

What is the value of studying english english language essay

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Language is the complex system we use to communicate. The Cambridge Encyclopedia of The English Language by David Crystal defines language as ‘the systematic, conventional use of sounds, signs or written symbols in a human society for communication and self expression’. [2003: p. 464].

English is one of the most widely spoken languages in the World and is the primary language in many countries including the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, as well as being the first choice of second language for non-English speaking countries. It is the main language of international diplomacy and can be seen and heard worldwide in advertising, music, literature, commerce and trade. [<http://www1.aston.ac.uk/ids/combined-honours/english-language/>] Many of the English courses on offer at Universities in England explore aspects of language such as syntax, morphology, phonetics and regional variation, along with personal, cultural and historical issues and how it is used in different contexts. [reference needed] There are also options to learn a modern foreign language or teach English as a foreign language which can provide a greater understanding of how English is used and understood by non native speakers. The value of studying English Language has been the subject of much debate. The term ‘value’ is slightly ambiguous as it can be interpreted in many ways depending on a person’s view point. This essay looks at ‘value’ in terms of skills obtained and graduate employability. In an article published by the Guardian in 2009, Anthea Lipsett comments that with the government pushing more funding into science research, there is less money available for arts and humanities, giving the impression that these subjects are less important. [<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/mar/05/universityfunding->

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researchfunding]In 2009 the former Higher Education Minister David Lammy pledged to promote arts and humanities degrees as they were " no less important than science and technology" and an " indispensable component of the glue that holds this country together and without which we cannot truly flourish".[[http://www. dius. gov.](http://www.dius.gov.uk/news_and_speeches/speeches/david_lammy/value_of_higher_education)

[uk/news_and_speeches/speeches/david_lammy/value_of_higher_education](http://www.dius.gov.uk/news_and_speeches/speeches/david_lammy/value_of_higher_education)].

As part of the national curriculum, English Language is a compulsory subject for all students up until the age of 16, but as a degree choice it is often seen as a ' mickey-mouse' subject which suggests that on achievement, the degree will have no benefit or advantage to the graduate. In specialist careers such as law, medicine and teaching, subject knowledge is very important, however evidence shows that when looking for potential employees, employers value graduates with certain transferable skills and attributes that can be gained from an English degree. A typical English graduate will gain the following transferable skills: Advanced literacy and communication skillsAnalytical and critical skillsInformation gathering and handlingIndependent thought and judgementAbility to work with othersAbility to work in a critical and self reflective manner[Ref: student employability profile]Still, some employers are still unsure of the value of studying English as it is a shared assumption that Arts and Humanities degree courses do not provide the opportunity to engage in teamwork or any project work with presentation elements, and therefore these graduates may lack some essential skills. However it has been suggested that this belief is often accompanied by ignorance of how Arts and Humanities subjects are actually taught. [http://www. english. heacademy. ac.](http://www.english.heacademy.ac)

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uk/archive/publications/reports/gradcareers.pdf Professor Maureen Moran, President of the English Association once commented that as an English student you develop "the insight of an artist, the analytical precision of a scientist and the persuasiveness of a lawyer". [Ref needed] It is generally assumed that English graduates have a limited choice of occupation with teaching being the main career path, however, the transferrable skills and attributes gained is making a wider variety of occupations more accessible with many recent graduates gaining employment in the creative industries, management, publishing and journalism. Statistics published in 2008 by Prospects, a graduate careers website showed that students of English are more likely to secure graduate level positions than other comparable humanities graduates. [www.prospects.ac.uk]. In 2008 there were 11060 English graduates with 78% responding to the survey. 51.6% of respondents were in UK employment, 1.9% in overseas employment and 7.9% believed to be unemployed with the remainder either continuing to study in the UK or overseas. Of the 51.6% in UK employment, only 6.3% of these were as teachers which supports the argument that teaching is not the only career opportunity for English graduates. http://ruby.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ImageCache/4B1936542D2E4AED9319D3CEF71C3C4A/CB052898FC164375A49A8CF6D57819AA/WD/WDGD_final2009.pdf

graduate careers website, showed that of the 78% of graduates who took part in the survey, the percentage of female graduates was 74.4%. Furthermore, a published report called 'What do graduates do?' presents the destinations of 2008 graduates, six months after graduation. Although it evidences an overall rise in graduate unemployment, it shows that amongst the arts and humanities,

English graduates are the least likely (alongside those in performing arts) to be unemployed (see p. 53). The unemployment rate for English graduates is 7.9%, the same as the percentage for all subjects taken together. Further information about the destinations of English graduates can be found on p. 56 and p. 57. Studying English Language equips graduates with a variety of skills that can be transferred to the work place. These include the ability to communicate coherently, how to think critically and argue persuasively, to work effectively with others, and to plan and organise time efficiently in order to work to deadlines. These are skills that people use everyday both professionally and personally. Graduates who possess such skills in written and spoken communication are highly valued by employers. English Language is a flexible and adaptable subject that opens up a wide range of career choices that is not limited to teaching but can include work in the public sector, media and management. Statistics published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency show that 71.5% of students enrolled on English Studies courses in 2007/08 were female. English graduates perform as well as most other graduate groups in finding employment and seem better at securing 'graduate level' jobs than other groups of humanities graduates. Quote: with only 9% experiencing a period of unemployment, English graduates are not all different from the 'average' and seem to be in a better position than some other humanities graduates. The English Degree and Graduate Careers 2003.