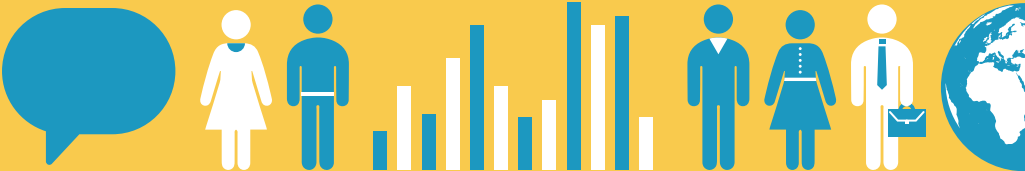


05

EVERY GRADUATE A LINGUIST



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.

This booklet deals with an LSE study of Institution Wide Language Programme (IWLP) students, commissioned by the British Academy in Autumn 2014.

What is IWLP?

Also referred to as 'Languages for All' and offered through University Language Centres, IWLP consists of elective, non-compulsory language courses offered to students who are not enrolled in specialist language degree programmes. These courses are taken by students who take them as credit-bearing

elective course options that are part of their non-language degree programmes or as non-credit-bearing courses taken in addition to undergraduate or postgraduate degree programmes.

In the context of declining enrolments for specialist language degrees, leading in extreme cases to departmental closures, IWLP numbers have more than doubled over the past decade and are estimated at over 60,000. In a marketised higher education system where student choice is increasingly important, understanding the type of students enrolled in IWLP and their motivations is vital. As future employees, it is also important to understand the course types and languages they are choosing and the level of proficiency being achieved.

In Autumn 2014, the British Academy commissioned the London School of Economics to follow a group of IWLP students at LSE in the 2014/2015 academic year. Through a survey and one-to-one interviews, it set out to understand their motivations, behaviours and progression as well as to develop a model for IWLP student attitudinal research that can be used by other HEIs.

Introduction

In addition to developing a better understanding of the demand for language skills in employment, and the nature and extent of language use in the workplace, the British Academy set out to investigate the supply of language skills in the education system. Whilst there is a wealth of data and literature on languages in schools, and language degrees at universities, one area that is relatively new and understudied is that of the so-called Institution Wide Language Provision or Programmes (IWLP).

Summary of key findings

Language choices

- French and Spanish are the most popular languages, followed by Arabic, German and Mandarin
- This is broadly comparable to data concerning language choice from the 2014–15 UCML-AULC survey of Institution-Wide Language Provision in universities in the UK

Level of Study

- Nearly half of all students in non-credit-bearing courses (49%) studied a language at beginners' level (A1 in CEFR)¹
- On credit-bearing courses, the percentage of students studying a language at a level which would enable independent study through the language (B2 level and above) is much higher (45%) than in non-credit-bearing courses (20%)



FRENCH 31%



SPANISH 21%



MANDARIN 12%



GERMAN 10%



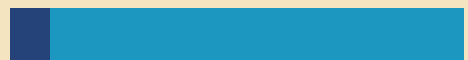
ARABIC 10%



RUSSIAN 5%



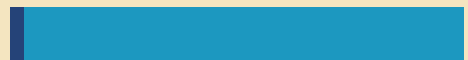
ITALIAN 5%



JAPANESE 3%



PORTUGUESE 2%



KOREAN 1%



CATALAN 0%

**LANGUAGES OFFERED AND
SHARE OF STUDENTS IN
THE LSE IWLP (2014/15)**

ON CREDIT-BEARING COURSES, THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS STUDYING A LANGUAGE AT A LEVEL WHICH WOULD ENABLE INDEPENDENT STUDY THROUGH THE LANGUAGE (B2 LEVEL AND ABOVE) IS MUCH HIGHER THAN IN NON-CREDIT-BEARING COURSES.



Performance, assessment and accreditation

- In credit-bearing courses, the overall level of attainment is high, with 87% of students achieving a 2.1 or 1st class degree mark and only 1.3% of students failing
- In non-credit-bearing courses, there is a high drop-out rate of around 30%. Of those who completed their course, 21.5% failed, largely due to not sitting exams or handing in coursework
- Reasons for the high drop-out and failure rate include students' underestimation of their workload and prioritisation of credit-bearing courses

IWLP Student characteristics

- Plurilingualism amongst respondents is high and UK students are under-represented; this is broadly similar to overall UK figures from the 2014 UCML-AULC survey
- While plurilingualism among participants was generally high, there was nonetheless a striking gap in high-level plurilingual proficiency between UK respondents and non-UK respondents: while only 40% of UK students taking part in IWLP reported an existing level of B2 or higher for a second language, more than 90% of non-UK respondents did so. Moreover, nearly a third of non-UK respondents claimed to be proficient users of three or more languages, compared to just 10% of UK respondents

- However, it is worth noting that the figures for plurilingualism amongst this subset of UK students is high, compared to figures for the general UK origin student population. This would merit further study

Motivations

Students were asked to rate the importance of different motivations for language learning on a 5-point Likert scale (1 not important, 2 slightly important, 3 fairly important, 4 quite important and 5 very important).

- Respondents rated their interest in the country, society and culture in which the language is spoken as the single most important motivational factor for wanting to learn or improve their language skills
- The next three reasons (travelling, career and proof of language competence) were all ranked as fairly, quite or very important by three quarters or more of all respondents

Respondents rated their interest in the country, society and culture in which the language is spoken as the single most important motivational factor for wanting to learn or improve their language skills.

- Future work or residence plans were fairly, quite or very important for 60% of respondents
- Research and future education were only important for roughly a fifth of respondents
- Students on credit-bearing courses attributed more significance than those on non-credit-bearing courses to nearly all motivational factors, particularly in regards to career
- The higher the level of language study, the more likely respondents were to mention the importance of career as a motivational factor
- 80% of UK respondents thought it 'likely' or 'definitely likely' that they would work outside the UK at some point in the future



About the data set

In 2014/15 more than 1,400 Undergraduate and Post-graduate students, out of a total of 10,800 Undergraduate and Postgraduate students registered at the School, attended language courses; a participation rate of approximately 13%. The majority of these students (1189) attended assessed non-credit-bearing courses, so-called certificate courses, while a smaller number of UG students (213) took credit-bearing language courses (“degree courses”) available as elective options within their social science degree programmes.

Methodology

To produce quantitative data on student background, language capability and motivation, a questionnaire was developed and made available online to all students registered in the IWLP at LSE. To increase the response rate printed copies of the online survey were also handed out by course teachers. The closed-ended questions focused on student background, course type, languages known and studied at LSE, proficiency in these languages, reasons for wanting to learn or improve the language(s) currently studied, and questions concerning career plans and

mobility. In total 226 questionnaires were completed and returned, which corresponds to a response rate of 16% from the overall population of all students registered in IWLP courses.

To complement the quantitative data and to give a group of students the chance to talk in-depth about their language learning motivation and experiences, a series of semi-structured one-to-one interviews, lasting between 10 and 30 minutes, were carried out with students chosen from amongst the respondents to the survey. The interviews were carried out between November 2014 and February 2015.

Further information on both the survey and interviews can be found in the appendices of the full report.

Endnotes

1. The CEFR is an internationally recognised framework that describes 6 levels of language ability from A1 for beginners up to C2 for those who have mastered a language. For more information visit www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp

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.

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