



CULTURAL SERVICES
FRENCH EMBASSY
IN THE UNITED STATES

What is French for Professional Purposes?

When faced with the challenge of supporting and expanding high-quality French language education, one of the most important questions posed to teachers, school administrators, and parents is the question: *How is French proficiency useful in the professional world?*

Today, the **importance** of learning French has come into question for students, parents, and even university language departments. It has been proven time and time again that learning French is mind-opening for students, creates opportunities for travel, and can foster increased cognitive functioning and better memory. However, these benefits only begin to describe the importance of French, as French proficiency is increasingly critical to economic success in the 21st century: there were 22,300 job offers requiring French proficiency published online in 2015 in the United States alone - an increase of 134.73% compared to 2010. French is the third most requested language on the American labor market, particularly in sectors such as insurance, healthcare, finance, and humanitarian aid.

Learning French also represents a productive way to adapt to the global demographical changes that are to come: the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* estimates that by 2050 the demographic evolution of African countries could increase the total number of French speakers in the world from 274 to 700 million, making French the second-most spoken language in the world after Mandarin.

To be able to differentiate themselves in a growing globalized market, companies are constantly striving to reinforce their workforce with more diverse intellectual backgrounds, cultural awareness, and communication skills. Even basic levels of proficiency in a second – or even third – language develops all of these skillsets for men and women in business. Companies and all employers thus have an obvious interest in investing in language training; and French should be a top choice.

The Embassy of France is committed to supporting French language education for the benefit of professionals across the United States.

The Resource Kit

The following toolkit of resources is designed for university teachers, administrators, department directors, and professionals interested in promoting French for professional purposes. The toolkit contains numerous sources which provide unique and important answers to our main question: ***How is French proficiency useful for professional purposes?***

Target Audiences

The resource kit is intended for use by university teachers and/or directors of language departments who are interested in opening courses based around French for professional purposes.

Fast Facts for Advocacy

[Not Lost in Translation: The Growing Importance of Foreign Language Skills in the U.S. Job Market](#)

New American Economy, 2017

The report discusses the reality that companies and organizations across the U.S. are increasingly demanding bilingual proficiency from future employees. There were nearly 22,300 job offers for French bilinguals published online in 2015 in the United States alone - an increase of 134.73% compared to 9,500 levels of 2010. French is especially demanded in the humanitarian sector, with three humanitarian organizations, Peace Corps, Relief Web, and the International Rescue Committee posting hundreds of jobs for French speakers in 2015. Table 5 gives a more detailed list of the top employers looking for French skills by industry.

FRENCH FRANÇAIS

Employer	Industry	Number of French Listings	Total Number of Listings	Share of Total
International Services Incorporated	Insurance brokerage	351	476	73.7%
Trinity Health	Managed health care	340	10,963	3.1%
Peace Corps	Humanitarian aid	280	3,111	9.0%
Reliefweb	Humanitarian aid	276	1,149	24.0%
Oracle	Enterprise software, Cloud Computing	238	160,678	0.1%
Asi Constructors, Inc	Construction	217	1,704	12.7%
Verint Systems Incorporated	Software, Business Intelligence, Speech Analytics, Video Analytics, Business consulting, IT consulting	180	3,490	5.2%
International Rescue Committee	Humanitarian aid	150	1,083	13.9%
Sykes	Brand advocacy, customer service, technical support and value-added sales	129	3,659	3.5%
United Nations Development Programme	Humanitarian aid	126	803	15.7%

Top employers seeking workers with skill in French based on share of online job listings, 2015.

[Making Languages Our Business: Addressing Foreign Language Demand Among U.S. Employers](#)

American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), 2019

ACTFL and its Lead with Languages campaign, with the support of Pearson LLC and Language Testing International, commissioned Ipsos Public Affairs to conduct a survey of 1,200 U.S. employers, and the resulting 2019 report indicates an urgent and growing demand for language skills in the workplace.

Key findings include:

- 9 out of 10 U.S. employers rely on employees with language skills other than English.
- 56% say their foreign language demand will increase in the next 5 years.
- 22% state a need in French language skills.
- French is the third-most in-demand foreign language among U.S. employers (after Spanish and Chinese) and is cited by 17% of respondents as being in short supply.

[Why French?](#)

Language Magazine, February 9th 2017.

French is a language that reflects both the rich cultural and historical heritage of France and also that of the worldwide Francophonie. It is a language of international diplomacy, a global business language, and a top internet language, which points to the growing importance of French.

[10 good reasons for learning French](#)

France Diplomatie website

Did you know that more than 220 million people speak French on the five continents? This article presents 10 reasons for why the worldwide promotion of French language is a key diplomatic priority for the French government.

Advocacy: French for Professional Purposes Campaigns

The following campaigns have been used locally and globally to highlight the professional and academic strengths provided by French language in the global job market.

[Et en plus, je parle français!](#) is a global advocacy campaign launched by the Institut Français promoting the diverse uses of the French language in everyday lives and careers all over the world. The campaign video and other images can be used as an inspirational tool.

[Lead with Languages](#) is a foreign language advocacy campaign led by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The [Lead with French](#) page offers extensive evidence of the importance of French as a global language: including a list of responses to *Why Learn French?* Here you can also find video testimonials from students and young professionals attesting to how they “lead with French” in their lives and careers.

[Stand out with a Business French Diploma!](#) is a video from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Paris (CCIP) aimed at entrepreneurs, professionals, and businesses. Centered around real-life professional situations, Business French Diplomas strengthen your French skills from starter level upwards.

Evidence: Highlighted Research Articles

[Le français de spécialité terra incognita universitaire](#)

AATF, *The French Review*, volume 90, October 2016

This article looks back at what *French for Professional Purposes (FPP)* is, a “label” which is often unrecognized by teachers of French departments. By first defining what *FPP* is, it then discusses the *FPP* courses offered to teachers since 2013 in the United States, under the guidance of the Embassy of France in Washington DC. True to its title “*terra incognita university*”, these programs which mix didactic courses and analysis of the needs, the article also looks at what repercussions did these programs have on French departments. Faced with what some describe as a war between “general French” and *FPP*, what future can French programs keep for the *FPP*?

[America's Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century American](#)

Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2017

The report calls for a robust paradigm shift in the U.S. education system's approach to foreign languages, offering arguments as to why language education should be valued "as a persistent national need similar to education in math or English." Cited arguments include: bilingual/multilingual ability is critical to success in business, research, and international relations in the 21st century; the U.S. needs more bilingual professionals in order to provide social and legal services for a changing population; the study of a second language improves learning outcomes in other subjects, in addition to communication and cognitive flexibility.

[Lifelong Bilingualism Maintains Neural Efficiency for Cognitive Control in Aging](#)

The Journal of Neuroscience

Cognitive control refers to the ability to flexibly shape thoughts and behavior to meet internal goals in the face of constantly changing environmental demands (Miller and Cohen, 2001).

This kind of cognitive flexibility is critical for successful navigation of the demands of everyday life, yet it declines significantly with age (West, 1996; Kramer et al., 1999). However, new evidence suggests that lifelong bilingualism, or speaking two languages on a daily basis since childhood, can attenuate age-related declines in cognitive control processes (Bialystok and Craik, 2010), and may even delay the onset of dementia symptoms (Bialystok et al., 2007). Current cognitive models suggest that the basis of this boost relates to the bilingual experience of constantly switching between languages, which serves to strengthen task switching and related executive control processes (Green, 1998; Bialystok and Craik, 2010).

For businesses, this is why having a bilingual candidate will make for a more suitable and better choice than a monolingual counterpart.

[10 good reasons to do research in France](#)

Campus France

Did you know that France has 75,000 doctoral candidates? This article presents 10 reasons for why doing research in France is the right idea.

[Points Communs](#)

Première revue scientifique de recherche en didactique du Français sur Objectif Spécifique (FOS).

Success Stories and Testimonials

[Lead with Languages](#) campaign contains a section of success stories, where real-life professionals talk about how learning a language has helped them find and thrive in a range of exciting careers.

University students [Yiou](#) at Duke University, [Trevor](#) at HEC Paris, and [Ekaterina](#) at Sciences Po, explain to us why French is a must-have in the professional world.

The ["Parlez-vous françaisPro?"](#) website created by the Paris Chamber of Commerce gathers more than 30 testimonials from students, faculty and professionals in 15 different countries for whom French for Professional Purposes is a strong asset.

[Testimonial](#) of Cheryl Toman, Chair of the Modern Languages and Literatures Department at Case Western Reserve University, on why Business French is an asset for students.

Exemplary Programs

Duke University

Duke University offers French 321S: Business and Culture in the Francophone World. This course analyzes current socio-economic and cross-cultural issues to increase understanding of the global marketplace. The course focuses on oral and written communication, business practices, labor issues, case studies, and product marketing in the Francophone world.

John Hopkins University

With 27 Nobel laureates and programs in public health, nursing, education, medicine, and biomedical engineering considered among the best in the country, John Hopkins University offers a Medical French course.

Professional French Master Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison

The UW-Madison Master of French Studies is presently one of the only credentials signifying both advanced proficiency in French and applied work experience using it. This combination - along with the extensive and personalized networking program that characterizes the PFMP approach - is arguably the most effective point of entry to job markets requiring work experience in French.

The University Rhode Island Business French

Rhode Island University offers a wide range of special programs that allow students to apply French within diverse areas of study including: engineering, business, textiles, fashion merchandising and design (TMD), pharmacy and political sciences.