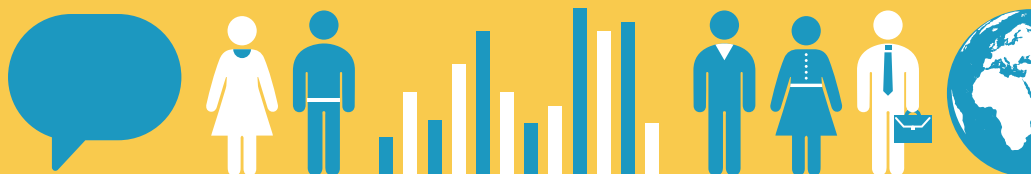


04

INSPIRING THE FUTURE: BRINGING LANGUAGES TO LIFE



Born Global is a British Academy project on language skills for employability, trade and business.

The British Academy set out to develop a deeper understanding of the language needs for employment, employer attitudes to languages and how language is used in the workplace for different purposes, by employees of different levels of skill and accountability.

We have produced an overview booklet on the Born Global project and the context in which it was undertaken. We have also produced a separate overview and summary of each data set.

Introduction

Bringing Languages to Life was commissioned by the British Academy in February 2015 as follow-up to the *Languages at Work* survey.

The survey aimed to develop a greater understanding of how and where languages are used in the workplace in reality, and also employees' views on languages and their perceptions of the benefit of language skills. It was sent out to members of the Education and Employers Taskforce's *Inspiring the Future* network, which exists to connect schools and employers, and is made up of 16,000

members, 1,600 of whom use one or more foreign languages at work.

Bringing Languages to Life provides a more detailed look at 10 of the respondents, who volunteered to give a personal account of their own professional use of language skills and the benefits that they perceive languages to confer.

About the data set

Inspiring the Future is a free service that the Education and Employers Taskforce runs to connect schools and employers. As of October 2014, there are 16,000 *Inspiring the Future* volunteers, of which 1,600 people indicate that they use one or more foreign languages at work. The sample is self-selecting and not nationally representative; members work for organisations of various sizes and sectors.

Methodology

The *Languages at Work* survey was distributed online to approximately 1,300 *Inspiring the Future Languages at Work* volunteers, who consented to receiving emails. Data were collected during a two-week period in October 2014. The survey achieved an 11.2% return with 146 ITF volunteers completing the full survey. *Bringing Languages to Life* was distributed to 70 respondents to the original survey who had consented to participate. 13 of these responded of which 10 are included here.

01

Lucy Beney

Writer and researcher

Freelance

Journalism/Education

? How often do you use a language other than English at work?

» Occasionally (i.e. monthly).

? Could you give us up to three examples of recent occasions when you have used foreign languages at work?

» Attending conferences where some of the content is delivered in a foreign language. While translations are available, some inputs are not full translations – also it is much easier to catch the real meaning from the original language.

Working in collaboration with others from different countries – for example, books to appeal to an international market, checking that the translation conveys the real meaning, particularly where slang or local words are used.

Reading foreign press and articles on the internet.

I would say that there are huge benefits. Apart from a particular skill, speaking another language – and understanding how it works – gives an insight into culture and society in other countries. Once you have learnt one language, learning another becomes easier.

? Would you say speaking foreign languages is particularly advantageous in your sector?

» Yes. It gives much more insight into a culture than merely making use of translations.

? How proficient would you say people need to be for language skills to be useful at work?

» Any knowledge is useful, but an intermediate level should be acquired for a language to be really useful.

? Based on your own experience of professional life, what would you say to a young person about the benefits of speaking at least one other language, when entering the workplace?

» I would say that there are huge benefits. Apart from a particular skill, speaking another language – and understanding how it works – gives an insight into culture and society in other countries. Once you have learnt one language, learning another becomes easier.

? How, when and where did you learn your languages? What helped you learn languages most effectively?

» In various ways. I took French, German and Latin for O Level (1982).

I continued with French for A Level and took O level Italian alongside it (1984).

I read History at university, but studied Spanish for a year as a subsidiary subject.

Later, I moved abroad and lived in various countries where I tried to learn as much of the language as possible – Dutch in Holland, Arabic in Oman and Portuguese in Brazil.

Undoubtedly immersion in the language, country and culture is the most effective method of learning. I am most fluent in Portuguese, through necessity, after living in Brazil for a total of seven years.

02

Marion Dubois

Project Manager

Nielsen

Fast-moving Consumer Goods FMCG

Q How often do you use a language other than English at work?

» Every day.

Q Could you give us up to three examples of recent occasions when you have used foreign languages at work?

» I use French to keep a difficult conversation light-hearted with a colleague in Belgium.

I switch to Italian with Italian colleague to be more straightforward.

Then I use English for all official situations, for instance when discussing with the international management team or when I know emails will be shared more widely.

Q Would you say that speaking foreign languages is particularly advantageous in your sector?

» Not in my sector, but in my job role, yes.

Q How proficient would you say people need to be for language skills to be useful at work?

» Fluent or near fluent.

Q Based on your own experience of professional life, what would you say to a young person about the benefits of speaking at least one other language, when entering the workplace?

» It opens more doors and will facilitate networking.

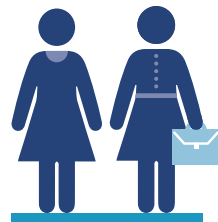
Usually another language will have been learnt abroad, thus giving a greater life experience.

It is not just the language itself that's beneficial, but its culture and history as well.

It opens more doors and will facilitate networking.

Q How, when and where did you learn your languages? What helped you learn languages most effectively?

» I started at school, then lived in another 2 countries to perfect these languages at Uni.



Katie Morrison

Human Resources Business Partner
Canon Europe
Consumer Electronics

❓ How often do you use a language other than English at work?

» Occasionally (i.e. monthly).

❓ Could you give us up to three examples of recent occasions when you have used foreign languages at work?

» Meeting and building trust with international colleagues, demonstrating my knowledge of their language and culture builds an instant bond, which helps to build a strong and supportive working relationship.

I can also help translate when required.

❓ Would you say speaking foreign languages is particularly advantageous in your sector?

» I work in the EMEA headquarters of Canon, so it's a very international, multi-cultural organisation (40+ nationalities!), which I love!

Language skills and cultural understanding really make it so much easier to relate to an international workforce, and break the stereotype of parochial Brits!

❓ How proficient would you say people need to be for language skills to be useful at work?

» If the working language is not English, then you really need to be fluent for it to be possible to work constructively.

For relationship-building and an international environment, any level beyond "tourist talk" is appreciated!

Just please don't claim you speak a language if all you can manage is a few phrases – either on your CV or in person!

❓ Based on your own experience of professional life, what would you say to a young person about the benefits of speaking at least one other language, when entering the workplace?

» If you have an interest in the wider world/travel/working with a scope bigger than the UK, then it is a great advantage to speak another language – it makes you aware of the fact that the world is not just what you have grown up with, there are so many different cultures, societies, ways of thinking and communicating, ways of doing things.

Particularly in London, you will work with an international workforce, and have the opportunity to work for European and global companies.

❓ How, when and where did you learn your languages? What helped you learn languages most effectively?

» Study at school and university, and then living abroad!

While studying – reading as much as I could in the language, watching films, etc. Listening to the radio. Conversation clubs. Getting your brain used to the sounds, rhythms, phrases etc... like a child learns their native language.

Once you have a solid grasp of the language, the best way to learn is to really immerse yourself in it – go and live abroad for a while! Either through Erasmus, or working abroad (e.g. teaching English, summer work, etc.)

Being there, you have no choice but to use it, so any timidity vanishes, and you'll be amazed how creatively you can communicate!

04

Malin Freiberg

Director, Global Reward
Dialog Semiconductor
Electronics

❓ How often do you use a language other than English at work?

» Every day

❓ Could you give us up to three examples of recent occasions when you have used foreign languages at work?

» 1. I held a remote training session via webex (online) with our managers in Germany. Although our company language is English and I held the presentation in English, some of our staff are more comfortable asking questions in their native language. I was able to take and answer questions in German ensuring that the managers had correctly understood the training content and enabling them to participate fully.

It will give you amazing opportunities, let you get to know people in other countries and from other countries really well and open lots of doors in business and in your career. It can make the difference between getting a contract or not and getting a job or not.

2. I recently had to research an Austrian law that specifies that you have to advertise the minimum salary you will pay for each job when you advertise it in a newspaper or online. The legislation had not been translated into English and I was able to read the regulation in the German original and take the appropriate action, ensuring that the company was not fined.

3. When the company I work for started operating in Finland, I was able to assist with the set-up of employee benefits and confirm what would be covered by the state health insurance. I don't speak or read Finnish, but Swedish is an official language in Finland (spoken by a minority) and information on government websites was available in Swedish (which I speak).

❓ Would you say that speaking foreign languages is particularly advantageous in your sector?

» Many international companies operate in the UK, in the electronics sector but also in many other sectors, and although the company language often is English across the world in these companies, you will get the opportunity for more interesting roles and more responsibility if you are able to take on a regional or global role. Being able to speak other languages is often desirable in these jobs and opens up doors to more opportunities.

❓ How proficient would you say people need to be for language skills to be useful at work?

» Some skills in a foreign language will already be of some help. Sometimes being able to read in a language to some degree can already be quite helpful.

For other jobs speaking the language can be more important, so full proficiency in all areas is not always needed.

More important is that you are confident in a language for the purpose that you will be using it.

To be able to make best use of a language at work you will need to know more than holiday use.

In my experience 4–5 years of language learning at school is not enough to give you the confidence or proficiency that you need.

I feel most confident and able to use the languages that I studied for 8 years or more.

? **Based on your own experience of professional life, what would you say to a young person about the benefits of speaking at least one other language, when entering the workplace?**

» It will give you amazing opportunities, let you get to know people in other countries and from other countries really well and open lots of doors in business and in your career. It can make the difference between getting a contract or not and getting a job or not.

? **How, when and where did you learn your languages? What helped you learn languages most effectively?**

» I learned to speak Swedish from my parents as we spoke it at home and it was their first language. I would encourage everyone who has a parent who is a native speaker of any language to use it at home and keep it going (although it is hard sometimes) and to see if your school will support you to take GCSEs or other qualifications in it, even if the school does not normally teach the language. In my opinion, this is key for a good school and parents selecting schools for their children should ask how willing the school is to support this. If this is not offered in your

school, see if you can attend a 'Saturday school' which are often run by local community groups to ensure their language is passed on.

I learned German because my parents moved to Germany for work when I was quite young and I went to the normal local pre-school and school there and did not attend an international school. It forced me to learn German to native speaker level really quickly. So if you get the chance, go live abroad, go on an extended school exchange or take a language course abroad in the holidays. Avoid spending time with other English-speakers while you are there and really immerse yourself into the language.

05

Rita Rosenback

Author, blogger and coach

www.multilingualparenting.com

Educational coaching

❓ How often do you use a language other than English at work?

» I mainly use English, but also use Swedish, my mother tongue, and Finnish on a regular basis.

❓ Could you give us up to three examples of recent occasions when you have used foreign languages at work?

» My mother tongues are Swedish and Finnish, so English is a “foreign” language to me, although I now do all my writing in English. I give speeches on the topic of raising bilingual children in English, Swedish and Finnish. Being able to speak with potential event organizers in their mother tongue makes a huge difference in how quickly you can connect with them – there is also a higher element of trust when you speak the same language. In my past professional life I have twice been offered (and accepted) a job I had no formal qualification for, but was chosen thanks to my language skills and then given the necessary training for the job.

❓ Would you say that speaking foreign languages is particularly advantageous in your sector?

» Definitely, as I deal with bilingual organisations and people.

❓ How proficient would you say people need to be for language skills to be useful at work?

» Any level of language knowledge is better than none. Learn the basics, greetings and culturally appropriate polite phrases and expand from there. Even if you can only do small talk, it will help to get a bigger

deal done. To lead more demanding sales discussions and agree on terms and conditions of a deal a much greater fluency is needed.

❓ Based on your own experience of professional life, what would you say to a young person about the benefits of speaking at least one other language, when entering the workplace?

» No matter which language you learn, you will at some point during your career need it and your language skills may be the factor that puts you above the rest when looking for a job. When I got the job as a manager of IT support without having much IT experience it was because of my language skills – when I asked why I got the job, the answer was “You can’t teach a techie a foreign language within a few months, but you can train a linguist the necessary IT skills in the same time”.

❓ How, when and where did you learn your languages? What helped you learn languages most effectively?

» I grew up in a bilingual household (Swedish and Finnish), studied German at Uni and also worked in Germany. Learnt English at school and have lived in the UK since 1998.

Learning as a child is probably the most effective way, but as this is not an option later on in life, formal language training combined with stays in a country where the language is spoken is the most effective way to learn. If you HAVE to use a language you learn a lot quicker.

06

Wendy Scott

Director

Royal Bank of Canada

Banking

❓ How often do you use a language other than English at work?

» Every day.

❓ Could you give us up to three examples of recent occasions when you have used foreign languages at work?

» Business trip to Luxembourg – meeting with colleagues and speaking French.

Negotiating loan documentation in French.

Client conference calls.

❓ Would you say that speaking foreign languages is particularly advantageous in your sector?

» Yes, clients and colleagues respond very well to speaking in their own language.

I have used my French skills in Paris, Luxembourg, Switzerland, North Africa, Vietnam and Canada.

❓ How proficient would you say people need to be for language skills to be useful at work?

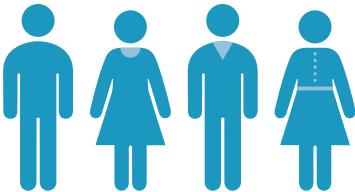
» Level B1 as a minimum, level B2 is more useful.

❓ Based on your own experience of professional life, what would you say to a young person about the benefits of speaking at least one other language, when entering the workplace?

» More opportunities, wider portfolio of clients, opportunities to travel.

❓ How, when and where did you learn your languages? What helped you learn languages most effectively?

» I did international baccalaureate at college, then followed up with regular classes, whilst working to keep au courant.



Paul Ketchley
University Lecturer
Higher Education

❓ How often do you use a language other than English at work?

» Occasionally (i.e. monthly)

❓ Could you give us up to three examples of recent occasions when you have used foreign languages at work?

» I was working at a Residential School outside Brussels on our MBA last weekend and so I had to get to the venue from the Eurostar terminal (find a taxi for five people and tell the taxi driver where we wanted to go), and deal with some problems at the centre with the technical staff.

It's just a lot easier if you can speak to people in their language, rather than assuming they can speak yours.

❓ Would you say that speaking foreign languages is particularly advantageous in your sector?

» It shows you have an understanding of the wider world and that you can operate on a reasonably equal basis to others. Apart from anything else you have a better understanding of the richness of other cultures and national approaches. You would be very "out of the loop" if you couldn't do that.

❓ How proficient would you say people need to be for language skills to be useful at work?

» I think that depends. You need a basic level of confidence and competence to get around things like the tram system or the metro in Brussels or Paris. If you can't read the station signs on the Moscow Metro you're going to find it very difficult to get around. Russian gets a lot easier if you can read

Cyrillic signage because a lot of the words are the same as English or French. I've always found Russian people extremely tolerant of my not speaking much Russian if I can read key words.

It helps to be able to understand what is going on and to contribute at events like conferences and to be able to converse over dinner if it's a non-English speaking table.

It shows you have an understanding of the wider world and that you can operate on a reasonably equal basis to others. Apart from anything else you have a better understanding of the richness of other cultures and national approaches. You would be very "out of the loop" if you couldn't do that.

On the other hand it's important to know your limitations and not get into (say) contract negotiations if you're not altogether fluent which I don't pretend to be.

❓ Based on your own experience of professional life, what would you say to a young person about the benefits of speaking at least one other language, when entering the workplace?

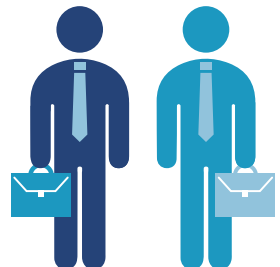
» Most businesses these days either have suppliers or customers in countries in which the first language isn't English, so where are you going to be in the queue if it comes to going to their premises to find out about their latest product or to build customer relations.

❓ How, when and where did you learn your languages? What helped you learn languages most effectively?

»» I did French to “A” level at school but then I worked for the County Council in Kent when the Channel Tunnel was being built and so I was lucky enough for there to be language courses and also got the chance to work with our partner organisations in the Nord Pas-de-Calais. Kent had a lot of very progressive policies in that regard. I gained a lot of confidence simply by going to meetings and having to use my French because the

people I was working with didn't speak that much English.

The London Ambulance Service sent me to Chile and Colombia for business purposes and the Open University has also sent me to places like Russia, Slovenia, Germany and the like so I've always tried to do the basics at the very least. Someone I worked with once told me that you should never go to a country on business if you couldn't order two beers in the local language and there is some truth in that basic test.



Leanne Sheen
Solicitor
Allen & Overy LLP
Law

❓ How often do you use a language other than English at work?

» Every day.

❓ Could you give us up to three examples of recent occasions when you have used foreign languages at work?

» I work in Frankfurt, Germany and I therefore use German on a regular basis for informal office communication.

I studied French, Spanish and Portuguese at university. I regularly liaise with fellow lawyers from Paris, Luxembourg and Brussels, which allows me to use French on the telephone with my colleagues.

I also use French, Spanish and German to review simple documents or translate short phrases. We rely on in-house translators for the bulk of our work but out-of-hours we occasionally need to gain some understanding urgently.

❓ Would you say speaking foreign languages is particularly advantageous in your sector?

» Yes, and the cross-cultural understanding that comes through learning languages.

❓ How proficient would you say people need to be for language skills to be useful at work?

» I think informal simple skills can make a good impression as you demonstrate that you are trying to integrate yourself into another culture.

❓ Based on your own experience of professional life, what would you say to a young person about the benefits of speaking at least one other language, when entering the workplace?

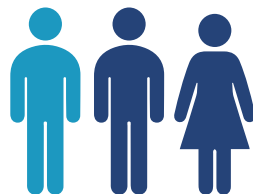
» People with languages and cross-cultural skills are greatly appreciated.

Learning languages also gives you a greater appreciation of your own languages.

❓ How, when and where did you learn your languages? What helped you learn languages most effectively?

» I learnt French and Spanish at University.

I learnt German subsequently through evening lessons, while working and lessons in-house with my employer.



09

Kate Medhurst

Vice President and Senior Documentation Officer
Bank of America
Banking

❓ How often do you use a language other than English at work?

» I use my language skills often (i.e. weekly or fortnightly).

❓ Could you give us up to three examples of recent occasions when you have used foreign languages at work?

» I use my French to negotiate contracts both spoken and written. I also have some knowledge of German which enables me to at least greet a client in German.

And, even if we then communicate in English, I enjoy being able to at least have the minimum.

I believe our clients really appreciate me making the effort to speak their languages, even in such a small capacity.

❓ Would you say that speaking foreign languages is particularly advantageous in your sector?

» Yes. Language skills are useful in the banking sector.

❓ How proficient would you say people need to be for language skills to be useful at work?

» They need to be pretty proficient from a business perspective to make sure there are no misunderstandings, but even if they just have the basics to say “hello”, “goodbye” and “thank you”, I think this is still an advantage and can be useful at work.

❓ Based on your own experience of professional life, what would you say to a young person about the benefits of speaking at least one other language, when entering the workplace?

» I would encourage them to take an interest in a second language which might give them the edge over someone who has the same experience but not necessarily the ability to communicate cross border.

Also it is a very good exercise for the brain which, after all, is just another muscle that we need to work.

I would encourage them to take an interest in a second language which might give them the edge over someone who has the same experience but not necessarily the ability to communicate cross border.

❓ How, when and where did you learn your languages? What helped you learn languages most effectively?

» I was fortunate enough to grow up in France. My family moved there when I was 8 years old and I found myself going to a local French school from the age of 11. It was tough (very much dropped in at the deep end!) but the best way to learn, as I am completely bilingual.

10

Stephanie Frackowiak
Regional Services Director
Sprinklr
Social Media Technology

? How often do you use a language other than English at work?

» Every day.

? Could you give us up to three examples of recent occasions when you have used foreign languages at work?

» I went to visit the French office last week – I had to interview candidates for open positions within the French office, meet customers to talk about progress on existing projects and future opportunities, meet prospects to convince them that my company understands them and would be a good company to do business with.

It is definitely a way to accelerate your progress and exposure to senior people.

All my meetings were in French... Even though I work for a USA company – and the “company language” is English, being able to speak local language opens doors, since it makes locals more at ease in dealing with you, and gives them more confidence that you understand them, their culture and their business...

This smooths the way for customers and also for difficult conversations internally.

? Would you say that speaking foreign languages is particularly advantageous in your sector?

» Definitely – my entire team speak at least one foreign language since we need to support customers across all of EMEA

? How proficient would you say people need to be for language skills to be useful at work?

» Conversational.

? Based on your own experience of professional life, what would you say to a young person about the benefits of speaking at least one other language, when entering the workplace?

» It opens doors and opportunities for you... If you're the most junior person on the team but the only person in the team to speak (say) Russian whilst we are trying to win business with a Russian customer – you will be taken along to all sorts of meetings, which you would not have exposure to otherwise.

It is definitely a way to accelerate your progress and exposure to senior people.

? How, when and where did you learn your languages? What helped you learn languages most effectively?

» I am bilingual and have always spoken 2 languages ...

We spoke French at home so that my father and I (and my siblings) could all speak French to our French family (my mother is French).

The British Academy, established by Royal Charter in 1902, champions and supports the humanities and social sciences across the UK and internationally. It aims to inspire, recognise and support excellence and high achievement across the UK and internationally. As a Fellowship of over 900 UK humanities scholars and social scientists, elected for their distinction in research, the Academy is an independent and self-governing organisation, in receipt of public funding. Views expressed in this report are not necessarily shared by each individual Fellow, but are commended as contributing to public debate.

In 2011, the British Academy launched a new programme, with funding from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, targeting deficits in languages and quantitative skills. The programme of work reflects the Academy's longstanding concerns about deficits in these areas of the humanities and social sciences, as well as in UK education and research. Through the programme, the Academy funds research and relevant initiatives, and seeks to influence policy in these areas.

THE BRITISH ACADEMY
10–11 Carlton House Terrace
London SW1Y 5AH
+44 (0)20 7969 5200

Registered Charity: Number 233176

britishacademy.ac.uk

 @britac_news

 TheBritishAcademy

 britacfilm



for the humanities and social sciences