

# Language Skills as Economic Assets: Insights from the Russian Job Market

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** In contemporary labor markets, foreign language proficiency is increasingly recognized as a form of economic capital that influences employability, wage levels, and career mobility. While English remains the dominant working language in globally oriented industries, emerging trade partnerships and geopolitical real alignments are driving demand for linguistic diversification. However, empirical evidence on language-related labor market outcomes remains limited in non-Western contexts, including Russia.

**Purpose:** To examine the structure of demand for foreign language skills in the Russian labor market. It investigates variations across sectors and regions and assesses whether specific languages are associated with wage premiums.

**Materials and Methods:** A total of 1,257 job postings with explicit foreign language requirements were collected from three major Russian employment platforms (hh.ru, Super-Job, and Avito) during the first quarter of 2025. The postings were manually annotated and categorized using ISCO-08 and Russian occupational codes. Descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, and salary comparisons were performed using Python (pandas, seaborn, scikit-learn). A control group of 980 language-neutral postings was selected for comparative salary analysis, matched by industry and job level.

**Results:** English was the most frequently required language, accounting for 84.7% of all mentions, followed by Chinese (5.2%), Korean (3.4%), and German (2.9%). The median salary for language-required positions was 94,500 RUB, compared to 72,000 RUB for language-neutral postings. The highest language premiums were observed for Mandarin Chinese (+32,000 RUB) and German (+29,000 RUB). Sectoral analysis revealed that language-related wage advantages were most pronounced in IT, finance, and procurement. Regional variations indicated stronger demand for Asian languages in the Far East and Turkic or Arabic languages in the Volga and North Caucasus regions.

**Conclusion:** The findings confirm that foreign language skills constitute a significant and unevenly distributed asset in the Russian labor market. While English maintains its dominance, regional and sectoral patterns reflect growing linguistic diversification due to economic reorientation. These insights contribute to ongoing debates on language policy, educational alignment, and the economic value of multilingualism in transitional economies.

## KEYWORDS

foreign language demand; linguistic capital; Russian labor market; wage premium; multilingualism; regional variation; job advertisements; sectoral analysis; English as a lingua franca; language in employment

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# Языковые навыки как экономический актив: данные российского рынка труда

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## АННОТАЦИЯ

**Введение:** На современных рынках труда владение иностранными языками все чаще признается формой экономического капитала, влияющего на возможность трудоустройства, уровень заработной платы и карьерную мобильность. Хотя английский язык остается доминирующим рабочим языком в глобально ориентированных отраслях, развивающиеся торговые партнерства и геополитические перестановки способствуют диверсификации языкового спроса. Несмотря на эту тенденцию, эмпирические данные о результатах рынка труда, связанных с языком, остаются ограниченными в незападных странах, таких как Россия.

**Цель:** Изучить структуру спроса на знание иностранных языков на российском рынке труда. Исследовать, как этот спрос варьируется по секторам и регионам, и оценить, связаны ли конкретные языки с надбавками к заработной плате.

**Материалы и методы:** В первом квартале 2025 года на трех крупнейших российских платформах по трудоустройству (hh.ru, SuperJob и Avito) было собрано 1 257 объявлений о работе с явными требованиями к знанию иностранного языка. Объявления были вручную аннотированы и классифицированы с использованием ISCO-08 и российских кодов профессий. Описательная статистика, распределение частот и сравнение зарплат проводились с помощью Python (pandas, seaborn, scikit-learn). Для сравнительного анализа зарплат была отобрана контрольная группа из 980 вакансий без языковых различий, подобранных по отрасли и уровню должности.

**Результаты:** Чаще всего требовался английский язык – 84,7% всех упоминаний, за ним следовали китайский (5,2%), корейский (3,4%) и немецкий (2,9%). Средняя зарплата для вакансий, требующих знание языка, составила 94 500 рублей, по сравнению с 72 000 рублей для вакансий без знания языка. Самые высокие языковые надбавки были отмечены для мандаринского китайского (+32 000 руб.) и немецкого (+29 000 руб.) языков. Отраслевой анализ показал, что языковые преимущества в оплате труда наиболее ярко выражены в сфере ИТ, финансов и закупок. Региональные различия указывают на более высокий спрос на азиатские языки на Дальнем Востоке и тюркские или арабские языки в регионах Поволжья и Северного Кавказа.

**Выводы:** Полученные данные подтверждают, что знание иностранных языков представляет собой значительный и неравномерно распределенный актив рынка труда в России. Английский язык сохраняет доминирующее положение, но региональные и отраслевые модели отражают растущую языковую диверсификацию в ответ на экономическую переориентацию. Эти данные вносят вклад в текущие дебаты о языковой политике, выравнивании образования и экономической ценности многоязычия в странах с переходной экономикой.

## КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА

спрос на иностранные языки; лингвистический капитал; российский рынок труда; премия к заработной плате; многоязычие; региональные различия; объявления о работе; отраслевой анализ; английский язык как лингва франка; язык в сфере занятости

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized economy, multilingualism has become a critical determinant of employability, income disparities, and career mobility across national and sectoral boundaries (Pietrzyk-Kowalec, 2023; Marconi et al., (2023). As international trade expands and cross-border value chains grow increasingly interconnected, language proficiency has transcended its traditional role as merely a communication tool. It now functions as both symbolic and economic capital that shapes individual career paths and enhances institutional competitiveness. While English maintains its dominance as the primary lingua franca in international business, scientific collaboration, and digital innovation (Pennycook, 2012; Luo, 2022; Neeley, 2017; Aleshinskaya, 2019), China's economic ascendancy, along with strengthened regional partnerships in Asia and the Middle East, has driven diversification in linguistic demand within global labor markets (Tannenbaum et al. 2023; Xu & Liu, 2023).

Although the strategic importance of language skills is well-established, research indicates their economic impact varies significantly across industries and geographic regions. Empirical studies demonstrate that foreign language proficiency correlates with wage premiums of 5–20%, with variation depending on both the language and occupational sector (Saiz, 2003; Salary.com, 2023; Budanova, 2015). Notably, multilingual individuals are overrepresented in executive and leadership roles, suggesting that language skills facilitate not only initial employment but also long-term career progression (Yang, 2018). However, these advantages are context-dependent: while Mandarin Chinese commands premium value in East Asia-oriented logistics and procurement, Spanish has become indispensable for healthcare and customer service roles in North America (Fishman et al., 1977; Hultgren, 2023). The study (Seible et al., 2023) found that cancer patients who communicated with their doctor in Spanish rated the quality of care as 20% higher than when using an interpreter. A study (Fernandez et al., 2011) found that patients with diabetes who switched from an English-speaking to a Spanish-speaking physician experienced significant improvements in glycemic control, while those who switched from a Spanish-speaking to an English-speaking physician experienced no significant change in glycemic control. The study (Lopez et al. 2021) highlights that, providing second language training to student doctors can potentially improve patient care and reduce health inequities facing limited English proficiency (LEP) patients.

Despite growing scholarly attention to language economics, existing research remains limited in two key aspects. First, most studies rely on aggregated international datasets or focus disproportionately on North America and the European Union (Gazzola & Templin, 2020; Grin et al., 2011). Second, there is scant empirical evidence from countries experiencing geopolitical realignment or developing alternative

trade networks. Russia presents a particularly compelling case study, as its labor market has undergone strategic pivoting toward Asia, the Middle East, and the Global South (Bratkovskaya et al., 2025; Rozhkova et al., 2019). Emerging reports highlight rising demand for Chinese, Arabic, and Turkic languages in construction, education, and trade logistics (Ostrovsky, 2024), yet these trends lack systematic quantification across industries and regions.

This study bridges these research gaps by analyzing foreign language demand in Russia's labor market using comprehensive job posting data from early 2025 (Chistyakova, 2015; Shamaeva, 2023). Our investigation examines:

RQ1: The distribution of language requirements across economic sectors and geographic regions.

RQ2: Potential correlations between specific language skills and wage premiums.

RQ3: Sector-specific variations in the economic value of multilingualism.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design aimed at empirically identifying which foreign languages are most in demand on the Russian labor market. The focus was placed on measuring the relative frequency of language requirements in job postings, identifying sectoral and regional patterns, and analyzing the association between language proficiency requirements and salary offers. The study also aimed to evaluate whether certain foreign languages are associated with wage premiums across industries.

### Data Sources

Job posting data were collected from the three most widely used Russian employment platforms: HeadHunter (hh.ru)<sup>1</sup>, SuperJob<sup>2</sup>, Avito Jobs<sup>3</sup>. These platforms collectively represent a large share of the Russian job search ecosystem and provide access to a broad spectrum of industries and geographic regions. Data were collected between March 1 and March 31, 2025, using both manual searches and automated scraping tools (custom Python scripts based on Selenium and BeautifulSoup libraries, when allowed by terms of service). Search queries included combinations of the following keywords:

<sup>1</sup> <https://hh.ru/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.superjob.ru/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.avito.ru/all/vakansii?utm\\_campaign=print&utm\\_medium=redirect&utm\\_source=ooH](https://www.avito.ru/all/vakansii?utm_campaign=print&utm_medium=redirect&utm_source=ooH)

“английский язык”, “китайский язык”, “испанский язык”, “иностраннй язык”, as well as common English equivalents (“English”, “Chinese”, “Spanish”, etc.). Only postings that explicitly required at least one foreign language were retained.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for this study required that job postings be published between January 1 and March 31, 2025. Each posting had to contain at least one clearly stated requirement for foreign language proficiency – either within the job description, the “requirements” section, or in the designated skill tags. Additionally, only those vacancies that included information about salary (whether specified as a fixed amount or a salary range) were considered eligible for analysis.

Postings were excluded from the dataset if they were duplicated across platforms, or if language skills were merely listed as desirable rather than explicitly required. Also removed were entries that lacked clarity in job categorization or used vague formulations regarding language proficiency, such as “basic English skills preferred,” which did not meet the threshold for explicit language equirements.

Sample Size and Composition

The final dataset consisted of 1,257 unique job postings that met all inclusion criteria. These postings were collected from three major Russian job search platforms, with 541 vacancies sourced from hh.ru, 382 from SuperJob, and 334 from Avito. Each posting was carefully reviewed to ensure it explicitly required knowledge of at least one foreign language and included salary information. In cases where a single job listing mentioned more than one language requirement (for example, both English and Chinese), each language was treated as a separate observation. As a result, the total number of language-specific entries reached 1,513, allowing for a more granular analysis of how individual languages are distributed across sectors, regions, and salary brackets.

Data Annotation and Variables

Each posting was manually annotated using a standardized coding protocol. The following variables were recorded in Table 1.

To ensure consistency in the classification of professional sectors, job titles were manually categorized into industry groups in accordance with the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08). These classifications were further cross-referenced and aligned with the corresponding Russian occupational codes (OKZ), allowing for standardized comparison across platforms and analytical accuracy within the national context.

Table 1  
Overview of Annotated Variables and Their Definitions

Variable Name	Description
job_id	Unique identifier for the posting
language_required	Name of the foreign language required (e.g., English, Mandarin, Arabic)
industry	Job sector / industry (e.g., IT, finance, education, construction)
region	Geographic region (federal district or city)
salary_rub	Stated salary (monthly, in Russian rubles, gross)
employment_type	Full-time, part-time, project-based, or shift work
language_level	Stated proficiency requirement (e.g., B2, fluent, native)
position_title	Title of the advertised position (e.g., Sales Manager, Software Engineer)

Data Processing and Analysis

The collected data were processed and analyzed using Python version 3.11 with a set of specialized libraries for statistical analysis and visualization. The pandas library was used for handling structured tabular data, while matplotlib and seaborn were applied to produce descriptive graphs and charts. For exploratory analysis, including clustering and pattern identification, the scikit-learn library was employed.

The analytical procedure involved several steps. First, frequency analysis was conducted to determine how often each language appeared across the dataset and within specific industry sectors. Second, descriptive statistics were computed, including the calculation of median and mean salary values for each language group. These figures were then compared with those derived from a control group of job postings that did not specify any foreign language requirement. This comparison served to highlight potential differences in wage levels. Third, cross-tabulations were used to examine the relationship between language requirements and variables such as industry classification, geographic location, and type of employment.

To reduce the influence of extreme values, all observations with salary z-scores greater than 3 or less than minus 3 were excluded from the wage analysis. In addition, a control group consisting of 980 job postings without foreign language requirements was assembled. These postings were matched to the main sample by industry and job category in order to provide a reliable benchmark. Based on this, the language-related wage advantage was estimated for each language by calculating the difference in median salaries between postings requiring a specific language and those that did not, within the same professional sector. This method allowed for a more precise evaluation of the economic return associated with foreign language proficiency.

Validation and Reliability

To enhance the credibility and robustness of the findings, several validation procedures were employed. First, data triangulation was used to cross-verify the results against external sources, including the EF English Proficiency Index<sup>4</sup> (2024), global hiring trend reports published by LinkedIn, and sector-specific compensation benchmarks provided by platforms such as Salary.com and Korn Ferry. This comparative approach enabled the alignment of primary observations with independently reported labor market patterns.

Second, inter-annotator reliability was assessed to ensure consistency in data coding. A random subsample of 150 job postings was independently annotated by two trained coders following the same coding protocol. The level of agreement between the two annotators was quantified using Cohen’s kappa coefficient, which yielded a value of  $\kappa = 0.88$ . This indicates a high degree of consistency and supports the reliability of the manual annotation process.

Finally, the dataset was screened for missing values. Job postings that lacked salary information were excluded from all wage-related analyses but were retained for descriptive and frequency-based assessments. This selective exclusion helped maintain analytical integrity without reducing the breadth of the overall dataset.

RESULTS

Overall Frequency of Language Requirements

Table 2 and Figure 1 present a detailed breakdown of foreign language requirements extracted from 1,513 language-specific entries across 1,257 unique job postings. English dominates the dataset, accounting for 84.7% of all language mentions ( $n = 1,281$ ). This overwhelming prevalence reflects

its entrenched status as the primary working language in multinational corporations, IT services, higher education, and professional services in the Russian labor market.

Mandarin Chinese emerges as the second most frequently required language, representing 5.2% of entries ( $n = 79$ ). Its demand is concentrated in sectors with strong Sino-Russian economic integration, such as logistics, procurement, and education. Korean follows with 3.4% ( $n = 51$ ), largely due to demand for rotational and contract-based labor in South Korean enterprises or projects involving Korean investors. German accounts for 2.9% of mentions ( $n = 44$ ), typically in engineering, technical documentation, and corporate services tied to German-owned firms.

Languages such as Japanese (1.1%), Spanish (0.8%), Arabic (0.6%), French (0.6%), and Turkish (0.4%) appear less frequently but represent specialized regional and sectoral demand. These include opportunities in luxury retail, international NGOs, tourism, and localized business development initiatives.

This distribution not only confirms the hegemonic position of English but also highlights emerging trends related to regional economic partnerships and shifting geopolitical alignments

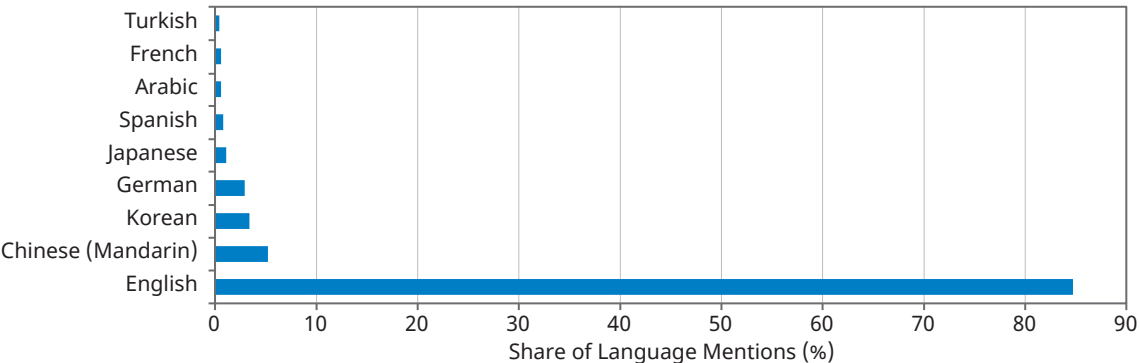
**Table 2**  
Frequency and Relative Share of Foreign Language Requirements in Job Postings ( $n = 1,513$ )

Language	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
English	1281	84.7
Chinese (Mandarin)	79	5.2
Korean	51	3.4
German	44	2.9
Japanese	17	1.1
Spanish	12	0.8
Arabic	9	0.6
French	9	0.6
Turkish	6	0.4

Note. Percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth and may not total exactly 100% due to rounding.

<sup>4</sup> EF English Proficiency Index. (2024). EF EPI 2024 Report. <https://www.ef.com/wwen/eipi/>

**Figure 1**  
Distribution of Foreign Language Requirements in Russian Job Postings ( $n = 1,513$ )





Frequency and Distribution  
of Foreign Language Requirements

A total of 1,257 unique job postings were analyzed, yielding 1,513 language-specific entries, as several postings required knowledge of more than one foreign language. The distribution of language mentions revealed a pronounced asymmetry in demand. As shown in Table 2, English overwhelmingly dominated the dataset, appearing in 84.7% of all language-annotated entries ( $n = 1,281$ ). This figure aligns with previous literature describing English as the primary vehicular language across globalized economic sectors, particularly in IT, finance, and higher education (Neeley, 2021; Hultgren, 2023).

Mandarin Chinese was the second most frequently required language, comprising 5.2% of all mentions ( $n = 79$ ). Its presence is primarily associated with economic cooperation between Russia and China, especially in logistics, procurement, and infrastructure-related employment. Korean, accounting for 3.4% ( $n = 51$ ), was disproportionately represented in shift-based or rotational employment opportunities linked to South Korean firms. German followed closely with 2.9% ( $n = 44$ ), particularly in engineering, manufacturing, and specialist consulting services associated with German corporations operating in Russia.

Languages with lower frequency included Japanese (1.1%), Spanish (0.8%), Arabic (0.6%), French (0.6%), and Turkish (0.4%). These languages were primarily concentrated in niche sectors such as diplomatic services, tourism, luxury goods, and regionally-specific business development initiatives.

This distribution pattern highlights the entrenched position of English as the default linguistic requirement, while also illustrating sector-specific and geopolitical influences in shaping demand for other languages. The marginal presence of Arabic, Turkish, and African languages may suggest latent demand related to future economic alliances or migration trends, but such hypotheses require further longitudinal investigation.

Table 3  
Regional Distribution of Selected Foreign Languages in Job Postings ( $n = 1,513$ )

Federal District / Region	English (%)	Chinese (%)	Korean (%)	German (%)	French (%)
Far Eastern Federal District	76.1	17.3	4.6	0.7	0.2
Central Federal District (Moscow)	88.4	3.1	0.4	5.6	2.5
Northwestern Federal District (St. Petersburg)	86.9	2.9	0.3	6.0	3.0
Southern and North Caucasus	85.5	3.6	1.2	2.1	0.9
Volga and Ural Districts	89.2	2.1	0.5	4.0	1.0

Note. Percentages represent the share of language-specific mentions within the total postings sampled from each region. Figures are rounded to one decimal place.

Regional Variation in Language Demand

The analysis revealed notable regional differences in the distribution of foreign language requirements across the Russian Federation. While English remained the predominant language in all federal districts, its relative dominance varied depending on regional economic orientation and patterns of international cooperation.

In the Far Eastern Federal District, the share of English-language requirements was comparatively lower. Here, Chinese (Mandarin) featured prominently, appearing in 17.3% of all language-specific job postings in the region. This pattern is consistent with intensified economic interaction between Russia and China, particularly in border regions such as the Primorsky Krai and Amur Oblast, where logistical, construction, and educational collaborations have grown significantly in recent years (Wang & Liu, 2023).

Similarly, Korean was notably overrepresented in Primorsky Krai and Khabarovsk Krai, where temporary labor migration schemes and rotational work models with South Korean companies are increasingly common. These postings were primarily associated with short-term contracts in logistics, seafood processing, and transport infrastructure.

In contrast, German and French were more frequently required in Moscow and St. Petersburg, cities that serve as hubs for multinational corporations, international NGOs, and educational institutions with European affiliations. The presence of European language requirements in these metropolitan regions likely reflects demand in higher education, diplomatic services, and high-end consulting.

These patterns suggest that language demand is not uniform across the national labor market but instead reflects region-specific economic integration and cross-border institutional ties.

This regional breakdown underscores the importance of viewing language demand not as a static national phenomenon but as a spatially differentiated response to transnational economic flows and localized labor market needs.

Salary Differentials and Language Premiums

The examination of salary data derived from the collected job postings demonstrates a stable and economically significant pattern: vacancies that explicitly specify a requirement for foreign language proficiency tend to offer higher remuneration compared to those that do not. The median monthly salary in positions requiring at least one foreign language was 94,500 Russian rubles. For comparable vacancies that did not include any language requirement and were selected to match industry sector and occupational level, the median was 72,000 rubles. This difference amounts to an average wage premium of 31.3 percent, which can be interpreted as a reliable indicator of the added labor market value associated with multilingual skills in the Russian employment context.

Disaggregated data reveal that this premium is not uniform across all languages. As indicated in Table 4, the highest median salaries were found in vacancies requiring proficiency in Mandarin Chinese, which reached 104,000 rubles. Positions listing German as a required language followed closely, with a median salary of 102,000 rubles. English and Japanese appeared next in the ranking, associated with 96,000 and 95,000 rubles respectively. By contrast, Korean was linked to a markedly lower median salary of 78,000 rubles. A plausible explanation for this difference lies in the fact that most Korean-language vacancies were concentrated in lower-paying occupational segments, including rotational and seasonal employment in logistics and related industries.

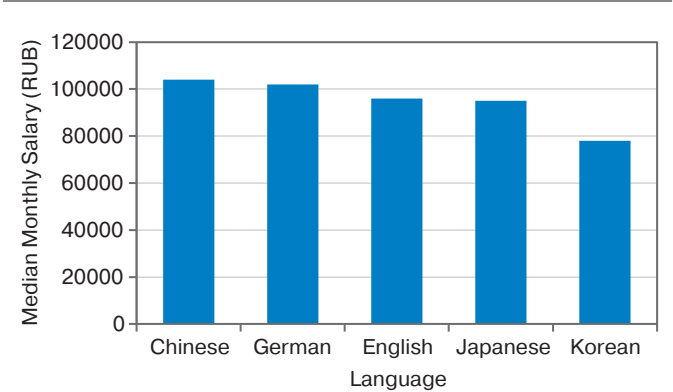
The magnitude of the language-related wage premium, calculated as the difference in median salary between language-required and language-neutral postings within the same professional field, provides further insight. The most substantial premiums were associated with Mandarin Chinese and German, estimated at 32,000 and 29,000 rubles respectively. English and Japanese followed with premiums of 24,000 and 23,000 rubles. Korean, while still yielding a positive differential, demonstrated a more modest premium of 6,000 rubles, confirming its relatively limited role in higher-income segments of the labor market.

Table 4  
Language-Specific Median Salaries and Premiums

Language	Median Salary (RUB)	Premium vs. Control Group (RUB)
Chinese	104000	32000
German	102000	29000
English	96000	24000
Japanese	95000	23000
Korean	78000	6000

Note. This table displays the corresponding numerical values, including both absolute salary levels and calculated wage premiums relative to a matched control group. These materials offer a clear and accessible summary of the economic incentives tied to multilingual proficiency across high-demand languages

Figure 2  
Median Salaries by Language Requirement in Job Postings



Note. This figure provides a comparative visualization of median monthly salaries for the five most frequently required languages. The disparities highlight the variable economic returns of specific linguistic

These differences are visually represented in Figure 2, which displays the median salaries for the five most frequently required foreign languages. This bar chart complements the quantitative overview in Table 4 and serves to illustrate the asymmetric nature of economic returns on foreign language proficiency. Collectively, the presented data suggest that linguistic capital is valued unevenly across sectors and is influenced not only by the functional status of the language but also by broader economic, geographic, and occupational factors that shape employer expectations and remuneration practices.

Sectoral Variation in Language-Associated Wage Premiums

The analysis of sector-specific patterns in salary data revealed that the financial return on foreign language skills is highly sensitive to the professional context in which those skills are applied (Stein-Smith, 2017). In particular, language-related wage premiums were most substantial in finance, engineering, and information technology. These fields are distinguished by their high levels of international integration, reliance on cross-border collaboration, and frequent interaction with foreign partners. As a result, foreign language proficiency in these domains tends to be a core requirement rather than a supplementary qualification.

For example, English proficiency in information technology roles was associated with a median salary increase of approximately 35 percent. This figure reflects the structural dependence of the IT sector on English-language documentation, team communication, and technical standards. In engineering and industrial consulting, German and Japanese were linked to similarly elevated salary levels. These languages were typically required for roles involving technical specifications, compliance with international protocols, or coordination with foreign manufacturers and contractors.

By contrast, the wage-enhancing effects of foreign language knowledge were far less pronounced in service-oriented sectors such as hospitality, tourism, and retail. Although foreign language skills are often helpful in client-facing roles, they do not appear to be essential to core task execution in these industries. In retail sales positions, for instance, English proficiency contributed to only a marginal increase in salary, which did not exceed 10 percent. This limited financial differentiation suggests that in low-wage, high-turn-over segments of the labor market, employers may value language skills primarily for customer service purposes rather than as a determinant of occupational complexity or responsibility.

A particularly clear example of this divergence was observed in relation to Mandarin Chinese. In procurement and logistics, where knowledge of Chinese facilitates negotiations with suppliers and coordination of international shipments, the salary premium exceeded 40 percent. However, in administrative support roles, where tasks are often routine and internally focused, the same language requirement had little to no measurable impact on wages.

These findings support the broader conclusion that the market value of foreign language proficiency is not uniform across professional domains. Instead, its effect on remuneration is shaped by the degree to which language use is embedded in the operational and communicative demands of a given occupation. Where linguistic competencies are integral to performance and accountability, they are rewarded accordingly. Where they remain peripheral, their economic value tends to diminish.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that foreign language proficiency remains a significant and quantifiable component of professional capital in the Russian labor market. Language requirements were associated with substantial wage premiums, particularly in high-demand and globally integrated sectors such as information technology, engineering, and procurement. Among all languages, Mandarin Chinese, German, and English yielded the highest economic returns, while Korean, despite a measurable effect, was predominantly linked to lower-paid positions in rotational and short-term employment. These results confirm that linguistic capital is not only in demand but is also evaluated differentially depending on its functional relevance to specific economic domains.

The observed patterns are consistent with international scholarship on the economics of language, which shows that the labor market rewards language skills most strongly in sectors characterized by high transaction complexity and international coordination (Chiswick & Miller, 2007; Grin et al., 2011; Ginsburgh et al., 2020). Within the Russian

context, the findings echo earlier work by E. Shamaeva<sup>5</sup>, who emphasized the structural integration of foreign language proficiency into professional competencies across technology and management. Similarly, the Russian labour market shows that German and French continue to be valued in Russian IT and engineering vacancies, especially where client relations or documentation in multinational environments are involved.

At the same time, the study contributes to a more differentiated understanding of regional variation in language demand. As noted by (Ostrovsky, 2024), Chinese is increasingly prioritized in the Russian Far East due to deepening economic ties with China. Our results confirm this trend by demonstrating a disproportionate concentration of Chinese-language postings in the Far Eastern Federal District. Likewise, the relatively strong representation of Korean in the same region aligns with findings by Gazzola and Templin (2020), who argue that regional trade dynamics significantly shape language utility on the labor market.

In terms of language valuation, the continued dominance of English supports global trends described by Neeley (2021) and Hultgren (2023), who documented the expanding role of English as a default language of digital communication, software development, and transnational corporate management. However, as Proshina (2022) cautions, this dominance does not necessarily lead to a reduction in the relevance of other languages. Rather, it coexists with a growing need for strategic multilingualism, particularly in regions undergoing economic realignment. This is supported by our data, which show that English yields high premiums, but Mandarin Chinese now rivals or exceeds its value in certain industrial functions (Gil, 2021).

The functional differentiation of language premiums is further clarified when viewed through the lens of sectoral segmentation. As Gricenko and Kazantseva (2021) noted, multilingualism enhances professional mobility only when embedded in occupations that require complex coordination and intercultural negotiation. Our study supports this by showing that wage premiums are highest where language use is essential to core operations, such as in procurement or software development. Conversely, in retail and hospitality, where language use is often auxiliary, the associated premiums were minimal.

These observations suggest that language skills are evaluated not solely as cultural assets but as operational tools, whose economic value depends on their embeddedness in task execution and organizational structure. This aligns with recent work by Koskinen, K. & Pokorn (2021),

<sup>5</sup> Shamaeva, E. (2023). What Foreign Languages Are in Demand for Work in Russia. And How You Can Increase Your Income by Learning a New Language. <https://t-j.ru/foreign-languages-for-career-stat>



Mirzayev (2024), who argue that the rise of AI and machine translation has reduced the symbolic capital of language in routine contexts, while increasing the demand for high-level, domain-specific multilingual communication.

This study confirms that foreign language proficiency continues to function as an economically valued skill in the Russian labor market. The magnitude of the wage premium varies by language, region, and sector, reflecting broader patterns of global integration and regional specialization. These findings underscore the importance of aligning language education policy with labor market needs, as also emphasized by Rozhkova et al. (2019) and Marconi et al. (2023), who noted persistent gaps between language instruction and real-world occupational demand. Ensuring that educational systems respond to these dynamics will be essential for preparing professionals capable of navigating an increasingly multilingual and interconnected economy.

## LIMITATIONS

First, the data were drawn exclusively from publicly available job postings and may not capture language requirements for internal promotions or informal labor markets. Second, the analysis focused primarily on the explicit presence of language skills in job descriptions, which may underrepresent latent expectations of language competence, especially in globalized sectors. Third, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to assess temporal trends or long-term wage outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated how foreign language requirements in job postings influence wage differentiation and sectoral demand patterns in the Russian labor market. The analysis revealed that language proficiency functions as a measurable form of professional capital, associated with a clear

wage premium across most sectors. English remains the dominant foreign language in employment requirements, but Mandarin Chinese and German were found to yield even higher salary advantages in specific occupational domains. The results also confirmed substantial regional variation, with Asian languages showing greater prominence in the Far Eastern regions, reflecting ongoing shifts in economic geography.

These findings highlight that the value of multilingual competencies is not uniform but is instead shaped by the sectoral relevance and functional integration of a given language into professional activities. Language skills appear to be most highly rewarded in industries with strong international linkages, technical complexity, or cross-border communication needs. By contrast, in sectors with limited exposure to international clients or standardized operational environments, the wage premium is notably reduced.

The practical implications of the study lie in its relevance for job seekers, educational planners, and policymakers. For individuals entering the labor market, strategic language learning aligned with high-value sectors may offer long-term wage advantages. For institutions involved in workforce training, the results underscore the importance of tailoring language education to match actual labor market needs rather than generalized assumptions. For employers, the findings suggest that investment in employees' linguistic development can yield returns in productivity, flexibility, and global competitiveness.

Future research should explore the temporal dimension of language demand, assess employer attitudes through qualitative methods, and examine the implications of emerging technologies such as machine translation on the valuation of human language skills. Expanding the analysis to include additional linguistic groups and cross-country comparisons may also offer a broader understanding of how language functions as a resource in increasingly diversified and digitalized labor markets.

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