

Language Pathways: Connecting Heritage Learners to Federal Careers

Episode 0: Introduction to the Language Pathways Podcast

[Intro music]

Francesca Di Silvio: Hello, and welcome to Language Pathways: Connecting Heritage Learners to Federal Careers. We believe in the power of multilingualism, and in this podcast series we'll discuss how your [00:30] language skills can help you get hired and work successfully in the federal government. By sharing experiences that link language study to potential federal careers, we'll teach you how to leverage your language skills to get a fulfilling job.

We define a heritage language learner as someone with a cultural or familial relationship to a language that was not the dominant language used around them outside of the home, for example, someone who lives and goes to school in the United States and has a parent who speaks Arabic. Our focus in this project is connecting heritage language learners of Arabic, [01:00] Chinese, Korean, Persian, or Russian to federal careers, but this podcast series can be useful to all current or potential language learners of these critical languages or additional languages other than English who may be interested in a career in the government!

I'm Francesca, one of the three hosts of this podcast series brought to you by the Center for Applied Linguistics, or CAL, which is a nonprofit organization located in Washington, D.C. that promotes language learning and cultural understanding by providing research and resources. In this episode, my cohosts and I [01:30] will provide some more information about this podcast series and other resources CAL provides for heritage language learners interested in pursuing federal government careers. But first, we'll tell you a little bit about who we are, what we do, and our own experiences with language learning.

Mathilda Reckford: I'm Mathilda. I grew up in France with a French mother and an American father. I spoke English with my father at home and had English as a Second Language classes alongside my French-speaking peers in the French school system. I moved to the U.K. and then the U.S. for my [02:00] studies and career. This helped me improve my English, and I always paid close attention to the way I'm speaking the language and how I'm learning it. I see that learning two languages while growing up helped me when I learned German and started to learn Russian. Working at the Center for Applied Linguistics and living in the U.S. really helps me explore my identity, and I bring my experience of learning English as a heritage language when helping to develop English proficiency tests and exploring best practices for heritage language education.

Jamie Morgan: I'm Jamie, and here at the [02:30] Center for Applied Linguistics I work on a variety of projects involving research, assessment, and professional development for heritage language, world language, and English language education. I'm not a heritage speaker myself, but I have extensive experience conducting research on and developing resources for heritage

language teachers, and I explored the relationship between these teachers' identities and their classroom practices in my master's thesis. Before I started working at CAL, I taught English and Spanish in bilingual elementary schools [03:00] in the U.S., Europe, and Asia, during which time I worked with some heritage learners of Spanish. Language learning has always been an interest of mine, and I personally have experience learning Spanish, French, and Korean.

Francesca: And back to me, Francesca, again - I was raised in the United States as a heritage learner of Italian. Growing up, I heard Italian spoken by my parents at home and by other relatives in Italy and I was lucky to be able to travel there and use the language. I was able to understand and speak Italian pretty well through this exposure. However, I was not [03:30] able to study Italian and really update my reading and writing skills until college. When I started language study in middle school, I chose Spanish as a language that is closely related to Italian, and I also continued to study Spanish throughout college. I am very happy these days to continue using Italian often with my family including in near real-time via WhatsApp, and I like to practice my Spanish when I can in daily life and work. I love languages and linguistics, and I have also learned a little bit of Portuguese, Catalan, and Russian. Now at the Center [04:00] for Applied Linguistics, I work on developing tests for English and world languages and do research and develop materials for language teachers and learners in U.S. K-12 schools and universities.

Now we'll talk about our organization and share some background information about this podcast series.

Mathilda: The Center for Applied Linguistics, or CAL, is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1959 and headquartered in Washington, D.C. Our mission is to promote language learning and cultural understanding by serving as a trusted source for research, [04:30] policy analysis, services, and information. Through its work, CAL seeks solutions to issues involving language and culture as they relate to access and equity in education and society around the globe.

Jamie: This podcast is part of a project funded by the National Security Agency to share free online materials to help connect heritage language learners of Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian, and Russian with opportunities for careers in the U.S. federal government. These languages are highlighted because they are identified as [05:00] critical languages for which the national STARTALK initiative provides summer and year-round learning programs for students from kindergarten through college.

Francesca: The podcast covers topics that will help you learn more about opportunities in the federal government and build on your language and cultural assets to pursue jobs. We talk about things like developing your language skills for government work; examples of different federal government careers and the personal and professional benefits they offer; using different language varieties in a federal work environment; [05:30] and how to network and search for government jobs.

Mathilda: Yes, and the podcast series comes with different supports to help you apply what you've learned from the episodes. On our website, we have an interactive podcast guide with questions for discussion and reflection. You can also find illustrated steps for various pathways towards a government career that uses language skills.

Jamie: The website also has specific guides for students of Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian, and Russian. Each guide provides advice and resources including [06:00] scholarship and language learning opportunities and links to learning materials to help develop your language skills.

Francesca: And for each podcast episode, make sure to check out the episode transcript and the resource list, which has links to the organizations referenced by our guests and other web materials you may find useful.

Mathilda: Yes, and speaking of what the guests mention in each episode, let's go over some common acronyms that come up in the rest of this series. Some of our guests talk about ACTFL, which is the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. [06:30] Guests will reference the ACTFL proficiency scale as well, which some of you may know, as well as the ILR proficiency scale. This acronym stands for the Interagency Language Roundtable, and we will explain it more in future episodes!

We also have to admit that the federal government is known for using lots of acronyms and other shorthand, from agency abbreviations like FBI, CIA, or DoJ for Department of Justice, to acronyms for different groups like NSEP, the National Security Education Program, [07:00] and even jobs like FSOs for Foreign Service Officers. We always try to spell out these in our episodes and you can check the transcripts and episode resource lists to learn more.

Jamie: Before we go, we also wanted to mention that in addition to our podcast series and resources, we have a series of short video interviews with speakers of Arabic, Chinese, Korean, and Russian who use their languages working in different government jobs. The video series is accompanied by results from a survey we administered to our guest speakers, [07:30] as well as an interactive video guide with questions for discussion and reflection. We also have resources for teachers and language programs who want to help connect their students to both our podcast and video materials, so make sure to check everything out on our website!

[Transition music]

Francesca: Well, that's all for our introductory episode of the Language Pathways Podcast! In the next episode, we'll welcome our first guests and build connections between [08:00] language learning and federal careers by talking about the skills and abilities that heritage language learners can bring to government jobs. Thanks for joining us and see you next time!

Language Pathways: Connecting Heritage Learners to Federal Careers was created and produced by the Center for Applied Linguistics. This podcast is one component of a project funded by the National Security Agency to develop and share materials highlighting federal [08:30] career opportunities for heritage language learners of Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian, and Russian.

[Outro music]