



# INDEPENDENT CONTRACT LINGUIST



Having knowledge of foreign languages and cultures is a significant asset to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Linguists provide valuable intelligence about criminal and terrorist activity that could potentially damage national security and risk American lives. Their unique talent also helps to identify and prevent foreign counterintelligence threats, cases of corruption, espionage, cybercrime, human trafficking, and other offenses.

## An Inside Look

The FBI has independent contract linguist opportunities in 56 field offices across the United States; however, they are NOT FBI employees, but self-employed individuals who provide service to the FBI. The FBI also allows independent contract linguists to apply to become full-time language

analysts. In fact, most language analysts began serving the FBI as independent contract linguists.



## FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEST BATTERY

The FBI's Foreign Language Test Battery consists of two phases.

### Phase I

**Listening comprehension** – Hear foreign language conversations and answer multiple-choice or short-answer questions in English. For some languages, you may be asked to write a summary of the conversation in English.

**Reading comprehension** – Answer multiple-choice questions in English about the content of short passages written in the foreign language.

**Translation** – Translate short passages of increasing difficulty from the foreign language fully and faithfully into English, communicating everything in the original passage. The test is scored for accuracy of content and quality of expression.

**English writing** – Required if a translation exam is unavailable; involves writing an essay on a given topic. For both translations and compositions, you are allowed to use a non-electronic dictionary.

### Phase II

**Speaking** – After passing the written tests, you will take speaking tests in the foreign language and English. These tests consist of a structured conversation conducted via phone with native speakers of the test language.

## More than Words

Independent contract linguists play significant roles at the FBI where they will be called on to:

- Translate written or audio materials, normally from a foreign language into English.
- Interpret during interviews or visits from foreign dignitaries.
- Provide cultural expertise in support of various investigations.
- Testify in court about translations produced.
- Assist special agents with various types of interviews.
- Work at a field office location but may be asked to travel to other field offices or legal attachés to support cases.

## Language Proficiency Required

Successful candidates must exhibit proficiency in English and their foreign language, as well as the ability to translate. Language proficiency and translation ability are demonstrated by qualifying scores on the FBI's Foreign Language Test Battery. The FBI looks for candidates with various skill levels to support its language mission. The test battery assesses those skills according to the [Interagency Language Roundtable \(ILR\) scale \(www.govtilr.org\)](http://www.govtilr.org).