

Spanish

What is Spanish?

The study of language is fundamentally about communication. It includes knowledge about peoples' culture, history, and literature. The purpose of studying a language, though, is more than to foster communication; today knowledge of a foreign language is an essential aid to fostering international relations and serves as a foundation for international business. Spanish has become the second language in the United States, as well as maintaining its importance as a world language, especially in the Western Hemisphere. As a Spanish major, you learn the Spanish language and explore the literature and culture of Spain, Latin America, and the Latino communities living in the United States.

Occupational opportunities

The Spanish major prepares one for a range of positions in government or business, especially those demanding mastery of a foreign language. Graduates can find jobs in business, banking social services, teaching, government, translating/interpreting, and international student exchange organizations. With appropriate advanced degrees they may work in law or in medical professions as a physician, nurse, or hospital administrator, and they will be especially valued in bilingual communities. Some career options available to Spanish majors include:

- Consultant
- Diplomat/attaché/foreign service officer
- Editor
- Foreign exchange trader
- Professor
- Teacher
- Translator

Career Snapshot: Translator/Interpreter

A translator's job is to convert a written document from one language to another. An interpreter converts speech from one language to another. Translators spend their days meeting with clients to discuss the document and the client's needs and reading the document(s) to be translated. They spend time consulting dictionaries for the meaning of words. Translators then rewrite the document(s) in the required language and proofread the translation to ensure the original meaning of the text is not lost. Translators and interpreters must be meticulous people with excellent language skills. They must also possess the ability to understand and concentrate on a subject that they may not be particularly interested in. A healthy respect for deadlines is also crucial as a translator. Translators can work in almost any industry, and the pay varies widely. This type of work can suit those who like to work on their own and from their own home. Some jobs can be carried out on a part-time basis and during times to suit the individual. Given the improvements in modern communications, this type of work can be done in almost any location and at any time. Specialized translators who can turn out 10,000 - 15,000 words per week of high quality work can earn a reasonable salary and do so from the comfort of their own home.

The Modern Languages and Comparative Literature Department is located on the fourth floor of the Newman Vertical Campus in room 6-280. You can contact them at (646) 312-4210.

Skills and Abilities

Skills and abilities helpful for this major include oral and written communication, good interpersonal skills, a good ear for language and patterns in communication, and a balance between analytical and creative skills.

Unique skills acquired by majoring in a foreign language include:

- Understanding and interpreting without losing the spirit of the message
- Understanding and adapting programs, products and services to the specific cultural background of a targeted population
- Interviewing and interacting with people who are culturally diverse
- Using original publications for research, rather than translations
- Considering cultural preferences in planning and design

Related Major Skills & Characteristics

- Reading comprehension
- Instructing
- Speaking
- Writing
- Learning strategies
- Information gathering
- Critical thinking
- Active listening
- Synthesis/reorganization
- Information organization

Values/Work Environment

- Achievement
- Authority
- Ability
- Utilization
- Autonomy
- Working indoors
- Sitting
- Standing

Additional Resources

U.S. Government's Occupational Outlook Handbook
<http://stats.bls.gov/oco>

The Modern Language Association of America
10 Astor Place
New York, NY 10003
(212)475-9500
www.mla.org

Latin American Studies Association (LASA)
University of Pittsburgh
946 William Pitt Union
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
(412)648-7929
<http://lasa.international.pitt.edu>

TeachSpanish.com

A website for Spanish language teaching professionals. Includes career advice and job opportunities for teachers.
www.teachspanish.com

Translator's Café – Directory of freelance translators and translation agencies.
www.translatorscafe.com