
Foreign Language skills and employment status: Evidence from Germany, Italy, and Spain

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Foreign Language skills and employment status: Evidence from Germany, Italy, and Spain^{*}

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between foreign language skills and the employment status of natives in Germany, Italy and Spain. Using a probit model and data from Eurostat's Adult Education Survey 2011, this article studies the conditional correlation between knowledge of English and French as foreign languages, and the probability of being employed, comparatively, for men and women. The results reveal that skills in English increase the probability of being employed for men in the three countries, respectively, by 3.4, 4.3 and 5.2%. Knowledge of English increases the probability of being employed for women in Germany and Italy — respectively, by 5.6 and 5.7%—but not in Spain. The results also show that very good skills are associated with a higher probability of being employed than sufficient or good skills. The conditional correlation between knowledge of English and employment status for men is larger in countries where skills in this language are less common among the population, and where the unemployment rate is higher. This is consistent with the fundamental economic concept of scarcity. Estimates for French are not statistically significant.

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