‘Doing languages at Oxford is probably the most fun degree you can do. The exam books I had made me understand much better why people act the way they act and why they think what they think. It allowed me to look at, history and the present in complex ways.’ — Marina, Russian & German

‘I was quite nervous about coming to interview at Oxford, but once I arrived, the atmosphere was pleasantly relaxed and lots of people were at least as anxious as any questions. I was interviewed by both languages tutors for about twenty minutes each. The experience was a lot less formal than I had expected, and included short passages to translate, discussion of the target language and its culture. Do you enjoy reading and thinking critically about whatever you read, or about films or plays that you watch? You will throw your best at Oxford, if you have a thirst for literary study and intellectual curiosity for discovering literature, culture, and linguistics. Tutors ensure that most applicants haven’t had a chance to study literature formally as part of their foreign language courses at school or college. Literary study will give you the chance to appreciate some of the most interesting products of human imagination and thought.’

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Modern Languages has never been more relevant, in an era of global communication where fluency and dexterity in at least one foreign language is an invaluak skill. At the same time, a deep and nuanced understanding of cultural imagination, intellectual history, beliefs and attitudes – what people think and how they think – is found in careful study of literature, thought, and linguistics.

Why study Modern Languages at the University of Oxford?

What courses in Modern Languages are available at Oxford?

You can study Modern Languages at Oxford in three ways:

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What opportunities are there for studying a language from scratch?

Alongside a language that you’ll have at A2 level, you can take on another language from scratch: Czech, German, Modern Greek, Italian (from the second year), Russian, or Spanish. You’ll have an intensive language teaching in small groups, enabling you to make accelerated progress. At the end of the first year, you take the same examination for all the first-year language classes and all the first-year language classes.

How is the course structured?

Language is the keystone of the Oxford course in Modern Languages: it provides subject-specific content for a wide range of other courses. As a student, you’ll have the opportunity to choose options from a range of other courses, including those in art history, architecture, art history, and European studies.

What does Linguistics involve?

Linguistics is the study of language in all its aspects. Its practitioners are interested in the historical and sociolinguistic study of current and emerging languages and their development, as well as the underlying structures of language use. It’s the opportunity to acquire an abundance of skills in foreign countries around the world, including the opportunity to work as a translator for an advertising agency in London, or study at drama school in Paris. You might undertake a journalism internship in Buenos Aires, or work on a newspaper in New York. The opportunities are endless.

How would I be studying?

Modern Languages students have lots of varied opportunities to learn with tutors and from each other. Each week, you’ll attend three to four hours of lectures on language, literature, and key topics in the field. You’ll have regular debates, seminars, and essay writing workshops on topics you’ve prepared in advance. You may also be in the Language Centre practising your oral or grammar skills, or meeting up with friends to discuss your latest thoughts and ideas.

Your Modern Languages degree at Oxford is normally a four-year course, including an compulsory year abroad (normally the third year).

[Lara is being set up for an EEG (electroencephalogram) experiment to measure electrical activity of the brain in response to language material.]

If you study a joint degree combining one language with a different subject, you expect to speak fluently in colloquial and more formal situations, and write and translate with accuracy and sensitivity. The study of literature, new to most students, provides unique and challenging opportunities for a language study that broadens and deepens your understanding of culture.

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It turned out to be one of the most enriching experiences of my life. I grew in confidence socially, and, I think importantly, with the people provided a great complement to my Oxford degree – the practical experience of preparing my everyday culinary dish.