

Bethany Waddey, Communication Disorders & Spanish, Class of 2023

By Bethany Waddey

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"I strongly encourage you to study a language during your college years. Having a degree in a language will not only make you a more marketable employee, but it will also strengthen you as an individual."



My name is Bethany Waddey, and I am double majoring in Communication Sciences and Disorders and Spanish. When I graduate with my bachelor's degree from Western Kentucky University, I plan to attend graduate school in Speech-Language Pathology and treat Spanish-speaking individuals with communication disorders. I want to share some of my college experience to demonstrate that a degree in a language can be paired with any other major. Doing so will better equip you to reach your personal and professional goals.

I came into college undecided about my major and future career. During my first semesters of college, I took many introductory courses and job-shadowed numerous professions in which I was interested. Eventually, I shadowed a Speech-Language Pathologist, and I instantly loved the profession. I then took the introductory course for Communication Sciences and Disorders and knew it was the right path for me. It combined many of my interests into one career, which allowed me to pursue my passion for helping people and making a difference.

I chose to pair my major in Communication Sciences and Disorders with a Spanish major because I knew it would allow me to help a larger population. English speakers are not the only people who experience language disorders and communication difficulties, but there are few Speech and Language service providers who are able to help Spanish-speaking individuals. There is a great need for bilingual Speech-Language Pathologists, and I want to help fill that need and make a difference in the Spanish-speaking community.

This semester I have seen both of my majors intersect. I am taking a phonetics course for my Communication Disorders major, and I have learned about dialects, or variations of speech or language based on a geographical location, native language background, or social or ethnic group membership. It is important for me-- and all Speech-Language Pathologists-- to have a deep understanding of dialects and language differences to be able to identify inherent speech differences and to prevent over-treatment of individuals who do not require services.

Caroline Hudson, a **WKU Communication Sciences and Disorders** instructor, Speech-Language Pathologist, and **WKU Communication Disorders Clinic** Director said, "There is a tremendous need for bilingual speech-language pathologists due to the fact that over 67 million residents of the United States speak a language other than English at home. Bilingual speech-language pathologists are able to build a strong rapport with those they serve due to being able to provide services in individuals' native language. In addition, a bilingual SLP understands bilingual language development and can help communication breakdowns be avoided to prevent medical errors or misunderstandings. In my opinion, being bilingual is an incredible asset to a speech-language pathologist in regard to career opportunities and more importantly in being able to make a positive difference in the lives of those they serve."

Overall, I strongly encourage you to study a language during your college years. Having a degree in a language will not only make you a more marketable employee, but it will also strengthen you as an individual. You will develop a deep understanding of other cultures, you will get out of your comfort zone, and you will grow as a student! You can pair a language major with any other major or minor, and it will set you up for success in your future career. I have had an incredible experience studying Spanish at WKU, and I know you would not regret studying a language.

If you are interested in adding a language major or minor and need more information, check out the [Modern Languages website!](#) One of our advisors can help you decide which courses you need to enhance and strengthen your current career goals.

