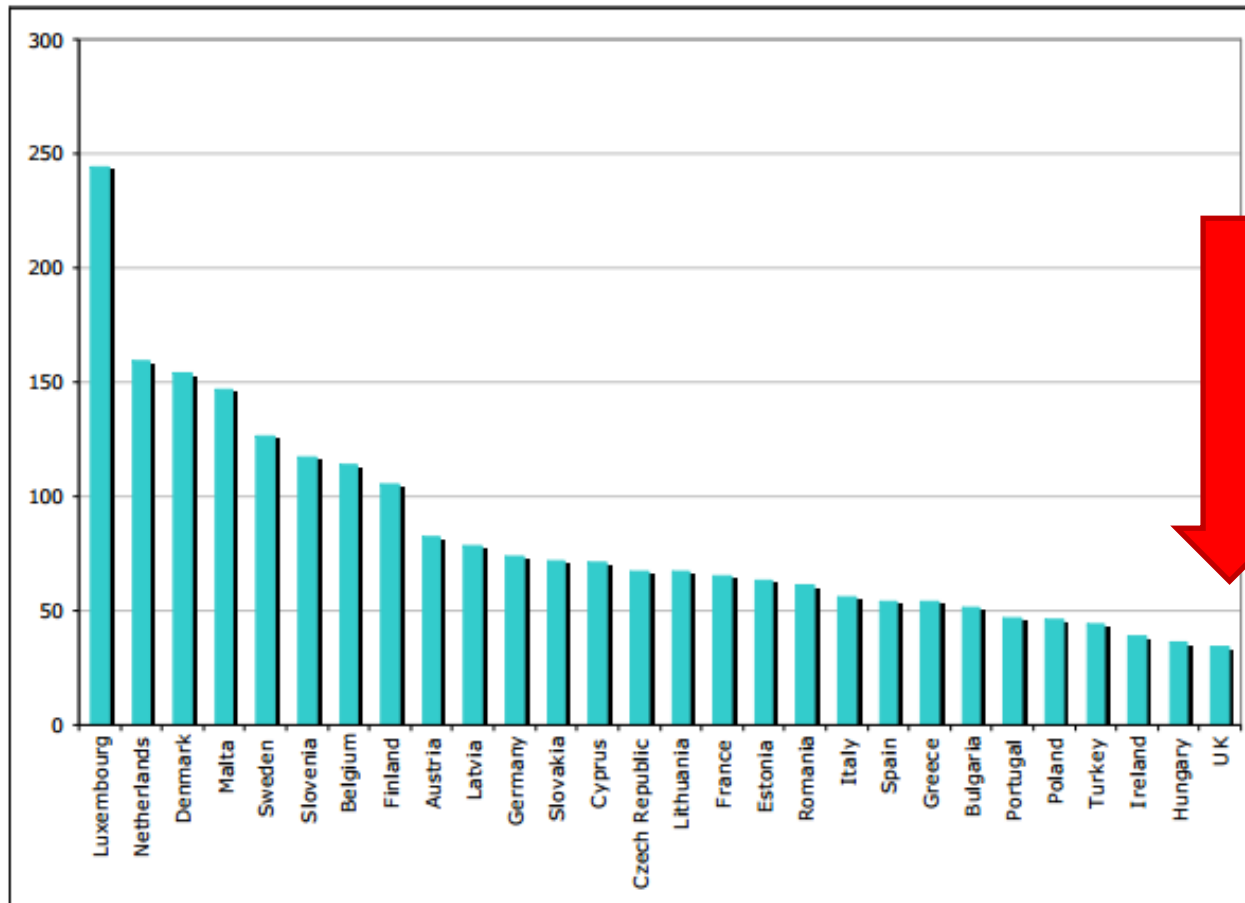People in 28 countries in Europe were asked about whether they spoke any languages other than their mother tongue. The results were then added together so the more people who spoke two languages or more, the higher the score.

Out of 28 countries, how do you think the UK did?

**Figure 1: Language skills of Europeans (2005)**

Key: the aggregate of all non-mother tongue skills in each country (i.e. the percentage saying they spoke French added to the percentage saying they spoke German etc.)

28th out of 28:

People from the UK have the <u>worst</u> language skills in Europe

1

Percentage of secondary school pupils across Europe with an advanced level of a second language

2
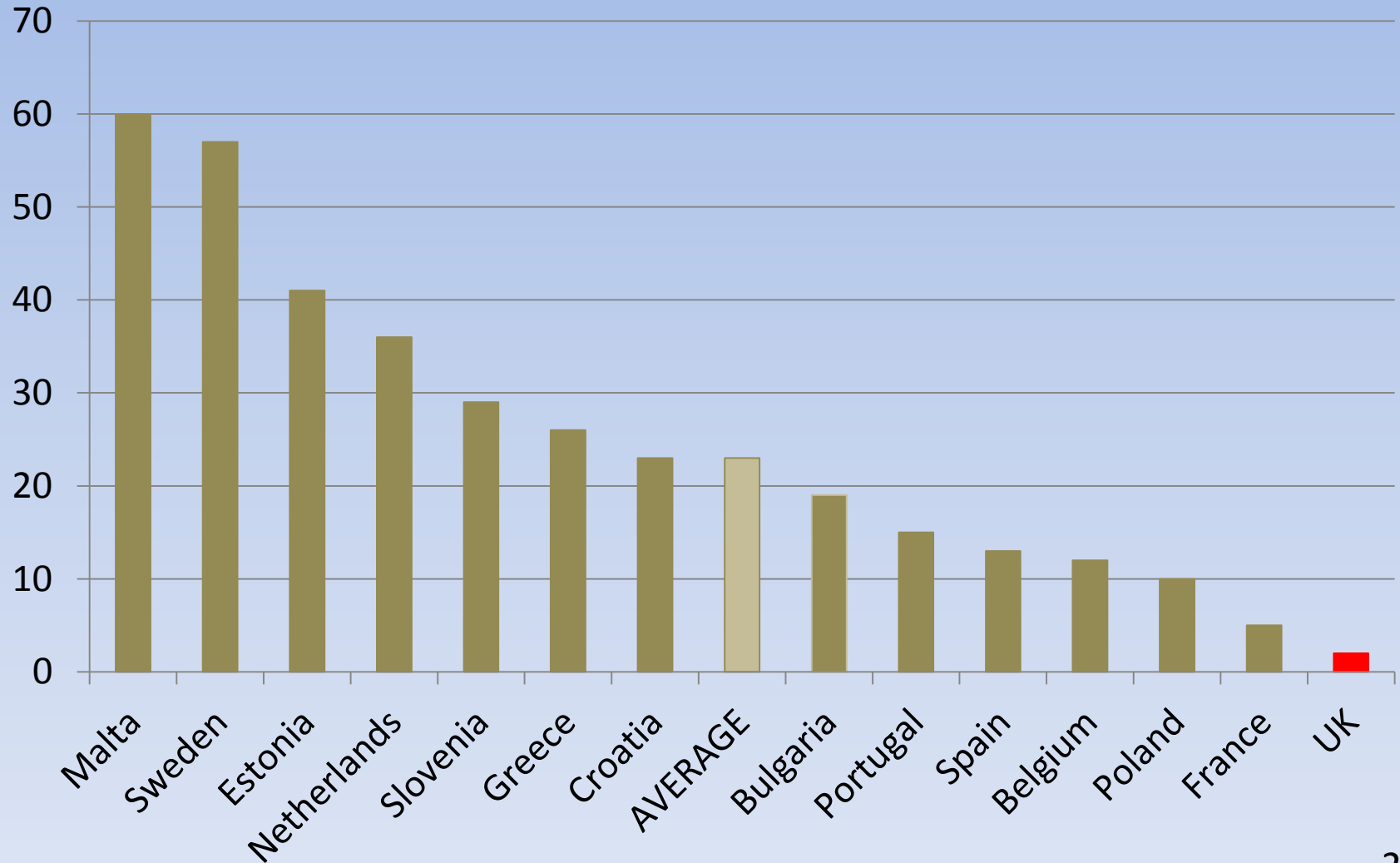
The UK is also the only country in Europe where learning a second language isn't compulsory in either primary school or the second part of secondary school.
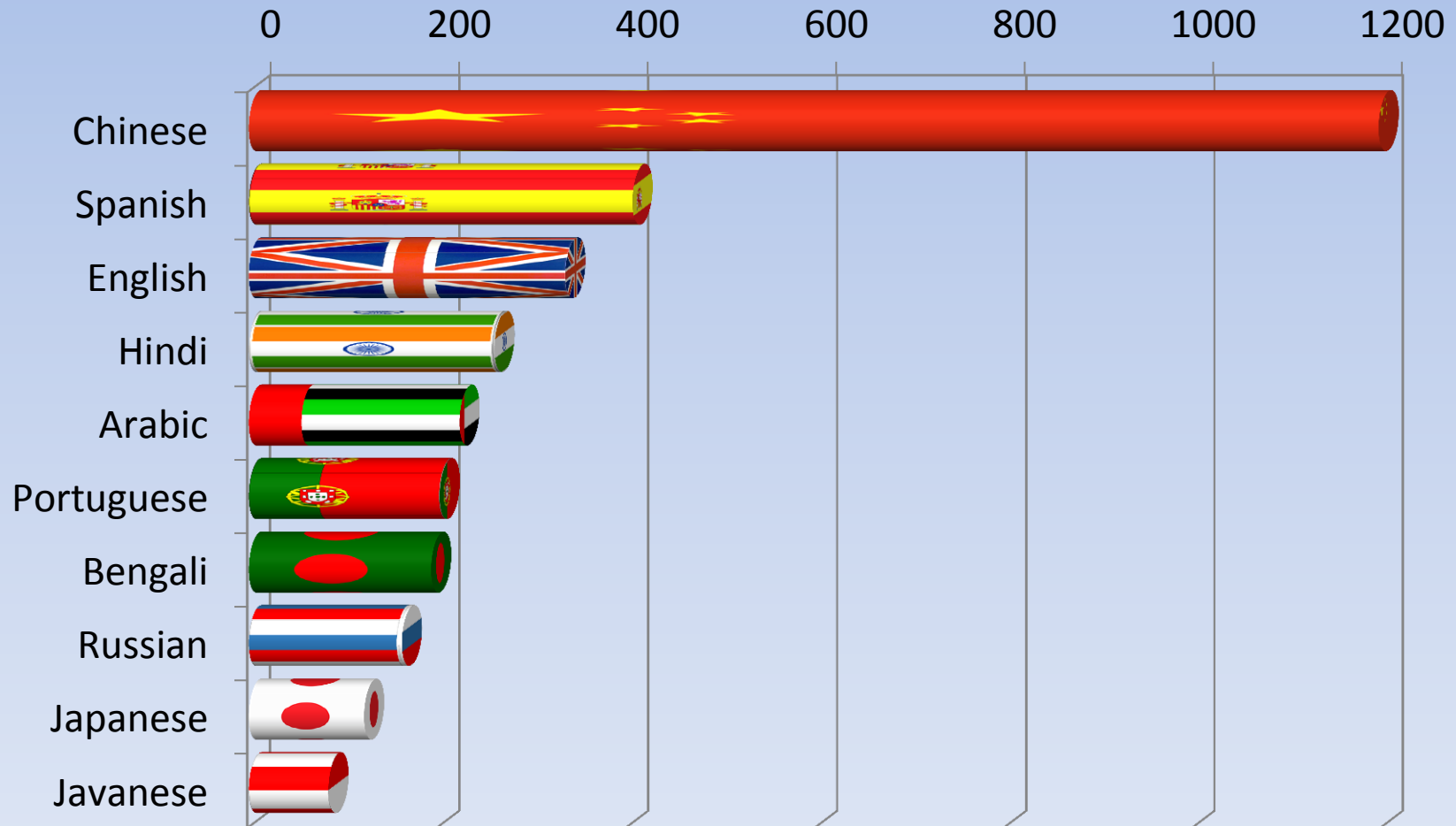

Are these figures something to be proud of??

What does it matter, everyone in the world speaks English, right?

WRONG!

Number of first language speakers around the world (millions)

Bar chart showing number of first language speakers (millions): Chinese (~1200), Spanish (~400), English (~350), Hindi (~300), Arabic (~230), Portuguese (~200), Bengali (~190), Russian (~160), Japanese (~130), Javanese (~80). X-axis scale: 0, 200, 400, 600, 800, 1000, 1200.

Language use online, 2000 and 2009

Source: CILT, (2009a), Talking World Class
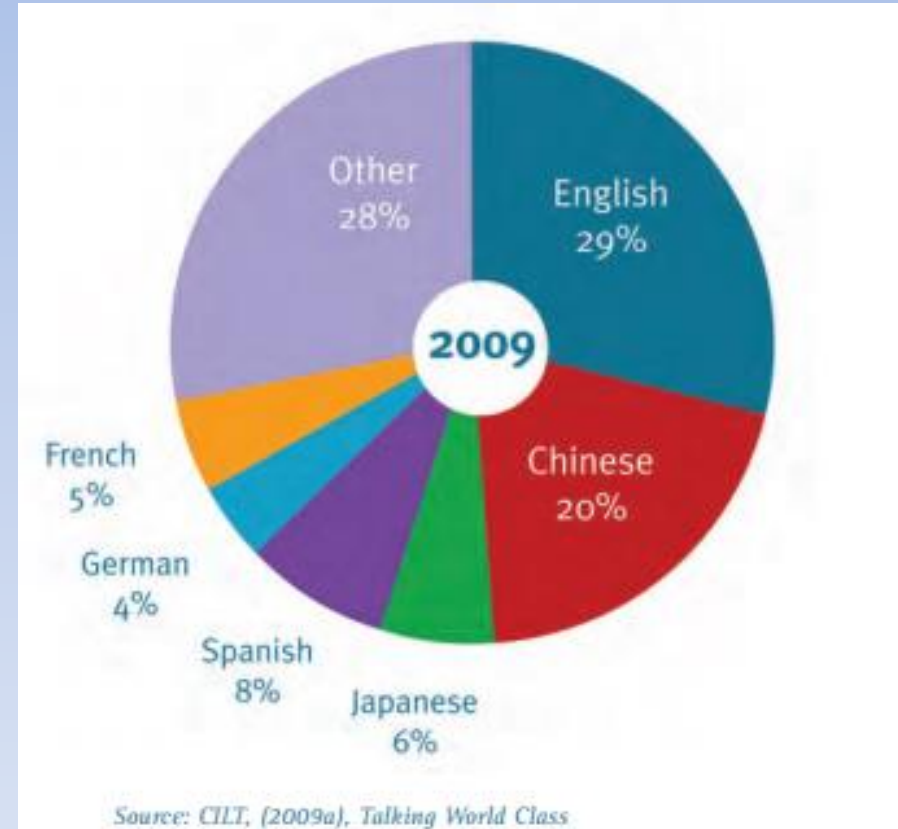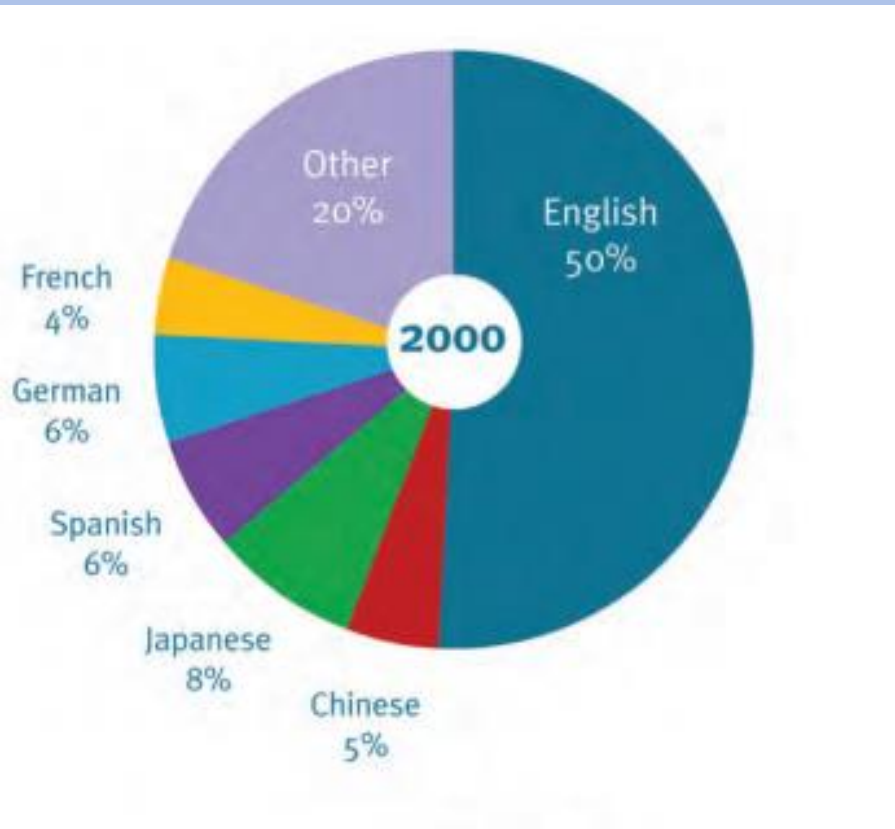
The UK relies heavily on trade from exports. We sell 75% of our goods to countries where English is not the main language spoken.

This means that not knowing languages is actually **costing** us money.

Would you like to guess how much it is costing us?

£50 million

Equivalent to the approximate cost of the Royal Wedding

£3 billion

Equivalent to the total value of trade between the UK and Nigeria in 2010

£7 billion

Approximately 1% of total UK GDP

DID YOU KNOW....?

1. 75% of employers say they want people to have foreign language skills;

2. You don't need to be fluent, 65% of employers are interested in people with 'conversational ability';

3. 3.5 years after graduation, people who studied languages at university were more likely to be employed or in education than people who studied law, architecture, business or computer sciences;

4. Language graduates earn more than people who study engineering, maths, physics, astronomy or chemistry;

5. In the USA, school leavers with language skills earned 4% more than their peers;

6. Of all the skills that employers want, students perform worst in foreign languages;

But that's not all...

Employers recognise that students who know more than one language often have other important skills too:

So, in what types of job will knowing languages be an advantage?

Some obvious ones:

- Translating and interpreting

- Teaching

- International work (diplomacy, foreign service, UN, EU)

- Travel and tourism

- Hotels and catering

Some not so obvious ones:

- Finance
- IT
- Marketing
- Secretarial work
- Conference and event organising
- Banking
- Law
- Accountancy and Insurance
- Sales
- Museum and library work
- Advertising
- Journalism
- Broadcasting (TV, Radio etc.)
- Health and social care
- Charity work

Or how about being a Hollywood star...?

Can you match these celebrities to the languages they speak?

German   French

Spanish   Hebrew

Afrikaans

Italian   Russian

Click here to see how many you got right

SUMMARY

1. In the UK we perform the worst on languages out of all European countries;

1. The world is getting more and more global and employers needs students to have language skills;

2. Our poor language skills are costing the UK over £7 billion in lost exports;

3. Language students have better job prospects and earn more than other students;

4. Language skills make us cleverer, better at listening, communicating and understanding others.

So why aren't we taking languages more seriously???

Speak to the Future is a campaign which aims to get languages to be taken more seriously in the UK.

We feel that our culture is too monolingual are we are far too complacent, thinking that our trading partners around the world will speak English.

You now know that this is not the case and you have seen what this is costing the UK in terms of exports that we are failing to trade because we can't communicate with our partners abroad.

If I'm selling to you, I speak your language.
If I'm buying, dann müssen Sie Deutsch sprechen.

Willy Brandt, former German chancellor

Our first priority is to get in touch with all 650 MPs in the UK and ask them for their opinion on languages.

The more we can contact, the more seriously the government will have to think about languages and put proper policies in place to ensure that education and training is good enough to ensure that young people can become global citizens.

This is where YOU come in….

Your challenge is to write to the MP for the constituency (area) in which you live or where your school is and ask them to explain their views on languages.

Why bother?

1. Being part of a national campaign will look great on your university or job applications;

2. If you're thinking of studying languages for A-Level or at university, your involvement will show your future teachers how committed you are to languages;

3. If you get a response, we will publish your letter on our website and in the Association for Language Learning (ALL) newsletter.
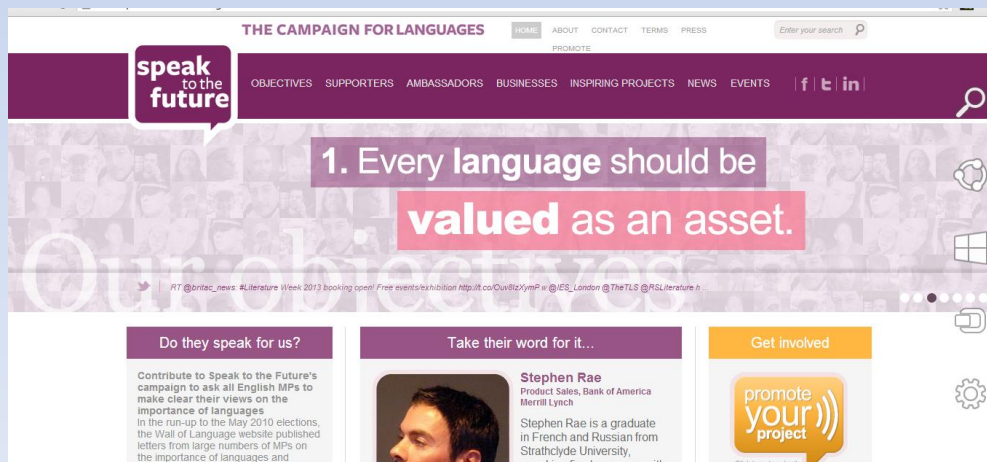
4. It's a chance for you to speak up for your future!

Visit
www.speaktothefuture.org
for more information.

There are 650 MPs in total,
help us to reach our target!

And most importantly, if you get a response, send it
to us along with your letter at
victoria@speaktothefuture.org so that we can post it
on the website.

USEFUL LINKS

www.speaktothefuture.org

Like us on Facebook

Follow us on Twitter

Click here to find your local MP

Click here for more information about languages and the economy

Click here for more information about languages in the UK

Sample letter – you can use this if you like, or feel free to write your own. You can also contact your MP by e-mail. Just remember to include your **full name and address, including postcode** otherwise you won't get a reply.

24c Maynard Way
Croydon
CR2 4XC

17 May 2013

Dear Mr Cameron,

My name is (   ) and I am a Year (   ) student at (   ) College. I am keen to hear your views on the importance of languages and language learning and the policies that should be adopted by your party to reverse the recent decline in the numbers of students learning languages in our schools, colleges and universities.

I believe that too many young people are leaving the UK education system without the language skills needed for success in their future working and personal lives and to meet the needs of the UK as a global economy and multilingual society. You will no doubt be aware of the British Academy report 'Languages: The State of the Nation - - Demand and Supply of Language Skills in the UK' which can be found at: http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy/State_of_the_Nation_2013.cfm.

As a student, I am particularly concerned about the language options available to me at GCSE/A-Level / the lack of recognition for community languages such as XX which I speak at home / whether or not I will be properly prepared for the global workplace when I leave school/university.
- Include one or two personal / local examples of the reasons for your concern.
- Ask your MP what he / she proposes to do to address this concern.
- If you speak other languages, mention this is the letter, especially if you feel it is a language that is not really recognised.

With your permission I should like to post this letter and your response on the Speak to the Future website (www.speaktothefuture.org<http://www.speaktothefuture.org>) which will publish the views of MPs on this subject.

Yours sincerely,

References:

1. CILT, 2005b
2. European Survey on Language Competences http://ec.europa.ec/languages/eslc/docs/en
3. Ethnologue http://www.ethnologue.com/statistics/size
4. Education and Employers Taskforce http://www.educationandemployers.org/media/14563/ll_report_1__for_website.pdf
5. Education and Employers Taskforce http://www.educationandemployers.org/media/14563/ll_report_1__for_website.pdf
6. http://www.prospects.ac.uk/using_your_language_skills.htm
7. Education and Employers Taskforce http://www.educationandemployers.org/media/14563/ll_report_1__for_website.pdf