

Case study

BUSINESS LANGUAGE CHAMPIONS

a project supported by the DCSF through CILT

Trade experts show students how languages can put them at the front of the pack in 2012 and beyond



UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) and GLE specialise in supporting businesses to succeed in international markets – as well as encouraging overseas partners to trade with the UK. This global outlook made these organisations ideal candidates for the Business Language Champions programme, where they collaborated with Bishop Thomas Grant school from Streatham.

Clare Owen, a German teacher, discovered Business Language Champions online and saw that this was exactly what her students needed. In common with schools across London, many students are native speakers of languages other than English – including Spanish, Portuguese and Polish. Clare wanted to build on this multicultural environment to show the relevance of languages in the wider world and improve take-up at Key Stage 4. Working with Sabe Tibbitts from UKTI, International Trade Adviser and specialist in Indian culture and commerce, she arranged in July 2009 for 14 Year 10 students of French, German and Spanish to visit UKTI's London Bridge offices.

Opportunities for linguists at the 2012 Games

The day's activity started in the morning with introductions by the team. Following a business overview by Sabe, Mel Langton (a France expert at UKTI) and Juergen Bauer (a native German speaker) talked about their own jobs and how languages play a vital role – whether in encouraging businesses to develop their own skills, or on the ground in trade missions. Monica Montero, a native Spanish speaker working for UKTI's partner organisation GLE, talked to the students about the 2012 Games and the opportunities available for linguists in the years to come.



The students were put into groups according to the languages they were studying – French, German and Spanish – and as an icebreaker,



they battled against the clock to piece together the different words in UKTI's 'mission statement' translated into each language.

Mock job interviews based on a simple UKTI job description followed, with time beforehand for each student to prepare. Held in the language by each UKTI or GLE staff member, for many students it was the first time they had had the opportunity to speak with a native speaker outside the classroom - reactions afterwards showed they found the experience challenging but immensely rewarding.

The morning was rounded off with a 2012 Games-based quiz using CILT's *Languages Work* materials and a 'networking' lunch where a number of other work colleagues including a Norwegian team manager and a Trade Adviser specialising in fashion chatted with the students.



A new insight into languages and international trade

As with many Business Language Champions partnerships, seeing the workplace at first hand made an impression in itself, but more than anything students gained a valuable new insight into languages and international trade. The well-organised day brought out the best in the students, who were excited but well behaved throughout.

Opportunities to stretch their language skills don't end with this partnership - students at Bishop Thomas Grant school can also take part in the BA Flag Award scheme. Thanks to Clare and her colleagues' efforts, take-up for German GCSE doubled between 2008 and 2009. "I was delighted with my students' response to their day out," said Clare. "Their sense of achievement was immense and they were able to take away a new confidence and understanding of the relevance of languages in their world."

Sabe added, "In my work and personal life, I feel that language knowledge is essential to understand how society and business operate – to deal with people more effectively and to see the other point of view. GLE and UKTI were delighted to help young people to see the importance of languages, and we hope that the opportunities we talked about in trade and the Games will inspire many of today's visitors."

Find out more



www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk/ukti/london



www.btg.ac

For more on Business Language Champions in London, visit www.rln-london.com/champions

