

Careers for Linguists

In this article, four people who studied linguistics and applied linguistics at university talk about their backgrounds and careers.

<i>Name</i>	John Bellamy
<i>Position</i>	Lecturer in German Linguistics, University of Sheffield, UK



What is your background?

Upon beginning the writing-up year of my PhD, I took up the position as lecturer in the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Sheffield, UK. Despite still being in the final stages of my PhD, I decided to begin working because I was looking forward to teaching and passing on what I had learned from my own academic background. This department at Sheffield wanted a colleague who would mainly teach linguistic modules and this suited my research interests. My thesis concentrates on language attitudes and covers language varieties in Austria and England. One of the primary influences on choosing this topic was my familiarity with Austria because I used to work there at the University of Vienna.

Can you briefly describe your job?

To be able to lecture in German linguistics has been a long-term ambition of mine and I am enjoying the opportunity to fulfil this goal. Twice a week I give a two-hour lecture, one of which is 'Introduction to German linguistics' and the other is 'Language and society in the German-speaking countries'. In addition to these, I teach a variety of German language modules in collaboration with colleagues from the department and these include German grammar classes, translation and advanced writing. I teach all levels of undergraduate students, from first to final year. There is also a certain amount of administration work involved, for example as language coordinator it is my role to help students who have timetabling clashes. Another aspect to my job is assisting the German section of the Modern Languages Teaching Centre at the university. There is also a pastoral element because I am the personal tutor for a number of undergraduate students who are in different years of their degrees.

What do you enjoy about your job? What do you dislike?

Ever since I began teaching at the University of Vienna, I realized that teaching an academic subject at a university is a career path I would like to pursue. Teaching can be very fulfilling and I have found it true that as the teacher, I am learning all the time too. Not a great deal of time has passed since I was an undergraduate student myself so I can closely relate to the experiences of the students in my classes and I hope to pass my own enthusiasm for the topics onto the students. As in many other jobs, there is administrative work which would be the only part I dislike.

What advice would you give people who are interested in becoming a lecturer?

It is very useful to be a member of electronic mailing lists for the relevant academic field. Vacancies for academic posts are usually advertised in these mailing lists and these help to keep everyone in the loop with latest developments, conferences and job offers. The Guardian newspaper lists vacancies for academic posts in the Tuesday edition. A PhD is generally a prerequisite for this position and I certainly recommend aiming to finish the PhD before starting full-time work because it can become difficult to finish a thesis whilst embarking on a new career. Networking is also important and it is a good idea to attempt to attend a few academic conferences each year.

<i>Name</i>	Sarah Atkins
<i>Position</i>	PhD Student in Applied Linguistics, University of Nottingham, UK; ESRC Intern, The British Library

**What is your background?**

I started my PhD in September 2006 at the University of Nottingham. Having gone straight from an undergraduate and Master's degree to a PhD, I wanted the opportunity to gain some experience outside the university. During my studies, I've been lucky enough to gain two placements. The first was in 2006 at Routledge academic publishers as part of the Language Learning and Linguistics editorial team. The second was run by my PhD funding council, the ESRC, who organise a placement scheme for their postgraduate students. The particular placement that took my interest here was one run in conjunction with the British Library, which offered a three month research position related to my field of study in the communication of health and illness.

Can you briefly describe your job?

The internship at the British Library, working within the Social Science Collections and Research team, required me to produce a research design for investigating the representations of stem cell research in British news media over the last 20 years. Whilst I was well used to carrying out academic research, the role provided me with far more autonomy and responsibility as a researcher than I had previously experienced, a daunting but also confidence-boosting position to be in. Further, the placement threw me into a rather different research environment, requiring me, from the first week, to disseminate my research to a range of different audiences. As well as talking to a number of members of the British Library, I was also able to interview MPs (Members of Parliament), stem cell scientists and journalists as part of the project. It also required me to organise practical means of disseminating this research through project reports and a seminar.

What do you enjoy about your job? What do you dislike?

The British Library was a fascinating and enjoyable institution to work for, with the benefit of seeing behind the scenes some of the historic and rare collections it keeps. The research job itself was incredibly varied and presented a steep learning curve for me. I enjoyed the opportunity to interview people that I would not normally have met in my PhD studies and to convey my research ideas and point of view to an audience outside the academy. Further, these figures have become valuable and

useful contacts for me. At times the critical view of research in the social sciences I experienced from a few interviewees was challenging, but the necessity to justify my work sharpened my academic thought and my understanding of how to make my research relevant and practical beyond academia.

What advice would you give people who are interested in taking on a placement within their PhD?

Taking on an extended placement during the PhD will undoubtedly take valuable time away from your studies, so make sure you research carefully and find an internship that you're enthusiastic about and has the potential to contribute to your doctoral research interests. There are a wide range of options available, so keep your eye on ESRC and other funding councils' communications, as well as your postgraduate school. If you're taking on a research position in another organisation, it's clearly well worth doing some preparatory work before you go, because from day one of your placement you'll need to be able to articulate and discuss your research ideas confidently.

<i>Name</i>	Anna Linthe
<i>Position</i>	Development Editor for Applied Linguistics, Cambridge University Press, UK



What is your background?

I started working as an editor in June 2008. At that time, I was midway through a full-time PhD in German Linguistics at the University of Sheffield, which I am still writing on a part-time basis. Although I hadn't finished my PhD, I decided to apply for the job as it sounded so interesting – and it was the first job I had ever seen which suited my background so well. Before starting my PhD, I taught English in Germany and Namibia for a total of three years, did a BA in German and Linguistics and a MA in Applied Linguistics. I have learnt how to be an editor through a combination of on-the-job experience and numerous in-house training courses.

Can you briefly describe your job?

My job is much more varied than I ever imagined. I work alongside the Commissioning Editor, whose main priority is the long-term planning of our publishing. My responsibilities lie much more with the books which are currently in development (i.e. being written and edited) or production (i.e. being typeset or printed). Part of my work involves desk editing (i.e. actually editing manuscripts, preparing them for the typesetter and proofreading), but a lot of it is project management, research, assessing proposals and so on. For example, in one day I might split my time between commissioning reviews of proposals, arranging for other reviewers to be paid their fee, proofreading the first proofs of a book, phoning the author of that book to talk through any changes they want to make, and editing a podcast interview for the Applied Linguistics resource site. I also spend a lot of time in meetings or talking to colleagues from other departments – for example, about marketing, manufacturing, or book schedules (i.e. when the manuscript will be submitted, when it will be edited, when it will be sent to the typesetter and so on).

What do you enjoy about your job? What do you dislike?

There is so much to learn and so much to do – I really enjoy the fact that I am constantly challenged. The days go by very quickly (which can of course also be stressful if I have deadlines to keep). I also enjoy the people side of the job: working with colleagues, authors and freelancers, meeting people at conferences and so on. The only thing I dislike is doing paperwork – administrative tasks which need to be done but which sometimes seem to take up more time than I would like.

What advice would you give people who are interested in becoming an editor?

Keep an eye on the publishers' vacancy listings. Most publishers seem to look for evidence of skills rather than editorial experience when recruiting at Development Editor level, so lots of publishers offer training on the job, rather than expecting applicants to already have it. When I asked my line manager why she chose me for my job, she said one key aspect was that I had done a lot of research on Cambridge University Press, the Applied Linguistics books which we publish, and competitors' publishing – so I showed evidence of being able to conduct research, which is an important element of the job. It is also important to demonstrate an eye for detail and an ability to develop good working relationships (with colleagues, authors and so on).

Name	Loretta Fung
Position	Tutor at Nottingham Trent International College, UK; Founder of Academic Voice – Proofreading, Editing and Research Support Services



What is your background?

I completed a BA in Modern English Language at Lancaster University and a MAELT and PhD in Applied Linguistics at the University of Nottingham. I taught ESL/EFL in Hong Kong and Nottingham and was project manager and ELT materials developer at the University of Hong Kong. I was involved in postdoctoral research which led to publications in several peer-reviewed journals. My research interests are in discourse analysis, teaching pedagogy, corpus linguistics and computer-mediated communication. Currently I am involved in EAP teaching as well as editing, translation and interpretation work.

Can you briefly describe your job?

In view of the huge international student population seeking higher education abroad, the need for provision of English language support within and beyond the university walls is imminent. In 2007, I founded Academic Voice (www.academic-voice.co.uk), a web-based initiative aiming to offer proofreading, editing, translation and research support to international students and researchers in higher education. The system is fully web-enabled and all work can be done within a few clicks. I am practically involved in editing essays, dissertations, theses and academic papers, as well as translating research data from Chinese to English. Since Academic Voice functions as a team, I am also involved in managerial and administrative duties, like co-ordinating other freelance editors and teaching professionals, and liaising with student bodies.

In addition, I am currently teaching a graduate diploma programme at Nottingham Trent International College which prepares pre-master's students for their progression to postgraduate study. International

students need to be fully equipped with the necessary language and study skills to meet the challenges in the academic world.

What do you enjoy about your job?

I have a passion for teaching and research-related work. The job nature of Academic Voice has enabled me to get in touch with many international students and researchers from different backgrounds. My teaching role is a nice complement to the editing work which is mostly office-based. I treasure the 'personal' dimension as a tutor and it is a real joy to see my students working towards their goal.

What's more, the flexible nature of this web-based business fits well into my schedule to look after a growing family. It leaves more time for parenting, gardening, school runs and domestic chores!

What advice would you give to people who are interested in running a business?

My job is seasonal in nature. There are very quiet seasons and busy hours when clients want to get their work back by the next day. Anyone who is interested in running a business of this nature needs to be highly efficient and flexible. More importantly, it is ideal to work as a team alongside experts in marketing and IT (not just in linguistics) to make the business a success.