



THE CAMPAIGN
FOR LANGUAGES

Briefing for Objective 5

An increase in the number of highly qualified linguists

This will fulfil the growing need for language professionals, especially English-speaking interpreters and translators, and for teachers and researchers specialising in languages and cultures.

▪ Why highly qualified linguists matter

Highly qualified linguists are vital to the future of the UK in the 21st century. For global business and international relations the UK needs increasingly to understand and communicate effectively with the rest of the world. The complex skill sets of language and intercultural expertise are indispensable to fulfil this aspiration, opening doors to political influence, economic success, business opportunities, a rich cultural life and civilised society.

In language teaching, research, interpreting and translation – as in business more generally – the UK has become increasingly reliant on overseas linguists. From within our own education system, the UK is failing to inspire and educate highly qualified linguists in sufficient numbers to meet the needs of businesses, government and public services, universities and schools.

The dominance of English as **the** language of business and international relations has induced complacency. Yet we have the opportunity to capitalise on our knowledge of English, a much-prized lingua franca, and to add value through mastery of foreign languages. We should aspire to offer UK citizens the full array of opportunities and careers that language and intercultural competence bring, both at home and abroad.

▪ Growing demand for highly qualified linguists

The languages sector in the EU is a high-value industry with good employment prospects, predicted to achieve 10% annual growth with an estimated value of €16.5 billion by 2015.

International organisations issued the Paris Declaration in 2010, calling for urgent action to address the worldwide shortage of linguists, which is particularly acute for English-speaking interpreters and translators.

EU institutions, supported by the UK Government, want to recruit more British officials with high-level language skills into EU institutions where UK staff are significantly under-represented and shortfalls in English mother tongue translators and interpreters are growing.

Business is calling for highly qualified linguists, and global demand for language service professionals is growing. Inadequate foreign language skills give UK business greater cause for concern than any other competency of graduate applicants' employability skills.

Research in UK universities risks losing its international standing and may be jeopardised by the inadequate language skills of UK born and educated researchers, not simply for languages research but across all disciplines.

UK education needs innovative, highly skilled and qualified language teachers with the passion and enthusiasm to inspire future generations of language learners. Challenges of supply and training are a major cause for concern.

▪ Shortage of supply

The numbers of UK-educated students completing first degrees, postgraduate, teaching and professional qualifications in languages **have fallen** in terms of market share over recent years, particularly at postgraduate level. Key trends are:

Students from other countries account for over 50% of the total number of **postgraduate languages students** (excluding part-time research and PGCE).

A significant decline in the number of researchers in languages and area studies in UK universities over the last decade, and increasing reliance on overseas researchers able to work in other languages.

Around 40% of applicants for language degrees come from the highest socio-economic group – compared to under 30% across all subjects.

A 48% fall in the number of undergraduate degree programmes in French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian and Japanese, from 503 in 2000 to 271 in 2011.

Closure of a third of higher education language departments from 2002 to 2009.

Failure to respond to demand for a wider range of **strategic languages** in new areas of international importance, and to provide courses in **UK heritage languages**.

▪ Priorities for the future

Our priorities are to engage **policy-makers in government and across the education sector** to:

- **Raise the profile of highly qualified and professional linguists**, highlighting the need for a wide range of specialists and sustained promotion of a variety of careers and international opportunities.
- **Gather the data** to demonstrate the high level of demand and deficient supply of UK-educated specialist linguists, supporting the case for strategic intervention with evidence from business, government and public service employers.
- **Make the case for the necessary incentives and provision** to ensure the supply of highly trained language professionals, translators, interpreters, teachers and researchers.