

# Business Language Champions Plus

## BLC+

### UK

#### Language Policy



## Good Practice Executive Summary

The programme is an initiative which runs across all 9 English regions and is managed by CiLT, the National Centre for Languages, and funded in England by the central government department the Department of Children Schools & Families (DCSF). It is supplemented in the East of England by match funding from Norfolk County Council, hence the addition of 'Plus' in the programme title in that region. It is an appropriate fit with the county's Shaping the Future economic strategy, under the section international activity.

From 2007-09 over 120 businesses took part in the BLC project across England. The current round lasts from June 2009 to Mar 2011, and targets 500 champions (the definition of this is broad but mainly targets company staff or staff in non-commercial organisations which use languages). In the East of England, the match funding from Norfolk County Council is used to invest in the language capability of the participating businesses, whether this be a contribution to language training, website localisation of literature/packaging translation. Companies taking part in the Norfolk BLC are also offered a UKTI Export Communications Review as part of the programme support.

The programme builds partnerships between businesses and schools to demonstrate the value of languages & intercultural skills for the world of work. Its specific objectives are:

- To bring young people and employers together to demonstrate the relevance of language learning for success in the global economy
- To engage a wide range of employers to work with schools to increase take up in KS4 and motivate young people in their language learning
- To use business/education links to raise the ambition and horizons of learners and to improve mutual understanding between schools and employers in relation to languages and the economy
- To set languages alongside other key subjects within mainstream business/education programmes
- To support schools to work better with business

It is supported by the Languages Work programme which supports careers advisers, language teachers and students with materials and factsheets to inform young people of career opportunities through languages. The BLC programme is delivered by a consortium of actors, mainly RLNs with support from Education Business Partners (EBPs) and Business in the Community.

A total of 18 key marketing campaign messages were established at national level, and these were categorised on a matrix by both target group and nature of activity. These messages would be disseminated through a planned campaign, with planning divided into mechanism, timescale, audience & purpose.

Mobility is a core theme running through the programme in that one of the more appealing aspects of a career with languages is the opportunity to work overseas. This is reflected in many presentations given to students, and is also reinforced through the presence of overseas nationals in companies taking part in the programme, especially in export functions.

It does not, however, currently embed the regular exchange of students from other countries, although (a) it encourages this and (b) exchanges form part of regular curricular activity in most schools, and the programme can support these.

The programme is inevitably embedded within the UK national mainstream education system and as such recognises and works within the established qualifications framework. In addition, CiLT is developing a Qualifications Strategy which includes, amongst other things, the new Languages Diploma, which is focussed on the world of work.

## 1. Reflects current EU and regional policy on multilingualism

The dossier file needs to confirm how the policy addresses lifelong learning relating to contextualised employment needs. Some policies may limit the breadth of the training foresees on one language or sector, and therefore all limitations need to be clearly defined, with justification for their inclusion outlined.

The programme:

- √ promotes lifelong learning and learner mobility
- √ seeks to improve the quality and efficiency of provisions and outcomes
- √ ensures the provision of the necessary skills and qualifications for the world of work

Both education and trade are driving this programme. Rather than focus solely on the training of the existing workforce, the programme targets the development of a pipeline of language capability from KS4 (14-16 yr olds) into AS/A-level (16-19 yr olds) and from here into employment or higher education. There is also a link with the Routes into Languages programme, which links higher education (such as university) down to A-level.

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This initiative builds on the European strategies on multilingualism, a fact reflected on 'Languages for All; Languages for Life', England's Languages Strategy (Department for Education & Skills (now DCSF), 2002).

"Languages for All", which is in the process of re-development as it reaches the end of its life-cycle, has the following objectives:

1. To improve teaching and learning of languages (centred on an entitlement to a language learning experience for all pupils in Key Stage 2, with coherent transition to an enhanced and flexible secondary curriculum).
2. To introduce a recognition system (a 'Languages Ladder' that would potentially credit a learner's progression through a scenario of lifelong learning and complement existing qualifications frameworks).
3. To increase the number of people studying languages (moving beyond schools to further and higher education, and to work-based training, maximizing the contribution of a suitably skilled workforce within a global (and multilingual) economy).

Such a Strategy is embraced by CILT, who is represented at the regional level by its Comenius (education) and RLN (business) networks. Specifically RLNs wide range of services target the third objective of the strategy, as they are entitled to increase the number of skilled workers in foreign languages and contributing thus to their regional economies.

## **2. Includes incentives to enhance and sustain language learner motivation and employment benefits**

Partnerships have been formed between business and schools to present the practical ways in which languages are used in the world of work. School students are set practical activities to try out their language skills, and these activities are 'scored' by local employers. Some activity has been high-profile, with the major motor companies (Honda, Ford) working with school children. One group won a prize visit to the Ford assembly plant in Köln, Germany.

There are also organised awards to recognise investment in language & culture such as the European Award for Languages, the LAFTAs (Language & Film Talent Awards) and the Business Language Champions Awards. It is promoted by the BLC national launch in Nov 2009 and other regional launches. There are 3 BLC awards, one for 'individual ambassador', one for 'outstanding commitment' and one for 'innovation'. The outstanding commitment /long term involvement award focusses on commitment to supporting the BLC programme and language learning in schools, and covers businesses that work with different schools each year. Businesses are eligible for the awards.

Two national programme brochures (labelled 'guides') are available, one aimed at schools and one at businesses. The guide to businesses includes sections on the challenge for languages, the benefits of participation, examples of generic activity and case studies. The guide for schools includes sections on the same themes but from a school perspective. There is also an e-booklet developed for the East of England, which contains case studies of BLC+ businesses explaining how languages are used in the workplace. This e-booklet is distributed to all 16-19 yr old language students in the participating schools. The most powerful tool of the overall programme is the opportunity for students to visit the company's workplace and see languages in action.

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## **3. Reflects regional strategy for employability and intercultural benefits**

The East of England model does not include training for companies, neither does the overall programme, as that is not its objective. However, it includes a fund to support their language development. The majority of companies targetted in the East of England are SMEs, although at national level a wide range of business size is represented.

CILT pioneered research into the business need for language and intercultural skills at regional and national level. This led to the development of a focussed offer based on what was recommended by business and needed by schools. The 'menu of opportunities' includes the following:

- Work placements and visits to businesses for languages teachers and pupils
- Presentation and workshops in school on the value and relevance of languages by businesses led by a BLC
- Enterprise Challenges with languages
- Work-related learning such as CV writing skills and mock interviews
- Mentoring
- International visits/exchanges
- Support to recruit employees with language skills as governors

Although there is a range of evidence clarifying the need to invest in language & culture skills for employment, the programme analysed research in 2009 by the CBI (Confederation of British Industry) into current language capability. The results of this have helped to inform the delivery of the programme, as offers can be tailored to meet business requirements. The main findings were:

- More than a third of companies (36%) recruit employees specifically for their language skills.
- The majority of employers (74%) are looking for conversational competence rather than full fluency.
- 26% of employers look for fluency.
- Only 4% of CEOs believe their firms had lost access to markets due to inadequate language skills, but the true figure could be as high as a quarter, as 21% of respondents admitted they did not know whether a shortage of these skills had cost them business.
- A significant proportion of firms are looking for speakers of Mandarin/Cantonese (38%), Spanish (28%) and Russian (21%).
- 15% are looking for staff with Arabic language skills, and with an understanding of the culture of business in the Arab world.

- In the retail sector 67% of employers recruiting for language skills were looking for Polish speakers.
- 72% of UK international trade is with non-English speaking countries – but it is estimated that only one in ten in the UK workforce can speak a foreign language (Talking World Class)
- The CBI/Pertemps employment trends survey 2008 showed that 74% of employers are concerned school leavers lack modern language skills

#### **4. Addresses local language minority and migrant community language resources**

The programme does not address migrant worker issues directly but does recognise the growing number of migrant worker children in the classroom. In one instance, Polish A-level students worked with a local orchestra to develop Polish content for their website. The mainstream UK education system is responsible for social inclusion of migrant workers children into the classroom, and these children are included in the overall mix of students participating in the programme.

#### **5. Provides for international networking and/or mobility**

Mobility is a core theme running through the programme in that one of the more appealing aspects of a career with languages is the opportunity to work overseas. This is reflected in many presentations given to students, and is also reinforced through the presence of overseas nationals in companies taking part in the programme, especially in export functions.

It does not, however, currently embed the regular exchange of students from other countries, although (a) it encourages this and (b) exchanges form part of regular curricular activity in most schools, and the programme can support these. In one instance, the winners of a prize in a mid-Norfolk school were taken to the Ford assembly plant in Köln by their champion company, which was based in the automotive sector.

## 6. Incorporates the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) with transparent validation/ credits

The programme is inevitably embedded within the UK national mainstream education system and as such recognises and works within the established qualifications framework. In addition, CiLT is developing a Qualifications Strategy which includes, amongst other things, the new Languages Diploma, which is focussed on the world of work. The draft strategy includes the following priorities:

- Ensure there is a range of qualifications available that meet employer and learner needs for languages and intercultural skills
- Promote awareness and understanding of how languages and intercultural skills can benefit UK and international business and social cohesion
- Explore opportunities for vocational experience of languages and intercultural skills within Further and Higher Education

To achieve these priority aims CiLT has outlined the following non-qualification and qualification outcomes, which also recognise the informal learning environment:

### *Non-qualification outcomes*

1. Clear progression routes within and across careers
2. Up-to-date, fit for purpose National Occupational Standards
3. Work with other sector bodies to develop qualifications based on the National Occupational Standards in languages and intercultural skills.
4. System for monitoring regional provision of qualifications and training
5. System to monitor trends and patterns in qualifications take-up following introduction of credit frameworks
6. Vocational experience programmes in Further and Higher education
7. Communication strategy to highlight the benefits of languages and intercultural skills to the UK workforce
8. Case studies of learners using languages and intercultural skills at work across a range of contexts
9. Enhanced employer engagement programme

### *Qualification outcomes*

- a. Diploma in Public Service Interpreting – Level 4
- b. NVQ in sign language interpreting – Level 4
- c. Diploma in Translation – Level 5
- d. Revised S/NVQ in languages for the QCF/SCQF – Level 1-4
- e. NVQ Level 3-Level4 in sign language
- f. S/NVQ for intercultural skills for the QCF/SCQF – Entry level- Level 4

- g. Units in intercultural working skills for import into other qualifications [titles to be confirmed] – Entry level- Level 4
- h. Revised VRQs and entry level qualifications in languages for QCF/QSF

The majority of these actions are expected to be completed by Dec 2010.

The new Languages Diploma includes the following topics in year 1:

- Business Introductions
- Travelling on Business: Hotel Bookings
- Travelling on Business: Travel Arrangements
- Business Meetings
- Business Lunch
- Communication: Telephone, Emails and Faxes
- Applying for Work Experience
- Interview Skills
- Accommodation: Seeking, Arranging and Marketing

The new Languages Diploma includes the following topics in year 2:

- Transport and Making Trips (course study visit)
- Visiting an International Company
- Designing a Product
- Marketing a Product
- Corporate Entertainment

A key part of the Diploma is the requirement for a student to undergo a work placement at a local company. The general template visit includes these elements:

- The students will be in small groups of up to 10 and will be accompanied by a teacher
- A company representative should greet them as formal visitors
- They should find out about the company's business
- They should find out how languages are used
- They should have a tour of the company
- They should be introduced to employees who use the target language
- They should have the opportunity to introduce themselves and ask simple questions in the target language

## 7. Can be readily & usefully implemented

The programme is managed by CiLT, the National Centre for Languages in London, but delivered 'on the ground' by regional managers. BLC Plus is delivered by RLN East, with support from Norfolk County Council and UK Trade & Investment. There is also input at national level from organisations such as NEPBN, BITC (Business in the Community, with a particular focus on

multinationals), EdComs (marketing & communications, with focus on linking languages to national employer engagement websites) and Links (delivery of awards for employer engagement).

The programme reports to both an Employer Advisory Group and a programme Steering Group. There are also quarterly regional managers' meetings and local partner meetings. The quantitative & qualitative data captured are as follows:

Progress against agreed project plan

Quantitative information we will capture:

- How many businesses are engaged, names and sectors
- How many schools and breakdown of target groups are engaged(e.g. those in greatest need)
- How many pupils & what age groups are benefiting from employer engagement activities
- Other stakeholders engaged (e.g. embassies)
- Press coverage, number of articles in national and regional press
- Qualitative information we will capture and report on:
- What type of activity is taking place through partnerships
- Impact of this activity
- Satisfaction levels of stakeholders

The programme management costs amount to 27% of total programme budget, with regional delivery accounting for 41%. The remaining budgets are allocated to marketing, communications and other initiatives such as awards, research & evaluation.

## 8. Transferability Assessment

### 8.1. Evidence of transfer

The file should identify whether the policy or training has already been transferred to other places or sectors. It can include the following information:

The principles of the programme have already been transferred to the United States through the work of the National Foreign Language Center in Maryland. They have been further transferred from here to several states, including Ohio, where it has the support of the Department of Education. See the USA Language Framework and Ohio Roadmap dossier files for further details.

The model is also currently being developed for transfer to the north European area under the Interreg programme, with input from Suffolk County Council and Norfolk County Council.

## 8.2. Innovation

The programme is innovative in that it is a new element of the business-schools partnering activity in the UK. Language & culture have not always been featured within this agenda, however this is now being addressed.

## 8.3. Dependence on political context

Although we are aware that the UK is fortunate to have a strong system of coordinated support for languages, which may not be the case elsewhere, the core principles of the project can be easily transferred.

## 8.4. Flexibility

The programme is completely flexible, and various elements of it can be transferred to other territories. One can almost 'pick and choose' the elements one finds most appropriate.

## 8.5. Multi-region transfer

The programme is entirely transferable to a multi-region network, both within the EU and as part of a wider collaboration (such as is the case with China through the Essex Jiangsu Center) as part of the young entrepreneurship or lifelong learning agendas.