

Marina KARAPETYAN*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9166-6016>

Yerevan State University

Marina KHARATYAN**

<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-1864-0392>

Brusov State University

THE ROLE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IN RECRUITMENT IN THE ARMENIAN JOB MARKET

The research is an attempt to provide insights into the role of foreign language proficiency in recruitment within the Armenian labour market. It aims to address the disparity in the existing body of research and provide actionable insights into the essential role of foreign languages across various industries and enterprises. The paper highlights the historical and socio-cultural factors that strongly affected the plurilingual tendencies in the country, and further elucidates how the capacity for minority languages alongside the mother tongue has become an asset for maintaining socio-cultural identity. This research aims to offer reevaluated perspectives within the existing discourse by analyzing studies from national and international databases, comparing and contrasting their findings and conducting local surveys alongside an empirical review of job announcements. The study results prove the crucial role of foreign language proficiency in the Armenian labour market, with most employers and employees regarding it a high-priced advantage in the job-seeking and hiring process. This outcome should encourage more active language learning and teaching practices.

Keywords: multilingualism, foreign language skills, labour market, recruitment, employability, competitive advantage, Foreign Language as a Medium of Instruction (FLMI)

Introduction

Multilingualism has been an integral attribute of the Armenian nation for centuries. Historical and socio-cultural factors have significantly influenced its

* marrkarapetyan@ysu.am

** kharatyan@yahoo.com



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Received: 24/09/2024

Revised: 25/10/2024

Accepted: 26/11/2024

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language versatility. Firstly, due to foreign invasions, the country was inhabited by a number of ethnic groups. The extensive and dramatic exposure to other cultures and languages led to the acquisition of additional languages as a means of socio-economic integration and preservation of cultural identity. Secondly, as one of the republics of the former Soviet Union, the country developed a tendency to easily acquire minority languages and use them on a par with mother tongue.

Last but not least, open borders, increased mobility and access to broader job markets have also contributed to the advancement of multilingual skills. Thus, the ability to learn foreign languages has historically and culturally become an inherent skill of Armenians. Multiple language proficiency has been regarded not only as a major factor for maintaining socio-cultural identity but also as an indispensable tool for socio-economic mobility and personal growth.

Today, Armenia is a developing country with broad and progressive views, as well as close business, economic, financial, diplomatic, political, social and cultural ties with the rest of the world. Armenia is a newly independent state seeking for realistic prospects for sustaining and ensuring a highly-educated civil society for the present and future generations. Armenian is the national and dominant language used in all spheres of public and professional life. Simultaneously, in the globalization age, the importance of possessing a good working knowledge of one or more foreign languages has grown. With greater mobility, the number of people who speak languages other than their native language has risen. As there emerge more companies that do business with overseas firms, the ability to effectively communicate with the latter seems to give polyglots a significant advantage. A growing number of Armenian employers opt to integrate bilinguals and multi-linguals into their personnel, who are certain to contribute to the success of their businesses.

This state of affairs has persisted in the global labour market for a long time. Not surprisingly, the role of foreign languages in labour relations has been widely discussed in corporate and academic blogs, newsletters and news releases, as well as in the comprehensive sociolinguistic and business studies by foreign scholars. In comparison, Armenia has been the focus of a limited number of works. These primarily highlight language diversity and learning trends, public attitudes toward foreign language acquisition and use, language policies and educational practices, job market dynamics and the advantages of the Armenian workforce. Additionally, studies have covered the demands for skills in the globalization-age labour market, gaps and challenges in relevant education, employment-related policy developments and recommendations for improving the educational processes. Little has been done in terms of surveying the actual demand for foreign language skills in specific industries, except in IT (Platform work in Armenia, 2021),

hospitality and tourism sectors (Knowledge and skills assessment, 2018), as well as in assessing the views of Armenian employers/employees about the usability of the must-have foreign language(s) at the workplace.

This paper addresses the current situation in the Armenian labour market with regard to the requirement for foreign language proficiency in the recruitment process and its subsequent usage. In particular, it seeks to explore both employers' and employees' perceptions about the need for foreign language application at work, identify the areas that value most foreign language communication skills, assess the proficiency levels required, and examine the correlation between language proficiency and earnings and/or promotion opportunities. Ultimately, the paper aims to bridge the gap in the corresponding body of research and provide action research insights into the essential role of foreign languages across diverse sectors, company types and sizes.

The literature review (including both the local and international contexts) sets a theoretical foundation for this research. Online surveys, face-to-face interviews, and a review of job announcements posted in online job portals disclose some practical details about the issues above. By examining a range of studies from different regions of the world, comparing the findings and applying them to conduct local assessments, the current research aims to address the gaps and provide a fresh insight into the existing discourse.

Literature Review

First, it is essential to explore the potential benefits that bi- or multilingualism may offer to both individuals and businesses. The existing research findings are often ambiguous and divergent, which can be attributed to several factors: various studies may derive from different datasets, include heterogeneous groups of respondents and consider a different scope of questions. Despite the resulting contradictions, the overall impression of the value of bi- or multilingual employees in the eyes of prospective employers seems to be favourable. A myriad of informal publications and popular media sources present academic research results consistently showing that a good command of foreign languages enhances a person's cognitive skills and overall capabilities (Desik, 2012; Burton, 2024; Parlez-vous français?, 2008), and can even effectively protect from senile dementia (Landes, 2012; Burton, 2024). "Speaking two languages on a regular basis – and having done so all one's life – enhances cognitive reserve and delays the appearance of symptoms associated with cognitive decline and dementia", reports Sáez on a health-news-related page of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Sáez, 2020).

From the career perspective per se, several sources have emphasized the soaring demand for proficiency in one or more foreign languages in the global recruitment practices (Jupp, 2013; Fox, n.d.; Foreign language skills, 2011; 6 ways bilingualism can further your career, 2014). According to International Business Times, a popular business and financial news portal, “With the globalization of businesses and populations growing increasingly cosmopolitan, the need for transactional knowledge of languages has become very important in both private and government sectors” (Foreign language skills, 2011). It has been argued that employees with the knowledge of foreign languages contribute not only outstanding communicative skills and the ability to understand people of diverse cultural backgrounds, thereby helping to enlarge the target market of customers (Fox, n.d.; White, 2014; 6 ways bilingualism can further your career, 2014; Porras et al., 2014, p. 235), but are also actually smarter, more knowledgeable, dedicated and better-performing (Bilingualism translates into higher earnings, 2010; Landes, 2012; Parlez-vous français?, 2008). They are reported to have better control of attention and working memory, as well as superior skills in observation, multi-tasking and problem-solving (Burton, 2024). According to Grundy and Trimmer, “working memory capacity can be added to the list of executive function advantages that bilinguals have over monolinguals” (Grundy & Trimmer, 2017, p. 332). Their research has vividly demonstrated that “bilinguals have greater WM capacity than monolinguals because of their extensive experience managing two languages that compete for selection” (ibid, p. 337).

In Lazar’s opinion, “bilinguals display key qualities, unique transversal competencies, that are becoming increasingly important in a more internationally integrated job market” (Lazar, 2018). Moreover, it is argued that speaking one or more foreign languages not only provides job-seekers with better and more business opportunities (Landes, 2012; 6 ways bilingualism can further your career, 2014), but also makes them highly privileged compared with monolingual candidates in terms of employability (Gazzola & Mazzacani, 2019; Parlez-vous français?, 2008), business trip opportunities (6 ways bilingualism can further your career, 2014), higher pay (Parlez-vous français?, 2008; Bilingualism translates into higher earnings, 2010; Callahan, 2022; Forbes Insights, 2011 as cited in Porras et al., 2014, pp. 238–239) and higher chances of promotion (Wells, 2023; Fox, n.d.; Forbes Insights, 2011 as cited in Porras et al., 2014, pp. 238–239). Wells (2023) highlights, “you might find yourself better positioned for a promotion or other opportunity because you understand a foreign language, and can therefore be trusted to be the face of your company and handle foreign transactions”. In fact, mastery of foreign languages is shown to help employees climb the company ladder leading them to managerial positions.

Nevertheless, a significant portion of American academic research into the job market value of bilingualism reveals that the results are often conflicting. While acknowledging the superiority of bilingual employees' communication skills, Porras et al. (2014, pp. 234–235) note a scarcity of studies examining their distinct advantages in the U.S. labour market, particularly in areas with substantial immigrant populations. Based on the literature review by the above-mentioned authors (*ibid*, pp. 237–239), it can be seen that most of the publications address the American perspective, i.e. non-English speakers learning English to boost employment and salary prospects in the USA. The divergent conclusions of American researchers on whether or not bilingualism provides a competitive edge are largely due to the country's unique linguistic context. In the USA, the population's ability to speak languages other than English is a direct consequence of immigration-related linguistic diversity. It is natural for US employers to primarily require proficiency in English, the official state language, which is also the global language of business. Mastery of additional languages is viewed as a welcome bonus helping to foster closer relationships with partners and customers. Agirdag (2014, p. 160) concludes that studies assessing the value of workers with high proficiency in these additional languages are insufficient, contradictory, and have both conceptual and data limitations, complicating the interpretation of reality. As a matter of fact, the results vary depending not only on the specific industry, but also on the job sector and category, employees' position and educational attainment, the must-have language(s) and numerous other factors. For example, in their 2007 study, Chiswick & Miller (as cited in Porras et al, 2014, p. 237) found that individuals in the US who spoke English in addition to their native Spanish did not gain any financial advantage, most likely due to their minority status, poorer education and geographical concentration in areas with limited job opportunities.

Conversely, other scholars (Lopez, 1999; Fry & Lowell, 2003; Forbes Insights, 2011 as cited in Porras et al., 2014, pp. 238–239) concluded that bilinguals proficient in both languages received slightly higher compensation than their monolingual counterparts. However, this difference was attributed not to their language abilities but to their higher educational qualifications and, consequently, to enhanced contributions such as higher productivity and efficiency. Porras et al. (2014, p. 238) thus argue that language proficiency has only a secondary impact on wages. As a final point, their survey of various industry sectors based in California concludes that "in every industry bilingualism was a desirable trait for some or all positions", especially in those roles based on interpersonal interaction (*ibid*, p. 242). Most responding employers admitted that bilinguals were better at serving customers, translating company documents and handling correspondence (*ibid*, p. 247). The

study also suggests that “in every sector, more employers would hire the bilingual candidate over the monolingual candidate” (*ibid*, p. 248).

In Ee’s study (2019, p. 262), which examines the employability and earning power of Asians in the US labour market, Asian bilingual employees tend to out-earn their fellow workers who are dominant in a single language. Similarly, Halm & Gazzola (2022, p. 5) find that European countries offer generous rewards for foreign language skills, with the extent of these rewards varying by country, the languages spoken and the employee’s proficiency level. English is the most commonly required foreign language, although some states may prioritize other languages. Thus, in the export-oriented German economy, English is particularly emphasized, followed by French, Italian, Spanish, and Russian (*ibid*, p. 2).

Armenia’s Language Demographics and Educational Traditions

Taking into account Armenia’s unique status as a small, developing and linguistically diverse country, it is crucial to overview its educational traditions and current linguistic environment, which lay the ground for the country’s language policies and planning.

According to a 2024 estimate (Howe & Suny (n.d.)), Armenia’s population stands at 3,009,000, the overwhelming majority of whom are ethnic Armenians (98.1%). The country’s ethnic minorities include Yezidis (1.1%), Russians (0.5%), as well as Assyrians, Ukrainians, Greeks, Kurds, Georgians, Belarusians, Jews and other smaller communities. Armenian is the official state language, but minority languages are recognized and protected by the republic’s language policies. The largest minority language, Kurmanji, is spoken by the Yezidis; other minority languages include Assyrian, Greek and Russian.

While Russian is officially a minority language (often referred to as a second or foreign language in educational settings), in practice it remains a major language widely spoken not only by people of Russian origin but also by many Armenians (89% of the population, according to 2011 Census, as cited in Armenia language map, 2021). However, it has experienced a decline over the past 30 years. Following Armenia’s independence from the USSR in 1991, the country underwent an abrupt linguistic transition. Russian, which previously dominated everyday life (appearing on public TV and radio, shop windows, cinema posters and in public discourse) was increasingly replaced by English. This shift was most likely motivated by a desire to break from the Soviet past and join the global community. As a result, English, as well as other foreign languages, is now attracting a larger audience. However, English is not as widely spoken or mastered by Armenians as Russian. A 2012 opinion poll (as cited in Languages of Armenia

(n.d)) indicated that “40% of Armenians have basic knowledge of English with only 4% having advanced proficiency of English, 16% intermediate and 20% beginner level”.

In comparison, the same poll revealed that “94% of Armenians have at least basic knowledge of Russian, with 24% having advanced knowledge, 59% intermediate knowledge and 11% having beginner level knowledge”. Russian also serves as the primary language for many cable television channels in Armenia, making it an important medium of entertainment and information. Other popular foreign languages spoken or learned in Armenia are French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Turkish and Persian. The 2011 Armenian census (as cited in Languages of Armenia (n.d)) identified 10,106 people who speak French as a second language, 6,342 people who speak German as a second language, 4,396 speakers of Persian, and 29,430 speakers of other languages.

Armenia preserves its long-standing academic traditions by keeping pace with the times and running successful foreign language teaching and learning practices. Modern Yerevan is home to a significant number of English-biased and some Russian-biased secondary schools. Most Armenian schools teach English and Russian, some teach French and Spanish; private schools may offer classes in more than one foreign language. The capital city also hosts several universities where instruction is provided in Russian, English and French. Additionally, it boasts numerous language teaching centers offering courses in high-demand foreign languages. Many higher education institutions provide programs in English. Yerevan State University also has a Center for Chinese Language and Chinese Culture, which promotes the teaching of the Chinese language and cultural values and supports cooperation with the Chinese Embassy in Yerevan. YSU Greek Studies Center provides Greek courses. The Armenian-Chinese Friendship School focuses on imparting knowledge of Chinese and fostering cultural awareness. The Goethe-Institut in Yerevan provides German language courses and cultural programs. Additionally, higher education institutions offer Foreign Languages for Special Purposes (FLSP) courses, equipping students with the specialized language skills needed for their future professions. However, limited class hours and varying individual abilities hinder learners from achieving high proficiency, which explains the low rate of advanced-level English speakers in the country.

Our long experience in teaching and tutoring suggests that the majority of Armenian parents and teenagers realize the value of foreign languages in the career prospects. Therefore, many parents arrange for their children to start English lessons early in life, whether in children’s education centers or with private tutors. The primary goals are to prepare them for local university admission exams and lay the background for studying abroad. Moreover, the skills acquired enable learners

to participate in the numerous foreign exchange programs available in Armenia, making graduates more competitive in both the Armenian labour market and globally. Foreign language mastery has shown to enlarge employment geography. Many of our compatriots go earn a living elsewhere – mostly to Russia, but also Europe (esp. Poland, the Czech Republic), the USA, the UAE and Turkey. Others find exciting career prospects remotely, allowing them to earn money without leaving their hometown.

More mature individuals turn to private courses to maintain or improve the functional knowledge needed for their work. A relatively small number of adults begin English classes with no or insufficient prior knowledge, aiming to improve their employment or career advancement prospects. One way or another, being fluent in multiple languages seems to open up many horizons.

Review of Armenia-Related Studies

Let us now examine Armenia's language policies in terms of labour market demands and regional trends. While global research highlights the measurable impact of foreign language proficiency on career prospects and earnings, local studies and data – though relatively scarce – offer useful Armenia-specific insights. To provide a more comprehensive perspective, we will also include our observations and experiences regarding the situation.

As mentioned before, the government policy on language has changed since 1991. The country's multiple minority groups must master the official state language – Armenian – to become full-fledged citizens. Simultaneously, the language policies “guarantee the preservation and development of all the languages spoken in the area” considering the minorities' native languages “the initial medium for the child's general cognitive development” and “a necessary prerequisite for the healthy development of the child's personality” (Petrossian, 1997, p. 1133). As a result, the country's ethnic minorities are mostly bi- or trilingual. The State Program of Language Policy asserts that “respect for multiculturalism and multilingualism and the promotion of national minority languages and culture guarantees Armenia a good reputation in the international arena” (The Law of the Republic of Armenia on Language, 1993).

Addressing the issue of language planning in the country, Petrossian (1997) points out the problems of teaching and learning Russian and English in post-Soviet conditions. She explains the shift in interest from Russian to English, identifies the learners' needs and inherent language aptitude, and outlines the difficulties encountered in the teaching and learning process. According to Petrossian, due to former language planning and policy, most Armenian school-

children begin learning English as a third language, benefiting from a relatively rich linguistic background. However, extra-linguistic factors such as the “lack of textbooks, competent teachers, normal conditions, audio and video apparatus” (Ibid, p. 1136) leave many school-leavers without practical skills in either Russian or English. While these challenges persist in provinces even today, it is important to note that schools in the capital have largely overcome the relics of the past, with many now well-equipped with the necessary resources and information technologies.

Analyzing the current linguistic context in Armenia, Ioannisyan (2017) reiterates the census data on Russian and English proficiency levels in the country. However, his study suggests a strong preference for the English language, positing that a better command of this widely spoken European language could significantly enhance Armenia’s economic standing and independence. In his exploration of the link between foreign language proficiency and the economic performance and independence of Armenia, Ioannisyan draws on global language statistics, noting the dominance of English worldwide, followed by Chinese, the Spanish and Arabic language groups, with Russian ranking seventh. He highlights that the English-speaking population contributes to 30% of the global economy, compared to Russian speakers, who contribute 10 times less GDP. Additionally, 51.3% of World Wide Web content is in English, in contrast to 6.7% in Russian.

Regarding the role of foreign languages in the labour market, Ioannisyan discusses labour migration, emphasizing its particular relevance in Armenia. He explains that labour migrants tend to move to countries where they can communicate in a familiar language, making Russia and Ukraine the most popular destinations despite relatively low wages and poor working conditions. In contrast, few Armenians choose Poland due to a lack of proficiency in Polish, even though the country offers better opportunities and actively seeks Armenian workers. Moreover, the level of English proficiency among Armenians is insufficient to access better-paid job markets abroad.

Poland is not the only country interested in the Armenian workforce. Leading multinational companies and organizations have established branches in Armenia and effectively integrate local staff into their operations. In the words of L. Avetisyan, the co-founder and CEO of staff.am, Armenia “presents a compelling case for businesses looking to expand or establish a presence in the region” (Avetisyan, 2024). Avetisyan highlights several professional traits that attract global employers, including marketable skills such as multitasking and project management, software development, IT service management, AI programming, digital marketing, multilingual proficiency (which also facilitates remote hiring by

firms outside the country), and a high level of education with a strong emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics, among others.

As the Armenian free-market economy becomes increasingly global and attracts more multinational enterprises, the linguistic environment at the workplace is changing too. The law mandates that all enterprises have the right to communicate in a mutually acceptable language. It requires businesses to provide simultaneous translation at various meetings and events, accompany official Armenian-language international correspondence with translations into the corresponding languages, and translate state documents into Armenian (The Law of the Republic of Armenia on Language, 1993). These regulations highlight the strong need for a multilingual workforce.

The demands of the 21st-century labour market are driven not only by globalization and upward mobility but also by the emergence of new fields of activity in the information age, such as IT services, telecommunications, blogging and online content creation, digital design and advertising. Consequently, the contemporary workforce must possess transferrable skills such as foreign language communication, computer literacy, critical thinking, creativity, and more. Echoing these changes, Fljyan posits that “Nowadays, the concept of education is to prepare highly qualified individuals with knowledge of foreign languages, intercultural communication, as well as multi-disciplinary skills [...] The employability of people increases, thus improving their chances of finding employment and earning an income” (Fljyan, 2011, p. 89). She further explains that globalization has fostered professional links between various companies in Armenia and international collaborators. In these circumstances, the quality of interaction depends not only on foreign language skills but also on the ability to understand and effectively communicate across cultures.

Regrettably, a thorough assessment of employee abilities in one of Armenia’s growing sectors – hospitality and tourism – has revealed significant gaps in knowledge and skills related to foreign languages, cultural awareness, communication, tourism geography, digital marketing and other areas (Knowledge and skills assessment, 2018, p. 4). Essential foreign languages for the restaurant business in Armenia include English, Russian, French and German, with intermediate to advanced proficiency in at least two of these languages considered critical (*ibid*, p. 12). Given the insufficient academic preparedness of the workforce, hotel business managers often find themselves settling for candidates who, despite lacking professional expertise, are enthusiastic, positive and fluent in foreign languages (*ibid*, p. 20). Managers also note that even proficiency in English and Russian is frequently at a basic level and not adjusted to the hospitality sector (*ibid*, p. 22). To address these language knowledge gaps, travel agencies frequently

prefer hiring graduates from linguistic majors over those from professional programs (*ibid*, p. 23). Accordingly, it is suggested that professional programs for hospitality sector candidates should be conducted in English to ensure students are exposed to “direct interaction [...] with the language” (Knowledge and skills assessment, 2018, p. 15)

Exploring the IT sector and, in particular, online and platform work employment in Armenia, the European Training Foundation found a substantial number of Armenian freelancers engaged in remote work platforms. Despite this, the study highlights that inadequate command of English (which is crucial for success in the global platform job market), along with a lack of digital skills, especially in rural regions, is a significant issue (Platform work in Armenia, 2021, p. 15).

Vardanyan et al. (2023) describe the benefits and challenges of using English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) programs in the Armenian tertiary education system, which came as a result of the labour market’s steady demand for foreign languages, starting with opening the American University of Armenia in 1991. Today, EMI courses are offered by several universities in the country. Regardless of numerous obstacles, they have proven to be beneficial for the participants’ foreign language skills and future job-related competencies. “Thus, we can imply that English-medium instruction is a stepping stone to the integration into the globalized labour market and landing their dream job”, suggest the authors (*ibid*, p. 78-79).

Based on this literature review, the current study of the correlation between foreign language skills and employment aims to address the gaps by conducting surveys among local employers and employees, as well as performing an empirical analysis of job postings.

The surveys are aimed at uncovering the attitudes of both employers and employees to the current issue. Although conducted on a modest scale, they are an unprecedented step to assess the foreign language requirement across a wide range of industry sectors in Armenia.

Employer Survey Implementation and Analysis

The employer survey involved 71 randomly selected businesses, both large and small, from public and private sectors across various local industries and multinational companies in the Armenian capital. The second one focused on 130 randomly chosen employees holding diverse positions across different industries. The data gathered were used to prepare statistical analyses to better understand the current state of foreign language proficiency demand in the labour market.

Understanding that a lengthy survey might deter busy headhunters, HR specialists and company directors, we developed a concise questionnaire with 13 close-ended and 4 open-ended questions designed to gain employers' perspectives on the need for foreign languages in the Armenian job market. The questionnaire for employees contained 10 questions similar to those in the employer survey but phrased to reflect individual experiences more closely. In an informal interview, some of the respondents generously shared deeper, more personal ideas and emotions about the issue, which they might not have openly expressed otherwise.

Conducting the first survey was rather challenging: many employers were either reluctant to disclose information they considered sensitive or simply ignored the participation request altogether. Despite these challenges, we succeeded in obtaining a meaningful dataset. Our findings offer valuable insights into the major role of foreign language proficiency in the recruitment process in Armenia, which should help regenerate bygone enthusiasm for learning foreign languages.

Based on the data collected from the employer survey, we categorized the companies by industry sector. The respondent list consists of 19 sectors: IT and software development (including iGaming, gambling, and bookmaking services – 25.3%); Retail trade and import (12.6%); Humanitarian and public services (8.4%); Finance (including banking, investment and payment services – 7%); Education (including training, tutoring and psychological services – 5.6%); Food/restaurant service (4.2%); Marketing and advertising services (including large-format printing – 4.2%); Production (4.2%); and Telecommunications (4.2%). The remaining 10 sectors have a smaller representation in the survey.

Summarizing our findings, 91.5% of the participating employers considered foreign language-proficient workers as valuable assets for their corresponding companies; however, only 85.9% found language skills critical for employment. Nearly 41% of the companies required employees to have advanced knowledge, 33.8% intermediate and slightly higher, and about 17% professional/technical. While only 1.4 % of the respondents regarded the elementary level as sufficient, another 1.4% found foreign language skills to be inessential.

Nearly 61% of the recruiters admitted they would prefer to hire narrow specialists who are also fluent in foreign languages rather than have translators and interpreters as staff. The latter group are hired by just under 6% of the employers, while nearly 19% have both types of professionals. This leaves the remaining 14% needing no foreign language speakers altogether. Despite hiring both translators and narrow specialists with foreign language skills, almost 44% of companies reported using free translation software to implement their foreign language-related work. Another 7% invested in more reliable paid software, with the remaining 49% going unsupported by technology and relying solely on human resources.

Regarding the salary advantage, the responses showed a clear split, with nearly 60% of the employers offering higher remuneration packages to foreign language-proficient workers. Admittedly, speakers of less widely spoken foreign languages, such as Turkish, Persian, Arabic and, surprisingly, French, tend to receive more generous compensation. As for the likelihood of a future pay rise, the responses were divided almost equally.

Some recruiters expressed an opinion that English-speaking employees would always be at an advantage as they would participate in international projects and professional development programs thus gaining richer experience, enhancing their hard and soft skills, and boosting their income. In contrast, others were convinced that incentives should accrue to all employees. At the same time, over 80% of the respondents confirmed a higher probability of promotion for workers having a good command of foreign languages.

Although over 80% of the respondents predicted a growing demand for language-proficient workers, less than 50% of the companies offered corporate foreign language classes, including on-the-job and external training. The rest chose not to invest in employee language education.

At the workplace, foreign languages are mainly used for negotiations and business correspondence, followed by translations. Other tasks include presentations, discussions, participation in conferences, research and communication. Of 71 companies, 63 use English in their daily practices, with 18 relying on it as the only foreign language required, and two companies using it as an official work language. Thirty-two companies use Russian on a par with English and twelve use it as the only foreign language. Four companies need speakers of Turkish, all of them representing the IT and software development sector (namely, iGaming and gambling businesses). French, German, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, Arabic, Persian, Ukrainian, Korean and Chinese were mentioned by even fewer companies.

Overall, the survey findings confirm the crucial role of foreign language skills in the Armenian job market, with most employers considering them valuable assets in employment. The marked preference for advanced proficiency levels demonstrates the complexity of business communications, while the demand for professional or technical language skills emphasizes the need to handle more specialized tasks. This outcome also explains employer preference for narrow specialists who are proficient in languages in addition to their professional expertise. Such an integrated approach ensures the optimization of language-related work activities. The extensive use of free translation apps suggests that workers have a sufficient command of foreign languages to fill the gaps without relying on higher-quality paid software. Despite diverging opinions on earning privileges, the prevailing view that multilingual employees are

promoted more often broadly confirms that language skills are viewed as a competitive advantage. Corporate language courses offered by almost half of the employers indicate that many businesses are interested in promoting their workers' language skills, whether by paying for classes or otherwise. Lastly, the dominance of English and Russian knowledge as an employment prerequisite reaffirms the need for placing a primary focus on these languages in the Armenian education system. Simultaneously, the higher earnings potential for offering services in less widespread languages proves the need for a larger supply of these languages by the private education sector.

Employee Survey

This survey collected insights from employees across 130 companies and organizations nationwide, including state authorities and departments, NGOs, broadcasting companies, telecommunication services, banks, medical centers, educational institutions, retail businesses, large and small private enterprises and more. Representing a wide range of occupations and areas of activity, the respondents shed light on the genuine role of foreign language proficiency in the enrollment and work process.

Overall, most participants reported that foreign language proficiency is taken into account in recruitment. While 62.3% considered it very important, another 33.8% still regarded it somewhat significant. This latter group mainly consists of support staff engaged in daily customer interactions.

Regarding the required proficiency level, the highest percentage represented advanced speakers (35.7%), followed by those with intermediate (34.1%) and professional (21.7%) language skills. This broadly agrees with the findings of the employer survey. Only 1.6% of the respondents said they did not use any foreign languages at work. However, the proportion of translation software users is still high (over 63%).

The most frequently mentioned foreign language-related activities include business correspondence, negotiations and presentations (approx. 70%). Among other common duties, the respondents highlighted translation, report preparation, customer service, grant writing, consulting, providing information and studying professional resources.

Almost half of the multilingual employees cited career advancement opportunities as the primary reward for foreign language skills. Frequent business trips were noted as a second major benefit. However, only 19% reported receiving higher salaries than their monolingual counterparts, while a significant 31.5% expressed disappointment at not being particularly appreciated. The possible reason

for the lack of privilege could be that English proficiency is an absolute prerequisite for employment, and the entire work process is often conducted in English. As a result, English-speaking workers are simply taken for granted.

Nearly half of the companies were reported to encourage foreign language learning by organizing free or paid, on-the-job or external corporate language courses. Still, for the rest of the respondents, this opportunity remains unavailable.

In conclusion, foreign language proficiency is most commonly listed as a must-have skill for customer support and managerial roles. However, the ability to communicate with clients in foreign languages (particularly, English and Russian) is also desirable for many entry-level positions.

A Statistical Analysis of Job Advertisement Data

For empirical verification and validation of the data obtained from our surveys, we analyzed job advertisements from the three most popular job-search websites (<https://new.staff.am/jobs>, <https://www.careercenter.am/ru> and <https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/search/>) during the last two weeks of August, 2024. This analysis provided insights into employers' real-time preferences and priorities. To obtain comprehensive data, we randomly selected a representative sample from the available job categories on each portal. The sample size in the first two portals was approximately half of the available advertisements (35 per portal). From the third portal, which displayed over 1,500 job ads (many repeated), we reviewed 150. The random selection was conducted using a random number generator. The jobs reviewed include remote, office-based and hybrid work, freelance and full-time, temporary and permanent positions, with opportunities available nationwide.

The data we collected included the following: 1) Industry category; 2) Job title; 3) Required qualifications, with a focus on foreign languages; 4) Whether foreign language proficiency was a mandatory or desirable skill; 5) The type of work requiring the use of foreign languages; 6) Benefits offered by the company for the required skill set.

The 220 vacancies reviewed cover about 30 industry sectors, including but not limited to IT and software development, financial services and banking, legal and consulting services, digital asset management and cyber security, healthcare and cosmetology services, leisure and entertainment industries, real estate, humanitarian mission, international trade, medical services and pharmaceuticals.

As expected, English proficiency is a sought-after skill in 148 out of 220 job posts. Of these, 94 require a minimum of B2 or higher proficiency, while the remaining businesses accept good or working knowledge, including professional proficiency. In 127 companies, English is listed as a mandatory requirement; in

others, it is an advantage but not a critical condition. Alternatively, Russian is required or desirable in 63 job posts. In comparison, while 10 job advertisements welcome knowledge of additional languages besides the mandatory English and/or Russian, another 10 posts list German (2), French (2), Persian (2), Arabic (2), Spanish (1) and Turkish (1) as must-have skills.

Given the diversity of responsibilities for vacant roles, we have summarized the activities involving foreign language usage. The most frequent tasks requiring language skills include: communicating with customers and business stakeholders; collaborating with partners and various departments; participating in team discussions; giving public presentations; negotiating favourable terms; conducting research and generating ideas for business growth; creating and editing content; working with company documents; conducting interviews; handling correspondence and translation. It is notable that for many of the companies reviewed, English is the main language of daily communication.

Although most of the companies offer a generous remuneration package, no specific benefits are stipulated for foreign language proficiency per se. Only in seven cases are bonuses skill-based. Other benefits include a competitive salary, opportunities for personal and professional growth, training programs (including English courses), and various company perks.

The analysis of job vacancies did not reveal any consistent correlation between foreign language requirements and position levels, except for a slight tendency for stronger language proficiency requirements in managerial positions. Of the 149 advertisements listing English as a necessary or desirable skill, 41 are for managerial roles such as managers, leading analysts, coordinators, supervisors, chief auditors, team leaders, program associates, and others. In fact, the demand for language proficiency seems to depend more on the company's type, nature and characteristics than on the specific job title. For instance, language skills are only viewed as an advantage, not as a mandatory requirement, when the alleged functions do not include much communication.

Final Implications

As has been mentioned, in the current stage of educational reforms and ongoing modernization of the educational system, effective communication skills in foreign languages are of utmost importance to succeed in the globalization age. Amid open markets, increased educational and socioeconomic mobility and cross-cultural exchanges, it is essential to carry out reforms that meet the objectives of contemporary Armenia. The primary focus of language policy should align with the requirements of a globalized world while prioritizing the preservation of

national identity. Considering the steady trend for multilingual employees in the labour market, universities should adopt policies geared toward transforming and enriching foreign language programs that would comprehensively reflect the content and context of students' professional domains, thereby enhancing the efficiency of cultivating the necessary communication and job-specific language skills. In this context, incorporating Foreign Language as a Medium of Instruction (FLMI) into traditional Academic Foreign Language (AFL) and Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes (FLSP) instruction is particularly relevant. This integrated approach develops practical and transferable skills in both academic and professional fields, allowing learners to save precious time and maximize the benefits of language learning. A multi-functional and multifaceted instruction program, FLMI develops both professional and language skills at the same time. It involves a real job-related context, enhanced linguistic and extra-linguistic content as well as cultural settings. The cultural component is crucial as it raises awareness of otherness, diversity and ambiguity and opens up opportunities for professional intercultural communication.

Thus, teaching the target language with further immersion into the professional or technical content provides a shortcut to career success. Prioritizing this method will ensure that language education curricula are aligned with learners' specific professional and academic needs.

We anticipate that our research findings should revive interest in learning foreign languages in Armenia and advocate for their increased and more purposeful inclusion in the academic programs of the nation's educational institutions.

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Մ. Կարապետյան, Մ. Խառատյան – Հայաստանի աշխատաշուկայում՝ օտար լեզուների իմացության դերը կաղըերի ընտրման գործընթացում. – Սույն հոդվածում փորձ է արվում ուսումնասիրել հայատանյան աշխատաշուկայում օտար լեզուների իմացության կարևորությունը և որոշարկել դրա դերը զբաղվածության խթանման գործընթացում: Ելներով առկա հետազոտությունների փորձ թվից, տվյալ աշխատությունը ներկայացնում է գործնական բացահայտումներ՝ արդյունաբերության տարբեր ոլորտներում և ձեռնարկատիրության մի շարք տեսակներում օտար լեզուների ունեցած նշանակալի դերի վերաբերյալ: Աշխատության մեջ ընդգծվում և առանձնացվում են պատմական և սոցիալ-մշակութային այն գործոնները, որոնք էական ազդեցություն են ունեցել մեր երկրում բազմալեզվության միտումների զարգացման վրա, այնուհետև վեր է հանվում, այն հանգամանքը, թե ինչպես է մայրենի լեզվին զուգահեռ, փորբամասնությունների լեզուների իմացությունը դարձել սոցիալ-մշակութային ինքնության պահպանման կարևոր միջոց: Հոդվածում ուսումնասիրվում և զուգադրվում են մի շարք ազգային և միջազգային հետազոտությունների տվյալներ, իսկ դրանց հիման վրա

իրականացված տեղական հարցումների և վերլուծությունների արդյունքում, հետազոտությունը ներկայացնում է մեր տեսակետն ու դիրքորոշումը հետազոտվող խոսությում: Հետազոտության արդյունքներն ապացուցում են հայաստանյան աշխատաշուկայում օտար լեզվի իմացության կարևորագույն դերը, քանի որ ինչպես գործատուները, այնպես էլ աշխատողները, համարում են այն կարևոր նախապայման և մրցակցային առավելություն՝ աշխատանքի որոնման և գործատուի կողմից աշխատանքի ընդունման գործընթացում:

Բանալի բառեր. աշխատաշուկա, անձնակազմի ընտրություն, բազմաթիվ աշխատանքներ, օտար լեզվի տիրապետում, զբաղվածություն, մրցակցային առավելություն, օտար լեզուն որպես դասավանդման միջոց

М. Карапетян, М. Харатян – Роль знания иностранных языков в подборе персонала на армянском рынке труда. – В настоящем исследовании рассматривается, как владение иностранными языками влияет на процесс подбора кадров на рынке труда Армении. Цель исследования – дополнить научные и статистические данные по Армении и предоставить практические выводы о значимости иностранных языков в различных отраслях экономики и сферах деятельности. В статье рассматриваются исторические и социокультурные факторы, которые существенно повлияли на развитие многоязычия в стране. Также подчеркивается важность владения языками этнических меньшинств наряду с государственным языком как ключевого условия сохранения социокультурной идентичности. На основе анализа ряда национальных и международных исследований, а также в результате проведения новых опросов на местном рынке труда и анализа объявлений о вакансиях, мы представляем собственную точку зрения и позицию в данной области. Данным исследованием подтверждается ключевая роль владения иностранными языками на армянском рынке труда: большинство работодателей и сотрудников считают его конкурентным преимуществом в процессе трудоустройства. Этот фактор должен способствовать более активному изучению и преподаванию иностранных языков в республике.

Ключевые слова: рынок труда, подбор персонала, многоязычие, знание иностранных языков, трудоустройство, конкурентное преимущество, иностранный язык как средство обучения