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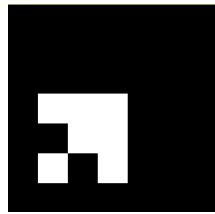
Language Requirements in Berlin's Job Market: A Comparison of International Image and Labor Market Practice

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B124 Academic Writing and Research Methods



SS0325



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Paper Title

Language Requirements in Berlin's Job Market: A Comparison of International Image and Labor Market Practice

Research Question

To what extent does Berlin's international and English-friendly reputation reflect the linguistic requirements of its labor market for non-German speaking professionals?

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*We confirm that this collaborative report is
our own work and that we have documented
all sources and materials used.*

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Abstract

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1. Introduction

Once divided by two disparate ideologies, the German capital city of Berlin has earned a reputation for internationalism and globalization. With its thriving technology sector, growing business opportunities, and a large community of English speakers, Berlin has become an attraction for expatriates and international students looking to start a new life or career in Germany. This is largely due to the city's branding as the ideal multicultural, English-friendly city requiring minimal German language skills. The ease with which one can navigate Berlin's historical sites, university systems, and social life without fluency in German has only reinforced the city's attractive reputation.

However, despite this welcoming image, anecdotal reports and personal experiences suggest significant obstacles for non-German speakers when applying for positions outside the narrow subset of expat-based tech startups. This creates a misalignment between Berlin's international image and the standard labor market's linguistic requirements. While many may assume that English is sufficient to secure a job, the reality of finding employment often tells a different story. Job listings in the Berlin Metropolitan Area continue to demand fluency in German across multiple job sectors, particularly more traditional industries such as finance, healthcare, and public administration; however, this demand is still visible in international fields such as software development and marketing. This linguistic requirement creates a significant barrier to entering the German labor market, hence challenging the perception of Berlin as a truly English-friendly city outside a touristic scope.

This paper aims to explore the question "To what extent does Berlin's international and English-friendly reputation reflect the linguistic requirements of its labor market for non-German speaking professionals?" Specifically, this will be done by examining the gap between Berlin's image and the language demands of its job market, investigating how English-speaking professionals fare in the job market, and identifying which sectors or industries are more accessible to non-German speakers. Furthermore, this paper will compare the relationship between Berlin's online reputation and online job boards, ca-

reer advisors, and first-hand job-search testimonials. The use of primary research will provide contemporary insight into the topic at hand as well as represent the diversity of Berlin's human talent. Additionally, secondary research into this question will further support this paper's analysis of Berlin's job market. However, it is important to note the limitations of each method. Such limitations will be further elaborated in the methodology portion of this paper.

2. Literature Review

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3. Methodology

To address this study’s research question, this paper employs a mixed-method approach comprising primary and secondary research strategies. This will provide a comprehensive perspective on how language impacts employability in Berlin, especially for individuals who are not fluent in German. Additionally, this mixed approach will allow for a relative comparison of secondary works and current-day testimonials as of the summer of 2025.

Primary data was collected via an online survey distributed through university mailing lists, online forums, and social media platforms. The survey was created using Microsoft Office Forms (see Appendix A). It targeted expatriates and international students and was conducted anonymously with informed consent provided through a data protection disclaimer (datenschutzhinweis) written in both German and English. Additionally, the survey includes sections on demographics, academic background, employment preferences, language skills, and job search experience. Thus, the survey enables the collection of both statistical trends and subjective perceptions regarding the role of language in Berlin’s job market.

Primary research aids and benefits this paper by ensuring contemporary data is included. The survey used in this paper allows this research to “avoid unreliable information from outside sources” (Indeed, 2025). However, primary research comes with its respective challenges (Karunarathna et al., 2024). The survey conducted in this study was particularly time-consuming and difficult to distribute. Issues arose when convincing individuals to take a few minutes to complete the survey, as many individuals had refused to participate in such a study without an incentive. Also, the sample size was limited due to the difficulty in distributing the survey to the large number of Berlin residents. Some respondents may also downplay the issue of language requirements if they had help from inside their company, or, contrary, where some may exaggerate the issue due to bad experiences during the hiring process.

Secondary data was collected through a content analysis of job listings on platforms like LinkedIn, Indeed, StepStone, and businesses' direct hiring portals. Said listings include jobs from various industries, including technology, marketing, education, health-care, customer service, government, and finance. Each job listing was analyzed to determine the language it was posted in, the language requirements listed, the industry, and the industry level. This data helps evaluate how frequently English-friendly positions are advertised, which industries offer such positions, and whether German language skills are a formal prerequisite or an implicit expectation. Notably, this paper does not aim or intend to explore the differences in salaries and job benefits between positions that require unwavering German language skills and positions that require little or no knowledge of the German language.

Secondary research is a key component of any study, providing nearly unlimited insight into other institutions' discoveries on a topic. Secondary research is an easy, cheap, and fast method of data collection that does not require "[involvement] in developing complicated data collection methods" (Nasrudin, 2025). Particularly with the rise of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, secondary research has become increasingly simple; it merely requires a quick prompt instructing an AI tool to search the internet for sources on any given topic. Additionally, secondary research is more varied, allowing a surplus of data to be used in comparison. However, secondary research comes with its respective disadvantages. For instance, the data may be inaccurate, as no piece can ever be fully verified as authentic. It may also be out-of-date, providing information that no longer applies to the current industry norms and requirements (Nasrudin, 2025).

4. Evaluation and Results

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5. Conclusion

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