

In addition to providing you with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary in the workplace, the study of languages, literatures, and cultures, like the study of history, philosophy, or mathematics, helps you develop the analytic skills needed to be an effective participant in local and national discussions. Studying languages in the context of history, politics, and popular culture can help you follow international events with insight, opening up perspectives to make you an informed and responsible citizen of your country and of the world.

Language study introduces you to new realms of ideas, customs, habits, and values. In both professional and personal ways, the twenty-first-century citizen and people without the skill and sensitivity

to deal with other cultures are at a disadvantage.

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Educators, advisers, and parents may obtain individual copies or packets of twenty of this brochure at no charge by writing the Office of Foreign Language Programs at the MLA; [languagebrochure@mla.org](mailto:languagebrochure@mla.org). This brochure may be duplicated.

KNOWING another language enriches your personal life, expands the range of professional opportunities open to you, and increases your power to act as a citizen of the world. At the college level you can begin a new language or build on your knowledge of a language that you have already studied. College may also be the first chance you will have to study languages such as Russian, Chinese, Japanese, or Arabic. Forget the myth that you have to learn languages as a child: in the classroom young adults can be faster and more effective learners than small children.

competitive edge. These include the ability to solve problems and to think analytically and creatively; to communicate effectively and confidently in writing and in person, and to act with versatility and flexibility. Leaders and decision makers must be able to access information, to understand it, and to interpret it critically; linguistic and cultural knowledge is essential to meeting these challenges. Because you can communicate and connect with people of other cultures and nationalities, you will be able to establish and maintain personal and professional contacts. In business, any cross-cultural effort for cooperation, sales, or negotiation will benefit from your experience of other languages and their communities. To be an effective professional, such as a doctor, lawyer, educator, artist, or scientist, communicating and investigating new knowledge in other languages as well as in English are essential in the increasingly international workplace. Exposure to another culture through its language will position you more favorably for success in your career, whatever career you may choose.

There are hundreds of affordable study-abroad programs available to college students from many disciplines. They range from intensive short-term travel and study programs to studying in connection with a foreign university for a semester or year. Internships or volunteer and service-learning work is often available in other countries and even locally. Study-abroad programs offer students the chance for a face-to-face encounter with another culture, often under the auspices of a United States academic institution or consortium.

Basic language competency is a prerequisite for study abroad in most non-English-speaking countries. Once in the country of your choice, you will find that what you learned in the classroom will be activated; you will be able to read, to understand and converse with people. As returning students put it, "You have to use the language every day; your language capacity will expand incredibly."

Students who have gone abroad frequently report that the experience changed their life. Many establish lifetime friendships or contacts that turn into important professional connections later on. Increasingly, employers look for this kind of international experience in job applicants. You can find out about programs available to you through your language department or in your institution's study-abroad office. And remember also that there are communities right here in the United States where languages other than English are frequently spoken. You may be able to find opportunities to immerse yourself in another language without international travel, in a neighborhood very close to your own.

Will you be fluent? Fluency has many meanings. After three or four years of study, depending on the language and the degree of intensity of study, you should be able