

SO, WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH THAT DEGREE?

12/04/20
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It's a favorite question posed to college students of many disciplines and one that the linguists on the OH Research & Intelligence (R&I) Team were recently invited to speak about at the 2020 Georgetown Linguistics Career Panel Series. This series aimed to connect undergraduate and graduate Georgetown linguistics students with career linguists to fuel them with the fodder to answer that very question.

Linguistics, the scientific study of language, is a discipline one can apply to a wide array of topics and professions. Linguists find themselves employed in a variety of environments—governments, corporations, academic institutions, non-profit organizations—and referenced by numerous titles (e.g., scientists, researchers, data or language analysts, language strategists, programmers). Because the field is so diverse, newly graduated linguists freshly entering the workforce can find the transition daunting and have difficulty translating their academic experiences into bullet points on a resume. This challenge is not limited to linguistics students, of course, as students of all disciplines often choose their educational path based on their curiosity and passion rather than specific career goals.

Over the course of an hour, the panelists shared their personal journeys and professional experiences and answered a range of student questions with one common theme: How can I market my unique interests and skills in a way that is appealing to prospective employers?

Our diversity is our greatest asset.

Throughout the discussion, one thing became abundantly clear: Our diversity is our greatest asset. It does not need to be neatly packaged up—just reframed to highlight the value these experiences bring to any organization. Framing is a powerful linguistic tool that allows us to create favorable associations with our words. Through framing, we can display our strengths and experiences in the most positive light, transforming our diverse perspectives into insightful deliverables. By framing our experiences to fit the requirements of a professional prospect, we open ourselves to new learning opportunities and growth potential, while simultaneously offering a diverse perspective to our potential employer.

*Not a single member of the R&I Team
has an educational background in
marketing, but the diversity of our
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interests and life experience are far from irrelevant to our industry. With degrees in Linguistics, English, Education, Women's Studies, and Sociology, as well as work experience in hospitality, veterinary medicine, government, grant management, and recruiting, OH's R&I Team are prototypical examples of how such diversity can strengthen a department and a company. Our individual skills allow us to identify and approach challenges from different angles; propose and improve upon one another's solutions; and, ultimately, service our clients with unique, innovative offerings and perspective. Working in a restaurant or a veterinary clinic may not seem immediately relevant to a position in an advertising agency; however, these experiences fostered many relevant skills that can be directly applied to our industry, such as managing client relationships, swift decision-making, and working on a team in high-pressure situations.

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Identifying the valuable skills acquired through individual experiences and achievements will inevitably offer an advantage when seeking opportunities in the workforce. By focusing on the tangible aspects of a successful academic career, one can transform these experiences into skills that would not only relate to the open position, but also connect them to a broader mission. For graduate students with little formal work experience, this transformation may involve shifting the focus from intellectual objectives to more practical skills used when describing one's research in an interview. For undergraduates, this transformation may include sharing a non-academic experience, such as volunteer work, and highlighting leadership experiences. Reframing the lens through which we describe our personal and professional endeavors can be a simple yet powerful way to transform ourselves in the eyes of a prospective employer, and sometimes all we need is a little linguistic reframing to make that transformation happen.

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