

# The value of Languages

Ideas for a UK Strategy for languages

A report of a workshop held in Cambridge in October 2015 to discuss current deficiencies in UK language policy, to put forward proposals to address these, and to illustrate the strategic value of languages. Representatives from government departments and bodies included: Ministry of Defence, UK Trade and Investment, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ofsted and the devolved administrations.



# **Executive Summary**

# A UK Strategy for Languages

A successful UK strategy for languages is one where the full contribution of languages to the UK economy and society is realized. Central are questions of prosperity and well-being; international relations, diplomacy, security and defence; education and training; identity and social cohesion.

- Since language issues are central to many key issues for the UK today, a cross-government approach is essential
- Education policy for languages must be grounded in national priorities and promote a cultural shift in the attitude towards languages
- Language policy must be underpinned by organizational cultural change
- Champions for languages both within and outside government are vital

# What concerns are there now?

- Decline of languages and language learning in the UK from schools through to higher education
- Business lost to UK companies through lack of language skills
- The UK's 'soft power' and effectiveness in conflict and matters of national security is limited by a shortage of speakers of strategically important languages
- The UK is under-represented internationally, for instance in the EU civil service or in the translating and interpreting departments of the UN
- The community and heritage languages spoken in the UK are at times undervalued

# What are the benefits of a UK Strategy for Languages?

- UK businesses can participate fully in the global market place using the language and communication skills of their workforce
- The UK is able to maximize its role and authority in foreign policy through language and diplomacy
- Educational attainment in a wide range of languages brings with it personal cognitive benefits as well as the 'cultural agility' vital to international relations and development
- Languages enhance the cultural capital and social cohesion of the different communities of the UK

# Contents

Executive Summary
Background and Context
Part 1: Benefits of a UK Strategy for Languages
<b>GOAL I:</b> UK businesses are able to participate fully in the global market place using the language and communication skills of their workforce
Case Study: The Value-Added Recruit
Case Study: The value of language skills to SMEs
<b>GOAL II:</b> The UK is able to maximize its role and authority in diplomacy, security and defence
Case Study: Counter-Terrorism and MOD
Case Study: The Value of Languages in GCHQ
<b>GOAL III:</b> Educational attainment in a wide range of languages is supported and encouraged
Case Study: Mapping infectious diseases – science and languages working in partnership
Case Study: Language learning as transformative – the experience of a Cambridge medical student
<b>GOAL IV:</b> Languages enhance the cultural capital and social cohesion within England and the devolved administrations of the UK
Case Study: Language and Conflict Resolution in Northern Ireland
Part 2: Facilitating and Delivering a UK Strategy for Languages
Cross-government approach
Organizational culture change
Education and training
Communications and public campaign
Research on multilingualism and language learning
Future action
Workshop Participants

# Background and Context

The role and contribution of language to the UK economy and society is both rich and varied. It stretches from enabling economic growth and prosperity through the language and communication skills required to enable UK business to participate in the global market place; to the 'soft power' and diplomatic skills through which the UK's role and authority in foreign policy is manifested; to enhancing the cultural capital, educational attainment and social cohesion within England and the devolved communities of the UK both now and in the future.

Several policy documents have recently addressed UK language policy such as Languages: The State of the Nation<sup>1</sup>, Global Futures in Wales<sup>2</sup>, a Scots Language Policy<sup>3</sup> and an Ofsted report on Key Stage 3: the wasted years?<sup>4</sup>, which highlights concerns regarding the level of achievement in modern foreign languages.

A workshop and discussions held in Cambridge in October 2015 discussed mapping where responsibility for language sits within government, in order to encourage dialogue between different government departments and with researchers, to promote the value of languages nationally. Language policy is not just restricted to foreign language learning, but deals with key strategic issues for the UK today and in the future: national security, diplomacy and conflict resolution, community and social cohesion, migration and identity. Indeed, speakers and representatives from government came from a range of departments including Ministry of Defence, UK Trade and Investment, Department for Education, HEFCE, GCHQ, Education Scotland, Welsh Government, Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure Northern Ireland, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and Ofsted.

The overarching goal of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages (APPG), chaired by Nia Griffith MP and co-chaired by Baroness Coussins, is to achieve a coherent, cross-departmental strategy for languages. In its 2014 'Manifesto for Languages' circulated before the last general election, the Group highlighted the need for a 'National Languages Recovery Programme' to address the decline of languages and language learning in the UK and its cost to the UK economy and society. Citing cases such as the loss of language departments and degree courses in the UK, the lack of native English speakers in the EU civil service and in translating and interpreting departments of the UN, and serious issues arising from inadequate language services in the criminal justice system and healthcare, the Group propose an audit of language skills across the UK civil service and a step change in policy to make commitments towards improving school language learning; a wider recognition of linguists and language skills; wider participation of schoolchildren in language learning; encouragement of the involvement of business and employers including tax breaks and other incentives to train and recruit home-grown linguists; and a commitment of languages in the UK university sector.

- 1. http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy/state\_of\_the\_nation\_2013.cfm
- 2. http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/global-futures-a-plan-to-improve-and-promote-modern-foreign-languages-in-wales/?lang=en
- 3. http://www.creativescotland.com/\_\_data/assets/pdf\_file/0018/31590/Scots-Language-Policy-June-2015.pdf
- 4. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-3-the-wasted-years

# Part 1: Benefits of a UK Strategy for Languages

- UK businesses are able to participate fully in the global market place using the language and communication skills of their workforce
- The UK is able to maximize its role and authority in diplomacy, security and defence
- Educational attainment in a wide range of languages is supported and encouraged
- Languages enhance the cultural capital and social cohesion within England and the devolved administrations of the UK

# **GOALI:**

UK businesses are able to participate fully in the global market place using the language and communication skills of their workforce

We know from the Born Global<sup>5</sup> research project that employers view languages as a 'value-added skill', employers gain from the linguistic skills of modern languages graduates but also from the 'cultural agility' which comes from knowing other languages and cultures. These skills are also applied in a range of occupations.

Language skills in business include both speaking additional languages and having good English language skills. Modern recruits need to be flexible, mobile, have more than one language and possess cultural agility. Research shows that British candidates for jobs often lack these skills compared to their international peers.

UK Trade and Investment has a group of culture and language advisers who deal with company requirements in their regions, assisting with exports and supporting small to medium enterprises (SMEs), who wish to break into international markets. Experience in this environment suggests that businesses underestimate the importance of language and cultural skills, whether in negotiating with potential international partners or even translating websites. A current scheme exists whereby postgraduates offer language help to businesses. One of the difficulties in making the case for languages here lies in explicitly quantifying the business lost to UK companies through lack of language skills, although some work is doing just that<sup>6</sup>.

A UK national languages strategy should ensure businesses are able to communicate what they are looking for in language skills, such as through case studies, in order for education policy (including higher and further education and apprentice training) to support the development of the skills required for modern recruits. Languages could be included in the new government-supported apprenticeship schemes

In its report, Language Matters, the British Academy (2009) highlighted the lack of foreign language skills amongst UK (born and educated) researchers, which limits the career opportunities available to researchers as part of collaborative research groups and may damage UK research scholarship through its inability to contribute to international projects, and win competitive international research funding.

- 5. British Academy, Born Global Rethinking Language Policy for 21st Century Britain
- See, for instance, the report produced by Professor James Foreman-Peck: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-costs-to-the-uk-of-language-deficiencies-as-a-barrier-to-uk-engagement-in-exporting

# **Key Points**

### Where we are now

- British candidates for jobs lack additional language skills and cultural agility compared to international peers
- Businesses underestimate the importance of cultural and language skills
- Emerging quantitative evidence of business lost to UK companies through lack of language skills

# How to improve

- Language strategy makes the link between education and the skills required by businesses
- Education policy supports skill requirements of the modern recruit
- Include languages in new apprenticeship schemes

# Case Study: The Value-Added Recruit

Bernardette Holmes, Principal Investigator on the Born Global research project, writes:

Globalization and the status of English as the lingua franca can lead to false conclusions about the relative importance of language learning to English-speaking young people. There are assumptions that as everyone speaks English, there is no need for English speakers to make an effort to speak other people's languages. This assumption must be challenged and overturned for a number of reasons.

Over a period of two years during the Born Global policy research project, we talked to a wide range of executives in global organizations. They affirmed that English is unquestionably the global language of business. There are clear advantages in speaking the global language and the widespread and increasing use of English is empowering, connecting business of all sizes across different continents as part of a global communication network. But cooperation in multiple countries means interaction with multiple languages and cultures. While English is the nexus, communication in multinational operations is functionally multilingual and culturally diverse.

Global organizations recruit globally, which means that for any graduate recruit aspiring to enter executive level streams the ability to speak and write fluent and accurate English is a core skill. Our study develops the concept of being 'Born Global' as characterized by proficiency in English and at least two (and often several) other languages. Language capability is worn lightly, and comes in addition to high-level qualifications in other disciplines. UK graduates must be aware that the asset value of English diminishes commensurate to the number of international graduates entering the global labour market with fluent English and other languages. At recruitment those graduates who offer only English are at a competitive disadvantage to their multilingual peers.



Executive directors of global talent use a complex matrix of skills to select a successful recruit. They prioritise sector or industry-specific knowledge and a range of transversal and soft skills. Cultural agility is an essential attribute of the global graduate, as they will be expected to work in multilingual and culturally diverse teams face-to-face and virtually. The ability to approach a problem from multiple perspectives and to take into account different cultural expectations in finding solutions is key to effective transnational cooperation.

Employers believe that cultural agility is developed by international experience abroad. Too often they report that British graduates have very limited experience of life outside the UK. Employers find that those graduates who have studied and worked in another country and constructed knowledge and skills through another language have greater cultural and cognitive flexibility. Applying knowledge and skills in a professional context abroad is highly sought after and can confer an advantage at recruitment.

We are dealing with a value-added economy. This notion extends to recruitment. Our many conversations with leaders of talent management at local and global levels give rise to a new concept, the 'Value-Added Recruit'. Today's young people enter a world which is still in flux, facing the turbulence of economic flows, shifting demographics, and the potent combination of shortages in essential skills with high levels of unemployment across the developed world. The competition for jobs is acute, and the way to success is to stand out from the rest of the field. The candidate who, in addition to meeting the core requirements of the job specification, can demonstrate an international outlook and a global mind-set, together with fluency in more than one language and culture, is likely to be selected over the candidate with few or no language skills, whose only experience outside of the UK was on holiday.

# Case Study: The value of language skills to SMEs

99.9% of all private sector businesses in the UK are small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), employing up to 249 people. Together SMEs provide 60% of private sector employment, while the large businesses, employing 250+ people, provide the remaining 40%. 95% of SMEs are micro enterprises employing fewer than 9 people, and drilling down further, 75% are sole traders employing no other workers. The explosion in the proportion of start-up companies and sole traders has grown by 73% since 20007.

This is relevant to the kinds of skills that employers need to be competitive. If you are operating a large business with a global reach, you will have ready access to employees speaking multiple languages in addition to English. These employees with international experience are also likely to have highly developed cultural agility. The situation is different for small to medium-sized enterprises. The smaller the company the more important it becomes to have individual employees who can add value to the business. First and foremost, SMEs need employees with industry knowledge, and, to expand business internationally, employees with international experience and language skills are of greater value than those who do not.

Effective communication in an increasingly multilingual and culturally diverse arena requires language skills and intercultural understanding. One in every two of the SMEs (52%) in the *Born Global* survey believed that additional languages would be helpful to extend business opportunities in the future.

There are specific areas in which SMEs consider would benefit most from additional language skills. These areas deal specifically with human relations and with building and strengthening customer/client relationships. Starting up a contract is only the first hurdle, retaining the business is essential. Language skills and cultural competence play a significant part in assessing client needs and evaluating client satisfaction, in the conduct of market research and in the effective targeting of specific markets. Product and service placement relies on careful planning and takes account of customer preferences. This process is made considerably easier if the business has access to employees with relevant language skills and cultural knowledge.

Government advisers from UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) who contributed to the *Born Global* survey shared examples of SMEs that have successfully worked with multilingual post-graduate students on short-term placements to get their international business operations off the ground. Through the UKTI Post-Graduates for International Business scheme, SMEs can recruit a post-graduate with relevant language skills for a specific purpose and unlock export potential that would otherwise have remained inaccessible.



# How assignments can add value<sup>8</sup> to SMEs:

- Brand management through Social Media a Japanese student is sought for a few hours per week to run a social media campaign in Japan to promote the SME.
  - Market research placement a company hires a Brazilian student for six weeks to conduct market research in Brazil, including setting up meetings and following up new contacts.
    - Professional assistance on industry and service user views a medical company offers a threeday placement to a German student to help with background research on the German medical industry and to conduct interviews with German-speaking citizens to capture service user views.

The prospects for SMEs expanding into international markets will improve if the supply of those leaving education and entering the labour market with language skills is increased.

The *Born Global* project has shown that every language is an asset; there is no limit to the number of languages that may be needed in global business. Action is highlighted in three areas. First, increase the number of young people learning languages in formal education and widen the range of languages offered. Second, value the community languages spoken and support their development. Third, be creative and flexible about how to source language skills from the international student population.

- 7. House of Commons Library BRIEFING PAPER Number 06152, 7 December 2015, Business Statistics, Chris Rhodes www.parliament.uk/commons-library | intranet.parliament.uk/commons-library | papers@parliament.uk | @commonslibrary
- 8. We acknowledge the support of Jack Porteous, Language and Culture Adviser UKTI London

# **GOAL II:**

The UK is able to maximize its role and authority in diplomacy, security and defence

The relevance of 'soft power' and language skills as part of UK cultural assets in the world today has been highlighted by a recent House of Lords select committee. The committee reported that the UK capacity to 'build connections is constrained by the small number of its citizens who are able to speak foreign languages', which is relevant to the influence and engagement required in modern international relations (paragraph 225).

In its work around the subject of conflict, stability and security, a report from the British Academy references the declining interest and investment in language and area studies, in the UK and other Western countries, adding to problems in conflict areas such as Afghanistan, by "ensuring that the pool of expertise and access to 'deep' knowledge about countries in conflict have become limited". Such knowledge provides historical and cultural contextualization, which is important in post-conflict state-building efforts<sup>10</sup>.

The crucial role of language and cultural understanding in the work of the armed forces was brought home in recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since these conflicts, the military has sought to implement language skills training<sup>11</sup> throughout its organizations, as a core competence, as directed by the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff (VCDS).

The Defence Requirements Authority for Culture and Languages (DRACL) is the single point of contact for Culture and Languages related issues. This organization follows the Defence Systems Approach to Training (DSAT) to ensure thorough analysis, design, delivery and evaluation of language education. DRACL is the custodian of Culture and Language information and standards and uses the NATO STANAG Ed 4 as the basis for their assessments. DRACL's responsibilities cover Foreign Language Training (FLT), English Language Training (ELT) and Cultural Training (Cul) within the MOD. The importance and utility of Languages on Operations can be seen by the Joint Doctrine Note 1/13 'Linguistic Support to Operations'.

Language examination results are recorded as a competence, current for three years, which can be utilized, at short-notice, for operations or urgent tasks. DRACL administer a language award scheme to promote and incentivize MOD personnel to undertake language examinations. These cover a spectrum of one-off payments from £360 for a lower level western European language to £11,700 (including a daily rate of pay for actual use) for a high level, operationally vital linguist. This scheme has been very successful in persuading MOD personnel to declare their language skills, and to attend the exam, to a point where two thirds of the MOD Language Capability does not need expensive residential courses.

Effective communication is important for the successful application of military and diplomatic skills, and through the 'Whole Force Concept', language skills are identified from heritage speakers, second language speakers and linguists. These can be tested through the MOD language examinations, run by DRACL. Currently MOD language training is conducted through the Defence Centre for Language and Culture (DCLC), which opened in 2014. Students are trained to NATO standards across four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Students are able to train for up to two years, including cultural skills and time spent in the appropriate country. Core languages taught by MOD personnel and contractors are: Arabic, Dari, Farsi, French, Pashto, Russian, Spanish and English as a foreign language. These language courses are currently being re-designed to focus on employment skills and task-based learning.

The Culture Capability framework is split into three levels of aptitude; Awareness, Competent and Expert. Cultural training is still in embryonic form but is developing fast. As well as the cultural skills included in the residential courses at DCLC there are also two culturally specific courses to allow MOD personnel to attain the Cultural Competent and Expert levels.

The Army has instituted a Language Policy in order to change organizationally how language is perceived. Currently, any sub-unit command must have a basic language skill. The Army is now funding around 2,500 soldiers a year to get a basic language skill at the equivalent of CEFR A2 level and it is hoped that this proactive approach will be adopted by other forces.

# **Key Points**

### Where we are now

- The small number of UK citizens who speak foreign languages is reducing our 'soft power'
- Pool of expertise and deep cultural knowledge of conflict areas is limited
- Shortage of skills in strategically important languages e.g. Mandarin, Russian, Arabic

# How to improve

- By visiting schools and engaging with professional bodies for linguists GCHQ is making efforts to strengthen language skills
- The Ministry of Defence (MOD) and armed forces are taking steps to implement language skills training as a core competence through the 'Whole Force Concept'
- Both MOD and GCHQ offer training courses and incentives to its workforce to encourage language skill development

<sup>9.</sup> House of Lords Select Committee on Soft Power and the UK's Influence (2014) Persuasion and Power in the Modern World.

<sup>10.</sup> Mats Berdal (2015) Afghanistan and After – Reflections on Western Interventionism and State Fragility in the post-Cold War Era in Rethinking State Fragility (London, British Academy) p. 15.

<sup>11.</sup> Although the term Language 'education' is more accurate, the military use the term 'training' for both training and education

# Case Study: Counter-Terrorism and MOD

In January 2016, the Defence Requirements Authority for Culture and Languages (DRACL) was contacted by the West Midlands Counter Terrorism Unit, to see if it could help source a speaker of a particular language dialect. This was to assist with translating communications in relation to an on-going investigation.

The West Midlands unit was unable to find a translator within its own organization and so the MOD was approached to see if it could provide support. DRACL asked the language school (DCLC) if it had any speakers of the dialect needed, and a speaker was indeed identified within DCLC and supplied to the Counter Terrorist Unit. If DCLC had not been able to find a translator then a trawl of the database of linguists held by DRACL would have been carried out to source one.

This sort of example shows what can be achieved informally through cooperation on the ground; putting cross-government support on a more formal footing would enable departments to carry out their roles even more efficiently and effectively.



# Case Study: The Value of Languages in GCHQ

Government communications, GCHQ, is one of the largest employers of linguists, with currently about 300 – and all must be British citizens. It recruits modern language graduates as well as native speakers with degrees. There are shortages of candidates with the required skills in certain languages such as Mandarin, Russian and Arabic, and there is a lack of consistency in the language competence of graduates from different universities. Although expensive, GCHQ is forced to retrain modern language graduates in scarce languages. A current lack of a language education strategy that stretches from primary through to higher education is a possible cause for recruitment problems here.

GCHQ, like the Armed Forces, is making efforts to strengthen language skills amongst recruits by visiting schools and offering language taster sessions, and getting involved in research and policy workshops. It has also strengthened its engagement with the Chartered Institute of Linguists to further help professionalize its linguist workforce. Employees can take part in language training, including re-training, in rare languages and 'maintenance' training. Language bonuses are offered for those who complete training through various levels or who broaden their range of languages.

Recent language graduates can find themselves in the middle of nationally important work right from Day 1 of joining GCHQ. For example a Spanish linguist - who had benefited from the usual year abroad while at university and developed not only her "street language" but also her knowledge of certain Latin American countries - found herself at the centre of translating communications related to an international drugs cartel looking to transport cocaine into the UK.

Summarizing and reporting the intelligence she had gleaned from her language work, the linguist used analytic tools to help make sense of a complex and unclear picture. She also compared the pieces of the intelligence jigsaw that she had put together with those developed by two of her language community colleagues - a more experienced Russian linguist and one of GCHQ's expert native speakers in Urdu who had been working on parallel strands of the drugs ring. This enabled her to create a clear intelligence picture of the likely methods and dates of the imminent drugs importation.

Meetings with Law Enforcement agents to discuss the line of reporting she produced resulted in operational plans being brought to a head to intercept the intended importation - which in turn resulted in a successful large seizure of cocaine, arrests of the key players and subsequent lengthy jail terms.

(Head of Language, GCHQ)

# **GOAL III:**

in a wide range of languages is supported and encouraged

It is encouraging that the Department for Education has put a language in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc)<sup>12</sup> as a core subject alongside English, mathematics, science, computer science and history or geography. However, a broader cultural change is required in order to help schools deliver an education strategy for languages that changes the mind-set that the UK is 'bad' at languages and also that languages can only be learnt by educational high achievers.

Language policy has not traditionally been high on the agenda of universities, despite widespread internationalization strategies. Data for A-level entries for modern languages shows decreasing numbers for French and German, although an increase for Spanish and other languages. The British Academy Report, *Language Matters*, highlighted the decline in UK researchers in languages and area studies with adverse consequences for securing future research funding in these areas, and the detrimental effect on securing research funding for the UK into global challenges such as security, terrorism and international crime, within which language and area studies play an important part (p. 2).

There are some encouraging moves. Modern languages and related area studies are considered to be subjects that are both strategically important and vulnerable by HEFCE (alongside STEM and quantitative social science). Through Routes into Languages (2006-2016) universities have been active at collaborating with, and making the case for, languages in schools. Increased take-up of institution-wide language programmes in universities is evidence of impact.

In a significant step, University College London (UCL) decided to make a GCSE or equivalent in a foreign language compulsory for all entrants; students without such a qualification are required to obtain one once they are enrolled. Possible conflict with university access policies needs to be overcome in order to extend this requirement to other universities.

At the same time, the study of languages within degree programmes is declining. This is important because it is here that the higher skill in language proficiency and cross-cultural agility are achieved, as well as deeper cultural and societal aspects of language learning.

The message about the value of languages has to be put forward to influencers (head teachers, parents, peers) earlier in pupils' lives in order to make languages more valued when subject choices are made. The experience of *Routes into Languages*<sup>13</sup> or the employment of student ambassadors in schools has shown that a positive experience of language learning can generate huge enthusiasm. However, it is vital that such changes in attitude translate into increased take-up of languages at GCSE and A-level, where currently negative factors such as availability of languages, timetable issues, poor teaching, and league table pressures often outweigh positive considerations.

- 12. The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is a performance measure for schools, awarded when students secure a grade C or above at GCSE level across a core of five academic subjects.
- 13. Funding for Routes into Languages will cease in summer 2016 after which the collaborative spirit of HE working to promote languages in schools is likely to decline.

# **Key Points**

## Where we are now

 Graduates who offer only English are at a competitive disadvantage to their multilingual peers

- British graduates often have limited experience of life outside the UK
- Study of languages within degree programmes is declining and there is low take-up of languages at GCSE and A-level

# How to improve

- Increase number of young people learning languages in formal education and widen range of languages offered
- Modern languages community defines what is distinctive about learning languages and the benefits to individual employers and society from learning languages
- Use role models, ambassadors to encourage positive experience of language learning
- Ensure languages feature in any measurement of attainment for schools and colleges



# Case Study: Mapping infectious diseases – science and languages working in partnership

**Dr Nigel Collier**, Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, University of Cambridge

Recent work on digital disease surveillance and detection systems, which scour the internet to track, report and map information related to public health crises, is beginning to show the advantages of adopting a multilingual approach. These systems require a combination of data-mining software and human expertise to track, interpret and report sources in the languages where an outbreak is reported. A study by the French Institute for Public Health, which reviewed how emerging health threats of international significance were identified and then classified by disease and location, showed that nearly half the initial sources were in languages other than English (53% English, 15% Spanish, 11% French, 20% other languages).

In the case of the SARS epidemic in 2003, an initial report in Chinese was detected by the electronic public health early warning system developed for Public Health Canada and was then passed to the World Health Organization. Similarly, reports in Spanish of the Swine Flu outbreak in the Mexican media were detected from early January 2009 onwards, more than three months before cases were reported in the US and Canadian press from mid-April. According to Dr Nigel Collier, who has developed one such multilingual detection system, "Being able to access and interpret online data in a range of languages is becoming recognized as a crucial part of being able to deliver faster global public health alerting. This is an exciting case of technology and languages working together to solve real-world problems."



# Case Study: Language learning as transformative – the experience of a Cambridge medical student

Jocelyn Wyburd, Director, The Language Centre, University of Cambridge

At the University of Cambridge, students and staff of any discipline can take language courses in the University's Language Centre or, where appropriate, the Engineering Department's Language Unit. These courses are taken by some 1850 learners annually, of whom c. 54% come from STEM disciplines. Why? Employability is one big motivator, as scientists increasingly compete for jobs in global organizations with peers who are multilingual, especially as English-medium instruction abounds in other countries and English becomes the dominant medium for publication of scientific research outputs. But the experience of one medical student who took a Spanish course in the Language Centre before engaging in intensive Spanish learning in rural Guatemala during the summer demonstrates how language learning by scientists can achieve so much more.

On his return, he wrote: "As an aspiring doctor, I have always had a desire to work in the developing world. I have my heart set on spending a significant part of my career in Latin America; to me, it is a region of the world that perhaps falls into the shadow of Africa and thus is often neglected. Too often, foreign aid fails to acknowledge and understand the local culture and language. Medical knowledge alone is no good; understanding the local beliefs and having the ability to liaise with local communities is equally, if not more, important. I came out here with the intention of developing my Spanish so that one day I could return, as a doctor, to help the people of Latin America. With much time to learn and reflect on my travels, however, I realized that this is no longer what I want. I do not just want to be another foreign aid doctor, trying to save as many lives as I can with my own hands. This was the most important lesson I learnt; the people of Guatemala do not want foreigners to come in and pretend they know what is best for their country. Their culture is too proud to want a handout; I learnt that in order to create a sustainable difference to Latin America, one must work to empower local change makers.

Instead of trying to help whomever I can with my own hands, I should help train and motivate Guatemalan doctors, nurses and community health workers. I should liaise with governments to improve their policies and public health initiatives. My time in San Pedro showed me that Latin America does not need another foreign aid doctor; it needs an opportunity to develop. It has convinced me to pursue a career in global health and advocacy, to help strengthen the healthcare systems of Central and South America. And for that, the ability to communicate in Spanish is not merely helpful, it is crucial. My time in Guatemala has transformed my career aspirations, and fuelled a real drive in me to make a sustainable difference."

# **GOAL IV:**

Languages enhance the cultural capital and social cohesion within England and the devolved administrations of the UK

# The devolved administrations have given greater priority to language strategy.

Creative Scotland has recently published a language policy for Scots. The Scottish government has adopted the EU 1+2 model, which requires the teaching of the first foreign language right through primary school and into secondary across a ten year span, and the teaching of a second foreign language to be introduced from Primary Year 5 at the latest. Primary teachers in Scotland are being trained in order to implement the policy and a plan enhances transition from primary to secondary school. Work is also done with heritage language speakers and new refugees.

In 2011 the Welsh government published *Supporting Triple Literacy*, which offered guidance to schools teaching languages at KS2 and KS3. The *Language Trends survey for Wales* (2015) drew attention to low language uptake at KS4, and identified languages not being valued by pupils and parents as well as the advantages of existing bilingualism not being exploited for additional language learning. A common complaint is option blocks and competing subjects to languages. New policies outlined in *Global Futures* (the Welsh government's "Improving and Promoting Modern Foreign Languages Plan") are aiming towards 'Bilingual plus 1' with formal teaching of a modern foreign language from year 5 onwards. Centres of Excellence have been established in Wales and a mentoring scheme whereby final- year undergraduates mentor year 9 pupils. The use of digital technologies is being explored in order to improve the teaching and delivery of modern languages.

In Northern Ireland, language policy has been developed within the context of a fractured community and conflicting perceptions of identity, and the heritage languages of the two major ethnic communities are treated as a separate political issue to that of modern foreign languages. There is currently no legislation for an Irish Language Act, although this was referenced in the St Andrews Agreement of 2006; it may still be a possibility in the future. The Liofa initiative aims to make 20,000 people fluent in Irish by 2015, and an area in West Belfast has been designated as a Gaeltacht (i.e. Irish-speaking) area.

# **Key Points**

### Where we are now

- Scotland and Wales have both developed language plans, which include enhanced formal teaching of modern languages through primary and secondary school
- These policies are informed by the EU policy for competence in three languages (mother tongue + 2)
- Policies are being developed to promote the indigenous languages of the UK

# How to improve

- Acknowledge structural barriers to maintaining language teaching in schools such as transition to secondary school and restrictive option blocks and try and overcome them
- Begin language education early in primary school and invest in teacher training
- Recognize and support enhanced skills associated with bilingual children
- Make use of digital technologies to improve teaching and delivery of modern languages

# Case Study: Language and Conflict Resolution in Northern Ireland

Professor Mícheál Ó Mainnín, Queen's University Belfast

The contribution of language to conflict resolution is central to work which has been initiated with Co-Operation Ireland (the all-island peace-building charity) and, particularly, its LEGaSI project which seeks to develop confidence and leadership in disenfranchised loyalist communities.

The language component of LEGaSI embraces both place-names and soft diplomatic skills.

The exploration of shared space through place-names (of varying linguistic origin: Irish, English and Scots) has been the subject of research at Queen's University Belfast since 1987 and has been embraced across the political divide. The collaboration with Co-Operation Ireland builds on what is being revealed in terms of the complexities of linguistic diversity to create greater awareness of the rootedness of the various linguistic traditions in Northern Ireland; the sense of belonging which thus emerges embraces the whole community and adds to social cohesion.

Empowerment of loyalist communities is also being facilitated through language training in Irish; this allows them to feel some ownership of the language while at the same time enhancing the soft diplomatic skills of loyalist leaders in engaging and negotiating respectfully across the community divide.



# Part 2: Facilitating and Delivering a UK Strategy for Languages

- Cross-government approach
- Organizational culture change
- Education and training
- M. Communications and public campaign
- Research on multilingualism and language learning

# Cross-government approach

# **Key Points**

- National strategy for languages to cut across departments in order to support Department for Education to deliver effective education policy around languages
- Build on existing Cross-Whitehall Language Focus Group with Cabinet Office leadership and effective ministerial support
- Involve department such as BIS, DCLG and devolved administrations as well as external bodies in national strategy for languages

Since language issues are central to many of the key issues for the UK in the twenty-first century, responsibility for language policy cannot be a matter solely for the Department of Education. Rather, a national strategy for languages must cut across departmental interests and thereby support the Department for Education in delivering an education policy grounded in national priorities and promoting a cultural shift in the attitude towards languages.

There is a pressing need to broaden cross-departmental cooperation on language policy, building on the existing Cross-Whitehall Language Focus Group. This group is limited in what it can achieve and requires enhancements to engage more in strategic decisions.

# The following developments would be welcomed:

- first, an effective leader, possibly from the Cabinet Office, who would be able to coordinate across departments;
- second, effective ministerial support (such as a Minister for Languages) in order to engage with other ministers and departments; for example, in Wales the First Minister is responsible for the Welsh language;
- third, external or networking leadership, in a role akin to the Government Chief Scientist, who could organize campaigns and mobilize executive support for coordination on languages policy. Such a role would require targets, resources and authority in order to be able to recommend operational decisions.

In order to provide support for this structure and decision-making body, a mapping exercise across government should be carried out in order to identify the respective need for action.

The current Cross-Whitehall Language Focus Group could be expanded to include departments such as BIS, DCLG and to have appropriate working groups to ensure protection of classified issues. Working groups could also include DfE, HEFCE, Ofsted, and the devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, as well as bodies such as the British Council and the British Academy, which have expertise and interest in these issues.

# Organizational culture change

# **Key Points**

- Use examples such as the Armed Forces and Metropolitan Police to promote organizational culture change in other sectors
- Include efforts by GCHQ to strengthen language skills amongst its recruits, and measures to help professionalize its linguist workforce
- Encourage and reward language training amongst employees
- Recognize positive contribution language skills and linguists can make to business

For the promotion of languages to be successful nationally, it must be accompanied and underpinned by organizational culture change.

Two examples of how this is already working well come from the Armed Forces, as we have already seen, and the Metropolitan Police. The Metropolitan Police are currently running a recruitment campaign, which requires applicants to be able to speak one of 25 languages (in addition to English), ranging from French and German through to Arabic, Farsi, Polish and Yoruba. Its website notes 'Whilst our police officers are able to effectively carry out their duties without the ability to speak a second language, a police constable with this skill is an asset in helping both themselves and their colleagues to more effectively engage with the community and deal with everyday policing situations in our diverse city'.

# Education and training

# **Key Points**

- Emphasize distinctive skills and rewards that learning languages brings in order to underpin education and training strategy
- Assist schools to deliver languages strategy that changes current mind-set around languages
- Draw attention to consequences of declining language and area studies in higher education
- Pursue language requirements for higher education admission

Whilst there are positive signs, as detailed below, the overall trend in foreign language learning in UK schools and universities is downward. This contrasts with our EU counterparts who have made efforts to increase requirements for school and university students to learn languages. Without improvements in language take-up in schools and universities, the UK's ability to compete in the global market place will be inhibited.

There are some positive developments in language education policy that seek to reverse this trend. There is now a statutory requirement for a language at Key Stage 2 and the choice of language is not restricted. At Key Stage 3 the curriculum is more humanities-based and the new GCSE and A-level curriculum have a broader and richer cultural content than previously. The UK government has demonstrated its commitment to languages by making them part of the EBacc attainment measure at Key Stage 4. The government's stated aim is for 90% of pupils to achieve the EBacc, but policies need to be put in place to ensure this happens and is supported by parents, teachers and headteachers. This will include making the broader case for studying languages as described here.

There are lessons to be learnt from the devolved administrations on valuing indigenous (and heritage) language speakers. Wales and Scotland are to be applauded for their 2+1 and 1+2 policies, which have been taken up by First Ministers, taking them beyond education policies. Each of the four different governments has its own political agenda and policy for languages. In Scotland, an eight-year programme from 2012-2020 allows time to build support for the policy from primary school teachers.

The value of English language as an asset should be at the heart of language education policy, as well as a positive approach to literacy in more than one language.

Harsh and inconsistent marking was cited as a disincentive for language choice at GCSE and A Level, although there are positive moves here by Ofqual to improve the situation. Concerns about equality of standard between 'learnt' languages and 'heritage' languages are not helpful to the promotion of language qualifications in the UK. There are also concerns that qualifications in several languages have been lost since the *Asset* qualifications were abandoned, meaning there is now no option other than GCSE. It is, however, welcome news that GCSE and A levels in a range of lesser-taught languages are to be retained.

A strategy for education policy in relation to languages should be maintained throughout the school system. In Scotland there is support for language education policy in primary schools. In the recent Ofsted report *Key Stage 3: The Wasted Years?* problems were highlighted in teaching pupils aged 11-14. Quality of provision of teaching needs to be important in Key Stage 3 to ensure students opt to take languages at GCSE. The new Ofsted inspection framework, which requires high performing schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum should encourage a focus on languages.

There is concern about current levels of teacher supply in languages if an education strategy for languages is to be achieved. There are lower levels of undergraduates studying foreign languages, which leads to teacher shortages, and figures suggest only half of the teacher training places required to deliver the EBacc are filled.

Consistency in language outcomes and assessment standards is needed. Currently, different parts of government use different standards. The Common European Framework could be used to provide consistent assessment and standards.

To encourage language take-up in higher education, HEFCE could introduce incentives such as league tables on language student numbers and attainment.

Measures should be put in place to encourage languages as lifelong learning, for example the British Chamber of Commerce favours tax breaks for firms which invest in language training for employees.



# Communications and public campaign

# **Key Points**

- Media campaign to change perceptions about language learning and emphasize the benefits (trade, influence, defence etc.)
- Link findings of the latest language research to public engagement strategy
- Highlight the role of languages in successful careers of high profile figures (business leaders, sportsmen and women, political leaders)

In order to support cultural and organizational change as well as policy change, a media campaign is required to focus on communicating the value of languages in the variety of areas highlighted in this report: for example, the importance of languages for business and trade; soft power, security and defence; cross-cultural understanding and mediation; cognitive performance and career development.

A communications and public campaign should link the findings of language research with a public engagement strategy to change and develop public perceptions about the value of language and the variety of ways in which languages and language learning can contribute to the economy and society. The British Academy has recently highlighted the role of languages in the careers of high profile business leaders, sportsmen and women, political and other public figures. Languages could learn from the contribution of academics who adopt public roles and hence raise the profile of their subject, such as classics (Mary Beard), history (Simon Sharma), physics and astronomy (Brian Cox).

One potentially fruitful avenue to explore in any public campaign would be to work together with colleagues in the STEM subjects who have been successful in establishing them as important with the general public and policy makers.

# Research on multilingualism and language learning

# **Key Points**

- Research to inform evidence-based policy
- New £4m initiative at Cambridge funded by Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) will study the benefits of multilingualism to individuals and society, and transform attitudes to languages in the UK
- Growing evidence of the cognitive benefits of multilingualism and language learning across the lifespan

There is range of research being conducted in different disciplines demonstrating the value of bi-/multilingualism and language learning. For example, there is increasing evidence from research of the challenges monolingual Anglophones face in communicating in English in lingua franca environments<sup>14</sup>.

One of the most exciting current research areas relates to the cognitive benefits of language learning. Strong evidence is now emerging to show the effect of bi-/multilingualism on cognitive functions across the lifespan, in healthy aging and in brain disease. For instance, later onset of dementia in bilinguals has been demonstrated in large studies from three continents (Canada: Bialystok et al 2007; India: Alladi et al 2013; Belgium: Woumans et al 2015)<sup>15</sup>. New evidence for the better resilience of a bilingual brain against disease comes from a recent paper showing that bilinguals have a significantly better cognitive recovery after stroke than monolinguals (Alladi et al 2015)<sup>16</sup>. Better cognitive functioning in multilinguals has also been found in healthy ageing, again in three continents<sup>17</sup>. These advantages are also available to those learning languages; improvement in some cognitive functions such as attention has been demonstrated following intensive language learning)<sup>18</sup>.

# **Future action**

- It is vital that we communicate clearly and simply the value of languages for the health of the nation. English is necessary, but not sufficient.
- The association of language and culture is essential, and is a key factor adding value to language learning.
- Languages should be for everyone, yet currently 20% of state schools dis-apply children from the statutory requirement from age 13. There is a misapprehension that languages are only for the brightest pupils.
- Effort should be made to tackle structural barriers to the promotion of modern languages at secondary school such as: timetabling/blocks; poor transition between primary and secondary schools; assessment issues.
- We must improve communication and schemes and resources for language training. At our meeting a UKTI scheme for postgraduates was not well known, as was the fact that the Erasmus scheme is open not just to linguists in universities.
- It is important to improve the status of languages and linguists. Whilst there are language bonuses at GCHQ, in the civil service there are not special pay scales for government linguists as there are for government scientists. The self-esteem of bilinguals and community language speakers has to be raised, and they should be encouraged to perceive themselves as linguists. We also need to popularize the importance of languages and linguists, for instance by having a TV champion for languages.
- If languages are considered strategically important and vulnerable, then there needs to be some ring-fencing of funding for this area. Some successful programmes such as Routes into Languages will not be funded in the future.
- England is lagging behind the situation in Scotland and Wales, where there is an active Minister and more coherent strategy. The case for a designated Minister for Language Policy, perhaps situated in the Cabinet Office should be carefully examined.

- 14. Hulmbauer, C., Böhringer, H. and Seidlhofer, B. (2008) 'Introducing English as a lingua franca (ELF): Precursor and partner in intercultural communication', Synergies Europe 3, pp. 25-36.
- 15. Bialystok, E. et al. (2007) 'Bilingualism as a protection against the symptoms of dementia', Neuropsychologia 45, pp. 459-464; Alladi, S. et al. (2013) 'Bilingualism delays age at onset of dementia [...]', Neurology 81, p. 1-7; Woumans, E. et al. (2015) 'Bilingualism delays clinical manifestation of Alzheimer's disease', Bilingualism: Language and Cognition 18, pp. 568-574.
- 16. http://stroke.ahajournals.org/content/early/2015/11/19/STROKEAHA.115.010418.abstract.
- 17. For evidence from the UK, see Bak T. H. et al. (2014) 'Does bilingualism influence cognitive aging?', Annals of neurology 75(6), pp. 959-963; for Canada, see Bialystok, E. et al. (2004) 'Bilingualism, aging and cognitive control: evidence from the Simon task, Psychology and aging 19(2), p. 290; and for Israel, see Kavé. G. et al. (2008) 'Multilingualism and cognitive state in the oldest old', Psychology and aging 23(1), p. 70.
- 18. See, for example, Vega-Mendoza M. et al. (2015) 'The impact of late, non-balanced bilingualism on cognitive performance', Cognition. E-pub 14/1/2015 (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25596355).

# **Workshop Participants**

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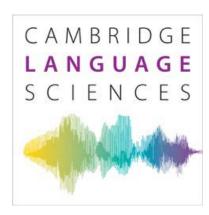
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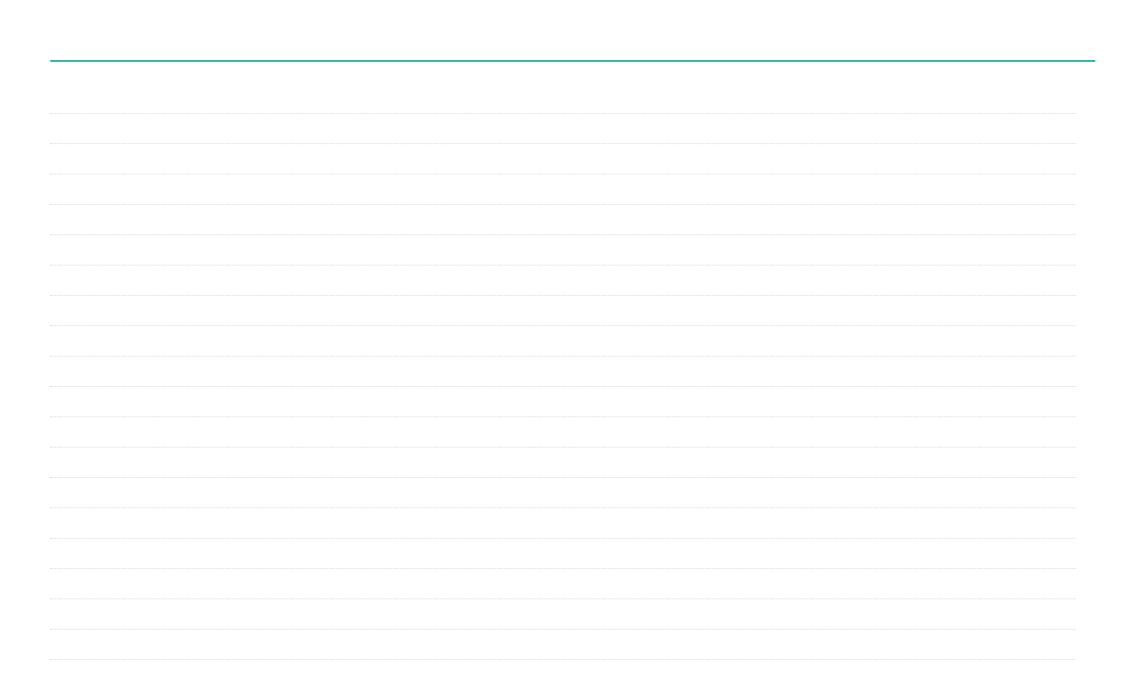
Centre for Science and Policy (CSaP)

Speak to the Future, The Campaign for Languages

UCML University Council of Modern Languages

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Notes



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