today's translators (particularly technical translators) must also be able to use specialized software and databases (e.g., for machine translation). But the required qualities—rigor, objectivity, and perseverance—have not changed.

French as a foreign language

Many universities have programs that prepare graduates to teach French as a foreign language. The so-called FLE program (for français langue étrangère) is offered in the third year of university *licence* programs in classical literature, modern literature, LLCE, and language sciences. FLE students continue to follow the usual curriculum for their licence, complemented by instruction in the teaching of French as a foreign language and in general and applied linguistics. They practice by preparing lessons and studying French history and culture. FLE offers jobs that require the would-be instructor to adapt to a wide variety of circumstances, both physical and pedagogical.

Specialized schools

About 10 schools of translation and interpreting—some public, some private—prepare graduates for careers as technical translators, interpreters, and international trade specialists. It goes without saying that advanced language proficiency is required. Programs require either an internship or a semester of study abroad at some point during the curriculum.

RESEARCH THEMES

French research in foreign languages often involves several different fields in the humanities and social sciences—among them literature, history, pedagogy, linguistics, sociology, and psychology. A uniquely French dimension is found in centers of research that focus on the regional languages within France (Basque, Breton, Occitan, and Picard) or on Creole speakers in France's overseas territories and departments.

USEFUL WEB SITES

- ITI-RI, Strasbourg, an institute of translation, interpretation, and international relations (2 years after the licence). <http://u2.u-strasbg.fr/itiri/>
- AIIC, which trains interpreters for work at international conferences, has consultative status with international organizations. <http://www.aiic.net/>
- ESIT, the École Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs, is affiliated with the Université de Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle and offers several degree programs. The interpretation department is open by examination to licence graduates who have spent at least 12 months abroad and have a thorough command of two or three languages. The translation department is open by examination to holders of a 2-year postsecondary degree. Tuition starts at €600. <http://www.univ-paris3.fr/esit/>
- ISIT, the Institut Supérieur d'Interprétation et de Traduction, 5 years after graduating high school in Paris, prepares for careers in translation, conference interpretation, communication and intercultural management. The Translation Management Communication Program offers opportunities to the business of translation, the location and all major business functions (Marketing, HR, Communication, buying). The Conference Interpretation Program forms in 2 years (level M1 and M2) of high-level interpreters for large international organizations <http://www.isit-paris.fr/>
- ULIP, the University of London Institute in Paris, awards University of London diplomas for programs taught in Paris in French. One 10-month program prepares students to translate business documents. Graduates may continue on for degrees in translation. <http://www.ulip.lon.ac.uk/>
- INALCO, the grande école of less commonly taught languages, trains civil servants, translators, interpreters, and international relations specialists in more than 70 languages. At the undergraduate level, the institute awards 2- and 3-year degrees in specific languages and the the cultures in which they are spoken. <http://www.inalco.fr/>
- ESTRI, a school of translation and international relations in Lyon, prepares students for careers as business translators and interpreters, marketing assistants, export assistants, communications attachés, and international relations staff. <http://www.estri.fr/>
- ESTICE, located in Lille, is a school of foreign languages and international trade that prepares graduates for careers in international exchange as an import-export assistant or commercial, economic, or legal translator. Many graduates go on for a licence in applied foreign languages. Others go straight to work, using experience gained in their required internship. <http://www.estice.fr/index2.php>
- The IPLV, located at the Université Catholique de l'Ouest in Angers, offers three language programs. One prepares students for a licence in foreign languages, literatures, and civilizations. Another prepares graduates for corporate and organizational staff positions in international affairs. The third trains translators. Students who complete a fifth year may obtain a degree in conference interpreting. <http://www.uco.fr/>
- ELCOA, École des langues et des Civilisations de l'Orient ancien (school of ancient oriental languages and civilizations). <http://www.icp.fr/>



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<http://www.campusfrance.org/fr/d-catalogue/>

Doctoral level : search the directory of doctoral programs

<http://www.campusfrance.org/ecoledoc/index.htm>

CampusBourse : search the directory of scholarship programs:

<http://www.campusfrance.org/fr/d-catalogue/campusbourse/cfbourse/index.html>