cover.jpg

Linguistic Auditing

---

title:	Linguistic Auditing : A Guide to Identifying Foreign Language Communication Needs in Corporations Topics in Translation ; 9
author:	Reeves, Nigel.; Wright, Colin
publisher:	Multilingual Matters
isbn10 | asin:	1853593281
print isbn13:	9781853593284
ebook isbn13:	9780585154381
language:	English
subject	International business enterprises--Management, Corporations, Foreign--Management, Business communication, Businesspeople--Foreign language competency, Training needs--Evaluation.
publication date:	1996
lcc:	HD62.4.R44 1996eb
ddc:	658.3/1244
subject:	International business enterprises--Management, Corporations, Foreign--Management, Business communication, Businesspeople--Foreign language competency, Training needs--Evaluation.

TOPICS IN TRANSLATION

Series Editors:
Susan Bassnett (*University of Warwick*) and André Lefevere (*University of Texas, Austin*)

Editor for Annotated Texts for Translation:
Beverly Adab (*Aston University, Birmingham*)

Editor for Translation in the Commercial Environment:
Geoffrey Samuelson-Brown (*Aardvark Translation Services Ltd*)

Other books in the Series

Annotated Texts for Translation: FrenchEnglish
BEVERLY ADAB

Annotated Texts for Translation: EnglishFrench
BEVERLY ADAB

Paragraphs on Translation
PETER NEWMARK

Practical Guide for Translators
GEOFFREY SAMUELSON-BROWN

The Coming Industry of Teletranslation
MINAKO O'HAGAN

Translation, Power, Subversion
R. ALVAREZ and M. C.-A. VIDAL (eds)

Other Books of Interest

About Translation
PETER NEWMARK

The Cultural Functions of Translation
C. SCHÄFFNER and H. KELLY-HOLMES (eds)

Please contact us for the latest book information:
Multilingual Matters Ltd, Frankfurt Lodge, Clevedon Hall,
Victoria Road, Clevedon, Avon BS21 7SJ, England

TOPICS IN TRANSLATION 9
Series Editors: Susan Bassnett (*University of Warwick*)
André Lefevere (*University of Texas, Austin*)

Linguistic Auditing

A Guide to Identifying Foreign Language Communication Needs in Corporations

Nigel Reeves and Colin Wright

MULTILINGUAL MATTERS LTD
Clevedon • Philadelphia • Adelaide

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Reeves, Nigel
Linguistic Auditing: A Guide to Identifying Foreign Language Communication Needs in Corporations/Nigel Reeves and Colin Wright
Topics in Translation: 9
1. International business enterprisesManagement. 2. Corporations, Foreign Management. 3. Business communication. 4. BusinessmenForeign language competency. 5. Training needsEvaluation. I. Wright, Colin. II. Title. III. Series.
HD62.4R44 1996
658.3'1244dc20 95-42195

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 1-85359-328-1 (hbk)

Multilingual Matters Ltd

UK: Frankfurt Lodge, Clevedon Hall, Victoria Road, Clevedon, Avon BS21 7SJ.
USA: 1900 Frost Road, Suite 101, Bristol, PA 19007, USA.
Australia: P.O. Box 6025, 95 Gilles Street, Adelaide, SA 5000, Australia.

Typeset by Archetype, Stow-on-the-Wold.
Printed and bound in Great Britain by WBC Book Manufacturers Ltd.

Contents

Acknowledgements

The origins of this book go back to the 1978 investigation of the role of foreign languages in UK exporting, chaired by HRH The Duke of Kent for the British Overseas Trade Board, *Foreign Languages for Overseas Trade*, when Nigel Reeves was a member of the research team. More immediately, however, the impulse came from the Lingua-funded project, *Euraudit* of 1993, which devised an approach to linguistic auditing and a set of analytical tools on which the current book builds. The authors are deeply grateful to the contributors, The Institut National des Sciences Appliquées at Toulouse, Universités de Toulouse I, II, Universitat Politécnica de Catalunya, Barcelona, Hogeschool Rotterdam en Omstreken, The Netherlands, Royal Forest of Dean College (UK), and, in particular, to the coordinator, Jean-Pierre Soula, for creating the stimulating environment that helped to shape many of the ideas that have found their realisation here.

We would like to express our especially deep debt to Dr Sue Wright, Aston University and to Jane Harvey, Royal Forest of Dean College for their keen insights and the fieldwork which they carried out in companies to test the analytical techniques devised during the project. Sue contributed some of the key concepts that find their expression in our text.

Further stimulus has come from a second Lingua-funded project, the Business Language Workbench, coordinated at Aston University with partners at Mast Learning Systems, Coventry Technical College, Rotterdam University (Hogeschool Rotterdam en Omstreken), The Netherlands, the Faculty of Education at Castell Branco, Portugal, and Kozani Technical Institute, West Macedonia, Greece. The Workbench project, which began in 1994, had as its initial task the design of a suite of computerised auditing tools, and the thinking behind that work has contributed greatly to this book. We wish in particular to thank John Allan of Mast Learning Systems and Alan Winchcombe of Coventry Technical College for the wisdom and experience they have brought to the project and for the assistance that has been to this related, paper-based publication.

We wish warmly to acknowledge the contribution made by Pieter Sleeboom and Theo de Wit of Rotterdam University, who generously allowed us to reproduce the auditing questionnaire which they devised and tested in The Netherlands.

But the publication would not have been possible without the unstinting work, the inspiration and cheerfulness of Dr Helen Kelly-Holmes, who helped so selflessly with the production of the manuscript and of Lesley Shield, who also helped prepare the manuscript and whose expertise in the teaching and learning of languages for specific purposes and in computer applications was invaluable.

The Lingua Bureau deserves our deepest gratitude for so generously supporting both Euraudit and the Business Language Workbench. In particular we want to thank Tony Shaw for his constant encouragement and his untiring enthusiasm.

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to Aston University and in particular to the Department of Languages and European Studies for vital financial and logistic support that flanked the funding from the EU Lingua Programme.

< previous page page_viii next page >

Chapter 1
Introduction to Linguistic Auditing and Overview of the Book

Introduction

The gap

The shelves of British book shops groan with books advising managers on how to exploit the opportunities presented by the unified European market. These works deal with cultural, political, economic, technical and other environmental conditions which must be taken into account when doing business in European markets. How extraordinary that surprisingly few even mention the problem of language and communication as a key issue.

This book sets out to close this gap. Good communication (in your own or others' language) is central to any successful business. Only too often insufficient effort is directed into understanding how and why good communication comes about.

When we stop to reflect, we all agree that language is central to business, from the first contacts to the completed transaction. Faulty, inadequate or inappropriate communication is undesirable at any stage. At best it may simply cause waste and delay; at worst it may cause the breakdown of relationships. This is true when we are working with others who share our language; it is doubly true when we need to communicate with people who do not.

Communicating with those who speak English . . .

When we communicate in our mother tongue, language tends to become invisible. We all use language but rarely reflect on how we do so. This can cause problems even when we communicate with other mother tongue speakers of English. Unless we are reflective, disciplined, clear communicators we may say what we do not mean; we may hear what has not been said. We must be aware, too, that there are many varieties of English. We can illustrate the care needed here with the much quoted story of the American and British divisions on a NATO exercise who bungled an attack. For one group the message 'We've cleared the woods' meant that they had come out the other side, but for the other it suggested that the wood was free of 'enemy' troops. Interestingly, it was the German contingent who anticipated this likely confusion!

. . . and with those who don't

Problems are even greater when we speak English to those for whom it is not a mother tongue. We need to be aware of what they may have understood, of what they may have missed. We have to assess what they think they mean. For the monolingual English speaker, who does not have the experience of communicating in a second language, these difficult but vital points may not be evident. The following example illustrates what we mean. The French for *at the present time* is *actuellement*. When a French negotiator says 'We can't do that actually', we need to check whether he is dismissing our proposal as totally impossible or simply not possible at the present time.

When we are the one to use the foreign language for business purposes we run the same risks. For example, importing a little light irony into negotiations in French or German will simply cause confusion. You cannot use it to lighten tension, or inject a little humour into a situation; the ideas expressed will probably be taken at face value.

Who needs this book?

This book is for those working within or for organisations having to communicate across language frontiers and who want to be more alert to the ways in which language use, whether in English or in the language of the customer or business contact, is going to affect performance. More specifically, it will be useful to the following groups:

(1) General managers or

(2) Management consultants, either of whom are looking at overall strategy and who wish to identify the weaknesses in their organisation's chains of communication, especially where these chains cross language boundaries.

(3) Training managers who want to identify how their organisation communicates with speakers of other languages, who want to assess the skills that the workforce already possesses, who want to know what it will cost in terms of time and money to train staff and to improve their communication systems.

(4) Foreign language training providers who need to understand their role within the context of an organisation as a whole and who want the tools to plan and provide training programmes that truly satisfy the needs of their customers.

Why do they need this book?

The benefits of putting language use on the agenda are quantifiable. Recent research in the industrial sector (Wright & Wright, 1994) has shown that a commitment to using the language of the customer, at least in all publicity (brochures, price lists, etc.), in instruction booklets and routine letters, has a high correlation with export success. This research carried out with over 800 firms demonstrates a positive relationship between profitability and good practice in this area. It does not prove that one leads to the other, but it shows that they are often to be found together. And there are benefits as soon as the organisation begins to be aware of language and to consider language as an integral part of recruitment and training.

A variety of approaches

However, there is no single solution put forward in this book. We are not simply preaching the need to use the language of the customer. Communication problems can be approached in a number of ways and solutions are numerous. The message of the book is that no solution is possible until the organisation's communication environment is fully understood. It is often impossible for an organisation working in a truly international way to attempt to use the languages of all its customers and contacts in all its dealings with them. There may be too many and English may already be in use as a common language. Why try to change this? English is a real economic advantage in that it reduces the need for language training. However, it does not do away with the need for foreign language capability. First and foremost, all those who use English in dealing with non-English mother tongue speakers should be made aware of which English they should use. They need to be trained to limit the range of their non-technical vocabulary and their structures, to speak clearly and not too rapidly, to avoid idiom, image and cultural illusion. John Major's 1991 speech to the other heads of EU countries was littered with cricketing metaphorsstraight bats, sticky wickets, googliesand was met with almost total incomprehension. This is a wonderful example of what not to do. In other words, English speakers need to be trained to use international English.

Some targeted foreign language knowledge is better than none at all

Another way of proceeding, rather than dismissing the language question as impracticable and insoluble, is to accept that there are partial solutions which may have beneficial effects far outweighing the cost, in time and effort, that is needed to implement them. If the language situation is complex and varied and if the organisation's staff start from a position of few or no foreign language skills, it is tempting to shelve the language problem altogether. However, some targeted foreign language use is better than none at all. Even just courtesies expressed in the foreign language will reveal commitment and build bridges. Relationships will almost certainly get off to a good start or improve.

If it is not possible to do everything that should be done, then the trainers need to identify what is the most useful. For example, the sales manager in the food industry who knows the essentials relating to his or her product in several languages (and alphabets!) can use a trip abroad to turn a walk around any store into convenient market research. Without some knowledge of the foreign language, sales and marketing managers will not even be able to read their competitors' advertisements let alone understand the trade literature.

The myth of the quick fix

This is not to say that we believe there are any quick-fixes in this area. The usual knee-jerk reaction to a communication problem that arises suddenly is to search for a solution involving an agency which supplies translators or interpreters. This may work when those brought in are of very high calibre, but even then there are problems. Sometimes the perceived need for someone with a particular language competence overshadows other criteria and the organisation may have to allow its interests to be represented by a spokesperson it would never have chosen under any other circumstances. Even with competent people you are of necessity introducing a further link in the communication chain where misunderstanding can arise and you have no way of monitoring this. Moreover, the practice may give the impression of crisis management. Where communication is always considered as a part of the overall strategy and planned for, the panic telephone call to the agency ought never to be necessary. And how well can such personnel understand your company, and of course your products? Proper prior briefing is indispensable in any case.

Another knee-jerk reaction to a language problem, even if it is in the longer term and concerned with exploiting opportunities, is to send everyone in the organisation involved with international business to a beginners course in French, Spanish or whatever. These courses are almost always totally unsuitable and ineffective, since they are usually too general and unfocused, designed without any reference to a language audit and thus do not take into account the needs of the organisation and its technical area, or the capabilities of its staff in the language area.

Learn what you need to know: 'Targeted learning'

One of the main reasons for the popularity of the quick-fix solution of a general and unfocused language course is that this is what the supply side, language trainers, fob organisations off with: it is what they have available and can deliver with little extra effort. The outcome is usually disappointing because effective language learning is slow and time consuming. Motivation is low because the general course underlines the fact that the whole of the language is there to be mastered. The prospect is daunting, success is unlikely and the probability of non-completion is high. And at the end those that stay the course may have little that they can actually use except the common courtesies we mentioned before.

A course targeted at properly identified language needs will of course be more expensive initially. The actual communication requirements of the organisation have to be established and courses designed specifically. However, this is likely to be far better value in the long term. Tailor-made courses have numerous benefits:

Benefits of tailor-made courses

• The language is immediately useful and so the effort has an immediate reward and motivation can remain high.

• The teacher and the taught are able to work together as professionals to provide the skills element and the content element of the course in partnership, with the result that the feelings of inadequacy on the part of the learner (so painful for professionals!) are lessened and the language teacher's sense of ignorance about the learner's area of expertise is reduced.

• Setting limited objectives which are realistic (but challenging) means that they will be achieved and that the learner can progress step by step.

In order to achieve this desirable state of affairs, those responsible for training will need to carry out a serious language or 'linguistic' audit and this is the business of the following chapters. However, first we must explain what a linguistic audit is, and when it is appropriate to use one.

A Brief Introduction to Language or 'Linguistic' Auditing

What is a language/linguistic audit?

The primary objective of a language or 'linguistic' audit is to help the management of a firm identify the strengths and weaknesses of their organisation in terms of communication in foreign languages. It will map the current capability of departments, functions and people against the identified need. It will establish that need at the strategic level, at the process (or operational/departmental) level and at that of the individual postholders. It should also indicate what it will cost in time, human resources, training and finance to improve the system, so that the resource implications can be fed back into strategic and financial planning.

Six stages in the linguistic audit can be distinguished:

Preliminary stage. Initiating the audit: Defining the audit with senior management (Chapter 2).

Stage 1. Integrating the audit into the planning process (Chapter 3).

Stage 2. Understanding the organisation: Understanding how the organisation works (Chapter 4).

Stage 3. Analysing postholders' foreign language use and needs (Chapter 5).

Stage 4. Assessing postholders' foreign language skills (Chapter 6).

Stage 5. Reporting back (Chapter 7).

Clearly, the extent to which an auditor will follow all these stages sequentially when carrying out a linguistic audit for an organisation will depend on a number of factors:

- The size of the organisation.
- The nature of the language communication problem.
- Who initiated the audit and what is expected of it.
- The auditor's existing knowledge of the organisation.
- The budget available for the audit.
- The time available for the audit.

All these issues should form an important part of the discussions with senior management at the first meeting (Initiating the audit, Chapter 2).

The remainder of the book is based on the structure of this auditing overview and the six stages identified above. (See also Figure 1.)

When should a linguistic audit take place?

There are a number of situations in which a linguistic audit may be required. The following are the major ones:

(1) A company wishes to review its entire organisation and, to this end, undertakes (or commissions from a management consultant) a strategic audit. A linguistic audit would be carried out as part of that audit.

(2) A company moves into a new overseas market or expands into an existing market with a new product/activity, or through an acquisition or merger, increasing the relative importance of that market. This situation calls for a linguistic audit to assess the current linguistic capability within the organisation, in the light of the new strategy.

(3) The company is dissatisfied with its performance in a particular market and asks for an expert solution to its problems.

(4) A company decides to initiate or upgrade its language training programme and commissions an audit to ensure that training is properly targeted and appropriate to its needs.

Thus, organisations can be proactive or reactive as far as their linguistic audit strategy is concerned: proactive if they undertake an audit as part of a strategic corporate audit or in anticipation of exploiting overseas oppor-

STAGE	MAIN ISSUES	TASKS	TOOLS/ TECHNIQUES	OUTCOMES
PRELIMINARY Initiating the Audit Chapter 2	Aims; Scope; Agenda	Establish the credibility of audit team; Define the assignment	Company Publications; List of Agenda items; Meetings	Audit proposal; Agreement with company re: confidentiality and access to information and personnel
STAGE 1 Integrating the audit into the planning process Chapter 3	Current language problems; Future language challenges; Focus on strategic level	Identify current and future language needs at a strategic level	SPAT SWOT TOWS PASS	Identification of language issues/ needs as part of strategic plan
STAGE 2 Understanding how the organisation works Chapter 4	Current and potential language roles in organisation; Dept/company culture and hierarchies affecting the process; Focus on process at operational and functional level	Understand company/dept culture; Devise techniques appropriate to company for language audit; Win hearts and minds; Identify both internal and external communications systems and problems.	Road Map; FL Documentation Checklist; Triangulation; Meetings with line managers	Understanding of culture re: FL communication; Identification of language issues/ needs in process and at operational level; Identification of appropriate analytical tools
STAGE 3 Analysing postholders' foreign language use and needs Chapter 5	Actual use of language; Potential use of language; Focus on posts	Establish what is current practice in each post/function; Establish what could/ought to happen now and in future	Questionnaire; Language Needs Analysis Grid; FL Activities & Tasks Checklist; FL Documentation Checklist; Triangulation	Language audit the posts' language needs; Confirm tools to be used; Establish rel'ship with NVQs (in UK)
STAGE 4 Assessing postholders' foreign language skills Chapter 6	How far do post-holders fulfil needs of post? Focus on post-holders	Test language skills of post-holders	Observation/ work shadowing; Proficiency Testing Grid; Proficiency Grade Descriptors	Language audit the postholder profile languages resource inventory
STAGE 5 Reporting back Chapter 7	Confidentiality	Formulate findings; Make objective recommendations	Analysis of outcomes	Report action plan training needs analysis recommend-ations benefits specific to company

Figure 1
The linguistic auditing overview chart

tunities or minimising threats; reactive if they are responding to problems in foreign markets.

Training may be the outcome of any of the situations mentioned above. However, it must be remembered that an audit seeks an objective assessment and should be carried out independently. Ideally, the auditors would define the needs and the required outcomes of any training programme and monitor the training on behalf of the company rather than undertaking the training themselves. The criterion for accepting a training programme must be that it serves the company's strategic needs and does not simply deal with training at the level of the individual postholder.

Selling the idea of a language audit.

This is one of the underlying purposes of the first meeting with senior management discussed in Chapter 2 (Preliminary Stage), and indeed of subsequent meetings with line managers (Chapter 4: Stage 2), and postholders (Chapter 5: Stage 3). This important issue will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter. At this point we must underline how important it is for readers and potential auditors to be fully conversant with the benefits of linguistic audits, in order that, when necessary and at whatever level in the organisation, they are able to 'win hearts and minds'.

Language audits are as yet not common practice in the UK, since learning foreign languages has hitherto been seen simply as a cost rather than a contributor to profits. This is probably because most of our management thinking came from the USA, where foreign language proficiency is not an important part of the managerial equation.

Since English is the primary tool of communication in commerce, engineering, science and technology, it is not surprising that Anglo-American human resource and marketing management models do not include languages as a dominant factor, if at all.

Moreover, linguists often fail to demonstrate that the contribution of language proficiency to overall performance is just as important as good internal communication or a reliable marketing information system. And this is in spite of the many examples showing how customers and even whole markets have been lost because of linguistic arrogance or deficiencies.

Even when management agree on the importance of foreign languages, there is an additional difficulty for the auditor. Unless training is considered an investment rather than a cost, it will be necessary to argue the advantages of including language training policies in strategic plans and to demonstrate the ultimate benefits a linguistic audit would entail.

These points are major factors in subsequent chapters (First meeting with senior management: Chapter 2; Integrating the audit into the planning process: Chapter 3). Here they serve to illustrate that a linguistic audit should not immediately focus on language training, but endeavour to assess fully the role of foreign language use within the development of a given company. Nor should the linguistic audit confine itself to current use, which may reflect current inadequacies. Instead, it should identify the potential value of foreign language competence in the future.

A linguistic audit, therefore, should strive to help a company's management make the right strategic decision, in recruitment, in modifying the organisation and behaviour of some departments, as well as allocating resources for training.

Chapter 2
Initiating the Audit (Preliminary Stage)

Initial Contact

Initial contact with a company and its senior management can be established in various ways.

If the company initiates contact, there will probably be some clearly identified need for a linguistic audit. In this case, less time will need to be spent on selling the idea, though planning issues will still be of key importance. Has, for example, the recognised need, say in the Sales Department, taken into account the range of departments and functions that are in practice involved in communicating with the foreign customers and on whom Sales depend internally? Has the identification of a particular salesperson obscured the fact that the first point of contact is actually the secretary and perhaps other colleagues even when s/he is in the office, let alone travelling? Any team, even any company is only as good as its weakest link.

And, even when a company initiates the first contact, communication and language problems may be expressed as perceptions rather than represent any analysis of foreign-language communications. It may thus be necessary to explain the idea and nature of an audit.

If the linguistic auditor, consultant, or training officer is the initiator, then clearly, it will be necessary to talk through the idea of an audit, and advisable to take even more time to establish clear and well understood parameters.

Experience shows that face-to-face contact is best from the outset. Sending lengthy time-consuming documents will not be effective in convincing senior managers of the benefits of a language audit while at the same time allaying their fears that the audit will be a burden in terms of time needed to produce results.

In this chapter we examine all the activities leading to the audit proposal. This clarifies the aims and objectives of the audit with senior management and specifies how far the audit will go.

Selling the Idea of an Audit

As suggested above, in many circumstances, particularly if the process has been initiated by the auditors rather the senior management, it may be necessary to demonstrate the reasons for carrying out an auditin a word to 'sell' the audit. The auditors, as well as highlighting the rationale for undertaking the audit discussed in Chapter 1, should make an attempt to quantify the benefits of linguistic competency specifically to that organisation. The emphasis should be on the benefits.

Benefits of language proficiency

(1) The actual cost saving of having linguistically competent staff when set against the cost of hiring translating and interpreting services and the extra time involved in using those services.

(2) The removal of the hidden or opportunity cost of senior management no longer having to spend time on low level operational matters.

(3) Language proficiency shows an interest in the culture of the customer's country and often smoothes negotiations by facilitating social contacts as well as allowing a keener insight into the partner's standpoint.

(4) It allows a relationship of trust to develop.

(5) It makes the flow of communication with the customer more efficient and more reliable.

(6) It improves the ability to understand the ethos and business practices of the foreign market.

(7) It improves the ability to negotiate and adapt product and service offerings to the customers' needs.

(8) It facilitates market research and competition analysis.

(9) It gives a psychological advantage in introducing new product lines for a company.

(10) It allows more effective quality control of agency-based market research, advertising, marketing and sales.

(11) It makes sales staff at trade fairs or involved in direct selling significantly more effective.

The first benefit listed is easiest to quantify. The process analysis allowed by the Road Maps, which we present in Chapter 4 (Audit Stage 2), can assist in costing the benefits of factor 5, more efficient communication flows, as well as this first factor.

It is usually a good idea for the auditor to have specific examples to illustrate benefits to a particular management team from the industry or sector involved. Examples from a close competitor would be even better.

The Agenda

Once the benefits have been explained to senior management, a non-detailed discussion of the audit can begin. An agenda for agreeing initial parameters for the linguistic audit is suggested below (presentation of the benefits is built in as item 1). Clearly, both the agenda and the parameters can change as managers become more aware of possibilities and alternatives.

Normally, the agenda will cover the following areas:

Agenda items for first meeting with senior management
(Initiating the audit: Preliminary stage)

(1) Presentation of the benefits of an audit.

(2) Introduction of the audit team and the creation of audit team credibility.

(3) The aim of the audit. An important aspect of this item is how the language audit fits in with the overall company plan (Chapter 3). It is here that the audit team may need to prompt the smaller company to formulate such a plan.

(4) Brief explanation of the linguistic auditing process. This will involve an introduction, as a presentation tool, to the Overview Chart (Chapter 1) and the Road Map (Chapter 4).

(5) Obtaining an overview of the organisation, particularly from the language use viewpoint. The auditors must try to gain an initial feel for the culture of the organisation. This insight will be taken further in Stage 2 (understanding the organisation) in meetings with line managers (Chapter 4).

(6) Discussion of any previous language training and its effectiveness.

(7) Strategy regarding the long term use of foreign language(s) (if any).

(8) Time scale of the audit.

(9) Matters relating to the auditors' access to company records and staff.

(10) Matters relating to confidentiality.

The broad aim of the first meeting with senior management is thus to establish what some practitioners call 'The Trust Bond'.

Key Questions

The auditors must ensure that during discussions of the above items, the following questions are addressed. Some of these questions are particularly relevant to senior management, some to the auditors and some to both. It can be seen that many questions touch on very sensitive areas, but they are at the heart of the linguistic audit. They must be addressed in order to have a full understanding of the organisation and the nature of its language problems. However, in many cases, staff may feel threatened if, for example, their linguistic skills are not as good as their post might seem to require. Auditors must therefore be aware of the possibility that they may not be shown the whole picture and should be at pains to promise a sympathetic approach regarding employees' natural fears and concerns.

Key questions for first meeting

(1) What are seen to be the key posts with a language function?

(2) What happens if poor linguistic skills are spotted at sensitive points?

(3) How much timeand thus moneyis available for training?

(4) Are there likely to be any problems associated with access to staff during an audit?

(5) Are there likely to be any confidentiality issues during the audit process?

These questions need to be addressed, not only for the auditors to gain an understanding of the organisation and its culture regarding language matters, but also to help establish the audit team's credibility and the parameters within which it has to operate.

The Audit Team

An important aspect of presenting the idea of an audit and of 'winning hearts and minds' is to establish the credibility of the audit team as quickly as possible. Teamwork is the guiding principle in working on an audit with any company. In a large company (and ideally in a small one), a linguistic audit may be part of a strategic plan (Chapter 3) and possibly even a full management audit. If this is the case, then the language audit team must work within the parameters of the overall management audit and with other audit teams. Whether this is the case or not, team members must complement each other in terms of competencies. As a minimum, there should be two members, one a linguistic training specialist and one who fully understands the organisation and its culture. Ideally, the linguistic specialist should not be the potential language training provider since there may be a question of objectivity in the analysis of the audit findings and the training recommendations made to management. If, however, the linguistic auditor is also a training provider, the internal training officer will need to ensure that the recommendations of the team reflect the needs of the organisation rather than the interests of the provider. This issue must be made clear to senior management at the outset.

Introducing the Overview Chart and Road Map.

The use of the Overview Chart (Appendix 1) and Road Map (Appendix 2) as initial presentation tools could be a very important aspect of selling the idea of an audit as well as of creating the credibility that the audit team needs in order to be effective.

The overview chart as a presentation tool

(1) It demonstrates to senior management the logical structure of the whole audit process.

(2) It helps them to focus on language problems and solutions.

(3) It can make them more aware of the alternative possibilities for the language audit and for training.

(4) It prompts a strategic approach to language matters if they do not already have one.

(5) It raises the sensitive issues of access to line managers and staff needing linguistic competence.

(6) It focuses discussion on the audit proposal, which is the main outcome of this stage of the process, e.g. time, cost, possible consequent language training.

(7) It generally contributes to the creation of credibility and the development of the trust bond.

The road map as a presentation tool

(1) It illuminates the role played by communication in the company's core operational process.

(2) It reveals the actual/potential importance of foreign language proficiency in the international business process.

(3) It may help to locate the source of a current problem.

(4) It indicates which departments do/may need foreign language proficiency.

The role of the Road Map as a linguistic audit tool as opposed to a presentation tool will be discussed in full detail in Chapter 4 (Audit Stage 2: Understanding the organisation).

The Audit Proposal

The main outcome of this Preliminary Stage is the Audit Proposal. The function of the audit proposal is to clarify the aims and objectives of the audit with senior management and to specify how far the audit will go. For example, will the audit be simply a specification of language needs, or, additionally, the elaboration of a training programme. The various options available to the organisation should have been made clear to management during the first meeting. The following aspects need to be covered:

Scope

How far will the audit go. Will it be concerned solely with an analysis of training and/or recruitment needs, or will it involve the design and even monitoring of training programmes? Will it involve line managers' and/or postholders' analyses of needs? Will it involve testing?

Time

A clear indication of how much time the management and employees need to invest in the audit in the various procedures such as interviews, grids, questionnaires, tests and observation (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Money

Based on the Road Map analysis of the company and its operational processes, and the number of employees who will be audited in the language use analysis, the auditors must offer a quotation.

Content

The proposal should state very clearly which areas of language needs or training will be covered. This is important because in some cases the language performance of the individual postholder may be a very sensitive matter needing discreet handling.

Schedule

The audit proposal should state when the audit will take place, and when the Report will be submitted.

Estimating Audit Time

The timing of an audit may be crucial to management. The following is a check-list to assist auditors to estimate the time involved in an audit. As before, it follows the Stages of the audit. The first scenario omits Stage 4 of the full audit, the assessment of postholders' proficiency.

Audit timing: Scenario 1 (= Complete audit less Stage 4).

Stages:

(1) Meeting with senior management to integrate the audit into the corporate planning process.

(2) Meeting with line managers to understand departmental roles and identify points of contact with foreign language customers.

(3) Analysis of language needs implicit in departments and posts audited.

(4) Production of audit report to contain recommendations for ideal foreign language use policy.

Audit timing: Scenario 2 (= Complete audit)

Stages

(1) Meeting with senior management to integrate the audit into the corporate planning process.

(2) Meeting with line managers to understand departmental roles and identify points of contact with foreign language customers.

(3) Analysis of language needs implicit in departments and posts audited.

(4a) Construction and administration of post-specific language proficiency tests.

(4b) Analysis of the gap between actual language competence of staff in post and the ideal language competence of such a postholder.

(5) Production of audit report to contain recommendations on ideal foreign language use policy and on the training needs to achieve this with current work force and/or recruitment requirements.

Signing the Agreement

It will have to be a matter of agreement with senior management whether the cost of this preliminary stage in the linguistic audit will be charged.

An agreement is signed to ensure that all parties are accountable for the progress of the project and to make the results of the audit available within the time agreed. Provision may have to be built in to accommodate any decision which incurs extension, restriction or curtailment of the audit.

Chapter 3
Integrating the Audit into the Planning Process (Audit Stage 1)

A Brief Introduction to Strategic Planning

In the previous chapter we highlighted on a number of occasions, the need for the linguistic audit to be treated as part of the overall strategic plan of the organisation.

Ideally, all plans and audits at any business function level (e.g. training and development) or Strategic Business Unit (SBU) level (e.g. product or market) should be consistent with and subservient to plans made at a higher, more strategic level in the organisation.

For example, the corporate strategic plan may involve expansion of sales outside the UK. A situation analysis (the opportunities and threats part of the SWOT analysis, which is an important part of the planning process see pages 21-22), may reveal opportunities in non-English speaking markets. It is at this stage that the language audit becomes important, although in many organisations, by identifying opportunities in foreign markets, the language audit may have already started, albeit implicitly.

In this chapter, we shall examine the strategic planning process and illustrate in which ways a linguistic audit can be integrated. In so doing, we shall introduce a number of tools and techniques which may be useful to auditors and indeed to managers of small firms who may not yet have formulated such plans, when thinking strategically about language issues.

Strategic decisions are concerned with the following:

- The scope of an organisation's activities.
- The matching of an organisation's activities to its environment.
- The matching of the activities of an organisation to its resource capability.
- The allocation and reallocation of major resources in an organisation.
- The values, expectations and goals of those influencing strategy.
- The direction in which an organisation will move in the long term.
- Implications for change throughout the organisationthey are therefore likely to be complex in nature.

The advantages of strategic planning are well documented and can be found in any corporate strategy or marketing strategy text. Listed below are some of the benefits typically put forward:

Generally

- It obliges management to examine all the factors that affect the potential effectiveness of each given strategy.

- It involves and informs all the people concerned with implementing a strategy, thereby motivating and possibly developing them.

- It forces management to form realistic objectives (in line with SWOT analysis).

More specifically

It enables a company involved in international business:

- To minimise the problems associated with environmental threats and organisational weaknesses.

- To match available company resources with opportunities abroad.

- To facilitate the co-ordination of data concerning many countries.

- To co-ordinate and integrate the activities of semi-autonomous units in a decentralised organisation.

- To create a framework of communications to ensure common objectives and the adoption of strategic options and policies that are beneficial to the whole rather than part of the organisation

The Strategic Planning Analysis Technique (SPAT)
(Relating to Foreign Language Communication Needs)

By seeking to define a company's long-term vision, and what it regards as its essential business (Mission) and then checking through the medium-term objectives and short-term goals of the organisation, plus the steps taken to achieve these objectives and goals (i.e. the Corporate Plan), the foreign language communication function can be identified as part of the company's essential strategy.

Clearly, if the vision statement, mission statement or objectives contain reference to overseas trade, global markets, joint ventures abroad or any other indication of commitment to the improvement in or expansion of international business, then the integration of language auditing and training into the strategic planning process will be much more straightforward.

The problem of integrating the audit into planning arises when the organisation has no clearly formulated strategic plan, as is the case with many small firms. Tackling the language issue at a strategic level is also likely to be a problem in a firm where revenue from overseas trade is a small proportion of total sales revenue, particularly when a firm is taking its first

Z0027001.gif

Figure 2
The Strategic Planning Analysis Technique (SPAT)

step into international business. It is in these circumstances that the auditors must make a particular effort during their first meeting to persuade senior management to think strategically and in an integrated way.

The iterative strategic planning process represented in the SPAT figure above serves to highlight the centrality of foreign language competence and the linguistic audit itself within the company's overall intentions and long-term, future direction. It can serve as an antidote to the crisis management that often calls for instant solutions and stop-gap language training.

The 'SWOT' Analysis of Overseas Activities.

The SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis is perhaps one of the most potent techniques in the strategic planning process.

It is a technique to assist managers in their decision-making by helping them to focus on the realities of their organisation's capabilities (strengths and weaknesses) in relation to the constantly changing external environment (opportunities and threats). It is now generally accepted that it is better to start with opportunities and threats and then relate strengths and weaknesses to these. Hence the relatively new acronym 'TOWS'. It can be used at two levels:

(1) At a corporate level, to help strategic analysts formulate realistic objectives and goals and in extreme cases to redefine the company mission. For example, in a situation where a company has a number of comparative weaknesses (compared with competitors) and is faced with a number of serious threats, then it may be necessary for survival to get out of the current business and look for opportunities in another area of business altogether.

This level of analysis will indicate general company strengths and weaknesses and broad opportunities and threats. However, to be really useful as a technique, it is now generally accepted that a SWOT analysis needs to be much more focused. Thus, it is at the second level that SWOT becomes particularly powerful.

In the same way that if reference is made to overseas business in the early stages of the strategic planning process (vision, mission, objectives), integrating language matters into the process will be much more simple, so it is with the SWOT analysis. If a SWOT analysis at corporate level reveals overseas trade opportunities or threats and language issue strengths or weaknesses, then the more detailed analysis at the next level will be much more straightforward.

It is worth noting, also, that for a small, single product company, selling in only a few similar markets the two levels highlighted here are the same.

(2) At the level of the business plan for a coherent part of an organisation. This is often referred to as a Strategic Business Unit (SBU). It can concern a department, range of products, a product or a market. It allows for a much more focused analysis leading to realistic decisions.

It is at this level that we shall illustrate the ways that SWOT can be used to deal with language strategy.

Strengths and weaknesses

This involves an internal examination of the area of the business on which the analysis is being focused, e.g. products, markets, products to markets. It is important to concentrate on 'relative' strengths and weaknesses. What is often perceived as a strength may be less so if all the competitors have the same level of expertise, knowledge, experience. The opposite is true of weaknesses. However, since the main reason for looking at strengths and weaknesses is to examine the extent to which the firm will be able to exploit any opportunities or how far any deficiencies are likely to act as a barrier to their exploitation, all strengths and weaknesses must be analysed to a degree.

Strengths and weaknesses can concern many factors. The product or service itself, the understanding of client needs, relationship with existing customers, promotional activities, contacts with overseas agents, capability of sales force are a few common examples.

To be really focused, it may be better to undertake a strengths/weaknesses analysis *after* choosing a strategy, i.e. after the strategic SWOT analysis. In any event, whether this is the case or not, the SW part of the analysis should always be closely related to the OT part.

Examples of strengths in the linguistic area would include:

• Existing linguistic proficiency.

• Experience in dealing with certain parts of the worldcultural understanding, contacts, etc.

• Easy access to translators, interpreters.

• Effective recruitment policies and practices.

Examples of weaknesses in the linguistic area i.e. problems blocking the likely success of exploiting an opportunity would be:

• Little experience in export selling.

• Little or no language proficiency.

• No experience in dealing with translators, etc.

• No recruitment experience/contacts.

• Taking the non-language option by using overseas-based agents. This is a problem because the agent has the communications power.

Opportunities and threats

• An opportunity can be defined as an attractive arena for marketing action in which the company would enjoy a competitive advantage.

• A threat is a challenge posed by a trend or development that would lead, in the absence of purposeful action, to the erosion of a company's position.

At the corporate level SWOT analysis, opportunities and threats come from an analysis of the macro environment. This includes such factors as: economic, demographic, socio-cultural, political, legal, technological and competitive. So, for example, broad opportunities may arise because the birth rate is rising in a particular country or a foreign government has cut tariffs on a range of products. Threats may appear as a result of the actions of competitors in a market or consumer tastes changing in a country following environmental group publicity and pressure about a product.

Any decision made as a result of environmental scanning of this kind will have a profound effect on the SWOT analysis at the language analysis level, especially the SW analysis. It is common for the OT analysis at corporate level to lead to the formulation of alternative strategies, and the SW analysis at a lower level to assist managers to make the final decision.

Focusing SWOT

A useful extension of SWOT is what has become known as the TOWS Model. It encourages decision makers to consider opportunities and threats first and then in turn relate them to strengths and weaknesses.

The TOWS model

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	SO STRATEGIES	WO STRATEGIES
THREATS	ST STRATEGIES	WT STRATEGIES

Two examples will serve to illustrate how this can be used in practice:

(1) WO Strategies:
OIncrease in disposable income in a country where English is not even a second language e.g. South American countries.
WNo experience in exporting; no staff with FL proficiency.
WO strategy

- Use foreign-based agents who speak English (but lose the communication power).
- Recruit Spanish-speaking staffonly viable if long-term opportunity. Can you ensure quality control?
- Begin training key staffagain, only viable if long-term opportunity.
- Recruit foreign national sales representatives based in South America. Can you ensure quality control?

(2) ST Strategies
TMajor competitor trying to increase market share by, among other tactics, producing better foreign language literature.
SSome language proficiency and experience in exporting to nonEnglish speaking markets.
ST Strategy

- Review sales literature with a view to FL improvement.
- Regain competitive advantage through sales visits to major clients by sales staff after an intensive FL refresher programme.

Problem Analysis and Solving Sequence

When a linguistic audit is commissioned in order to tackle a performance problem (weakness), it is still important to obtain a view of the company's global strategy in order to contextualise the problem and the foreign language element. However, it may often be the case that the nature of the problem is not fully understood, that symptoms may be mistaken for causes, that the damaging effects of poor communication may be overlooked as a central cause.

A helpful but simple analytical technique for focusing on the root cause(s) of the problem, its consequences for the company, and the measures to be undertaken to resolve it is PASS (Problem Analysis and Solving Sequence).

The main advantage of PASS is that it forces managers to question assumptions about problems and their causes. It is an iterative sequence which should be used in conjunction with the Road Map to check lines of communication with foreign contacts and to evaluate any part played in the problem by poor FL proficiency.

Z0031001.gif

An actual example illustrates this simple technique clearly. It is from a well known UK Midlands based company in the automotive industry:

(1) The company was experiencing a fall in sales in northern France.

(2) The export marketing department assumed that this was caused solely

by the aggressive actions of a Belgian competitor who wished to increase market share.

(3) This was true to an extent, but a more detailed analysis of all the likely causes revealed that poor communications with the sole agent in northern France, who did not speak much English was also part of the problem.

(4) The consequences of this problem was misunderstanding between company and agent and lack of motivation on the part of the agent to work hard on behalf of the company, pushing its products.

(5) A number of solutions were considered including recruiting another agent who spoke English. However, since the current agent had an excellent understanding of the market and good contacts within it, a foreign language solution was applied. As part of an overall policy in that division, a business/language graduate was recruited, quickly given the product knowledge needed, and given the task of developing good relations with this agent. This she has done and sales are on the increase.

Chapter 4
Understanding the Organisation: Foreign Language Communication at the Departmental Level (Audit Stage 2)

Introduction

Using the analytical tools and techniques presented in the last chapter, it will be possible for the language auditor both to form a picture of the company's short-, medium- and long-term plans in so far as they may depend, for efficient implementation, on foreign-language capability, and to ascertain whether existing capabilities or their absence appear to support, or put obstacles in the way of realising the plans.

Any organisation is a system and an important, but sometimes overlooked, part of that system is the communication flow within the company and between the company and all those it deals withsubsidiaries or parent company in the case of multi- and transnational enterprises, end customers, suppliers, agents, distributors, and a variety of service function partners such as advertising agencies, market research companies, marketing companies, freight forwarders, hauliers and shippers, banks, insurance companies and more. In the case of multi-national, transnational and exporting and/or importing companies that are involved in cross-borderand cross language bordertrade, which is our concern here, communication in the foreign language or at least with partners whose first language is not your own, will be inevitable. It is the task of the language audit to identify these actual or potential foreign language contacts and then to assess their importance for the maximum efficient working of the organisation.

In order to achieve this identification it is necessary to ascertain all those stages in the company's operation where contact with the foreign language could occur. To this end, we propose a process analysis method.

Operational Process and Communicative Process: Concepts and Terms

Before we proceed it is, however, necessary to clarify the concepts and terms we are using in this book to describe the business communicative process and how it relates to the operational process. Use of language and the effectiveness of communication within organisations and between organisations is rarely scrutinised. Language is seen as second nature, taken for granted. Yet without adequate communication the operations that constitute the working of any organisation are inefficient and may be ineffectual. Even in companies that have adopted a Total Quality Management approach, the fundamental communication process inside and outside the company may be overlooked.

When a foreign language is involvedor where a customer is using the organisation's language as a foreign language, the chances for inefficiency, misunderstanding and extra cost are great, but rarely quantified, and sometimes not even noticed. At a first level of analysis we may distinguish the operational steps where contact with the foreign-language customer or partner may occur (this is discussed in greater detail on pp. 30ff., where the Road Map is used for the identification of these steps). Below this level, within the departments responsible for carrying out the various steps, we can identify individuals' posts and the functions they fulfilsuch as purchasing, sales and marketing, senior management, finance, logistics and so on. Within the functions there are broad activities that involve actual or potential contact with the foreign customer or partner, e.g. selling to speakers of other languages, purchasing from foreign suppliers, liaising with a foreign parent company, etc. These broad activities are represented as communication flows on the Road Map.

There are also activities such as telephoning, or written communication, or holding and attending meetings that are generic or multi-functional that is they apply to many functions and posts. The activities consist of sequences or series of tasks: e.g. selling at trade fairs, sourcing components, checking deliveries, persuading colleagues of policy changes. These tasks are function-specific.

Our Language Activities and Tasks Checklist (reproduced in full in Appendix 5) is arranged according to this scheme. The Foreign Language Analysis Grid also depends in its use on identifying, with the help of postholders and line managers, the tasks conducted actually or potentially by postholders using the foreign language in fulfilment of the activity and thus function.

But before we move to these tools and how they can be presented to the department, we need to consider how communication and operational function, activity and task fulfilment are interlinked.

Figure 3 illustrates the operational process, covering both the job function and its functional objective, to be attained by the operational activities. One or more of these activities will involve communication with the foreign language customer and it is those activities (such as our example of selling to speakers of other languagesas opposed to selling to the domestic market or to mother-tongue speaking markets) that concern the audit.

The activity then breaks down into clusters of operational tasks, such as attending trade fairs, making telephone sales, entertaining foreign customers. Each task consists of sub-tasksgetting to the Trade Fair, helping on the stand, product presentation, responding to enquiries, taking provisional orders, arranging subsequent meetings, writing a report. The orders, meetings, report are the outcomes of the task; the outcome represents or assists the achievement of the functional goals. Together the attainment of the goals following on completion of the tasks marks the attainment of the functional objective.

This operational process is matched very closely by the communicative process, since with very few exceptions, the objective can only be attained through communication, that is through conveying and processing information, through persuading, discussing, agreeing and recording that agreement.

Thus, Figure 4, the communicative process, shows an identical pattern and flow, corresponding precisely to the operational process, except that it shows how the tasks and sub-tasks involve communication chains of different language skills at different stages in the task (e.g. listening, then speaking; reading for further information, writing), with the skills sometimes being used in communicative sub-tasks on their own, (e.g. reading a specialist report; listening to a presentation), or linked together, (e.g. listening and speaking at a meeting; listening and speaking on a telephone call and making foreign language notes, or composing a foreign language letter or fax as a consequence). These notes, faxes, verbal agreements etc. are not only the language outcomes but also the practical *evidence* of the operational outcome.

Thus, the communicative outcome is represented by the fax or letter etc. and marks the communicative goal. The attainment of these communicative goals together mark the attainment of the functional objective.

This inseparable link between operational process and communicative process demonstrates, in another way, the enormous importance of foreign languageand indeed mother-tongue competence, in the efficient fulfilment of functions and of the organisation's whole operation.

Analysis of Operational Process and of Lines of Foreign Language Communication: The Road Map Tool

In problem analysis or strategic planning for organisations with overseas activities, clarifying where the lines of communication (the communicative process) lie and knowing how they relate to production and to equivalent and related operational processes are essential.

Z0036001.gif

Figure 3
The operational process

Z0037001.gif

Figure 4
The communicative process

The tool developed to aid auditors to identify lines of communication and points of contact with foreign-language users is the Road Map. The next figure is an example of a Manufacturing Road Map. Road Maps of the process from Market Research to After-Sales Service and Follow-up for manufacturing, service industries and non-profit-making organisations are to be found in Appendix 4.

Road maps may be employed in the following way.

The vital first step in using the Road Maps approach is to agree with senior management on the key phases in the trading process, from initial contact with the foreign market and customer through delivery of the product or service to after-sales service and dealing with complaints and final reports. The Manufacturing Road Map reproduced in Figure 5 is one example. It may be used in hard copy form in the initial strategic meeting with senior management or as an overhead projector transparency. The model reproduced here may, of course, not entirely apply to any specific company. What the auditor needs to agree with management are the steps in the process as realised in the client company. It is important that the functions and steps in the process are identified, not simply departments, since several functions may be carried out in a single department.

When the process and its steps have been agreed, the foreign language communication flow chart can be appliedin a hard copy version or more powerfully, as an overlay.

Together, Road Map and overlay suggest the likely and potential lines of communication with the foreign customer at each point in the trading and operational process. In each case the foreign language may be used or potentially needed.

The Road Map together with the overlay thus serves four important functions:

(1) It illuminates the role played by foreign language communication in the core operational process.

(2) It reveals the potential/actual importance of foreign language proficiency in the exporting or transnational *trading* process.

(3) It may help to locate the source of a current problem (a problem that the SWOT or PASS analysis may already have revealed).

(4) It indicates which departments may or do need foreign language proficiency, the next move being to match the process steps/functions against departments.

In summary, the Road Maps, used in conjunction with one of the other strategic analysis tools (see Chapter 3 and Appendix 3), focus attention on the central role of foreign language proficiency, which may not be apparent at first sight.

Z0039001.gif

Figure 5
The exporting road map (manufacturing tool)

Even if translation/interpreting or sheer misunderstanding only added 10% to time and/or costs in each step and sub-process, the cumulative benefit of eliminating that inefficiency would make for substantial gains in speed, efficiency and quality (in the sense of understanding and meeting customers' needs). Indicative costs incurred by inefficiency in communicating point to the savings that can be made by investment in needs-specific training.

The Road Maps can also help to identify a contributory factor in a performance problem that is not evident from conventional analysis.

It sets in train the second full stage of the linguistic audit by identifying those departments where there are current or potential linguistic needs. By indicating the sub-processes that may involve communicating with the foreign language customer or partner, it will also point to the type of language tasks that make up the contact, for example, telephoning, negotiating, attending meetings, reading contracts, etc. (see Chapter 5).

Understanding Language Needs at Departmental Level

The audit has already obtained a strategic overview of the organisation and its long-term aims and objectives from the meetings with senior management (Audit Stage 1).

So far the core trading or operational process has been analysed and the actual or potential role of foreign language communication identified. The steps in this operational and trading process have been mapped on to the organisational departments.

It is now necessary for the auditor to discuss with the heads of the identified departments in greater detail:

• the interaction between departments;

• the role of each department;

• any current philosophies and practices that have a bearing on foreignlanguage use in the organisation.

The purpose of this is twofold:

• to confirm the Road Map analysis with regard to the particular step in the operational process;

• to obtain detailed information on the lines of communication, identified by the Road Map, with foreign-language speaking customers and partners.

It can also serve to illuminate the departmental culturee.g. distribution of responsibility, degree of formality, informality, emphasis on group or individual decision-making, and so on, which may affect also both the operating of the core process (and communication lines) within the organisation *and* the nature of communication with foreign language customers/partners.

Talking with Line Management

At the same time as gathering information, auditors need to inform line management fully about the language audit. The auditors must be concerned to have everyone 'on their side' for information to flow freely.

In practical terms this will mean that auditors should organise a briefing in which they should consider presenting the company-specific Road Maps to the Departments in order to put the audit in context and to illuminate the communication role of the Department as part of the overall corporate trading process.

Suggested agenda for the meeting with line management

The following agenda for a briefing meeting covers these issues.

Part 1

(1) Introduction of auditing team.

(2) The aims of the audit as agreed with Senior Management.

(3) The audit procedure (discussion of general approach).

(4) Confirmation of the Department's role in the operation and that it corresponds to the identified stage in the trading process shown in the Road Maps.

Part 2

(5) Discussion of actual and possible foreign language communication.

(6) Identification of posts with actual or potential language needs.

(7) Discussion of previous language training.

(8) Overview of activities carried out in foreign languages.

(9) Overview of documentation received or generated in the foreign language.

(10) Agreement on choice of tools for assessing postholders' foreign language use and needs.

(11) Date set for postholders' needs analysis.

(12) Date set for presentation of results (if not confidential for individuals).

Obtaining Information on Current Language Use

In some cases, in the second part of the meeting an auditor will find that while the foreign language is not used, perhaps for apparent convenience or for lack of capability, it has been recognised that such capability could help, could save time, could eliminate misunderstandings (experienced in the past) or be psychologically more effective. Clearly, the auditor then knows that training would probably be positively received as a contribution to efficiency and job-satisfaction.

On the contrary, however, it may become apparent that there is anxiety about trying to use the foreign-language, resistance to the idea, or direct rejection. In all these cases, if foreign language capability is still seen as important for efficiency, it will be necessary to win over the hearts and minds of the people concerned. Whose task that is will depend on the nature of the audit contract and the relative role of the senior or line manager or in-house vocational trainer.

The agenda for the second part of the meeting focuses, then, on the sections and postholders who deal with clients, customers, suppliers or contacts that use foreign languages. At this point the auditors can ascertain whether line management believes that all such communication:

(1) actually takes place in the foreign language;

(2) should take place in the foreign language;

(3) actually takes place in the mother-tongue of the organisation's employees;

(4) should take place in the mother-tongue of the organisation's employees. This permits the auditors to assess the organisational 'climate' with regard to foreign language use.

Ascertaining managerial opinions of previous language training

This meeting with line management also provides an opportunity for the language auditor to collect information on any previous language training that has taken place in the department or language training which the employees have undertaken individually. Previous experiences will vary and will determine the attitude of the employees and of management towards language training. In addition, it will be useful for the auditor to ascertain whether the need for the language audit and possible subsequent language training has been solely management-inspired or whether individual employees have been proactive in alerting management to language issues. Even when individual postholders express no desire for language training the auditor will need to know whether this is likely to be through fear of personal inadequacy or through absence of need. The line manager's views here are crucial.

Where previous training has taken place the language auditor will want to know its nature and results in the view of the participant(s). This is a very important piece of background information as it can explain the attitude of the employees towards foreign language learning and use. It can also explain the strategies employees sometimes use to overcome their lack of language proficiency. Attitudes can range from enthusiasm, through apparent indifference, to complacency and fear!

Language Activities in the Department

The auditor now understands the role of the Department in the organisation's core process, how foreign language communication supportsor could supportthe step in the operational/trading process that the Department is responsible for, and the general attitude towards foreign languages in the organisational and departmental culture.

Functions and activities

To assist with the identification of how and in what mode the foreign language is or could be used in this department's role in the core process, the Language Activities and Tasks Checklist can be employed. This Checklist is reproduced in Appendix 5. Developed from a large-scale survey of foreign language use in UK enterprises carried out by the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry and subsequent surveys in Germany and Spain, the Checklist is organised into nine broad functional categories. The functions are fundamental to any company. That element in the function that involves foreign language communication is termed an 'Activity'.

Market Research function.

Activity: Measuring and analysing the characteristics of foreign language markets.

Sales and marketing function

Activities: Sales to foreign customers in home countries. Sales to foreign language markets.

Senior management function

Activity: Senior manager (transnational).

Product Research and Design function

Activity: Research and development using foreign language sources.

Purchasing function

Activity: Purchasing and ordering from foreign suppliers.

Logistics function

Activity: Communication with foreign-language transport and warehousing agencies and suppliers.

Financial function

Activity: Communication with foreign-language customers, subsidiaries, parent company.

Secretarial function

Activity: Communication with foreign-language customers, subsidiaries, parent company.

Multi-function: Telephoning

Supporting activity: telephoning with speakers of other languages.

Multi-function: Written communication

Supporting activity: written communication with speakers of other languages.

Multi-function: Meetings and conferences.

Supporting activity: meetings and conferences with speakers of other languages.

Multi-function: Human resources and training.

Supporting activity: human resources and training (transnational).

The common communicative tasks are represented in the Checklist and space is allowed for additions.

Before moving to discussions with individual postholders in order to establish their needs, an overview of the tasks conducted in the foreign language as perceived by the line manager is very helpful. Using the Checklist is a rapid method for undertaking/starting such an overview.

Foreign Language Documentation

In addition to establishing in what situations and tasks foreign languages can or could be used, it is also vital to know what documents in the foreign language come to the Department and require processingand what documents may need to be generated. This could range from just receiving faxes and letters to creating publicity brochures in the foreign language. It is imperative that all documents are properly understood and rapidly dealt with and, moreover, that no documents in the foreign language leave the organisation unless they have been checked for authentic style, accuracy and cultural appropriacy. The consequences of neglecting documentation of any kind can vary simply from lost business through to the creation of a bad or even ludicrous image in the foreign market.

Thus, the Documentation Checklist acts as a reminder of the large spectrum of possible foreign-language documentation to be dealt with or generated. It requires treatment in a professional, quality manner of precisely the same order as would be required for specifications documents or instructions for use in the company's own language (and indeed these are amongst possible documents required in the foreign language). While a laborious or tortuous telephone conversation can delay business, be inefficient or even lose immediate business, the existence of second-rate foreign language documentation continues long after any individual verbal transaction is over and can be a lasting blot on the company's overseas image.

As with the identification of the Language Activities and Tasks, at this Second Stage of the audit, the purpose is to obtain from line management an overview of the types of document encountered. A rapid use of the Documentation Checklist will ensure this.

Decision on Techniques for Assessing Postholders' Language Needs

A final and crucial element in the meeting with line management will be to ascertain, depending on the time available, which tools should be used in the analysis of individual postholders' language needs (which forms, of course, the core of the audit). There are a number of audit strategies available and this meeting would seem an appropriate time and place to discuss with those most closely concerned, the different options for analysing the language needs themselves. The choices are:

(1) Questionnaire filled in individually in own time.

(2) Questionnaire filled in during a one-to-one session with auditor.

(3) Questionnaire filled in during a group session with auditor.

(4) Grid to be filled in during a group brainstorming session with auditor.

These alternative tools and techniques are discussed in the next chapter.

Summary of this Audit Stage

At the end of this second Audit stage, the audit will have ascertained the part played by each relevant department in the operational process, and how it communicates with foreign language customers and/or partners. The audit will have given an overview of the activities and tasks carried out or potentially carried outin the foreign language, what documentation is involved, and how any previous experience of language teaching was received.

It is now time to find out the views and establish the competencies of the individual postholders.

Chapter 5
Analysing Postholders' Foreign Language Use and Needs (Audit Stage 3)

Introduction

Your meetings with the line managers of the departments identified by the Road Map technique as occupying key links in the communication system with foreign customers, will provide an invaluable overview of how foreign languages are or could be usedin which situations and involving what communicative activities and tasks and what kinds of documentation. You will also have an initial picture of which postholders may require language skills.

The next stage entails meeting the postholders themselves to assess their needs and their skills both individually and as a team.

Triangulation of Information

The first meeting with postholders, however, serves another related purpose. It is to confirm that the department plays the role in the operation which was identified as a stage in the overall trading process by the Road Map tool and that foreign languages feature or could feature in that role as had been deduced. This is necessary because the auditor will soon possess three sets of information or viewpoints:

(1) The policy view of senior management (Audit Stage 1).

(2) The implementational view of line management (Audit Stage 2).

(3) The record of actual practice from postholder (Audit Stage 3).

This process of confirmationor triangulationis strongly recommended in the light of experience drawn from pilot studies leading to this book. Mismatches between perceptions of foreign language use held by the different layers of management and postholders were found to occur. Senior and middle management sometimes had differing or even erroneous ideas of foreign language use when it came to the everyday realities dealt with by individuals. The reason is, once again, the 'invisible' quality of language and communication, its often fleeting nature and the fact that if it is not recorded as part of documentation, it cannot be monitored like sales performance.

This is why a sensitive audit, by pinpointing discrepancies, if any, between organisational policy and practice, can contribute to an increase in operational efficiency and, beyond that, provide valuable information for future policy making.

Meeting the Staff: Presenting the Audit

If it is at all possible, arrangements should be made for the auditor(s) to meet the entire staff, thus covering all functions or sub-functions within the department. Only in this way can:

(1) Triangulation be achieved with regard to Road Map conclusions on communications with the foreign language market.

(2) An overview be obtained of the department as a team that communicates internally about messages received from that market and responds to or initiates dialogues or correspondence with the foreign customer.

(3) The confidence of the team can be gainedthat is win their hearts and minds.

Winning hearts and minds

The original reasons for the audit will determine strategy at this juncture. Clearly, if management have perceived a lack of expertise amongst the work force and are commissioning the language audit with major restructuring in mind then the target staff are likely to feel threatened; the position may be slightly easier in situations where there is already good practice in linguistic terms and management is seeking through the audit to establish individual training needs which may always have been implicit in the posts and with which the postholders have already come to terms.

This meeting is, therefore, of key importance and will determine the psychological context of the audit. This means that, time constraints permitting, target staff should be given the same presentation as senior staff so that they can appreciate how the audit may benefit the company and ultimately themselves, and the same tools (SWOT, PASS, Road Maps, etc.) could be used. It also means that auditors need to pay particular attention to building a good relationship with auditees. In order to be able to address problems and reassure auditees who feel threatened, several issues should already have been considered, and agreed with senior/line management:

- confidentiality;
- access to the individual's needs analysis data;
- ownership of any language test results;
- right to training.

Unless the workforce can be given clear reassurance on these points they are unlikely to give the full cooperation on which the successful language audit depends. If the staff perceive that they are being 'tested' and measured against external bench-marks and if they see the audit as having negative outcomes for them, they are likely to protect their interests by stressing the positive aspects of the situation and masking the areas where there are communication problems. In pilot studies this reaction went in two directions: resistance in order to mask weakness of which the postholder was painfully aware, and resistance based on over-confidencean assumed but in fact defective mastery of the language. With this in mind it seems that the auditors will need to consider working through the following steps:

- explaining carefully the aims and objectives of a language audit and showing how language use can help effectiveness, efficiency and ultimately profits. The benefits to the work force should be stressed;

- indicating what training might be available to fulfil these aims and reassuring all concerned (if possible) that the linguistic audit will be treated as part of staff development.

Establishing Profiles of Foreign Language Use in Individual Posts.

Concluding the first meeting: Deciding on tools and techniques

To conclude the first meeting with staff the auditor needs to introduce in outline the possible tools and techniques that can be used to ascertain the postholders' specific foreign language useactual and potentialtheir needs, and their skills.

A variety of tools will be proposed in this book. Which ones will be used will depend on:

- postholders' time available for participating in the analysis;

- whether they can be available in groups;

- their availability as individuals.

According to the circumstances, these decisions have to be agreed with line management or, if the postholders have the autonomy, at this staff meeting. The preceding meeting with the line manager will already have indicated what is broadly feasible.

Presenting the tools

The foreign language needs analysis grid

This tool is used in functional group sessions rather than with individuals. It involves the auditor conducting a brief brainstorming session to help elicit the use, and particularly, the specific tasks of the group or team involving foreign languages, and in which of those each individual participates. In other words, through discussion with a team of postholders in a single function, the auditor seeks to record within the general Operational and Communicative Activity entailing foreign language use, which tasks are carried out or could be carried out given the necessary capability.

The foreign language activities and tasks checklist

This is familiar to the auditor from the meeting with line management and can be used beneficially as a prompt, especially as it is arranged in part generically, i.e. referring to multi-function activities like telephoning and written communication, in part function-specifically, e.g. sales and marketing, purchasing, secretarial, is related to the stages of the Road Map, and has the same design concept as Figures 6 and 7 (pp. 42 and 44-5; Appendix 5).

Using the foreign language needs analysis grid

With the help of the Checklist, or by means of straight brainstorming, each participant records along the top horizontal line of the Grid the communicative tasks entailed by their function and which together compose their language activity, e.g. selling to speakers of other languages. Participants will often remind one another of tasks, including those they might have carried out more easily with some knowledge of the foreign language.

Having identified the language activity and tasks involved in the post and function, the postholders are next invited by the auditor to record in the left-hand column the types of topic area they have to cover. These topics will indicate the vocabulary or 'lexical field' that is used, e.g. quantities, dates, automotive components, computer terms, social conversation and so on. The task and the vocabulary are then matched in the grid, with one tick mark indicating occasional use, two, moderate use and three, frequent.

The documentation checklist

This can also be used in conjunction with the Grid, to provide specific information for training and proficiency assessment purposes on what written materials in the foreign language are encountered or have to be created for which task. The auditor will need to write up a separate list for that purpose or alternatively record that in connection with establishing which types of specialist vocabulary (terminology) the postholders use or have to cope with.

The great advantage of the Grid is that profiles of individual language use are almost instantly created with no further processing by the auditor afterwards and that the auditor can obtain a clear view of the group function as a link in the operational/communicative process.

There follows a worked example, which uses the Checklist as a guide:

Language Profile of	J. Smith
Post and Function	Purchasing Clerk
Company	Automotive Components Ltd. Birmingham

ACTIVITY: Purchasing and Ordering from Foriegn Suppliers
COMMUNICATIVE TASKS IN: French
(LANGUAGE)

Z0050002.gif

Figure 6
The Foreign Language Needs Analysis Grid

The questionnaire

The advantage of a questionnaire is that individuals can fill it in on their own and in their own time. The questionnaire is based on an analysis of languages needs of the individual, according to two modes of use:

• in the company;

• when abroad.

Created by partners in the Euraudit Project at Rotterdam University Faculty of Education, it is presented in flowchart form. The postholder identifies the operational activities and then the communicative tasks involved in each activity. The tasks match and extend those in the Language Activities and Tasks Checklist, additionally identifying constituent subtasks.

In Figure 7 we reproduce the overview and first page of the questionnaire. The remainder of the questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix 5.

On the first page the participant has confirmed that s/he receives foreign language calls from abroad and then indicates the sub-tasks that then have to be carried out, such as giving routine information or confirming appointments. The communicative sub-tasks required are graded so that the respondents move from mentioning the simplest to the most complex. The frequency and the importance of these sub-tasks can also be logged.

The questionnaire can be administered with or without an interview. If an interview takes place it can include a section which allows the auditor:

• to discuss the attitudes and experience of the postholder with reference to former training;

• to offer their perception of which communicative tasks and sub-tasks present difficulties.

Choice of the Tools (Audit Stage 3)

When choosing which language analysis tools to use, priorities are: ease of administration; reliability; comprehensiveness of results; ease of analysis. The general strengths and weaknesses of the two principal methods have been noted as the following:

Questionnaire: strengths

• It may be sent to and filled in by target staff at their own convenience.

• The contact time at the organisation is reduced.

• It is an easy tool for new auditors to understand and administer.

• If the software version is used, large numbers of employees can be processed rapidly.

Z0052000.gif

Figure 7
The Rotterdam questionnaire overview

< previous page page_44 next page >

Z0053000.gif

Figure 7
continued

Questionnaire: weaknesses.

Questionnaires tend to be lost within institutions, or there may be a failure to obtain a complete return.

• There is less flexibility; postholders may tick an approximation of what they do rather than give a true description.

• There may be a temptation to respond to questions mechanically without reflection.

• It is time-consuming for the respondent, unless they master the introductory page.

• It is time-consuming to transcribe the findings in order to establish the language profile of the post.

• The lexical fields (terminology, specialist vocabulary) of the individual involved in the identified tasks will not be directly evident.

Grid: strengths

• It is efficient in terms of time; it is more effective when worked on as a group.

• It can follow on from the presentation of the audit to staff, so that only one meeting is necessary.

• It is shorter than the questionnaire but can be even more exhaustive since it is respondent led.

• It is flexible; it applies to the industry/section in question.

• It is very easy to analyse for training purposes. A complete picture of the individual's language use appears on a single page.

• The lexical fields (terminology or specialist vocabulary) used by the postholders in the identified activity/task will become known.

Grid: weaknesses

• It may be a difficult tool to master for less experienced auditors.

• Under ideal circumstances it can elicit more information than the questionnaire; where there are difficult group relationships and faulty group dynamics it may reveal less.

• It is not quantitative.

• The paper version has to be administered by an auditor; it is not self-explanatory.

UK National Vocational Qualification Standards

The use of the Grid, the Language Activities and Tasks Checklist and the Documentation Checklist, or of the Questionnaire enables the auditors to create profiles of the language use and needs of individual postholders.

In the UK the Languages Lead Body has established national standards for languages on five levels of challenge, ranging from a first level where users need to 'deal with predictable day to day activities' in a foreign language through to the professional level of competence required by translators and interpreters at Level 5. Specific competencies are categorised in terms of the four basic Language Skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, plus translating and interpreting for the two highest levels, 4 and 5. Descriptions of these competencies are reproduced in the Appendix of this book. They are expressed in the Languages Lead Body documentation in abstract wording to indicate in a general manner the difficulty of 'tasks' performed, in each of the skills, at each of the five designated levels.

For example Level 1 Listening involves 'obtaining information about predictable day to day activities by listening.' Level 4 Reading involves 'obtaining information about complex work tasks of reading' while Level 5 Writing involves 'producing written materials to deal with highly specialised tasks.'

The Language Activities and Tasks that are formulated in the approach towards language analysis adopted in this book stress language as communication, emphasising the interlinking of the four skills. In our approach towards assessment of proficiency (see Chapter 6) the outcome of communication involving more than one skill is seen to be crucial (e.g. whether through speaking and listening on the telephone, and taking notes for another member of the team, the task required of the postholder to provide accurate information for that colleague is achieved).

Nevertheless, the Level descriptions may be used to help the auditor match our language use and needs profile of postholders against the performance standards of the NVQ framework as a guide for recommending external qualifications, where postholders wish to obtain recognition of their competence after training.

Moreover our proposed assessment method does entail the separate assessment and grading of the four skills (as part of the communication chain and communicative tasks carried out by the postholder). This allows not only for a detailed insight into strengths and weaknesses for the future trainer but also for our proposed assessment method to be used by NVQ assessors for NVQ testing purposes.

Chapter 6
Assessing Postholders' Foreign Language Skills: From Proficiency Assessment to the Languages Resource Inventory (Audit Stage 4)

The aim of this stage of the audit is to assess the linguistic competence of postholders in order to obtain their present 'language proficiency profile'. This profile can then be compared with the target language use and needs profile of the post defined in the previous stage. Where a shortfall occurs, there is a need for training.

Testing is possibly the most delicate part of the entire auditing process. It is certainly possible to win the hearts and minds of members of departments in the introductory meeting by explaining the purpose and rationale of the audit in terms of company objectives and success. Similarly, discovering in greater detail the use of foreign languages and the need for them in communication with foreign customers (using the Grid Technique or the Questionnaire) is quite unthreatening and even fun. But testing does seem threatening. It might simply uncover inadequacy and there is no hiding the fact that the intention is to improve efficiency.

So testing, if included in the audit, must be seen as part of management development, designed to assist the postholder, and in assisting the postholder, the company too.

The least threatening of testing methods are those that look at proficiency within the familiar territory of the job and in the spirit of improvement and development, rather than as a kind of measurement against external absolutes that seem impossible to attainsuch as native speaker competence. What counts is whether the language communication needs of the job are fulfilled.

So, we propose two tests that look at competence strictly in the context of actual needs: individual needs analysis-based testing and work shadowing. Each technique will be described below. Each is closely related to the language use and language needs auditing techniques advocated in the last chapter (Audit Stage 3).

Testing Language Proficiency in Context

It is very important to remember that we are not so much testing individuals' knowledge of the foreign language as their skill in using it for defined purposes within the context of their job and function. So, tests have to be targeted at individuals acting within their work roles.

This may seem obvious but still needs to be stressed; adult language users are most effective when the field in which they are using the language is one with which they are familiar. It is, therefore, essential to test them on what they can do and what they habitually use rather than according to objective bench-marks which may be irrelevant to their actual foreign language use. Tests using commercially produced material or taken from a pre-conceived battery of tests developed by the auditors may be misleading since the language will be decontextualised and the tasks assessed will not be authentic.

Defining individual language competence

The background to the audit of needs and language use which has been established in the previous stages should be borne in mind when defining an individual's language competence. Auditors may need to know only whether postholders are effective within their area of foreign language communication.

In the past, testing traditionally concentrated on the language produced as if an accurate command of the language were an end in itself, with little consideration being given to the context: 'who is talking to whom and why'. However, if our main concern is to evaluate language as communication, then we need to measure the ability to establish and maintain relationships as well as correctness and this requires consideration of the speakers and the context as well as the actual words. A number of elements must be included in the assessment, criteria such as how well the speaker adapts to the kind of language used by his/her interlocutor or to the situation, the evidence s/he gives of intercultural awareness, and command of specialist terms.

UK national vocational qualification standards

The companyor the individualmay wish to be measured against the standards defined for National Vocational Qualifications by the UK Languages Lead Body (see p. 47). With its starting-point the plethora of competing vocational language examinations in the UK, the Lead Body has defined five levels of language proficiency against which job requirements can be calibrated (we also looked at these in the previous chapter). Generic descriptions of communication functions or tasks categorised according to separate language skillslistening, speaking, reading, writingare the constituent parts of the Levels Framework.

The purpose is to define by means of these general descriptions (or 'generic descriptors') common proficiency standards that can be applied to any job in any industry, thus ascertaining the Level that the postholder needs to attain. This is tested within the NVQ framework by assessors in the workplace who are licensed for this testing by the Examinations Boards such as City and Guilds, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the RSA, and the Institute of Linguistics.

While we reproduce the overview of the Standards in Appendix 6, the Languages Lead Body Standards document is a book in its own right and we recommend that auditors obtain a copy of it. Additionally, the Examinations Boards offer 'interpretations' of the Standards in straightforward language use by way of illustration. Official assessors are required to undertake training offered by the Boards and have their work checked by accredited Verifiers from the Board.

Currently under development, as part of the LINGUA-sponsored Business Language Analysis System, is a Skills Audit software package, which enables the individual aloneor individual and auditorto identify the NVQ Level required by the job and how the postholder perceives their proficiency matched against the standards as illustrated by a series of exemplars: the 'Up to Standard' Needs Analysis and Skills Audit.

The industry, company and job-specific approach to language needs analysis and proficiency testing advocated in this book is primarily concerned with one thing: is the postholder able adequately to participate in communication with the foreign customers in their language? External norms are a secondary consideration. We shall therefore present the two testing procedures first, and relate their use to the NVQ system afterwards.

Individual Language Testing: Assessment Based on Needs

Testing language as actually used

The aim of the testing we propose is, then, not just to test the general language level of the employee but to gauge whether s/he is capable of carrying out the linguistic tasks s/he is called on to perform. If this is not so, the areas of weakness must be identified and these will constitute the basis of future training.

Authenticity.

Tests therefore need to be tailored to the individual and to be job specific, based on authentic material used within the company. This has cost and time implications but it will give the most reliable information on proficiency as required. To use a battery of general tests is to replicate examinations available already in the education sector and to measure postholders against criteria that may not be relevant. A careful choice of tests is therefore the key to the process. Tests adapted to the job may increase the cost of the audit but will be reliable; tests of a general nature will be cheaper but may not test the actual fitness of the postholder for the job being investigated. When financial considerations force auditors to use general testing materials, care must be taken to choose the tests that best indicate ability to carry out the language tasks identified earlier in the audit.

Communication (or language) tasks chains

Most jobs require a set of identifiable types of foreign language communication that are embodied in various transactional exchanges. Such exchanges or communicative tasks may involve chains of language skills or 'language (communicative) sub-tasks'. Using the Foreign Language Needs Analysis Grid and the Language Activities and Tasks Checklist or the Questionnaire, a picture of the communicative tasks undertaken by the postholder will already have been formed in the Audit Stage 3 (see Chapter 5). The communicative sub-tasks make up the communication chains that are the very basis of the job. Examples of the communication chains are:

• reading a foreign language text for information and giving a verbal summary in the mother tongue;

• telephoning (i.e. listening and speaking) using the foreign language and making notes on the conversation in the mother tongue;

• reading a foreign language fax, discussing the content with a colleague in the mother tongue and composing a foreign language reply.

Such chains are best replicated by role play or simulation and these can be relatively easily constructed to be company specific. Testing of this kind gets to the core of the communicative efficiency issue which lies at the heart of linguistic auditing.

The technical language or terminology used will often be product- or at least industry-specific. The areas will already be known from the Grid, if used. These needsthe language tasks, the communication chains, and the technical language of the jobare what should be tested. This has implications not only for testing, but also, of course, for efficient training. Efficient and effective training can be targeted specifically to match the type of language and the way it is used in the specific job and its stage in the operational process, always paying attention to the broader context of how information is conveyed by the company to and from the foreign language customer.

Testing potential language users

In the case of an employee who is to move post or be promotedor when the audit is looking to future company developments such as opening new markets, the audit should have identified the new language demands placed on the individual or job. This will alter the contents of testingthe aim is to indicate the postholder's potential for other linguistic roles apart from those already being undertaken, perhaps involving new kinds of communication chains, language tasks, technical language and even an additional language.

Creating the Tests

In the light of the above, it will be apparent that testing should ideally be based on the language profile of the individual, gleaned from the Questionnaire or the Grid.

Testing speaking and listening skills

In many cases it may be beneficial to start testing with an unstructured oral test which allows the auditee to take the lead. The auditee will not necessarily perform better but will feel that s/he is in control and this may be reassuring. It also permits the auditor to make a quick assessment of accent, intonation, speed of delivery, complexity of structures employed and so gain the general impression necessary to pitch testing at the right level.

Focused testing will be simulations (scenarios) based on company-specific situations, using the specialist vocabulary of the organisation. The following points should be noted:

• When testing speaking and listening skills there is a difference between face-to-face and telephone conversations. In the former, body language can help comprehension whereas this is not present in telephoning, which is one reason of course why telephoning is one the most difficult activities to master. It follows that it is necessary to test these two forms of listening skills separately.

• In the real world, postholders encounter (often strong) regional accents very different from those heard on the radio or in professionally recorded commercial language courses. Ability to comprehend such accents can be difficult to ascertain. Ideally examples should be drawn from real situations, if there was an opportunity to record visitors, for example. Generally, however, this is a challenge to training, a challenge rarely taken up!

Having started with single situations and simple chains such as speaking-listening dialogues, the auditor may need to evolve more complex simulations involving a sequence of language sub-tasks. A simple example would be, as mentioned on p. 51, asking in a telephone simulation for the auditee to take down a written message, and asking him/her to report the content in their own language, or vice versa; or at more demanding levels to present their product and take down an enquiry or to negotiate an order and record it. When the auditor is fully involved in such simulations, assessment is very demanding. One solution is to tape the tests so that they can be assessed later. Another is to arrange for the auditees to be tested in pairs or small groups, in which the various roles in the communication scenarios are shared out.

Whatever is decided, auditors must try to make sure that their assessment procedures do not falsify test results by adding levels of stress and anxiety not present in the real world. At a simple level, careful disposition of the furniture, discrete placing of microphones, a relaxed atmosphere and a friendly attitude may be enough to avoid problems. And again, it can be stressed that the testing is part of staff development.

Tests of reading and writing

Reading and writing tests, such as producing or understanding faxes and letters, should be derived from authentic examples, from within the company where possible. The types of written foreign language documentation go beyond letters and faxes of course. The Documentation Checklist, if used in the earlier part of the Audit, will have helped to identify the types involved in any given job.

Of course, neither reading nor writing ever occur in a vacuum. They, like speaking and listening, form parts in communication chains and the best form of testing will reproduce the chain. Thus, if a research worker has to read research reports in the foreign language, s/he will probably need to provide a colleague with the gist or an abstract in their own language, or simply make notes for the file. That can form the basis for testing comprehension, the authentic outcome being required by the auditor as evidence of understanding. Or a secretary may need to generate foreign language faxes but the input is in his/her own language. Here, too, the framework of the test is established by authentic practice. Thus, once the Auditin Stage 3has identified these communication chains, the appropriate form of testing can be established for a realistic assessment of foreign language proficiency in context.

We move next to the most highly customised form of testing, Work Shadowing. We then conclude this chapter with a discussion of how to assess the outcomes of the testsand of Work Shadowingand suggestions on how to grade proficiency.

Individual Language Testing: Work Shadowing

The case for work shadowing

There are certain situations where formal testing may be deemed to be inappropriate. This is particularly true when the auditors wish to examine language skills in context as advocated above. For example:

• Where foreign language users are negotiating and where they may need to use the language in a very subtle and possibly manipulative way in order to achieve their ends.

• Where foreign language users are building up relationships and where attitude and cultural awareness may play as great a role as expertise in the language in achieving their aims.

The difficulties of work shadowing

The difficulties in setting up work shadowing are enormous. Amongst them are:

• Confidentiality: In order to get a true idea of language proficiency the auditor may need to be allowed to witness meetings of a sensitive nature. The auditors have to guarantee and ensure complete confidentiality.

• Time and timing: The work shadowing must be arranged for a time when there are likely to be a number of opportunities to witness foreign language use. This is self-evident but not always easy to ensure. To be cost effective the visit must not be excessively long. The auditors must plan carefully in conjunction with the target staff.

However, if these factors are borne in mind and discussion of them built into the early negotiations with the auditees, then work shadowing can be a very efficient and accurate way of assessing whether members of the workforce are able to fulfil the foreign language demands of their jobs. Ways of helping them will also become more readily evident and can provide invaluable clues when recommending a training programme.

Accuracy: Testing in context

In pilot studies we noted in particular that there was a gain in testing accuracy because auditees were less nervous. People who were apprehensive of being examined formally, accepted work shadowing more willingly. A Russian speaker who was very nervous explained her attitude:

> I know what I've got to do and I know that I can do it. But I'm not sure that I'm going to be able to answer what you are going to ask me (i.e. formal tests) and that makes me nervous.

Work shadowing also makes it possible to assess whether communication strategies other than formal foreign language skills are successful in the work environment. An employee in one of the pilot studies who was at first unhappy about being shadowed was revealed later to be worried that his language skills would not be judged adequate for his role. He certainly would not have scored well on a formal test, but showed the auditor that he was quite a successful communicator, using personality and charm as well as his limited language skills to get his message across. If his brief was to communicate facts and to ease relationships between the company and its suppliers, he must be judged to be very successful.

At the top end of the skill spectrum there is equally an interplay between the language skill and other interpersonal skills, and an auditor who is able to work shadow will be able to comment on this. In interchanges where foreign language users were building relationships or negotiating prices and contracts, it was necessary for them to be able to concentrate on the effect that they were having. Formal language testing which focuses on the language task in hand does not allow the examinee to be tested in the same way. In the work shadowing it was possible to say that some auditees were so at home in the aspects of the foreign language they were using, that they were able to focus on the other skills needed in their dialogues.

Work shadowing avoids the difficulties of decontextualised language testing discussed above; language users are being tested only on the tasks they have to undertake.

Furthermore, it is possible for auditors observing large offices to assess how people work in teams. Some foreign language users perform better in environments where there is cooperation and are less able to function adequately in competitive or aggressive atmospheres.

Timesaving through assessment in the workplace.

Employees who were tested in their workplace activity through shadowing also liked the fact that there was no interruption to the working day while the assessment was being made. It should be added, finally, that work shadowing is the assessment mode recommended in the UK NVQ Framework and was originally the only method advocated by the Languages Lead Body.

Assessment Criteria and Grading

The Criteria for Successful Communication

The key criterion for assessing proficiency in work-based language tasks is:

• has the objective of the language/communicative task been achieved?

To answer this fundamental question we need to know the following:

• Was the information conveyed in the foreign language correctly understood?

• Was the information conveyed from the foreign language conveyed:

without ambiguity?

accurately?

in context?

in an appropriate form?

- Was the information to be conveyed in the foreign language conveyed:

  without ambiguity?

  accurately?

  in context?

  in an appropriate form?

- Did the respondent react as was intended/hoped for?

- Was the intended outcome achieved?

In other words, was the task carried out through the communication successful?

As we have argued above, it is of course impossible to test or assess in work shadowing any single one of the four skills without involving one of the others in the foreign language itself or in the mother-tongue, since each of the skills forms part of a two-way communicative situation. In other words, the postholder has to speak on a topic in the context of a task. Thus, the assessment pattern can follow that of the real life task. For example, where the postholder has to write in the foreign language, there will be an input in one of his/her languages in the context of the real world taska spoken request or a written requestthat has to be understood and followed. In test simulations, these inputs can be presented in whichever language would be authentic within the communication chains characteristic of the job. Proficiency assessment will be based on the adequacy of the outcome (or product).

Likewise for an assessor to know if listening or reading is proficient there also has to be outputin other words, they have to be assessed in the context of the task that is given in spoken or written form involving the listening or reading. The task will define what information has to be provided about what has been heard or read. In the workplace this occurs entirely naturally, in the context of the objective of the communication task. It can be required in spoken or written form, in either language according to the task.

There are thus many permutationswith movement between the skills and between languages being determined by the acid test of *authenticity*. Would the postholder need to move between the languages in his/her work? What are the real-life inputs, what are the required outputs?

In a word, assessment has to follow the natural, real-life sequence of communication and the tasks to be carried out through communication.

Proficiency Grading

The above approach is especially appropriate when the purpose of the assessment is to ascertain whether the postholder can conduct the transactions required in the foreign language to an appropriate level of professionalism. Can the postholder deal with foreign language communication to the same level of communicative professionalism as in his/her own language?

If, as is usually the case, the audit is to lay the basis for a training programme, proficiency grading is helpful as a way of describing the skills level of the postholder.

As with the criterion-based form of assessment just presented, the assessor will need to be a trained linguist to use the grading descriptors. They can be applied either in work shadowing or to assess simulations.

Categories of grading descriptors

These descriptors are arranged in three broad categories:

• Production.

• Reception.

• Intercultural Communication.

Production is sub-divided into pronunciation and fluency for Spoken Production, and further into use of structures (grammar and syntax) and use of vocabulary and specialist terminology for Spoken and for Written Production.

Reception is divided into reading and listening and each of these subdivided into understanding of structures and understanding of terminology/specialist vocabulary.

The category Intercultural Communication looks at sociocultural competency.

Each of the sub-divisions within a category is lettered for easy referencee.g. in Spoken Production, Pronunciation is (A), Fluency, (B); Use of Structures (Grammar and Syntax) (C); Use of Vocabulary and Specialist Terminology, (D). In Written Production Fluency is again (B); Use of Structures (Grammar and Syntax) (C). In ReceptionReading, Understanding Structures runs on as (E), Understanding Specialist Terminology (F), and these letters are repeated in the same subdivisions for Listening. Sociocultural Competency becomes (G) (see Figure 8).

These letters can be used in the Grading Grid as an abbreviated reference.

Proficiency grade descriptors

Each of the sub-divisions has six grade descriptors from zero proficiency to the equivalent of what the counterpart professional could achieve in his/her own language.

Since the key criterion of effective communication and therefore of proficiency in carrying out the characteristic language activities and tasks of the post is successful attainment of the communicative objective, the top grades 4 and 5 will only be expected where the post requires a person to interact with their counterparts with the same relative ease as with people in their own language.

This is less uncommon than it may seem, however, as European industry, for example, continues to integrate through mergers and acquisitions, and through the freedom of movement of labour, so that managers may be asked to run divisional operations or even entire subsidiaries or branches abroad, or to interact regularly in operational coordination and transnational meetings and negotiations both within the company and between companies.

The Descriptors are reproduced in Appendix 6. It is advised that these are designed for use by auditors who are trained linguists, but they can serve to give line managers and training managers guidance on what the linguist would be looking for in grading proficiency.

They have been designed to correspond broadly to both the NVQ Levels and to those levels established in the European Language Projects which have matched language examinations across the EU by level of difficulty and proficiency certificated (e.g. LangCred and ALTE).

The proficiency testing grid

In Stage 3 of the Audit, a Language Profile of individual postholders will have been obtained by using the Foreign Language Needs Analysis Grid or the Questionnaire. The primary use of this profile is to identify the language areas in which the activities and tasks take placefor *training purposes.*

Testing can of course be used both *initially* to establish what training is neededand *after* training. The Proficiency Testing Grid and the Proficiency Grade Descriptors can be used in later phases.

Language skills in practice are linked in sequences to form communication chainsas we have already said. In testingeither through the use of authentically based simulations or work shadowingit is possible both to test these sequences of sub-tasks or 'communication chains' and to separate out discrete proficiency features and grade them.

In the worked example this has been done. Along the horizontal top line are the tasks that a purchasing clerk carries out using the foreign language. These tasks make up the Foreign Language Components of the post (his/her part in the function).

Below are three horizontal double sets of boxes: each double set identifies a Proficiency Category (as listed in the Proficiency Grade Descriptors) and provides a box below for assessment according to the Grade Descriptors.

These are categorised as can be seen from Figure 8 below as:

(1) = Production (Spoken) = S.

(2) = Production (Written) = W.

(3) = Reception (Reading) = R.

(4) = Reception (Listening) = L.

(5) = Sociocultural Competency = SC.

Language Profile of (Name)	J. Smith
Post/Function	Purchasing Manager, Sourcing Dept.
Company	Automotive Components Ltd. Birmingham
(Previous) language learning experience/ qualifications	French at school until 16. One year of evening classes one year previous to test

FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMPONENTS OF JOB: French

Z0067002.gif

Figure 8
Proficiency testing grid

So the Task 'placing routine automotive components orders' involves either telephoning and then writing the order (S&W) or just writing (W). The letters applying to each task are recorded in vertical columns below the identified task.

Acknowledging the receipt of goods, in this example, only involves writing (W). 'Entertaining suppliers' involves speaking, listening and sociocultural competency. 'Drafting reports for suppliers' involves making enquiries in the postholder's own language of the production manager on the performance of the components and delivery, listening to these verbal reports and then composing an appropriate report in the foreign language. 'Participating in small meetings' includes speaking in and listening to the foreign language and displaying sociocultural competency.

The Proficiency Testing Grid is thus able to represent the tasks as communication chains using sequences of language skills, but still provides for separate assessment of each skill. During testing, the assessor then fills in the aspect of the skill by lettere.g. Spoken Pronunciation (A), Use of structures (Grammar and syntax) in Writing (C), Understanding of Structures in Listening (E) and so on. During assessment, the grade is filled in for each identified sub-skill. We discuss this further below.

Requirements of the post

Before proceeding to assessment of an individual postholder's proficiency, however, we have to know what grade of proficiency is required for the communicative tasks to be achieved effectively.

The Criteria for Successful Communication, stated on pp. 55-56, provide the basis. They are in summary:

(1) Correct understanding.

(2) Accurate conveying of information.

(3) Appropriate conveying of information.

(4) Lack of ambiguity

(5) Intended effect on respondent achieved.

Which grades of proficiency are needed to satisfy these general criteria will depend on the relative difficulty and demands of the communicative task.

Using the Proficiency Testing Grid, the auditor must ascertain from the line manager and the postholder, preferably together, what the key communicative tasks, within the foreign language, are. These can be filled in along the top line. This we have done in the worked example below.

Triangulation

Having recorded the communicative tasks and the skills involved in carrying these out on to the Grid, you need to agree with both the line manager and the postholder what minimum levels of proficiency could make it possible to fulfil those tasks efficiently, referring to the Proficiency Grade Descriptors. If the views differ, the auditor will settle the issues in the third leg of this triangulation technique, his/her own observation (work shadowing). The appropriate numbers are then filled in.

Thus, 'Placing Routine Component Orders' includes speaking (on the telephone to the supplier) and confirming the order in writing. So we enter on a blank grid the number after the letters designating the proficiency areas involved.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMPONENTS OF JOB: French

Z0069001.gif

Figure 9
Post proficiency grade requirements grid

Assessment of Observation (Work Shadowing) or Simulation

Either work shadowing (observation of the postholder using the foreign language in authentic tasks) or simulations will track how the postholder copes with the communicative tasks of the post.

Simulations may be necessary to cover all the ground. It is very rare except in routine and repetitive posts, for all the communicative tasks to occur naturally in a time span that would be reasonable for an external auditor. It is for this reason that the NVQ approach, which seeks evidence of proficiency in the workplace, calls for trained assessors who are themselves employed in the workplace. The practicalities of this in the case of languages are, however, very limited, unless the line manager or equivalent who is in everyday contact with the postholder has both linguistic expertise and sufficient training to be able to judge appropriate proficiency.

Matching assessment against post requirements.

Equipped with the Proficiency Grading Grid and the proficiency grade requirements for the individual skills entailed by the communicative tasks, the auditor assesses the postholder's performance. Level 0 will never be adequate. Level 1 will be adequate only for simple communicative tasks.

In our worked example, the auditor was able to tick off that the majority of target grades were attained. In Pronunciation (A4) the postholder exceeded requirements.

However he was not sufficiently skilled in socio-cultural competency to be fully effective in 'entertaining suppliers'failing to put them at their ease, nor in 'participating in small meetings' where he did not observe the necessary courtesies in both cases, failing to adjust his usual manner or to observe how difficult his guests found this. Nor was his command of written structures in 'placing routine orders', 'calling for progress reports on orders' and 'drafting reports for suppliers' good enough to avoid ambiguity. The messages were not clear in their meaning.

In both these skills areas then, the auditor finds that the postholder, while adequately proficient over a wide range of communicative sub-tasks, would benefit possibly from trainingtraining that would also benefit the organisation and improve the communicative efficiency. Poor relations with suppliers do not lead to efficiency, especially at times of crisis or difficulty, while ambiguous reports can be positively damaging if misunderstood and indeed might even be used in litigation in an extreme case.

This returns us finally to the central criteria that must be fulfilled, independent of proficiency grade. For as we have stressed, the necessary grade will vary according to difficulty of task.

In our example the postholder failed the criterion of 'lack of ambiguity' in his written communication with suppliers and probably also the second criterion, 'accurate conveying of information', since if the recipients could not fully understand the orders and reports, they receive what is actually false information. And of course, this also means that the criterion, 'the intended effect on the recipient', was not achieved either.

Furthermore the postholder's inadequate sociocultural competency also included failure on the last criterion 'intended effect on the recipient'.

So what appeared at first sight to be a very proficient all-round performance turns out to have quite serious failings and not to satisfy four of the five criteria.

Linking in with the Language National Vocational Qualifications

The Language NVQs were introduced above on page 47. These are qualifications at five levels of demand or challenge from the basic Level 1 to the Highly Advanced Level 4 and Specialist Level 5. To obtain the Qualifications you have to demonstrate competence in carrying out work-based tasks involving the use of a foreign language. You have to be able to produce evidence that you have this competence. Oral competence may involve being observed by an assessor or being satisfactorily recorded so that an assessor can be sure of the competence. Competence in writing can be assembled and kept as a dossier of evidence. To cover all Skills entailed in the job you keep a Competence Transcript.

To obtain the Qualification you must be registered at an Approved Centre and such Centres may be the company or a training institution. These Centres require approval from the Certifying Body, e.g. City and Guilds, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, RSA, Institute of Linguists.

The four discrete Language Skills comprise the four Assessment Units so there is a Skills Unit (listening, reading, speaking, writing) at each of the five levels. Each Unit in its turn comprises a series of generally or 'generically' described 'tasks'. We reproduce the overview sheet for the Language NVQs in Appendix 6.

The distinguishing features of the NVQ levels

Below is a summary of the distinction between the Levels using the NVQ's terms. The terms are not more closely defined and the candidates' literature does not give examples of what is meant in practical terms in target foreign languages.

Level 1

The *'tasks'* are:

- Predictable.
- Simple.
- Everyday.
- In standard format.

Level 2

The *'language tasks'* involve:

- Familiar contexts but some are non-routine.
- Daily but varied activities.

The *sources* are

- Simple.
- Familiar.

The *production* (S & W):

- Is semi-structured.
- Uses set phrases and structures.

Level 3

The *'language tasks'* are connected to 'key work tasks':

- In varied contexts.

The *sources* are:

- Varied.

Language tasks include the following *language functions*:

- Conveying and understanding facts.
- Persuading and understanding persuasive texts.
- Expressing ideas and opinions and understanding texts expressing ideas and opinions.

The *production* (S & W) is:

- Linked to key but routine work requirements.

Level 4

The *'language tasks'* are complex or technical

- Over a broad range and a wide variety of contexts.

The *sources* for listening and reading are

- Complex.

The tasks involve complex reasoning, and, for the productive skills, response to such reasoning, unscripted presentations and the writing of complex and/or technical texts and documents conveying opinions and complex information.

Level 5

The *'language tasks'* are:

• Complex and non-routine.

• Over a broad range and in often unpredictable contexts.

The *sources* are

• Highly specialised yet can be diverse.

The tasks are concerned with understanding and conveying highly specialised information with contribution to complex discussion and debate. In 'Writing', arguments need to be presented and debated on complex matters, highly specialised texts and correspondence will need to be produced.

The language required and encountered progresses from:

Level 1:	entailing simple and standard language to;
Level 2:	uncomplicated with some complexity in it;
Level 3:	commonly used structures with some complex and unfamiliar language;
Level 4:	response to a wide range of spontaneous foreign language interventions and capability of inferring or expressing implicit and multiple meaning. The individual will have available a ready range of appropriate and adaptable language strategies;
Level 5:	the individual will possess a significant range of language strategies from an extensive repertoire that is constantly updated to meet new demands.

NVQ assessment

The principle for obtaining certification is that of 'can do'. There is no grading of proficiency within the Unit or Level. The Level itself is the indicator of grade, there being no differentiation of performance within the Level.

The link with auditing

Where the audit takes place in a company that is an Approved Centre, the candidate's Competence Transcript can be invaluable for assisting the analysis of language use and needs. Combined with the interview-based Language Needs Analysis Grid, a clear picture of the job's language/communicative tasksin the sense developed in this book (see Chapter 5)should be easy to assemble. The tasks will of course have to be reidentified in terms specific to the job instead of the generic language of the NVQ standards. Similarly, the discrete skills represented by the units will need to be reconstituted in their communication chains for the needs analysis and consequent training programme.

The link with proficiency grading.

The proficiency testing proposed here could itself be part of the NVQ certification process if the auditor is an NVQ assessor. Or the evidence assembled by the auditor could be referred to an NVQ assessor.

The proficiency criteria proposed in this book are entirely suitable for deciding whether a postholder 'can do' the tasks identified as the foreign language components of the job function.

As far as the grading levels in their various categories are concerned, i.e. pronunciation, fluency, structure, specialist terminology etc., Level 0 is a non-competence level. Level 1 may be adequate for an NVQ Level 1, since the proficiency required is limited in scope. Level 2 may correspond to NVQ Level 2 and so on.

The link with other NVQ competencies

There can be a close correspondence between the operational tasks (and their corresponding language/communicative tasks) and the competencies identified in NVQ descriptors for the proficiency units in commercial functions. For example, these are some of the units of competence for the International Trade and Services NVQ Level 2 offered by the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Examinations Board. Core Units.

- Identify and record the goods ordered and customers requirements.
- Arrange the movement of goods.
- Engage service providers for the movement of goods.
- Provide information to customers/clients.
- Process information.
- Health and Safety.

Optional Units include, for example:

- Shipping: Identify, record and advice on the movement of goods and customer requirements.
- Process payments.
- Process documents relating to goods and services.

Clearly, such 'Units' closely adhere to the type of operational tasks an audit would expect to identify. But, if these operational tasks or 'units of competence' regularly included foreign language communication and were thus language/communicative tasks in our sense, it seems unlikely that the Language NVQ Level 2 competencies would be adequate, and Level 3, which is characterised by 'dealing with key work tasks' would be more appropriate.

Similarly, the demands of this post, matched against the Proficiency Grade Descriptors proposed in this book, would point to Grade 3 in the skills required for the communicative task (and forming the communicative chain).

The Language Resource Inventory

One of the most valuable outcomes of an Audit that proceeds from the strategic, through the operational to the individual postholder leveland includes proficiency assessmentis to create an inventory of what the organisation's foreign language capability comprises. It will establish:

- Where capability resides with regard to each stage in the operational process, to function and to department.
- Which persons have this capability in which jobs and functions, in which languages and to which grade.
- Whether this capability reaches, or exceeds the current need.
- Whether, following the strategic analysis, it can match future needs.

The resultant inventory can point out training requirements. It can also provide invaluable information on whether a strategic policy of, say, moving into a major new foreign language market, or the acquisition of an overseas subsidiary is advisable in human resource (i.e. foreign language capability) terms and what such a decision might imply for recruitment as well as training.

We look in greater detail at the outcome of the audit, the kinds of options for action, and the feedback loop between the Audit Report and the strategic analysis with which it began in the final chapter.

Chapter 7
Reporting Back (Audit Stage 5)

Introduction

The format and destination of the final report obviously need to be established from the beginning of the whole process i.e. the first meeting with senior management at the Preliminary Stage. Issues of confidentiality, particularly such matters as access to individuals' linguistic assessment results, will have an effect on the attitude and co-operation of participants. If all concerned are in agreement over the fundamental points, then the procedure is likely to be much smoother and carried through in a spirit of greater cooperation. It also needs to have been made clear from the outset whether the process is leading towards training for the staff involved and on what time scale. Furthermore, the auditing team must make it clear whether or not they are in the market for providing any training that the audit and report deems to be necessary (see Chapter 1). (We have not recommended that they should be, in order to avoid bias)

Report Content

It is obvious that there can be no definitive blueprint for the production of every audit report that is likely to be undertaken. However, there are some key elements that would, most probably, figure in the majority of audits and therefore reports.

Restatement of objectives of the audit

It will be essential to place the audit in context, restating the parameters and aims agreed with management and outlining the methods used. If the linguistic audit is part of a general management audit it will be necessary to liaise with the other auditors to avoid duplication and ensure consistency of approach. This will be the place to state formally the general benefits to be expected of appropriate language proficiency (see Chapter 2, p. 11).

An analysis of the present situation of the company (Audit stages 1 & 2)

This will deal with the areas in which the company currently operates.

- How it is organised internally.

- Its general training policy.

• An overview of previous language training undertaken.

• The completed Strategic Plan referring specifically to FL requirements (SPAT).

• The results of the SWOT (or TOWS) analysis and/or PASS sequence.

• The Road Map used in Stage 2 to identify communication problems, both current and potential. The Map will also have been used as a basis on which to choose posts to be assessed and where there may be foreign language communication blockages.

It is here that the specific benefits to the company should be stated, referring to the problems, e.g. communication blockages, that the audit has revealed.

Language analysis by function and job (Audit Stage 3)

This may take the form of a brief summary of the 'triangulation' method used together with the actual tools, and their justification. Was the Grid used in a 'brainstorming' session and if so, how was the group selected? If the Questionnaire was used, what was the method of completion? Was it posted for completion at the respondent's convenience, or completed in a group, or individually with the auditor present? If individually completed, was there a follow-up interview to see if the initial analysis actually matched the respondent's own perceptions, and those of his/her line manager?

How and with what tools were the supervisor's views of the job requirements obtained? It will obviously be necessary to distinguish in the analysis of posts, between current and future needs as seen by both sides.

As well as the reports on the individual posts assessed there should be an overall summary of the present and future needs of the company in the language(s) under consideration.

Results of linguistic testing (Audit Stage 4)

The reporting routes will have already been decided with management at the beginning of the process (Preliminary Stage).

Results will usually include a consideration of the general findings of linguistic proficiency in the staff tested; the global capability of each of the departments tested; the gap, if any, that is revealed between their abilities and current and future needs.

If agreed at the outset and particularly if training is anticipated in the immediate future, it will be appropriate to include individual reports on each member of staff so that managers can be made aware of the particular deficiencies that exist, between actual and ideal FL proficiency in each case.

If time and finances allow, it is very helpful for the individuals involved to be able to go through their personal assessments with the auditors rather than simply receiving a bald assessment. Such an approach will help to allay any anxieties that the testing process inevitably raises and will also allow staff to approach any planned training in a positive frame of mind. Ideally, this debriefing should take place before the report is distributed generally and be designed to contribute to staff development.

Action plans and recommendations.

The interest of the language audit for the company lies in its relevance to strategic planning needs. The report should include a customised version of the Road Map enabling management to see at a glance the scale of the task ahead by identifying the areas where need, supply and capability are mismatched.

Advice on training provision should also be provided and the advantage of the auditor not being a potential provider will be obvious here.

As appropriate, auditors may suggest strategy options such as:

(1) A Language Training Plan to provide language training to postholders.
The plan should:

- Be needs-specific, not general.
- Be time-specific.
- Be fully costed.
- Recommend whether training should be in- or out-of-house.
- State whether training should be intensive or extensive.
- Include any need for accreditation by external bodies.
- Include the development of skills in International English.

(2) A medium or long term Recruitment Plan, making language skills a prerequisite in recruitment for certain posts.

(3) Recommendations on the use of professional interpreters and translators.

(4) 'Fire Fighting', the immediate recruitment of appropriate skilled and qualified staff when the need is extremely urgent; intensive courses for key staff. The Languages Resource Inventory will provide the overview of actual capability (pp. 66-67).

(5) The identification of underused skills among the current employees deriving from the Inventory. If this leads to a change of post for an individual, it will show how a linguistic audit may impinge on other areas of training.

(6) It may ultimately lead to a reconsideration of the corporate mission and strategic objectives in the light of serious weaknesses and potentially devastating threats.

The report should also include an indication of the total cost of implementing the recommendations, perhaps expressed in terms of the number of hours of training which will be required to achieve company objectives.

Finally, it will almost certainly be advisable to ensure that the company understands that language training objectives cannot be met within the same time limits as some other training needs. Whilst a week may be sufficient to master a new piece of software, language training takes much longer to achieve its aims. In many cases involving key, front-line staff, recruitment will be a more realistic strategy than training.

Delivering the Final Report

The final report will need to be delivered to the company as soon as practicable after the completion of the audit. The actual method of delivery will have been agreed at the outset:

• To senior management or to all those involved in the process.

• In groups or in one large meeting.

The cost of this process will, of course have been built in at the outset

Preparation of an Action Plan

This will follow on from the presentation of the final report and will enable the management to begin to put into practice the findings of the report. Discussion of the auditor's role on drawing up and monitoring the implementation of any subsequent action will naturally follow here and may include a brief to identify and invite tenders from potential language providers. The value of the auditor working through the Audit Report in detail with the selected trainers cannot be overstressed. Use of the Grid, or the Questionnaire, together with the results of task-related Proficiency Testing and Grading provide the basis for targeted, needs-specific curriculum design. It is absolutely essential that subsequent training does not revert to general language teaching, without reference to postholders' actual communicative tasks and use of specialist terminology. In many ways that is the point of the audit: to identify how language learning can be efficient, effective, motivating and relevant. If the training that does follow is not so targeted, the audit will have been, in part at least, a waste of time and money.

If the initial brief did not include individual linguistic assessment of postholders, it may be that the report encourages management to proceed to this phase.

After Audit Service

The company may wish to extend the involvement of the auditor to provide a link between audit and training. This will allow for discussions with the management on any areas of the report that need further clarification. Perhaps even more importantly, it will allow the auditor to ensure that the language training provider chosen is fully aware of the company's needs.

So the company may even at this stage ask the auditor to cooperate with its training manager in choosing a language provider, and advising on the design of language materials, in monitoring the progress of trainees and ensuring that the final objectives of the audit report are achieved.

Appendices to the Report

The tools, techniques and assessment procedures used may be considered essential to a proper understanding of the audit. In such a case the audit report could include:

- Copies of the linguistic tests used.
- Copies of the proficiency descriptors used.
- Copies of the original and customised Road Maps.

In the Appendices to this book which now follow we have reproduced the Tools we have recommended in sequence of use.

Appendix 1
Linguistic Auditing Overview Chart

< previous page page_73 next page >

STAGE	MAIN ISSUES	TASKS	TOOLS/ TECHNIQUES	OUTCOMES
PRELIMINARY Initiating the Audit Chapter 2	Aims; Scope; Agenda	Establish the credibility of audit team; Define the assignment	Company Publications; List of Agenda items; Meetings	Audit proposal; Agreement with company re: confidentiality and access to information and personnel
STAGE 1 Integrating the audit into the planning process Chapter 3	Current language problems; Future language challenges; Focus on strategic level	Identify current and future language needs at a strategic level	SPAT SWOT TOWS PASS	Identification of language issues/ needs as part of strategic plan
STAGE 2 Understanding how the organisation works Chapter 4	Current and potential language roles in organisation; Dept/company culture and hierarchies affecting the process; Focus on process at operational and functional level	Understand company/dept culture; Devise techniques appropriate to company for language audit; Win hearts and minds; Identify both internal and external communications systems and problems.	Road Map; FL Documentation Checklist; Triangulation; Meetings with line managers	Understanding of culture re: FL communication; Identification of language issues/ needs in process and at operational level; Identification of appropriate analytical tools
STAGE 3 Analysing postholders' foreign language use and needs Chapter 5	Actual use of language; Potential use of language; Focus on posts	Establish what is current practice in each post/function; Establish what could/ought to happen now and in future	Questionnaire; Language Needs Analysis Grid; FL Activities & Tasks Checklist; FL Documentation Checklist; Triangulation	Language audit the posts' language needs; Confirm tools to be used; Establish rel'ship with NVQs (in UK)
STAGE 4 Assessing postholders' foreign language skills Chapter 6	How far do post-holders fulfil needs of post? Focus on post-holders	Test language skills of post-holders	Observation/ work shadowing; Proficiency Testing Grid; Proficiency Grade Descriptors	Language audit the postholder profile languages resource inventory
STAGE 5 Reporting back Chapter 7	Confidentiality	Formulate findings; Make objective recommendations	Analysis of outcomes	Report action plan training needs analysis recommend-ations benefits specific to company

Appendix 2
Preliminary Stage Agenda Items for the First Meeting with Senior Management

< previous page page_75 next page >

AGENDA ITEMS FOR FIRST MEETING WITH SENIOR MANAGEMENT (INITIATING THE AUDIT: PRELIMINARY STAGE)

(1) Presentation of the benefits of an audit.

(2) Introduction of the audit team and the creation of audit team credibility.

(3) The aim of the audit. An important aspect of this item is how the language audit fits in with the overall company plan (Chapter 3). It is here that the audit team may need to prompt the smaller company to formulate such a plan.

(4) Brief explanation of the linguistic auditing process. This will involve an introduction, as a presentation tool, to the Overview Chart (Chapter 1) and the Road Map (Chapter 4).

(5) Obtaining an overview of the organisation, particularly from the language use viewpoint. The auditors must try to gain an initial feel for the culture of the organisation. This insight will be taken further in Stage 2 (understanding the organisation) and in meetings with line managers (Chapter 4).

(6) Discussion of any previous language training and its effectiveness.

(7) Strategy regarding the long-term use of foreign language(s) (if any).

(8) Time scale of the audit.

(9) Matters relating to the auditors' access to company records and staff.

(10) Matters relating to confidentiality.

Appendix 3
Audit Stage 1

(a) The Strategic Planning Analysis Technique (SPAT)

(b) The 'TOWS' Analysis

(c) Problem Analysis and Solving Sequence (PASS)

The Strategic Planning Analysis Technique (Spat)
Relating to Foreign Language Communication Needs

Z0086001.gif

The 'Tows' Analysis

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	SO STRATEGIES	WO STRATEGIES
THREATS	ST STRATEGIES	WT STRATEGIES

Problem Analysis and Solving Sequence (Pass).

Z0087002.gif

Appendix 4
Audit Stage 2
Road Maps and Overlays

Exporting Road Map (Manufacturing)

Phase 1: from market research to delivery

Z0089002.gif

OVERLAY (Manufacturing Phase 1)

Z0090001.gif

Phase 2: after sales

Z0091002.gif

OVERLAY (Manufacturing Phase 2)

Z0092001.gif

Exporting Road Map (Service Industries)

Phase 1: from marketing to delivery of service

Z0093002.gif

OVERLAY (Services Phase 1)

Z0094001.gif

Phase 2: from delivery to quality assessment

Z0095002.gif

OVERLAY (Services Phase 2)

Z0096001.gif

European/International Activities/Projects Road Map (Non-Profit Making Organisations)

Phase 1: from liaison to realisation

Z0097002.gif

OVERLAY (Non Profit-Making Phase 1)

Z0098001.gif

Phase 2: project follow-up.

Z0099001.gif

OVERLAY (Non-Profit Making Phase 2)

Z0100001.gif

Appendix 5
Audit Stage 3

(a) The Rotterdam Foreign Language Needs Questionnaire

(b) The Foreign Language Needs Analysis Grid

(c) The Foreign Language Activities and Tasks Checklist

(d) The Documentation Checklist

The Rotterdam Foreign Language Needs Questionnaire

Z0102000.gif

Z0103000.gif

Z0104000.gif

Z0105000.gif

< previous page page_97 next page >

Z0106000.gif

Z0107000.gif

Z0108000.gif

< previous page page_100 next page >

Z0109000.gif

< previous page page_101 next page >

Z0110000.gif

Foreign Language Needs Analysis Grid

Language Profile of:
(name)
Post and Function
Company

	ACTIVITY: COMMUNICATIVE TASKS IN: (LANGUAGE)
CONTENT (Topic Area/ Lexical Field)	

Language Activities and Tasks Checklist Tool

FUNCTION: Market Research	
Activity:	Measuring and analysing the characteristics of foreign language markets
FUNCTION: Sales and Marketing	
Activity:	Sales to foreign customersin the home country
FUNCTION: Sales and Marketing	
Activity:	Sales in foreign language markets
FUNCTION: Senior Management	
Activity:	Senior Management (transnational)
FUNCTION: Product Research and Design	
Activity:	Research and development using foreign language sources
FUNCTION: Purchasing	
Activity:	Purchasing and ordering from foreign suppliers/sources
FUNCTION: Logistics	
Activity:	Communication with foreign language transport, warehousing agencies and suppliers
FUNCTION: Financial	
Activity:	Communication with foreign language customers/subsidiaries/parent company
FUNCTION: Secretarial	
Activity:	Communication with foreign language customers / subsidiaries/parent company
MULTI-FUNCTION: Telephoning	
Supporting Activity:	Telephoning with speakers of other languages
MULTI-FUNCTION: Written Communication	
Supporting Activity:	Written communication with speakers of other languages
MULTI-FUNCTION: Meetings and Conferences	
Supporting Activity:	Meetings and conferences with speakers of other languages
MULTI-FUNCTION: Human Resources and Training	
Supporting Activity:	Human resources and training (transnational)
OTHER FUNCTIONS	

MARKET RESEARCH FUNTION

ACTIVITY

Measuring and analysing the characteristics of foreign language markets

TASKS

* accessing foreign language secondary sources of data
* briefing foreign market research agencies
* designing foreign language questionnaires
* telephone interviews with foreign language speakers
* face-to-face interviews with foreign language speakers
* making notes from foreign language interviews
* reading foreign language advertisements
* reading foreign language trade journals
* writing reports
* writing letters to foreign government agencies
* making travel arrangements

Other

(please fill in any other tasks connected with Market Research in foreign language markets which occur regularly in your company)

SALES AND MARKETING FUNCTION

ACTIVITY

Sales to foreign customersin home country

TASKS

* receiving customers
* entertaining customers
* acting as a guide to the company
* acting as a guide to the town
* interpreting (liaison)
* providing information*
* presenting the enterprise*
* presenting a product*
* presenting a service*
* writing sales leaflets
* writing instruction booklets
* checking foreign language sales literature sourced abroad
* negotiating contracts
* conducting telesales

**These tasks may be conducted face-to-face or on the telephone (see Multi-function Sheets)*

Other

(please fill in any other tasks connected with Sales in the Home Country to foreign customers which occur regularly in your company)

SALES AND MARKETING FUNCTION

ACTIVITY

Sales in foreign language markets

TASKS

* making travel arrangements: air*
* making travel arrangements: rail*
* making travel arrangements: car hire*
* travelling in Foreign Language countries
* arranging accommodation*
* confirming accommodation*
* ordering food
* receiving hospitality
* visiting customers
* visiting agents
* investigating new markets
* collecting information on current markets*
* organising market research for formal reports*
* executing market research for formal reports*
* presenting the enterprise*
* presenting a product*
* presenting a service*
* participating in trade fairs
* negotiating contracts

**These tasks may be conducted face-to-face or on the telephone (see Multi-function Sheets)*

Other

(please fill in any other tasks connected with Sales Abroad which occur regularly in your company

SENIOR MANAGEMENT FUNCTION

ACTIVITY

Senior Management (transnational)

TASKS

* making contact and representing the enterprise*
* negotiating common ground for co-operation
* negotiating common ground for contracts
* defending the company's interests
* communicating with counterparts in subsidiaries*
* communicating with counterparts in the parent company*
* participating in formal workshops
* participating in meetings
* chairing meetings
* discussing with colleagues
* instructing colleagues*
* travelling in Foreign Language countries

**These tasks may be conducted face-to-face and/or on the telephone*
and/or by written communication
(see Multi-function Sheets)

Other
(please fill in any other tasks connected with Senior Management which occur regularly in your company)

PRODUCT RESEARCH AND DESIGN FUNCTION

ACTIVITY
Research, Design & Development (using foreign language sources)
TASKS

* reading technical notices
* reading technical specifications
* reading specialised articles
* reading articles of a general nature
* abstracting for other people
* abstracting for own use
* contacting specialists
* contacting consultants
* writing reports
* consulting customer (written)
* consulting customer (oral)

Other
(please fill in any other tasks connected with Research, Design and Development which occur regularly in your company)

PURCHASING FUNCTION

ACTIVITY

Purchasing and ordering from foreign suppliers/sources

TASKS

* discuss purchases with suppliers
* placing routine orders*
* thanking for orders received*
* getting progress reports*
* sending progress reports*
* chasing orders*
* giving detailed information about products*
* giving detailed information about services*
* dealing with financial matters (invoices, bills of payment, customs documents)*
* holding meetings with suppliers (see Multi-function sheets)
* entertaining suppliers
* visiting suppliers

**These tasks may be conducted face-to-face, on the telephone or by written communication (see Multi-function sheets)*

Other

(please fill in any other tasks connected with the Buying Department and Ordering which occur regularly in your enterprise)

LOGISTICS FUNCTION

ACTIVITY

Communication with foreign language transport and warehousing agencies and suppliers

TASKS

* communicating with customers, suppliers, agents etc.*
* reading reports and correspondence
* making travel arrangements: air*
* making travel arrangements: rail*
* making travel arrangements: car hire*
* arranging accommodation*
* confirming accommodation*
* travelling in Foreign Language countries
* participating in meetings (see Multi-function sheets)
* receiving and entertaining foreing visitors

**These tasks may be conducted face-to-face and/or on the telephone and/or by written communication (see Multi-function Sheets)*

Other

(please fill in any other tasks connected with Logistics which occur regularly in your company)

FINANCIAL FUNCTION

ACTIVITY

Communication with foreign language customers/subsidiaries/parent company

*· reading financial reports

*· reading technical correspondence

*· reading accounts

*· writing technical letters

*· writing technical faxes

*· writing technical reports

· spoken communication with financial counterparts

* spoken communication with foreign management (customers/subsidiaries/parent company)*

* participating in informal meetings

* travelling in foreign language countries

* being entertained

**These tasks may be conducted face-to-face and/or on the telephone and/or by written communication (see Multi-function Sheets)*

Other

(please fill in any other tasks connected with the Financial Function which occur regularly in your company)

SECRETARIAL FUNCTION

ACTIVITY

Communication with foreign language customers/subsidiaries/parent company

TASKS

* writing letters (see also Multi-function: Written communication)
* telephoning (see also Multi-function: Telephoning)
* writing faxes (see also Multi-function: Written communication)
* taking notes at meetings
* taking notes at conferences
* taking shorthand
* reading correspondence for gist
* reading correspondence
* translating correspondence for gist
* translating correspondence
* reading reports for gist
* reading reports
* reading technical journals
* reading technical brochures
* reading sales literature
* making travel arrangements: air*
* making travel arrangements: rail*
* making travel arrangements: car hire*
* arranging accommodation*
* confirming accommodation*
* receiving foreign visitors
* entertaining foreign visitors
* participating in meetings
* liaison and interpreting

**These tasks may be conducted face-to-face or on the telephone (see Multi-function Sheets)*

Other

(please fill in any other tasks connected with the Secretarial Function which occur regularly in your company)

MULTI-FUNCTION: TELEPHONING

SUPPORTING ACTIVITY

Telephoning with speakers of other languages

SUB-TASKS

* connecting telephone calls
* asking to be connected
* giving routine information
* leaving messages
* making appointments
* taking messages
* confirming information
* changing information
* cancelling arrangements

Other

(please fill in any other tasks connected with Telephoning which occur regularly in your company)

MULTI-FUNCTION: WRITTEN COMMUNICATION WITH SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

SUPPORTING ACTIVITY

Written communication (see also the Documentation Checklist Tool)

SUB-TASKS

* typing letters from hand-written sources
* typing reports from hand-written sources
* sending routine messages by letter
* sending routine messages by fax
* sending routine messages by email
* receiving routine messages by letter
* receiving routine messages by fax
* receiving routine messages by email
* sending complex letters with *technical content*
* sending complex letters with *commercial content*
* sending complex letters with *general content*
* sending complex faxes with *technical content*
* sending complex faxes with *commercial content*
* sending complex faxes with *general content*
* sending complex email with *technical content*
* sending complex email with *commercial content*
* sending complex email with *general content*
* filling in forms
* writing agendas
* writing minutes
* taking shorthand
* preparing memoranda
* preparing reports with *technical content*
* preparing reports with *commercial content*
* preparing reports with *general content*
* translating
* translating for gist

Other

(please fill in any other activities connected with Written Communication which occur regularly in your enterprise)

MULTI-FUNCTION: MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

SUPPORTING ACTIVITY

Meetings and conferences with speakers of other languages

TASKS AND SUB-TASKS

* participating in small, informal meetings
* chairing meetings
* giving a presentation
* giving a paper
* making a speech
* presenting colleagues
* presenting guests
* presenting customers
* thanking colleagues
* thanking guests
* thanking customers
* being a rapporteur of a group (written)
* being a rapporteur of a group (spoken)
* listening to conference speeches
* taking notes
* writing reports of meetings
* writing minutes of meetings
* writing reports of conferences

Other

(please fill in any other tasks connected with Meetings and Conferences which occur regularly in your company)

MULTI-FUNCTION: HUMAN RESOURCES AND TRAINING

SUPPORTING ACTIVITY

Human resources and training (transnational)

TASKS (TRAINEE)

* following a training course
* participating in groupwork
* making mini-presentations
* acting as rapporteur (written)
* acting as rapporteur (spoken)
* making notes

Other

(please fill in any other tasks connected with Human Resources and Training which occur regularly in your company)

OTHER LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS

If you are regularly involved in language functions which are not covered above, please note these in the space below, along with the language taks associated with them.

Examples of Other Language Functions:

* Legal
* Quality Control
* Production

FUNCTION:

Activity:

TASKS

Please make copies of this page if required

Foreign Language Documentation Checklist

MARKET RESEARCH FUNCTION

Reading

- trade journals
- advertisements
- own advertisements
- own advertisement drafts
- competitor brochures
- competitor prospectuses
- economics/business pages of newspapers and magazines
- research journals
- market research reports
- analysts' reports
- electronic data surveys
- letters
- questionnaire responses
- interview transcripts

Writing

- questionnaires
- interview questions
- interview framework
- enquiry letters
- enquiry faxes
- enquiry email
- commissioning letters: agents
- commissioning letters: advertising agents
- commissioning letters: distributors

SALES AND MARKETING FUNCTION

Reading

- agents' literature
- agents' letters
- distributors' literature
- distributors' letters
- own advertisements (FL)
- own sales brochures (FL)
- own sales prospectuses (FL)

- own presentation materials
- own display boards
- official (government literature)
- customers' enquiry letters
- customers' enquiry faxes
- customers' enquiry email

Writing

- letters to customer (technical)
- faxes to customer (technical)
- email to customer (technical)
- letters to customer (organisational)
- faxes to customer (organisational)
- email to customer (organisational)
- letters to customer (commercial)
- faxes to customer (commercial)
- email to customer (commercial)

SENIOR MANAGEMENT FUNCTION: NEGOTIATING

Reading

- letters from customer
- faxes from customer
- email from customer
- reports from customer
- technical statements from customer

Writing

- letters to customer (technical)
- faxes to customer (technical)
- email to customer (technical)
- letters to customer (organisational)
- faxes to customer (organisational)
- email to customer (organisational)
- letters to customer (commercial)
- faxes to customer (commercial)
- email to customer (commercial)

SENIOR MANAGEMENT FUNCTION: CONTRACT/AGREEMENT/COMMISSIONING STAGE

Reading

- agreement proposals
- agreement statements
- agreement summaries
- orders
- contracts

Writing

- agreement confirmations
- orders
- contracts

PRODUCT RESEARCH/DESIGN/DEVELOPMENT FUNCTION

Reading

- enquiry letters to customer
- enquiry faxes to customer
- enquiry email to customer
- enquiry letters to supplier
- enquiry faxes to supplier
- enquiry email to supplier
- technical research materials

Writing

- technical reports
- instructions for use
- workshop manuals

LOGISTICS AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONS

Reading (and checking)

- export documentation
- freight/transport documentation
- finance documentation
- banking documentation
- insurance documentation
- delivery notes
- correspondence with hauliers/freight forwarders/shippers

- correspondence with travel agents/airlines/car hire companies/railways
- correspondence with hotels

Writing

- export documentation forms
- freight documentation forms
- finance forms
- letters to hauliers/freight forwarders/shippers
- faxes to hauliers/freight forwarders/shippers
- email to hauliers/freight forwarders/shippers
- letters to banks/finance houses/insurance companies
- faxes to banks/finance houses/insurance companies
- email to banks/finance houses/insurance companies
- letters to hotels
- faxes to hotels
- email to hotels
- letters to airlines/foreign railway companies
- faxes to airlines/foreign railway companies
- email to airlines/foreign railway companies

Appendix 6
Audit Stage 4

(a) Foreign Language Proficiency Assessment Criteria

(b) Proficiency Testing Grid

(c) Proficiency Grade Descriptors

(d) Post Proficiency Grade Requirements Grid

(e) National Vocational Qualifications Language Standards Framework

Foreign Language Proficiency Assessment: The Criteria For Successful Communication

KEY CRITERION: Has the objective of the language/communicative task been achieved?

CRITERIA

* Was the information conveyed in the foreign language correctly understood?
* Was the information conveyed from the foreign language conveyed
    - without ambiguity?
    - accurately?
    - in context?
    - in an appropriate form?
* Was the information to be conveyed in the foreign language conveyed
    - without ambiguity?
    - accurately?
    - in context?
    - in an appropriate form?
* Did the respondent react as was intended/hoped for?
* Was the intended outcome achieved?

Proficiency Testing Grid

Language Profile of:
(Name)
Post/Function
Company
(Previous) language
learning experience/
Qualifications

FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMPONENTS OF JOB: [LANGUAGE]

Z0133003.gif

Proficiency Grading Tool: Proficiency Grade Descriptors

Production (spoken)

(A) Pronunciation

(B) Fluency

(C) Use of Structure

(D) Use of Vocabulary and Specialist Terminology (LSP)

Production (written)

(B) Fluency

(C) Use of Structure

(D) Use of Vocabulary and Specialist Terminology (LSP)

Reception (reading)

(E) Understanding of Structures

(F) Understanding Specialist Terminology

Reception (listening)

(E) Understanding of Structures

(F) Understanding Specialist Terminology

Intercultural communication

(G) Sociocultural Competency

Production (spoken).

(A)Pronunciation
(0) Unintelligible.
(1) Distortions, easily intelligible only to speakers used to dealing with foreigners. Intonation and phonetics based on L1.
(2) Generally intelligible but strongly influenced by L1.
(3) Accent still foreign but thoroughly intelligible.
(4) Intonation and phonetics closer to authentic pronunciation but with some evidence of another language (for speakers of several foreign languages this could be the second language).
(5) Authentic pronunciation, close to or identical with native speaker pronunciation.
(B)Fluency
(0) Halting. Conversation not possible.
(1) Slow, largely routine expressions.
(2) Hesitant but has strategies to cope. Keeps conversation going.
(3) Speaks with facility, though may rephrase or paraphrase to convey meaning. Evidence that the speaker is thinking in the target language.
(4) Fluent, no hesitations, natural speech.
(5) Fluency associated with the speech of an educated native speaker.

(C)Use of structures

(0) Knows no structure or morphology. Unintelligible.
(1) Errors in morphology and in structures but is able to convey straightforward meaning.
(2) Is able to manipulate basic structures and produce syntactically coherent text in limited discourse.
(3) Is familiar with, and handles well, basic structures; some errors in morphology may persist and may not use complex or less common structures or forms.
(4) Only occasional errors. Is able to manipulate the syntax to express meaning at a level of fairly sophisticated discourse.
(5) In full command of syntax and morphology. Has native or near-native control and can express a wide range of meaning in a variety of discourses.

(D)Use of vocabulary and specialist terminology (LSP)

(0) Insufficient to hold a simple conversation or compose an unambiguous message.
(1) Vocabulary limited to everyday level.
(2) Sufficient to cope with fairly simple family, personal topics, interests, travel and basic work areas.
(3) Is able to refer with some confidence to professional/technical sphere, has knowledge of basic terminology of function, enterprise, product or service (as well as personal sphere).
(4) Extensive basic range from personal to matters of public interest, and has a good grasp of specialist terminology associated with post, enterprise and products (or service).
(5) Native or near-native range of vocabulary plus full command of specialist terminology of post, enterprise and products (or service).

Production (written)

(B) Fluency
(0) Is unable to write simple sentences or short texts.
(1) Restriction of general vocabulary and of syntactical and grammatical knowledge can result in errors in written texts. Can write basic, everyday texts. May make errors.
(2) Wider general vocabulary and better grasp of grammar and syntax enable writer to convey meaning in simple business communications referring to such topics as travel/visiting arrangements/basic arrangements/basic orders/straightforward fax communications.
(3) Knowledge of grammar, syntax and general vocabulary sufficient for conveying gist of professional/technical communications. Is acquainted with terminology associated with post, enterprise and products or service.
(4) Can write professional and/or technical documents without error. Can handle the syntax of professional/technical discourse (and is well versed in specialist terminology . . . see also G)
(5) A specialist writer who can produce with ease and confidence research reports and other substantial and complex texts of that type.
(C) Use of structures
(0) Knows no structure or morphology. Unintelligible.
(1) Frequent errors in morphology and in structures but is able to convey straightforward meaning.
(2) Is able to manipulate basic structures and produce syntactically coherent written text in limited discourse.
(3) Is familiar with, and handles well, basic structures; some errors in morphology may persist and may not use complex or less common structures or forms.
(4) Only occasional errors. Is able to manipulate the syntax to express meaning at a level of fairly sophisticated written discourse.
(5) In full command of syntax and morphology. Has native or near-native control and can express a wide range of meaning in a variety of written discourses.

(D)Use of vocabulary and specialist terminology (LSP)
(0) Insufficient to compose an unambiguous message.
(1) Vocabulary limited to everyday level.
(2) Sufficient to cope with writing about fairly simple family, personal topics, interests, travel and basic work areas.
(3) Is able to write with some confidence in professional/technical sphere, has knowledge of basic terminology of function, enterprise, product or service (as well as personal sphere).
(4) Extensive basic range for writing about topics dealing with personal matters and matters of public interest, and has a good grasp of specialist terminology associated with post, enterprise and products or service.
(5) Native or near-native range of vocabulary plus full command of specialist terminology of post, enterprise and products or service.

Reception (reading)

(E)Understanding of structures
(0)Is unable to discern the meaning of simple sentences or short texts.
(1)Restriction of general vocabulary, and of syntactical and grammatical knowledge, results in serious misunderstanding of any professional level text. Can handle basic everyday texts.
(2)Wider general vocabulary and better grasp of grammar and syntax enable reader to discern meaning of simple business communications referring to such topics as travel/visiting arrangements/basic orders/straightforward fax communications.
(3)Knowledge of grammar, syntax and general vocabulary sufficient for grasping gist of professional/technical communications. (Is acquainted with terminology associated with post, enterprise and products or servicesee also F).
(4)Can read without misunderstanding professional and/or technical documents. Can handle the syntax of professional/technical discourse (and is well versed in specialist terminologysee also F).
(5)A specialist reader who can understand with ease and confidence research reports and other substantial and complex texts of that type.

(F)Understanding specialist terminology
(0)Insufficient to understand a simple, unambiguous message.
(1)Vocabulary limited to everyday level.
(2)Sufficient to cope with fairly simple family, personal topics, interests, travel and basic work areas.
(3)s able to understand, with some confidence, professional/technical sphere, has knowledge of basic terminology of function, enterprise, product or service (as well as personal sphere).
(4)Extensive basic range from personal matters to matters of public interest, and has a good grasp of specialist terminology associated with post, enterprise and products or service.
(5)Native or near-native range of vocabulary plus full command of specialist terminology of post, enterprise and products or service.

Reception (listening)

(E)Understanding of structures
(0)Is unable to discern meaning of simple utterances.
(1)Restriction of general vocabulary, and of syntactical and grammatical knowledge can result in misunderstanding of basic, everyday speech.
(2)Wider general vocabulary and better grasp of grammar and syntax enable listener to discern meaning of simple messages or statements referring to such topics as travel/visiting arrangements/basic orders/appointments information.
(3)Knowledge of grammar, syntax and general vocabulary sufficient for grasping professional/technical spoken communication. (Is acquainted with terminology associated with post, enterprise and products or servicesee also F).
4 Understands professional or technical-level speech. Can handle the syntax of professional/technical discourse (and is well versed in specialist terminologysee also F).
5. A specialist listener who can understand with ease and confidence specialist lectures and other substantial and complex speech of that type.

(F)Understanding specialist terminology
(0)Insufficient to understand a simple, unambiguous utterance.
(1)Vocabulary limited to understanding everyday level speech.
(2)Sufficient to cope with understanding speech on simple family and personal topics, interests, travel and basic work areas.
(3)Is able to understand, with some confidence, speech in the professional/technical sphere, has knowledge of basic terminology of function, enterprise, product or service (as well as personal sphere).
(4)Extensive understanding of speech on topics in a range from personal matters to matters of public interest, and has a good grasp of specialist terminology associated with post, enterprise and products or service.
(5)Native or near-native understanding of spoken range of vocabulary plus full command of specialist terminology of post, enterprise and products or service.

Intercultural communication

(G)Sociocultural competency
(0) No evidence of any awareness of sociocultural factors in communication.
(1) Awareness of basic modes of greeting but few other concessions. Rather closed horizon.
(2) Some evidence of attempt to adjust approach and discourse to target language/culture expectations, but lacks 'feel' or confidence. Tries to be open to interlocutor or to adapt message to cultural context of recipient, but may lack knowledge.
(3) Makes use of target language cultural references and linguistic behaviour patterns, though not always successfully, but shows evidence of trying to adapt to and understand cultural signals from partner. Does not offend in speech or written communication.
(4) Shows good awareness of cultural expectations in approach to conversation, discussion or written communication. Responds to signals, subtexts and body language in spoken discourse, and to subtext in written discourse. This level shows intercultural competence in personal and professional communication.
(5) Is thoroughly versed in the ways of expressing personal and professional meaning in the target language and culture. Is aware of uses of differing registers and can use them (together with non-verbal techniques in oral discourse) to advantage. Cultural competence close to that of native speaker.

Post Proficiency Grade Requirements Grid

Language Profile of:

(name)
(Post and Function)
(company)
(Previous language
learning experience/
qualifications

FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMPONENTS OF JOB: [LANGUAGE]

Z0141001.gif

National Vocational Qualifications Language Standards: The Framework

Level descriptors	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
	Deal with Predictable Everyday Tasks			
Level 1 Competence in a range of predictable simple language tasks.	L.1 Obtain information about predictable day-to-day activities by listening. L.1.1 Obtain specific details from simple everyday sources.	S.1 Deal orally with predictable day-to-day activities. S.1.1 Ask for and provide personal information. S.1.2 Ask for and provide information to meet day-to-day requirements. S.1.3 Ask for and provide everyday goods and services.	R.1 Obtain information about predictable day-to-day activities by reading. R.2 Obtain specific details from simple everyday texts.	W.1 Produce written information to deal with predictable day-to-day activities. W.1.1 Produce familiar information in standard formats.
	Deal with Varied Daily Activities			
Level 2 Competence in a range of language tasks performed in familiar work and social contexts. Some of these tasks are non-routine, and the individual is expected to use a limited range of language to meet the needs of differing but familiar situations and topics.	L.2 Obtain information about non-routine and daily activities by listening. L.2.1 Obtain general information from varied everyday sources. L.2.2 Obtain specific details from varied everyday sources.	S.2 Deal orally with varied daily activities. S.2.1 Establish and maintain social contact. S.2.2 Give and seek information to fulfil routine work requirements. S.2.3 Seek and respond to opinion on everyday matters. S.2.4 Deliver simple semi-structured presentations.	R.2 Obtain information about non-routine and daily activities by reading. R.2.1 Obtain information from simple texts. R.2.2 Obtain specific details from familiar written sources.	W.2 Produce written information to deal with routine and daily activities. W.2.1 Construct everyday texts using set phrases and structures. W.2.2 Produce notes and short messages to fulfil everyday requirements.

(table continued on next page)

(table continued from previous page)

Level descriptors	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
	Deal with Key Work Tasks			
Level 3 Competence in a broad range of factual, persuasive and expressive language tasks performed in a variety of contexts. Most language tasks require decision making to select appropriate language; and the individual is expected to be able to combine and recombine language elements to accomplish key work tasks.	L.3 Obtain information about key work tasks by listening. L.3.1 Obtain information, ideas and opinions from a variety of sources. L.3.2 Obtain specific details from a variety of sources.	S.3 Deal orally with key work tasks. S.3.1 Give and seek instructions and guidance to achieve key work tasks. S.3.2 Contribute to routine business discussions. S.3.3 Seek and respond to opinion on a variety of matters. S.3.4 Deliver prepared presentations.	R.3 Obtain information about key work tasks by reading. R.3.1 Obtain information, ideas and opinions from a variety of texts. R.3.2 Obtain specific details from written sources.	W.3 Produce written materials to deal with a variety of work tasks. W.3.1 Produce written texts to fulfil routine work requirements.
	Deal with Complex Work Tasks			
Level 4 Competence in a broad range of complex or technical language tasks, performed in a wide variety of contexts and with a substantial requirement to select and adapt appropriate language strategies. The individual is expected to make and respond to a wide range of spontaneous foreign language interventions and to inferior express implicit and multiple meaning for a wide variety of work and social purposes.	L.4 Obtain information about complex work tasks by listening. L.4.1 Obtain information, ideas and opinions from complex sources.	S.4 Deal orally with complex work tasks. S.4.1 Contribute to routine and non-routine business discussions. S.4.2 Give and seek complex information to achieve work tasks. S.4.3 Present and respond to complex lines of reasoning. S.4.4 Deliver unscripted presentations.	R.4 Obtain information about complex work tasks by reading. R.4.1 Obtain information, ideas and opinions from complex texts. R.4.2 Extract information from a number of sources.	W.4 Produce written materials to deal with complex tasks. W.4.1 Produce technical texts. W.4.2 Exchange complex correspondence. W.4.3 Convey information, ideas and opinions in written form.

(table continued on next page)

(table continued from previous page)

Level descriptors	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
	Deal with Highly Specialised Tasks			
Level 5 Competence in a broad range of complex and non-routine tasks across a wide and often unpredictable variety of contexts; and which involves the application of a significant range of language strategies selected from an extensive repertoire, which the individual continuously updates to meet changing requirements.	L.5 Obtain highly specialised information by listening. L.5.1 Obtain information, ideas and opinions from highly specialised sources.	S.5 Deal orally with highly specialised tasks. S.5.1 Give and seek information and advice to achieve highly specialised tasks. S.5.2 Contribute to complex business discussion. S.5.3 Present and debate argument on complex matters.	R.5 Obtain highly specialised information by reading. R.5.1 Obtain information, ideas and opinions from highly specialised sources. R.5.2 Extract information from diverse sources.	W.5 Produce written material to deal with highly specialised tasks. W5.1 Produce highly specialised texts. W.5.2 Exchange highly specialised and complex correspondence. W.5.3 Present and debate arguments on complex matters in written form. W.5.4 Produce texts intended for public consumption.

Works by the Authors on Auditing, Needs Analysis and Curriculum Design

Reeves, N. (1979) Creating a language training policy. *The Training Officer* 15, 294-7.

(1985) with D. Liston. *Business Studies, Languages and Overseas Trade: A Study of Education and Training* (pp. 109-24). London: Pitman and Institute of Export.

(1990) The foreign language needs of UK-based corporations. *Foreign Languages in the Workplace. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 511, 60-73.

(1992) Critical issues in achieving quality in language learning and teaching: The application of total quality management principles to curriculum planning and design. In N. Bird and J. Harris (eds) *Quilt and Quill. Achieving and Maintaining Quality in Language Teaching and Learning* (pp. 5-23). Hong Kong: Institute of Language in Education.

(1993) Assessing business language and cross-cultural training needs. *Crosscultural Training for Canadian Competitiveness* (pp. 32-4). Toronto: Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

(1994) (contributor) Euraudit. *Language Audits and Needs Analysis Symposium Proceedings Saarbrücken 1994* (pp. 78-88). Luxembourg: Bureau Lingua, European Commission.

(1995) Assessing corporate foreign language needs: Creating a language auditing toolkit adequate to meet international and cross-cultural needs. *The International Language in Education Conference Proceedings, Hong Kong, 1995*.

Wright, C. and Wright, S. (1994) Do languages really matter? The relationship between international business success and commitment to foreign language use. *Journal of Industrial Affairs* 3(1), 3-14.

Further Reading

Calori, R. and Lawrence, P. (1991) *The Business of Europe: Managing Change*. London: Sage.

Clifford, R.T. and Fischer, D.C. Jr.(1990) Foreign language needs in the US government. *Foreign Languages in the Workplace. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 511, 109-21.

Devinney, T. and Hightower, W. (eds) (1991) *European Markets after 1992*. New York: Lexington Books.

Embleton, D. and Hagen, S. (eds) (1992) *Languages in International Business*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Emmans, K., Hawkins, E. and Westoby, A. (1974) *Foreign Languages in Industry and Commerce*. University of York: Language Centre.

Fixman, C.S. (1990) The foreign language needs of US-based corporations. *Foreign Language in the Workplace. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 511, 25-46.

Foreign Languages for Overseas Trade (1979) *A Report by the British Overseas Trade Board Study Group on Foreign Languages*. British Overseas Trade Board.

Gibbs, P. (1992) *Doing Business in the EC*. London: Kogan Page.

Hagen, S. (ed.) (1988) *Languages in British Industry*. Newcastle and London: Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic Products/Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research.

Lee, E. (1977) Non-specialist use of foreign languages in industry and commerce. *Audio-visual Language Journal* 15/3, 223-31.

McLaughlin, G.(1994) Language audit: A new science analysedan overview of lingua-supported work in the field 1990-93. *Language Audits and Needs Analyses. Symposium Proceedings, Saarbrücken 1994* (pp. 23-7). Luxembourg: Bureau Lingua, European Commission.

Makridakis, S. *et al.* (1991) *Single Market EuropeOpportunities and Challenges for Business*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Pilbeam, A. (1979) The language audit. *Language Training*. 1/2,4-5.

Quelch, J., Buzzell, R. and Salama, E. (1991) *The Marketing Challenge of 1992*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Raasch, A. (1994) Foreign language audits. *Language Audits and Needs Analyses. Symposium Proceedings, Saarbrücken 1994* (pp. 29-34). Luxembourg: Bureau Lingua, European Commission.

Stevens, A. (1994) Lingua and the enhancement of language audit work. *Language Audits and Needs Analyses. Symposium Proceedings, Saarbrücken 1994* (pp. 17-22). Luxembourg: Bureau Lingua, European Commission.

Stuart, W. and Lee, E. (1972: 1985) *The Non-Specialist Use of Foreign Languages in Industry and Commerce*. Sidcup: London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Examinations Board.

Swift, J.S. (1991) Foreign language ability and international marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, 25/12.

Teemant, A., Varga, Z. and Heltai, P. (1983) *Hungary's Nationwide Needs Analysis of Vocationally-oriented Foreign Language Teaching*. Budapest: Ministry of Culture and Education/USIS.

Turnbull, P.W. and Cunningham, M.T. (1981) *International Marketing and Purchasing*. London: MacMillan.

Utley, D. (1992) The language audit. In D. Embleton and S. Hagen (eds) *Languages in International Business* (pp. 33-46). London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Van Hest, E. and Oud-de Glas, M. (1990) *A Survey of Techniques Used in the Diagnosis and Analysis of Foreign Language Needs in Industry*. Brussels: Lingua.

Williams, M. (1988) Language taught for meetings and language used in meetings: Is there anything in common? *Applied Linguistics*, 9, 145-58.