

Careers with Languages

Linda Aitchison

Editor / writer



Linda Aitchison speaks Russian, German, and French and works as an editor and writer. Here, she shares her experience of editing a magazine in Russia and explains how knowing multiple languages has been a catalyst for her professional success, despite describing herself as far from ‘academically gifted’.

‘My language ability opened doors’

I enjoyed languages immensely, and even though I wasn’t considered an outstanding student academically, that didn’t stop me. I knew I wanted to travel, so I jumped at the chance to learn French, Russian and German at secondary school.

It definitely wasn’t easy. I lacked confidence in pronunciation and would often laugh nervously as I tried to improve. However, I persevered and can truly say I wouldn’t be where I am today without it.

A love of languages

Languages have given me confidence and brought immense joy, allowing me to connect with a wide range of people.

Learning languages keeps your mind active. It breaks down barriers, makes communication more accessible and opens doors you often don’t know are there.

During university, I spent some time living in France and Russia and it was an unforgettable experience - languages learnt at school enabled me to do that. Being able to make friends and understand different cultures is truly priceless.

I am still passionate about learning new languages now, and would love to study Welsh, Greek and Spanish, as these are my favourite travel destinations.

My language skills have given me many incredible career moments:

- Working for a year in St Petersburg, Russia, first as a reporter and then as editor of an English-language weekly newspaper. I frequently had to interpret conversations from Russian into English, including an interview with a woman whose father had been murdered by Stalin - this became my favourite piece of writing.
- Reporting on a speech given in Russian by former President Gorbachev for an English-speaking audience.
- Working for Aeroflot, translating and sub-editing in-flight brochures.
- Covering Queen Elizabeth II's royal tour of St Petersburg - recently portrayed in *The Crown*.
- Launching a glossy lifestyle magazine, published in both Russian and English.
- Visiting the Somme and speaking to local people and officials while reporting on efforts to identify an unknown British soldier. This remains a powerful memory.
- Teaching English in France and volunteering with young people with special needs.

Go for it!

For anyone considering studying a language at GCSE level, I'd strongly encourage it. The more of the world you see, the richer your life becomes.

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