


LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IS A

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# SUPERPOWER

A CAREER TRANSITION INTO INTERPRETING

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- A close-up portrait of Miya Alcivar, a woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a dark blue blazer and a gold necklace. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a collage of various national flags, including the United States, Georgia, Australia, Japan, Canada, and Denmark.
- MIYA ALCIVAR ON ELIMINATING LANGUAGE BARRIERS
  - INFORMED AND DRIVEN BY HER IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE
  - ON THE INTERPRETER'S ROLE AS A BUSINESS ASSET
  - *AND SO MUCH MORE!*

In the last decade there has been a 276% increase of people who identify as multiethnic in the U.S., according to the 2020 Census. This represents a leap from 9 million to 33.8 million people who identify with diverse backgrounds. As a result, we experience in our daily lives culturally and linguistically diverse encounters with people who have limited English proficiency (LEP) or simply prefer to speak in the language that reflects their heritage.



At the federal level, there is no law stating English as the official language of the U.S. because our country was founded by migrant families. In addition, the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed to ensure that the rights of individual taxpayers who don't speak fluent English are protected. However, the de facto language to conduct business in the U.S. and globally is English. Given this multicultural and multilingual world we live in, the importance of certified language interpreters has increased for people to understand each other and avoid the pitfalls of miscommunication.

Miya Alcivar, an office manager and bookkeeper, is pursuing the opportunity to become an interpreter thanks to her language skills. She can fluently speak English, Spanish, and French, and is learning Korean. "Being an immigrant myself, I think the ability to connect with people in a language they understand is truly impactful. I can provide help to people that may have not been able to get any when they needed it because of a language barrier," she said.

To accredit her language skills and have the proper credentials to achieve her goal of becoming an interpreter, Miya contacted Language Testing International (LTI) to assess and certify her level of language proficiency. She shared that she achieved Advanced Mid in Spanish and French. "For me the purpose of testing is to verify knowledge. You either know it or you don't, you are just proving it to others,"

Miya adds.

Many fields now require language certifications for employment as an interpreter such as Social Work, Healthcare, and Judicial or Legal. There is also a wide variety of ways to perform the job whether in-person, by phone or video remote interpreting (VRI). Miya does not use her language skills at her current job and looks forward to using them in a workplace environment. "As a multi-lingual person, I have an advantage in roles that deal with human relations or customer service. I can help companies reach a wider audience and avoid or resolve misunderstandings due to language or culture," she explains.

Interpreters are a business asset. They are at the epicenter of maintaining communication and mitigating risk, especially in legal or healthcare situations. In a standard interpreting role, the interpreter greets the people involved and introduces themselves. Ideally, the interpreter has been already briefed with an explanation or reason for the session. The interpreter speaks directly to the person needing the language assistance and if the session is in person, makes eye contact when appropriate. The interpreter will always speak in the first person, on behalf of the person they are interpreting for, and the use of short and complete phrases will be encouraged. The interpreter is expected to clarify any linguistic or cultural nuances and to avoid slang or colloquial phrases, always checking for everyone's understanding during the entire exchange.



Miya is on the right track to start a career as a professional interpreter. She also values the impact that language proficiency has in her personal life thus far. "It will help me to start in my new career as an interpreter, but it has helped me make many friends and enriched my view of the world. I have become more empathetic and understanding because I have been able to connect with people using their language," she stated.