

ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP on MODERN LANGUAGES

Chair: Nia Griffith MP (Lab); Co-Chair: Baroness Coussins (CB);
Vice-Chairs: Paul Maynard MP (Con); Baroness Sharp of Guildford (LD)



‘Born Global’ – pre-publication summary of the final report: languages, education & employment

Wednesday 21 October 2015, 4-5pm

Minutes

In attendance:

Baronesses Coussins; Garden of Frognal; O’Neill of Bengarve; Sharp of Guildford;

Lords Harrison & Wright of Richmond

1. ‘Born Global’ – Pre-publication summary of the final report.

Baroness Coussins welcomed the speaker for this meeting:

- **Bernardette Holmes MBE, Bye-Fellow, Downing College, University of Cambridge.**

Bernardette Holmes began by acknowledging the invaluable support of Richard Hardie, Non-Executive Chair UBS and Chair of the Born Global Steering Group.

Born Global is a policy research project into the extent and nature of language needs in employment. It is funded by the British Academy and was set up in 2013 and its final report is due for publication by the end of 2015. Bernardette is the principal researcher and lead author for the report.

The research has taken place during a time of major change to the world economy which affects the labour market through factors such as the global economic and financial power shifts from West to East, unpredictable market flows, and unprecedented levels of international mobility and the impact of technology.

Bernardette has interviewed over 50 business executives, in the UK and abroad. She has taken into account current research from Professor James Foreman Peck, whose publications put a figure on the potential monetary value of language skills to the UK economy. She has spoken to UKTI and to industry representatives, such as the CBI, BCC, CMI, Federation of Small Businesses, EEF, CIPD and the Education & Employers Taskforce, and successful language-industry businesses such as Rosetta Stone. She has also actively involved Cultural Partners in this project and academics and students. In addition to

interviews, Bernardette has conducted two surveys to capture insights from a wide range of occupational categories and from businesses from a broad range of sectors and size of operation.

In 2014 there were 5.2 million businesses in the UK; 99.9% of those are Small & Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) (*Source BIS, Business Population Estimates 2014*).

The aim of this research is to ask representatives from global companies and from SMEs for information on the importance of languages *within their operations and in the jobs they understand*.

Key messages

There are three main messages to take from the **Born Global** research:

- 1) Languages *are* valued by employers.
- 2) There was little evidence of an urgent demand from employers for a particular language, but evidence of a growing use of a wide range of languages.
- 3) There is a strong consensus emerging among business leaders that languages should be part of the core curriculum for all learners.

Considering these three key messages more closely, evidence from **Born Global** shows that:

- 1.1 While the research found little evidence of a binary equation between language skills and labour market advantage in the private sector in the UK (Some evidence in the US), there was strong evidence that the study of languages fosters cultural agility and a global mind-set in addition to the value languages bring as functional skills. These are essential attributes of executive level employment, and employers assume that global graduates will demonstrate a wide range of transversal skills, will offer international experience and will be culturally flexible. Languages are part of that matrix.
- 1.2 There is an expectation that global graduates should speak a global language. The implication for British graduates speaking only English is that they enter a highly competitive global labour market of international peers, who offer sector, technical and professional skills, cultural agility, international experience and the ability to speak two or more other languages, including fluent English. Monolingual graduates risk losing out in the jobs market unless they can demonstrate that they can compete on an equal footing.
- 1.3 Language graduates need to demonstrate transversal skills gained through learning a language and emphasise that they also bring high levels of functional language skills and cultural competence: Bernardette emphasised that in a value-added economy, they need to show that they are the **Value-Added Recruit**.
- 1.4 High levels of fluency are needed at board room level. However, conversational ability is also greatly valued, as it connects people informally, and smooths relations between different cultural groups.

1.5 Learning another language enables English speakers to identify the limits of international English and improves their communication skills in multilingual situations, where English is the lingua franca.

2.1 Global companies recruit globally and therefore have access to a wide range of languages within their work force in this country and abroad. French, German and Spanish are the most commonly used and there is growing interest in a range of other languages, including Mandarin Chinese (and Cantonese), Polish, Japanese and Italian and the languages of emerging markets like Brazilian Portuguese and Russian and low level demand for many other languages, dependent on where consumers/clients are based.

2.2 There is a need, therefore, to source language skills from a wide range of different groups, including international multilingual speakers, speakers of languages other than English in the home, and graduates and school and college leavers with language skills. There is a new **“choreography of demand and supply”**.

3.1 Employers believe that even though English is a considerable asset for international business, employers benefit from employees with language skills and experience of using another language.

3.2 The majority of employers believe that languages are valuable, even if the particular language employees bring is different to the languages needed by the company, or is, in fact, never actively used in formal business transactions.

3.3 Employers believe languages are of value because language skills are transformative and help to prepare young people for life and work in the 21st century. It is because they are perceived to contribute to an international outlook and cultural agility, essential attributes in the global labour market, that language learning is relevant to all occupational categories.

Bernardette noted that the purpose of the new National Curriculum and the aims of the new GCSE and A Level curricula do emphasise cultural fluency alongside the renewed focus on grammar.

She outlined some of the key findings from the research evidence in more detail:

Is there a labour market advantage to having language skills?

Yes, but the case is nuanced. 60-70 per cent of recruiters do not specify a degree discipline and will not prioritise language skills.

Are there any incentives? No. Very unlikely in the private sector in the UK.

Is there evidence of professional advantage at recruitment and in professional promotion to executive levels? Yes. 71% of professionals with language skills taking part in the survey claimed that over their career, language skills had given them the edge in applying for jobs.

Do businesses need languages? *Isn't English enough?*

Bigger businesses expect recruits to have language skills, or will find them within their multilingual teams. Smaller businesses prefer to recruit staff with language skills (but rarely find them). They will either rely on English only, or will buy in language skills where/when they are needed

The research found that the need for languages is great, but not all businesses recognise this. Over 99% of businesses are SMEs, 96% are micros employing 0-9 people, so the skills employees bring are essential to success. As soon as a company has an online presence they become an **“inadvertent trader”** and could be dealing with customers anywhere in the world with a www. internet connection. English will go so far, but knowledge of other languages will take you further. UKTI language and culture advisers have been engaged across the country to raise awareness of the need for language skills and cultural competence.

Is it up to schools and universities to provide employers with all these needs?

If so, how do they do it?

Bernardette proposed that evidence from the research illustrates **“a new choreography of demand and supply”**. We need to optimise language skills among many groups of young people, including students in universities, bilingual and bicultural people within our communities and recognise the benefits of the “extraordinary mobility” of the new generation of highly skilled young employees coming from around the world.

Bernardette discussed the possibilities of working with international students and matching them to SMEs for short-term projects. The UKTI and Mark Critchley at the University of Durham are developing pilot projects which do precisely this.

We should be seeking to put entrepreneurship into schools (perhaps as early as primary), including languages as part of how you engage with people, and make use of the languages and apply cultural knowledge. This could involve curriculum innovation linking different subject disciplines in schools, colleges, apprenticeships and in universities.

Languages and employability: we need to articulate *what we can do*

It is crucial that languages continue as a discipline, but linguists must market languages better to show how they can also develop those skills which recruiters require.

Recruiters do not fully understand what skills are developed through language degrees (Will a graduate of languages have international experience? Cultural knowledge? Business level fluency?)

Graduates see few jobs which explicitly require French, German, or Spanish (etc.). They should be aware that most jobs are open to any subject discipline. Language graduates need to show how they fit the requirements of a specific post and **add value** through their language and cultural skills – but Careers Advisers report examples of MFL graduates even omitting to list communication skills on their CV.

The **Born Global** report concludes that graduates need to exemplify how their MFL studies equip them with valuable employability skills, cultural agility and high levels of operational competence in the language of study.

Some encouraging statistics from the two Born Global surveys

(Results for the SME survey are presented in 3 columns: (1) the percentage of ‘Language Active’ SMEs, using one or more languages to operate their business; (2) the percentage of SMEs using English only, and (3) the percentage of all SMEs in the survey sample. Data from the SME survey is nationally weighted)

| Do you agree with the following statement: | People using Languages@ Work (% agree) | SMEs (% agree) | | |
|--|--|----------------|----------|------------|
| | | LA | Eng.Only | All |
| Foreign language skills are equally as important as STEM* | 82% | 65% | 51% | 54% |
| School & college leavers who only speak English are at a disadvantage in the job markets I know most about | 70% | 61% | 48% | 51% |
| Graduates who only speak English are at a disadvantage in the job markets I know most about | 75% | 62% | 52% | 53% |
| Young people who speak a different language in the home should regard bilingualism as an asset | 95% | 90% | 89% | 89% |

*Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics

2. Questions and comments from Peers and other APPG members

- If it is true that employers are not resistant to languages, they should say so. Parents and students need to see proof of this, if they are to put languages in their option choices.
- It should be standard for recruitment forms to have a standard “box” for MFL skills.
- Employers do specify languages in their recruitment, but not in the UK, where recruiters do not believe they can find individuals with the right skillset *and* languages.
- Recruiters are not short of MFL skills (as they can recruit from abroad) and MFL graduates are not short of opportunities (as they have some of the highest recruitment outcomes of any subject). Those who have a problem are those who didn’t realise it would be good to have acquired a language.
- The low status of languages in Universities is a problem, as it sends the wrong messages to graduates.

- Linguists need to market what an MFL degree can offer. Since the Worton Report, Universities have been doing this, but messages are not getting through. We need a bigger national conversation; Universities cannot do that alone.
- MFL departments in Universities are closing (Northumbria, Ulster, Salford, Manchester, Westminster) while institution-wide MFL programmes are thriving – but this is a “sticking plaster”.
- We should be cautious in the use of terms ‘specialist’ and ‘linguist’ as these can appear exclusive. The ability to speak other languages is a part of general education for the 21st Century.
- Bilingualism at home is often thought of as a “deficit”. Should we not think of it as “English plus”? Very few EAL (English as an additional languages) children go on to study their language at University – often because their language is not offered at University.
- The outgoing GCSE institutionalised rote learning, which was very counterproductive.
- The EC Civil Service does indeed need UK graduates with MFL combinations; these are valuable examples of career opportunities for linguists.

Bernardette responded:

The “**value added recruit**” is very desirable and the MFL graduate is exceptionally well placed to be that person.

And while “language active employers” will not say they prioritise languages, they will say that they value them.

The responsibility for taking forward the languages agenda lies not just with the DfE or with BIS. The job to promote languages lies across all departments, local government, UKTI, and the wider communities.

For example, national policies can have unforeseen implications which affect language capability and the national skills deficit more broadly. Changes to Tier 1 Visa Regulations and the elimination of the post-study work programme mean that highly qualified international graduates often cannot be recruited in time by UK businesses, and they leave for careers in other competitor economies such as Australia and the US. The UK needs to recognise the value of international recruits and retain them. One way of doing this would be to consider removing students from the net migration figures.

The CMI (Chartered Management Institute) supports the development of executive leadership and management skills through leadership training, accreditation, membership and research. It also works in schools and universities and with the apprenticeship scheme to promote entrepreneurship. In *Management 2020*, the APPG on Management recommended the consideration of an elective module in higher education degrees focusing on “Management Entrepreneurship and Leadership” (MEL). Bernardette informed us that there is active interest from the CMI in adding an additional ‘L’ for language skills - “MEL+L”. There is a lot of business support for international experience in their recruits. Languages can be a vehicle to provide “cultural fluency”, essential in the international business leader and entrepreneur.

The message for schools is: young people today are part of the ‘born global’ generation, and schools should equip them with language capability in at least one preferably two languages in addition to English, cultural agility, an international outlook and an entrepreneurial edge.

3. Close of session

Baroness Coussins thanked Bernardette and all those who contributed to the discussion.

4. Further reading

British Academy Born Global homepage: http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy/Born_Global.cfm Born Global Interim Findings (2014): <http://www.britac.ac.uk/templates/asset-relay.cfm?frmAssetFileID=14225>

The Costs to the UK of Language Deficiencies as a Barrier to UK Engagement in Exporting: A Report to UK Trade & Investment by James Foreman-Peck and Yi Wang. Cardiff Business School (2013).

Available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/309899/Costs_to_UK_of_language_deficiencies_as_barrier_to_UK_engagement_in_exporting.pdf

Guardian article on the cost to the UK economy of language skills deficit (10 Dec, 2013):

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/dec/10/language-skills-deficit-costs-uk-economy>

Review of Modern Foreign Languages provision in higher education in England, by Professor Michael Worton, Vice-Provost, University College London (2009). Available at:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100202100434/http://hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2009/200941/>

UCML website: <http://www.ucml.ac.uk/>

Website of the Chartered Management Institute’s Management 2020 Report:

<http://www.managers.org.uk/insights/management-2020>

Website of University of Durham Centre for Language Studies: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/cfls/>