



**BORN GLOBAL: Rethinking Language Policy for 21st Century Britain –
A policy research project into the nature and extent of language needs in the labour market and
the implications for languages education from school to higher education.**

Abstract

Bernardette Holmes, Principal Researcher

Following years of declining capability in language competence in education and in the face of recurrent reports in employer surveys (produced by the CBI and British Chambers of Commerce) of high levels of demand from employers for language skills, the research will elicit new knowledge about the language needs for employment to inform government language policy development, the current national curriculum review for England and future developments in Higher Education language curricula and assessment.

As a key project in the **British Academy's language programme**, the research aims to develop a deeper understanding of how language is used in the workplace for different purposes, by employees of different levels of skill and accountability. It will explore employers' expectations of language competence and investigate the reasons for their dissatisfaction with the current language capabilities of school and college leavers and university graduates.

Working with the Education and Employers Task Force, the study will also include a closer analysis of longitudinal data investigating the relationship between the language competence of young people and their adult employment prospects. While there has been some research into the potential benefits of language capability to economic recovery, to date there has been no reliable information to inform public discourse about the economic and social benefits of language study to individuals.

The research design will develop a **new paradigm for language policy development**, engaging key stakeholders from employment and education in a radical rethinking of languages education for the 21st Century. Empirical data of language use will be gathered from a representative sample of employment contexts. Using an innovative methodology combining ethnographic data with discourse analysis of recorded samples of languages at work, the research will elaborate a conceptual framework to map language competence, identifying the range of knowledge, skills and understanding required to function effectively from administrative to executive levels, calibrating authentic examples of language use to the Common European Framework of Reference.

The research will be structured in three phases, running from **May 2013** to **July 2015**. The project will draw on the expertise of a high level Steering Group convened by the British Academy and an Advisory Board, including representatives from the CBI, British Chambers of Commerce, the Employer and Education Task Force, and Fellows of the British Academy. The Steering Group will be Chaired by **Richard Hardie**, non-executive Chair of UBS Ltd. The study will be published by the British Academy and will be relevant to the Department for Education, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Higher Education Academy, as well as to a range of other stakeholder groups from education, public services and employer networks.