



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Tuesday 20 June 2017 – Morning

A2 GCE CRITICAL THINKING

F504/01/RB Critical Reasoning

RESOURCE BOOKLET

To be issued with the Question Paper

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes



INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Read and use Documents 1, 2, 3 and 4 to answer the questions.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

- The information contained in this Resource Booklet was accurate when it went to press, but may subsequently have changed. Questions should be answered on the basis that the information is correct.
- This document consists of 8 pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

INSTRUCTION TO EXAMS OFFICER/INVIGILATOR

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Document 1**Language learning in the UK: 'can't, won't, don't'**

The latest statistics from the Higher Education Statistics Agency show that the number of UK students choosing to study foreign languages at university level has been in steady decline over the last seven years. While there is some progress – current figures show languages are now on the timetable in more primary schools – much work still needs to be done to encourage young people in the UK to study foreign languages. The latest national school exam results show that uptake of languages at both GCSE and A-level is not growing.

The hugely successful campaign by government, industry and academics to raise the profile of subjects such as science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) for study purposes and eventual careers is contributing to the decline in interest in languages, which are increasingly seen as neither useful nor important.

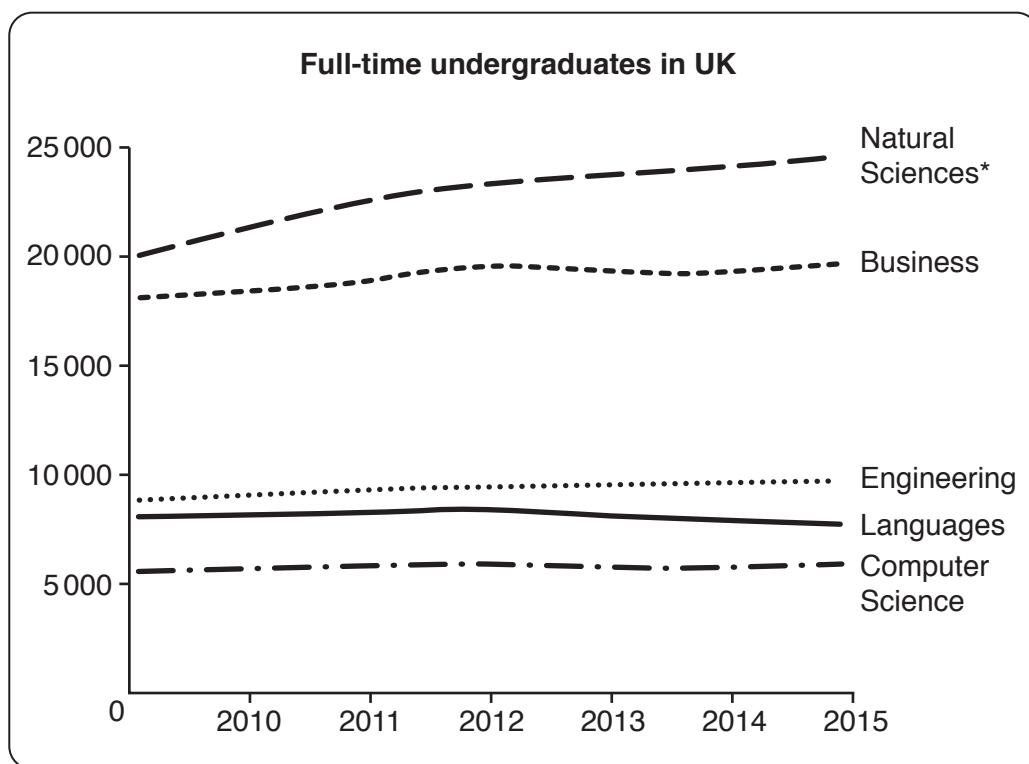
We need to promote language learning for the sake of the UK's future prosperity and global standing. Languages are increasingly essential for our trade, prosperity, cultural exports, diplomacy and national security. The most recent Education and Skills Survey from business leaders showed almost two-thirds of UK businesses need foreign language skills – and expect that to grow, since the UK's concerted export drive is causing more firms to look to break into new fast-growing markets. The problem is many UK businesses have given up on home-grown talent and rely on translators or hire abroad.

The only piece of really good news is forward-thinking universities are offering students the chance to study a language alongside another degree subject. A number of students are opting to do so – more should. It's a particularly attractive combination for employers. The tough reality in a tough jobs market is a lawyer with Chinese language skills is more in demand than someone who is purely a lawyer or purely a linguist.

There is no doubt the UK needs more of our young people, not fewer, to develop their language skills to at least a functional level for trade and export. But more than that, understanding another language is the basis for understanding another culture – and an open mind has never been more important for the UK's place in the world.

Source: John Worne, Director of Strategy at the British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities.

Document 2**Trends in university study**

The category "Languages" is comprised of:

- English Language and Literature, also Latin and Greek and the scientific study of languages
- European Languages and Literature
- Eastern, Asiatic, American and Australasian Languages and Literature.

Statistics for these three sub-categories and their constituent parts are not published separately.

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

* Natural sciences degree courses focus on the natural world from chemical, biological, physical, mathematical, environmental, geological perspectives

Document 3**Learning a foreign language: Now you're talking**

After international football matches, the players mill about in the corridors, mingling with the journalists. It can be a bit of a scrum. Sports broadcaster Andy Brassell, though, is in his element, interviewing one player in French, another in Spanish and a Brazilian international in Portuguese. Andy is an authority on European football, who appears regularly on BBC Radio 5Live and Talksport, providing the kind of insight you only get by travelling the grounds of Europe. "It really helps to speak the languages," he says. "The players tend to open up a bit more, just talk more freely, and you get better stories." 1

Brassell discovered his talent for languages in his mid-20s when he and some friends were planning a trip to South America and hired a Spanish teacher. "It turned out I picked it up with reasonable speed, then I started to remember my school French," he says. From there, he went on to take A-level French and Portuguese at night school, and GCSE Spanish. 2

His story shows that languages can really boost your career, but as a nation we are notoriously rubbish at them. In general, we are pretty relaxed about this. There's a feeling everybody else speaks English anyway, a theory apparently based on the fact waiters everywhere can say: "Do you want ice in your Coke?" It has become fashionable to talk about "globish", a simplified version of English that is becoming the global common language of business. But even if the global business elite can speak English, it doesn't follow that everyone else does. 3

In jobs such as sales, marketing or technical support, languages can open doors for you. Irene Missen, of language specialist recruitment agency Euro London, estimates a language can add between 10% and 15% to your wage. For those looking to stand out in a tough jobs market, or for graduates wanting to add a special extra ingredient to their CV, learning a language could be just the thing. 4

She says many people will conduct meetings with foreign clients in English, but "if you can speak to people in their language during breaks, then they will see you in a very different light. I think they appreciate it if somebody has bothered to learn the language instead of arrogantly acting as if English is the best language; it helps with building relationships." 5

Source: The Guardian

Document 4**Why do the English need to speak a foreign language when foreigners all speak English?**

Fewer and fewer of us are learning a foreign language, while more and more foreigners are becoming multi-lingual. This, say distraught commentators, will condemn us pathetic Little Englanders to a life of dismal isolation while our educated, sophisticated, Euro-competitors chat away to foreign customers and steal all our business as a result.

In fact, I think those pupils who don't learn other languages are making an entirely sensible decision. Learning foreign languages is a pleasant form of intellectual self-improvement: a genteel indulgence like learning to embroider or play the violin. A bit of French or Spanish comes in handy on holiday if you're the sort of person who likes to reassure the natives that you're more sophisticated than the rest of the tourist herd. But there's absolutely no need to learn any one particular language unless you've got a specific professional use for it.

The planet's most common first language is Mandarin Chinese, which has around 850 million speakers. Clearly, anyone seeking to do business in the massive Chinese market would do well to brush up on their Mandarin, although they might need a bit of help with those hundreds of millions of Chinese whose preferred dialect is Cantonese.

The only problem is that Mandarin is not spoken by anyone who is not Chinese, so it's not much use in that equally significant 21st century powerhouse, India. Nor does learning one of the many languages used on the subcontinent help one communicate with Arab or Turkish or Swahili-speakers.

There is, however, one language that does perform the magic trick of uniting the entire globe. This is the language of science, commerce, global politics, aviation, popular music and, above all, the internet. It's the language that 85% of all Europeans learn as their second language; the language that has become the default tongue of the EU.

This magical language is English. It unites the whole world in the way no other language can. It's arguably the major reason why our little island has such a disproportionately massive influence on global culture: from Shakespeare to Harry Potter, from James Bond to the Beatles.

All those foreigners who are so admirably learning another language are learning the one we already know. So our school pupils don't need to learn any foreign tongues. They might, of course, do well to become much, much better at speaking, writing, spelling and generally using English correctly. But that's another argument altogether.

*Source: David Thomas
Opinion article in the Daily Mail*



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