

Malopolska Language Support

Poland

Language Policy



Good Practice Executive Summary

This best practice focuses on the southern Polish region of Małopolska, a region known for its areas of natural scenic beauty, its large range of World Heritage sites, which include Krakow city centre, a number of wooden churches, the Wieliczka salt mines and the Oswiecim (Auschwitz) concentration camp.

The Regional Development Agency MARR have implemented a series of initiatives to boost export promotion, inward investment and language & culture training in response to the Regional Economic Development Strategy which has highlighted that “real problems with communication skills for foreign markets and marketing overseas exist for small and large players alike.”

A response to this by the region has been the delivery of a language & culture survey to SMEs, a series of culture workshops, language training for SMEs, mobility across the EU (in particular England) and the development of its export promotion team. Four projects forming part of this implementation have been Harvest (2006-08), MINEM (2006-08), a recent Mobility project (2009-11) and Małopolska Export Offer Promotion (2009-10). The initial 3 have been funded through the EU Lifelong Learning programme.

The region recognises the importance played by Polish citizens moving overseas to gain work experience and improve their English skills, job prospects and income levels. These citizens, in returning to Małopolska, are able to provide valuable language skills to local businesses.

The international team at MARR, in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders, both within the region and in other EU member states, have promoted the value of language & culture skills for economic growth, and in particular its key sector agro-tourism. This wide range of stakeholders engaged in the languages agenda has been one of the key reasons behind the success of its implementation.

SMEs have been surveyed concerning their language needs, and details of these surveys are provided below. Subsequent language training responded to company needs and was designed to reflect everyday business reality, both in terms of content and learning style. A list of topics/modules covered is provided below, as is a summary of learner feedback.

Language training took place in Krakow, the regional capital (and former capital of Poland) due to its central location and cluster of businesses. There has been insufficient financial resource to extend the training beyond there, however the strategy model implemented and the approach taken by MARR in working with well-placed stakeholders is worth consideration for best practice.

It is worth noting that nothing of this nature had previously been implemented in Małopolska and that the focus on language & culture skills for business was an innovative activity in which the region engaged. It also came at a time of large-scale migration (and return) from Poland to other EU member states and adaptation to new systems to reflect recent EU membership.

This dossier file is based on information provided by various regional stakeholders (in particular MARR), participation in several events & meetings in and around Krakow during the period 2005-08, and a recent return visit as part of the Lilama work package Observatory of Best Practices to gather up-to-date information and meet former implementers of the strategy.

1. Reflects current EU and regional policy on multilingualism

The implementation of the support for language skills development in Małopolska

- promoted lifelong learning and learner mobility
- sought to improve the quality and efficiency of provisions and outcomes
- ensured the provision of the necessary skills and qualifications for the world of work

The Małopolska economic 2004-06 strategy identified tourism as a high priority for development & support, with food & drink and the manufacture of wood products as key sectors. With the rapid increase in inbound tourists, one of the weaknesses yet to be addressed was the low level of language skills, particularly in the smaller towns and rural communities and in relation to agro-tourism. The Development Agency had identified that “real problems with communication skills for foreign markets and marketing overseas exist for small and large players alike.” Support for priority sectors was outlined in the 2005 Regional Innovation Development Strategy. SMEs formed 40% of the workforce of Małopolska, yet only 1% of companies in Małopolska say that a reasonable number of their staff head count have foreign language competence.

At the time the East of England through its Europe & International Affairs Panel had established an alliance with the Małopolska region, and partners from both regions identified common needs and issues in relation to the language skills development.

The Małopolska Agency for Regional Development was established in 1993 on the initiative of the Kraków Voivode and the Agency for Industrial Development in Warsaw. The Agency is an organisation operating in the public interest to further develop the Małopolska region. The mission of the agency is to effectively support the economic and social development of the Małopolska region through undertaking and implementing a range of activities, including capital projects, support for SMEs and the operation of funds aimed at supporting SMEs, support for investors, co-operation with local governments. It also took responsibility for creating sector and local government development strategies, project planning, preparation of grant applications, and stimulation of international and cross-regional exchange of information and experience.

The lead partner in implementing language support in the region was the Agency itself, with support from a range of regional and local organisations. Most prominent were its 2 departments of International Affairs and Programmes for SMEs. These included International House in Krakow, which was responsible for the development of training materials and delivery of the English language workshops. Other organisations included the Association of Rural Business Advisors and the Labour Office of Małopolska, which was running the MINEM project at the same time. The latter was responsible for preparing local citizens to work in other European countries.

The implementation of the strategy also saw the establishment of an office within MARR for the promotion of the export capability of companies across the region. There was an exchange of staff from the East of England (where export promotion has a strong track record) to Krakow, where one International Trade Advisor was co-located for a period of one month to support with export programme development. The manager of this office also came to the UK to meet counterparts, establish relationships & meet local businesses. This office now forms a separate department whose activity is growing.

In 2006 the manager of the export promotion organisation at MARR made a presentation to East of England businesses on Polish Business Culture as part of an event preparing businesses for working in Poland. The international trade adviser and MARR's export promotion manager made joint visits to Polish companies to share best practice and learn from each other. The International Trade Adviser was based in the offices of MARR working alongside the Export Promotion staff, January 2007. The East of England's International Trade Adviser made a presentation on the differences between Polish and British business cultures to businesses in Krakow at an event hosted by the Technology Transfer Centre based at Krakow Polytechnic as part of the GrowIntoPoland'07 on 30th March 2007.

In August 2007 a delegation from East of England's Screen East undertook a visit to Małopolska Multimedia City project to support the project and offer practical advice on getting this venture up and running. A return visit was hosted from the Multimedia City management team, which included a tour of the EPIC centre in Norwich.

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

The main promotion to SMEs was through a range of promotional activities, including initial employer needs survey (95 SMEs participated) and then a series of workshops for SMEs from Oct-Dec 2006 targetting 160 SMEs, local & regional authority representatives. Results of the company language audits were also distributed via 20 reports to the Labour Offices across the region. Oct-Nov 2007 saw a further concentrated promotional campaign, as this coincided with the recruitment of SMEs to the language training workshops.

Details of the activities of the promotional campaign, channels, target groups and numbers involved are outlined below:

Period	Event / Channel	Target groups	Targets to be reached
Oct-Dec 2006	Conference on export in Małopolska	SMEs from Małopolska, local authorities	80 SMEs, local authorities, regional authority
Oct-Dec 2006	Conference on export in Małopolska	SMEs from Małopolska	30 SMEs
Oct-Dec 2006	Conference for SMEs on assistance programmes	SMEs from Małopolska	50 SMEs
January- March 2007	Websites of MARR,	SMEs, internet	5000 visitors

	Marshal's Office of Małopolska	users, advisers	
April – May 2007	Małopolska Labour Office	Labour offices in Małopolska	20 reports sent out
July 2007	Conference on regional development	Regional and local authorities	110 participants of the conference
October 2007	www.wrotamalopolski.pl	Visitors, employees of the Marshal's Office	500
October 2007	Conference on language and cultural differences for SMEs	Project partners, SMEs	40 SMEs, project partners, 55 reports of the audit findings given out
October 2007	Department of Education, Marshal's Office of Małopolska	Deputy Head of the Department	Vocational schools in Małopolska, Teacher's Continuous Education Centre
October 2007	www.marr.pl (MARR website)	SMEs, internet users, advisers	2500 visitors
November 2007	www.biznesporadnik.pl	SMEs, internet users, advisers	500 visitors
November 2007	Kurier Europejski (internet bulletin edited by MARR)	Local authorities, SMEs, advisers	1500 recipients
November 2007	www.wrotamalopolski.pl	Visitors, employees of the Marshal's Office	500
November 2007	www.wrotamalopolski.pl	Visitors, employees of the Marshal's Office	500
November 2007	Information on websites: www.bankier.pl www.pi.gov.pl http://notatnik.mobi http://fider.idg.pl www.kswp.org.pl	SMEs, internet users, advisers	5000
January 2008	www.bankier.pl	Internet users	500
January 2008	www.twoja-firma.pl	Internet users	400
January 2008	www.marr.pl	Internet users	600
January 2008	www.wrotamalopolski.pl	Visitors, employees of the Marshal's Office	500
January 2008	www.wrotamalopolski.pl	Visitors, employees of the Marshal's Office	500
January 2008	www.iph.krakow.pl	Members of Chamber of Commerce, visitors	500
January 2008	www.mot.krakow.pl	Members of Małopolska Tourism	500

		Organisation, visitors	
January 2008	www.marr.pl	visitors	800
January 2008	www.modr.pl	Advisors, visitors	500
February 2008	Business meeting	Management of Małopolska Agricultural Advisory Center	5
March 2008	www.wrotamalopolski.pl	Visitors, employees of the Marshal's Office	500
March 2008	Conference	agro advisers from whole Małopolska from Małopolska Agricultural Advisory Center	40
April 2008	www.wrotamalopolski.pl	Visitors, employees of the Marshal's Office	500
May 2008	www.marr.pl	Entrepreneurs, local associations representatives, employees	600
April-May 2008	Testing session of materials	Entrepreneurs, local associations representatives	35
May 2008	Conference	SMEs, labour offices advisers, British Council, local rural associations	35
April 2008	Meeting	Representatives of British Council and South Poland organisation	4
June 2008	European Courier – internet magazine	Local authorities, SMEs,	1500
July 2008	Publication « Małopolska – Forum of Regional Initiatives »	SMEs, local authorities, chambers of comers, labour offices	1000

Further strategy implementation received the support of a wide range of stakeholders, and was highlighted as a concrete action undertaken as part of the Regional Strategic Alliance with the East of England. This culminated in the conference in Krakow in Jan 2006, attended by over 30 representatives from the East of England and 30 representatives from Małopolska.

The language training was promoted through business support organisations, in particular those associated with agriculture and agro-tourism. It was also important for stakeholder partner (such as the Marshall's Office) to understand the importance of communicating with visitors to and investors in the region.

The training materials were planned as self tutoring in the form of task oriented scenes in which a company has to take care of some business dealings in English. These are everyday situations, such as writing e-mail, making appointment, writing and invoice, business trips etc. Most of these were prepared in the form of dialogues with some extra options. Some business culture information was also included. The dialogues have their audio version, which is recorded as a slower and normal speech version. There are also some pointers included. The third part of the materials is a vocabulary divided into general part and connected with food business.

Also included is the tutorial. The idea is that a person in the company, using these materials will be able to communicate in English with foreign partners in a “correct & generally approved way”.

The materials were prepared in an attractive way with photographs and attractive look. They were tested during the testing session planned in the period May-Sep 2008 with SMEs.

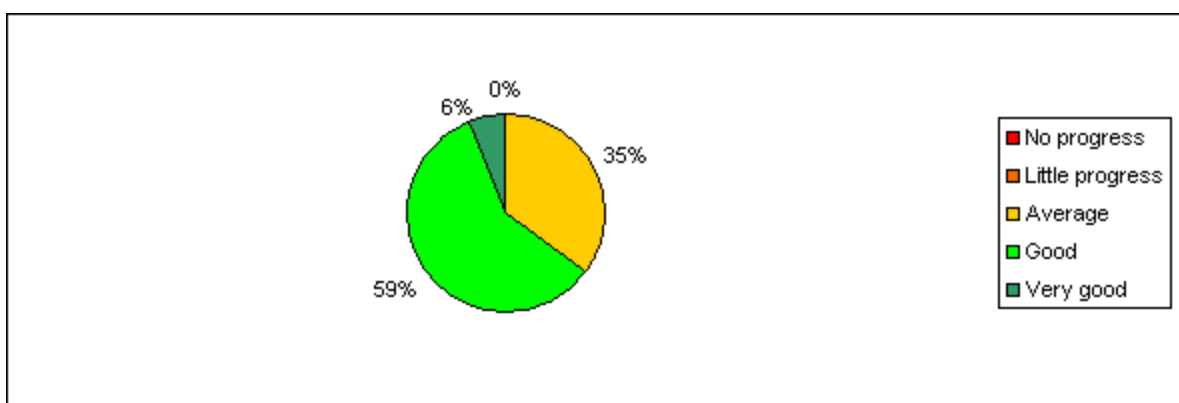
The key messages given to learners at the start of their training were:

- We will help you overcome your fear of speaking English
- Language, even if not perfect, is the best means of communication
- Understanding in context rather than word by word

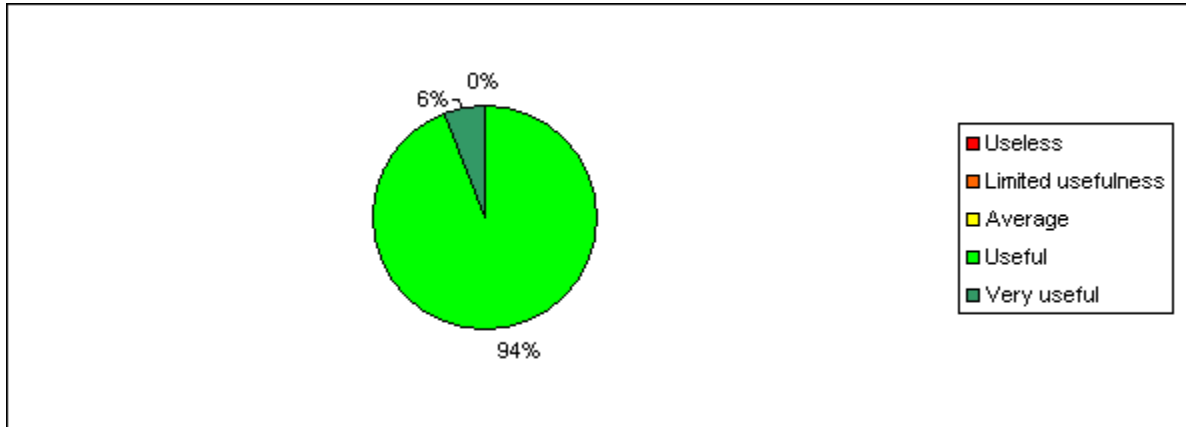
Training materials were prepared as a way to solve specific problems connected with a company, with easy access to specific ‘problem vocabulary’ (from a Polish cultural perspective). Learners were tested before training to gauge their level according to the CEFR and place them accordingly.

Feedback from the training was gathered by ongoing dialogue with learners combined with formal written survey (see below for analysis).

1. How do you rate your progress on the course in acquiring new language (vocabulary, grammar etc.)?

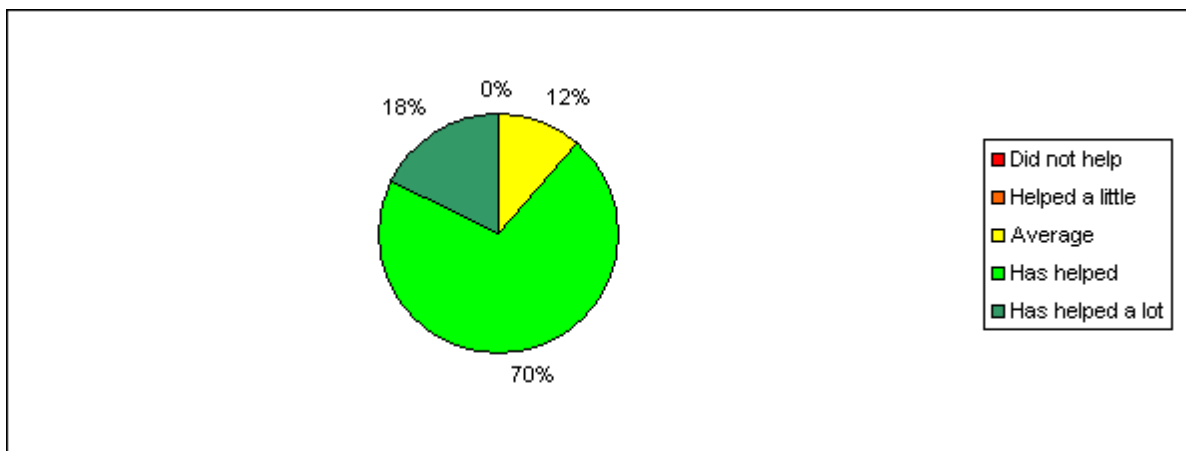


2. How useful did you find the course with respect to its topical contents?



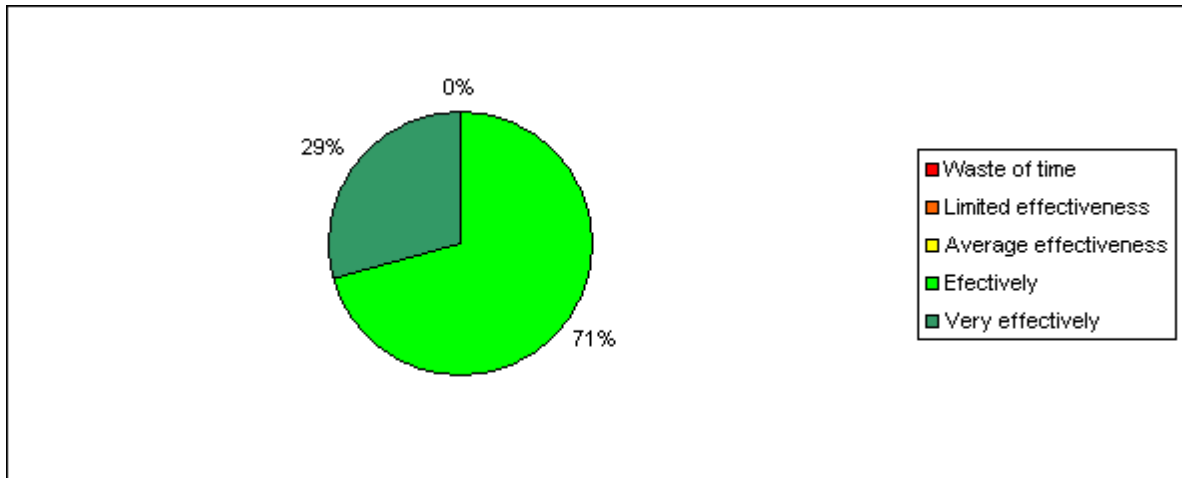
- 0 Useless
- 1 Limited usefulness
- 2 Average
- 3 Useful
- 4 Very useful

3. To what extent did the course help you to improve you language in the topical areas?



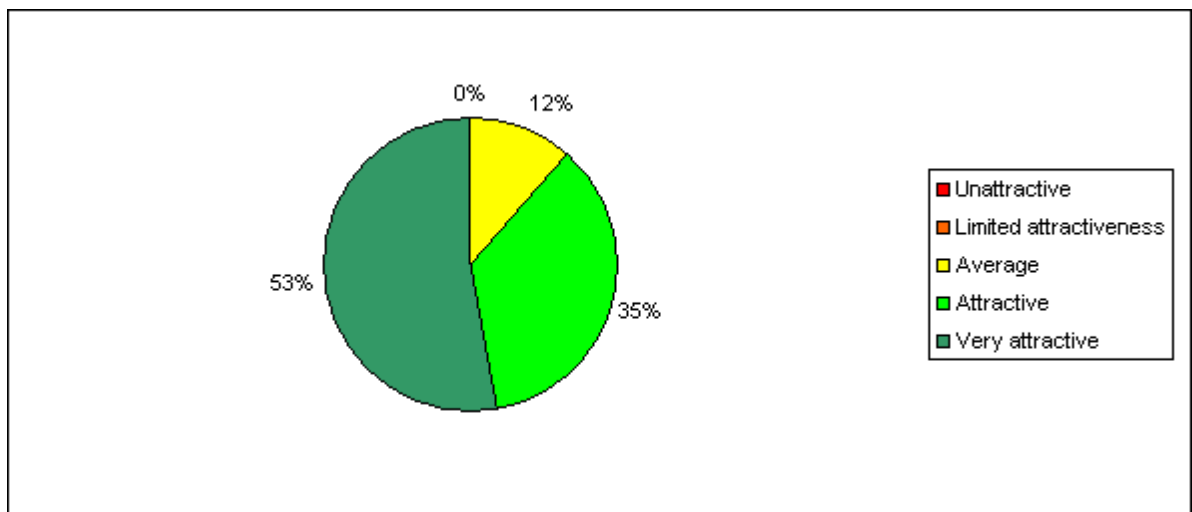
- 0 Did not help
- 1 Helped a little
- 2 Average
- 3 Has helped
- 4 Has helped a lot

4. How effectively in your opinion was the time used on the course?



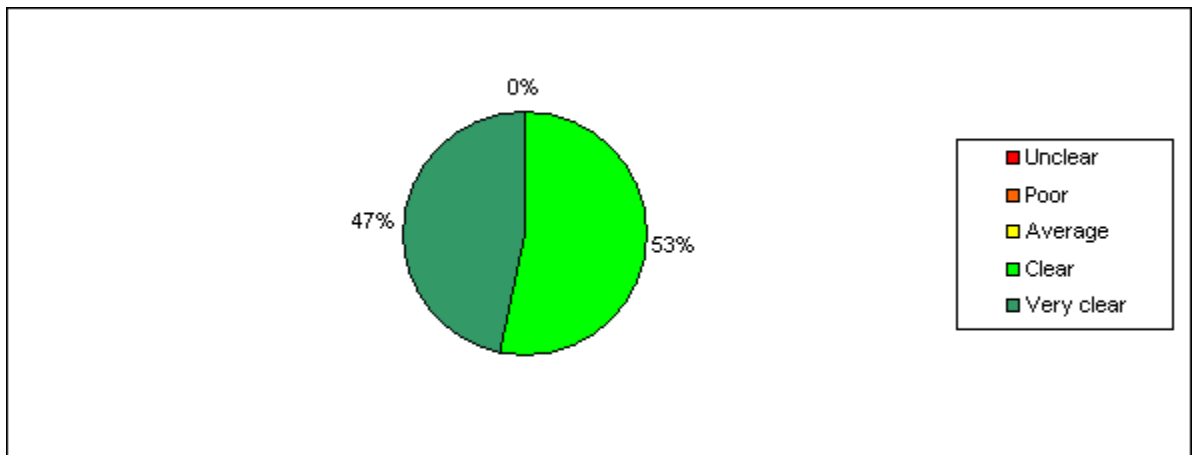
- 0 Waste of time
- 1 Limited effectiveness
- 2 Average effectiveness
- 3 Effectively
- 4 Very effectively

5. How attractive did you find the way the course was taught?



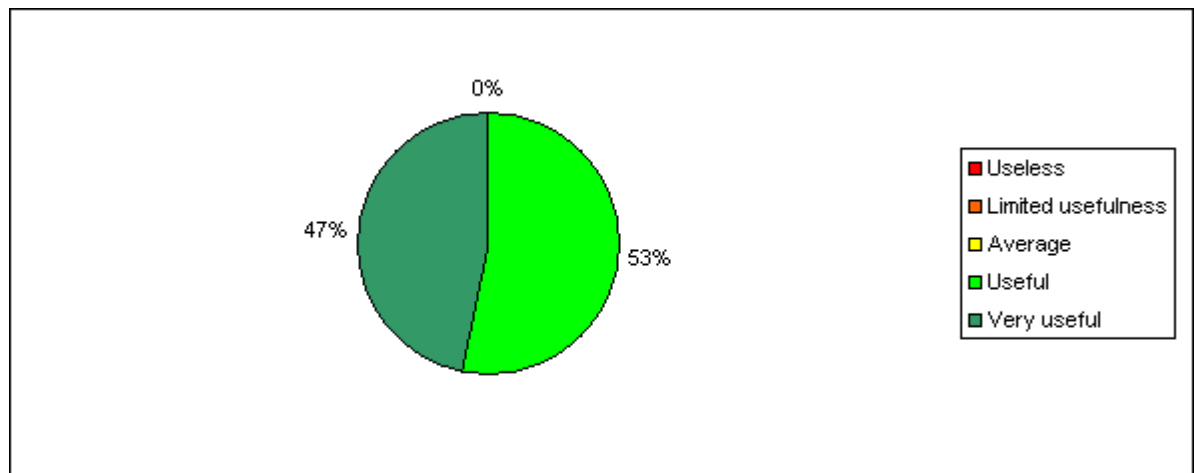
- 0 Unattractive
- 1 Limited attractiveness
- 2 Average
- 3 Attractive
- 4 Very attractive

6. How clearly was the new language presented by the teacher?



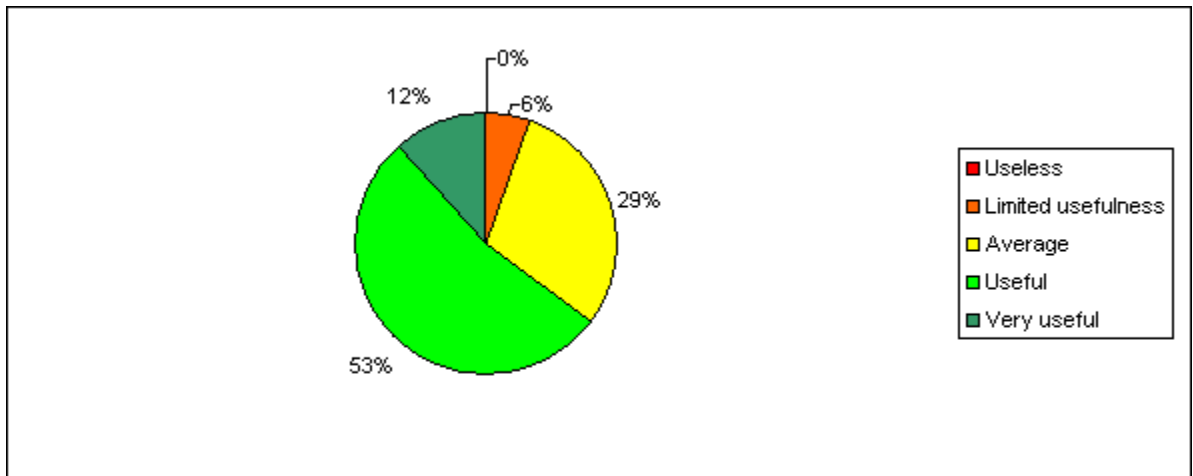
- 0 Unclear
- 1 Poor
- 2 Average
- 3 Clear
- 4 Very clear

7. How useful did you find the exercises containing difficult or new language contained in the course material?



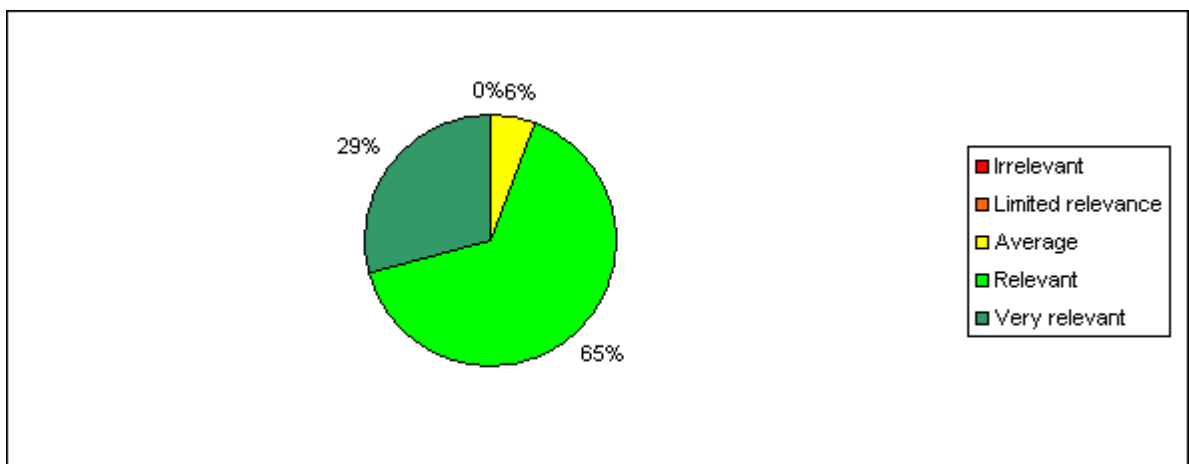
- 0 Useless
- 1 Limited usefulness
- 2 Average
- 3 Useful
- 4 Very useful

8. How useful did you find the course materials for the purposes of self-study?



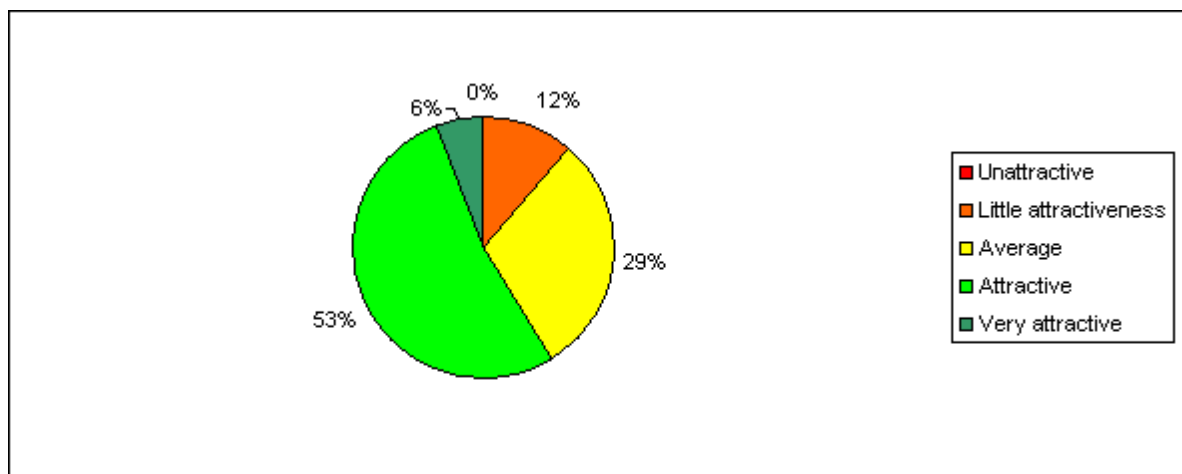
- 0 Useless
- 1 Limited usefulness
- 2 Average
- 3 Useful
- 4 Very useful

9. How relevant did you find the selection of course materials to your language needs?



- 0 Irrelevant
- 1 Limited relevance
- 2 Average
- 3 Relevant
- 4 Very relevant

10. How did you rate the graphic presentation of the course materials?



- 0 Unattractive
- 1 Little attractiveness
- 2 Average
- 3 Attractive
- 4 Very attractive

3. Reflects regional strategy for employability and intercultural benefits

The language materials developed in 2006 were made available on the MARR website www.marr.pl under “training” (szkolenia), which was popular with entrepreneurs. The website is visited by approximately 15 000 visitors a month. In Małopolska the HARVEST project was the first programme to present this kind of approach to supporting SMEs, and it helped to raise awareness of the problem which was lacking completely.

A systematic survey of business language & culture need was undertaken in early 2007. A total of 95 companies were interviewed. The target groups were agrifood producers, managers of tourism wood artifact production, and staff in tourist destinations. The surveys confirmed that there was substantial need for language & culture training. They were carried out initially using postal returns but were replaced by face to face interviews to speed up the process.

A roadmap was also developed based on a model used in the East of England. Access to the roadmap was through visiting the main website, through e-mails sent from a database of companies, and through bulletins (European Courier). The importance of links between websites was taken into consideration in order to acquire additional Google points. The structure of the roadmap reflect the core content of intercultural communication in business, language and training for international trade. It dealt with the most commonly asked questions by SMEs. The roadmap IP address (www.biznesporadnik.pl), ‘meaning business roadmap’, is currently unoperational due to budgetary restrictions.

The surveys highlighted the predominant demand for English, followed by German & Japanese. A series of business-related English-Polish modules were developed, most of which were based on a flow-chart approach to reflect the Polish style of

learning. The 36 modules developed were divided into 2 levels, namely low intermediate and intermediate. All materials were put onto CD-ROM and provided in hard copy to companies. The CR-ROM included audio materials and interactive exercises. They are also currently available on the website www.rln-east.com/materials. The move to this website was part of the sustainability plan, as the programme was a joint initiative with the East of England, and this website had a secured budget for the foreseeable future.

A total of 31 staff from 29 SMEs received language training in the form of regular weekly 2-hr classes over 18 weeks. These took place on provider premises in Krakow, where 'English' rooms (for example, with images of London scenery decorated on the walls and a mock English pub bar) were available. The training which took place as a result of the surveys was funded by the Leonardo Lifelong Learning programme and match funded by MARR.

A series of English culture workshops was also run. The first of these took place in Krakow in October 2007 at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. The target group were local companies and stakeholders from the Krakow area. The workshop focussed on English business culture and differences between English and Polish business etiquette.

The second was held in March 2008. Participants were 46 agricultural business advisors and other stakeholders at the Agriculture Business Advisory Centre in Karniowice. Areas covered by the combined presentations were similar to those outlined in the bullet points below, followed by a session on the presentation of the prepared language materials by representative of International House Language School.

The third was held in Krakow in May 2008. Areas covered by the training included the following areas (with titles of sessions):

- Getting to know and understand cultural differences in international contacts as a key to success in business (presenting a short video)
- English business culture, the most common causes of misunderstandings
- Promoting a company beyond Polish cultural area – experiences of Małopolska Export Promotion Center
- "Lifelong learning " – cultural differences as necessary part of the market place, language competences – is knowledge of the foreign language enough (cultural differences included) ?
- Language – a necessary basis for understanding in business (specifics of business language learning)
- Support systems for exporting companies in East of England, and exchange of experiences
- Discussion of differences and similarities in business dealings

Participants from different organizations presented their experiences from implementing different projects and functioning in different cultures. 25 participants took part, including representatives of British Council in Krakow, (who presented a project aiming to name the role of cultural differences in multinational companies). Again the Harvest project was presented with special emphasis on the English language materials.

In terms of the language materials developed, it was assumed that the target user of the course would be a company owner or executive, unsure about his/her command of English, who uses English sporadically since managing the company takes a lot of his/her time, and has no time to attend a regular English course. The target level was low intermediate or intermediate (A2/B1).

At this level the language user could understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, local geography, and employment); could communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters; could describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need; could understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.; could produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest, but may or may not be able to describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

The topics covered by the training programme were as follows:

A basic marketing campaign, agro-tourism, arranging a meeting, at a factory, at a restaurant, at the airport, buying a ticket, changing arrangements, checking in at a hotel, e-mails requesting & giving information, emergencies & accidents, false friends, agricultural terms, food produce terms, freight forwarding, honorifics, invoices, making excuses, negotiating, numbers, leaving voicemail messages, telephoning, personal data, polite requests, problems with understanding, quantities, responding to a reminder, sales contracts, social English greetings and the calendar.

International House decided that the best option would be to write a task-based self-study survival English manual containing 1. short phrases typical of most frequent contexts related to business communication complete with a pale-print Polish translation underneath; 2. set of boxed gap fill to enable the business person to prepare for their own type of conversation; 3. a glossary of business English-Polish. The manual was accompanied by recordings of each scene and pronunciation of English-language terms. Such a way of preparing materials would make the communication easier by giving special tools to correct communication in specific areas.

Training took place in two groups, with feedback provided on the relevance of the language resources to their sectors. Learners were asked to give informal feedback on the following areas:

1. whether or not the presentation of new language, especially vocabulary, was helpful to students
2. to what extent the lesson helped the students to acquire new language for subsequent practice
3. to evaluate the attractiveness and interest level in the subject matter.

Formal feedback was organized towards the end of the course using a specially modified IH student satisfaction survey Training included a session on 'false friends'. See section 2 above for feedback analysis.

Learners mentioned as benefits: understanding in context instead of word by word, appreciating value of trying to communicate even if not perfectly, overcoming fear of using English. Also mentioned were: prepared materials as a way of solving specific problems of the company, easy access to problematic words. Representatives of MARR visited most of the classes, with the coordinator of the project visiting last classes and taking photographs of the 2 groups.

The programme of language education was supported by a parallel drive to grow the export promotion activity of the region's businesses in line with the region's business strategy implemented by MARR. One member of the language project staff moved to head the €273,000 regional programme 'Małopolska Export Offer Promotion at the international level', running from Jan 2009 – June 2010. The aim of this is to create a business brand of the region recognisable worldwide through the promotion of the Małopolska export offer and the building of a system of monitoring and supporting export actions.

4. Addresses local language minority and migrant community language resources

AND

5. Provides for international networking and/or mobility

In this sense the 'migrants' in the strategy were (and are) the locally engaged staff moving to the UK and returning to Małopolska. Implementation of the mobility aspect of the strategy has been delivered through 2 projects: MINEM (2006-08) and a 2009-11 Lifelong Learning Mobility project. MINEM stands for Meeting the Information Needs of Economic Migrants.

Implementation of the strategy was mainly focussed on businesses based in the Małopolska region who were in the most part of Polish extraction. However, this coincided with a period of mass emigration from Poland in general to regions such as the East of England, to the extent that the Labour Office in Poland developed training for those wishing to move to the UK. UK recruitment agencies in particular were setting up representation in Krakow, particularly to feed the seasonal agricultural opportunities in the East of England, known for its large agricultural businesses. Agencies such as Accent Europe and Taskforce Recruitment were particularly active.

The jointly-implemented 2006-08 MINEM project developed a DVD and pre-arrival information packs in Polish, English & 4 other EU languages focussed on 3 target groups: Polish (and other, especially Lithuanian & Portuguese) migrants, East of England businesses, and stakeholders in Małopolska & the East of England.

As the programme progressed, a large proportion of Polish citizens began to return to Małopolska to find employment, with improved English skills and overseas business & social experience. Whilst in the East of England, Polish staff in many companies continued to receive English language training through the Learning & Skills Councils and East of England Development Agency basic skills funds. Further support was provided by the organisation Friday Bridge, whose premises are

established on a former air camp and which have been converted to house migrant workers undergoing temporary or seasonal agricultural work.

This was continued in 2009 through the TransQual programme, which both provides low-level English language training and a system of mapping qualifications for employers across the 2 regions. This is funded using ESF.

The Mobility project runs from Sep 2009 to Feb 2011. Institutions of various profiles and operation areas have been selected – from research institutes, through business-surrounding institutions, to centres offering training and preparing for new jobs. Between April and July 2010, the participants pay two-week visits to their partners in the UK and 5 other EU countries (Austria, Spain, Italy, Portugal & Latvia). As part of the preparation process for the study visits, all project participants will undergo language and target culture training. The project is a response to the “Methods of entrepreneurship development in the region” project ex post evaluation and a mid-term evaluation of the “Best practices in vocational needs analysis for SMEs” partner project currently implemented by MARR.

The main objective of the project is an exchange of know-how concerning support and services for enterprises, especially connected with training and vocational needs analysis. The project focuses on international mobility (expert visits at hosting institutions) aimed at the further professional development of trainers and guidance counsellors, and at those responsible for training establishments and for training planning and career guidance within enterprises. The period of mobility is 14 days.

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

The training did not lead to an accredited qualification, although the materials were assessed by an externally-appointed assessor as part of the final claims procedure within the Lifelong Learning Programme.

Throughout the training reference was made to the CEFRL, with learners apprised of their level both on entry and completion. The target level was A2, with progression to B1. Course materials are integrated into the ongoing training offer by International House (www.uh.pl).

7. Can be readily & usefully implemented

The implementation of the strategy can take place without too much adaptation. It requires a driving body such as MARR to head the initiative and monitor progress, together with sufficient budget (although this does not need to be large) and buy-in from select business support agencies. The latter are key if there is no in-house expertise or contact with the business community, however MARR have 2 teams which have worked closely with business, namely the international and export promotion teams.

This joint focus (on international collaboration and trade/investment) is key to ensuring that language training takes place in context. It needs to be supported by a language training provider who is able to appreciate the needs of business and skilled in developing new resource. International House in Krakow possessed such

skills and ensured quality at all times during materials resource development and workshop training.

The roadmap facility requires the financial ability to maintain both the hosting of the site as well as ongoing maintenance & updating of its content. This has been difficult in recent months for MARR due to budgetary pressures and a small and focussed export community which has already had 3 years' exposure to the site and the support it offers.