



Local Authority and FE college Adult language learning survey

Full statistical report - final results, May 2007

The following sections are included in this analysis of key results from the Adult language learning survey:

- Summary of key results
- Research design and methodology
- Overview of adult language learning provision in Local Authorities and FE colleges
- Frequency tables

Summary of key results

The adult language learning survey was carried out by CILT, the National Centre for Languages, in collaboration with the Association for Language Learning and NIACE. The survey took place from November 2006 to February 2007 and aimed to identify figures and trends in language provision and learner uptake in Adult Education in England. A questionnaire was sent out to all Local Education Authorities and FE colleges on the NIACE database for adult learning in England. The data is based on responses received from 49 out of 150 LAs and 140 out of 393 FE colleges. Full data tables are located on pages 5 –9.

- There were 34 different languages were on offer to adult learners in the responding LAs and FE colleges.
- For the academic year 2005/6, a total of 68,575 adult language learners were recorded by the 49 LAs and 140 FE colleges that were able to provide data on total learner numbers.^{1 2}
- For the academic year 2004/5, a total of 73,792 adult language learners were recorded by the 49 LAs and 140 FE colleges that were able to provide data on total learner numbers.³
- In 2005/6, over a third (36%) of all language learners were studying Spanish (25,023) and just under a quarter were learning French (16,252). This was followed by Italian (8,547). See *frequency tables 1 and 2 showing the number of institutions offering each language and number of learners*.
- Over half of all institutions perceived a decrease in total learner numbers in the current year 2006/7. Just under a quarter perceived an increase.
- The majority of institutions reported large proportions of learners studying at entry level and level 1.
- Oversubscribed courses were more problematic in LAs than in FE colleges with 42% of LAs reporting that they had too many learners for some classes compared to only a quarter of FE colleges. Spanish, French Italian and Arabic were reported as oversubscribed on the lower level courses.
- Very high proportions of FE colleges and LAs experienced under subscribed courses (86% and 72% respectively) and reported that they had had to cancel some language courses due to learner numbers being too low to form a viable group. This was reported across different languages and levels of study.

¹ The survey asked for learner numbers rather than enrolment numbers to minimise the potential for double counting of students enrolling in consecutive terms.

² The learner numbers are expected to be underestimates of the true totals as many institutions said that they could provide some but not all data. See data notes on page 6 for full data notes on learners numbers.

³ A comparatively high number of institutions had missing learner numbers for 2004/5 (than in 2005/6), hence comparing across the years is difficult. The 2004/5 figure is deflated.

- LAs offered a wider variety of modes of delivery for adult language learning. Almost all offered evening and daytime courses. Many offered short courses (70%) and about a third offered weekend classes (35%) and summer courses (30%). Almost all FE colleges offered evening sessions, about three quarters offered daytime classes and half did short courses. In-company classes were offered in just under a third of all FE colleges (31%).
- Non-accredited learning was more commonly offered in LAs (88%) than in FE colleges (60%). Of the most commonly offered accreditations GCSE/AS/A2 levels were offered on 60% of FE colleges and just under half (47%) of all LAs and OCN qualifications were provided in 46% of FE colleges and 37% of LAs.
- Most LEAs offered non-accredited language learning (93%). The most popular forms of accreditation were GCSE (offered by 59% of all LEAs), OCN (57%) and AS/A2 levels (40%). Some LEAs reported having high numbers of learners on non-accredited courses, however, this was not the case for all LEAs, for others the majority of their learners were studying towards a qualification.
- Average minimum class numbers required were around 9 in LAs and 11 in FE colleges. The range of responses varied.
- The data collected about student fees indicates a steady rise in minimum and maximum charges to the student for language classes from 2004-5 to 2006-7, with LA classes per hour generally slightly cheaper than the FE college equivalent.
- Some commonly perceived barriers to the provision of language learning were: finding good, experienced tutors; funding changes; and exam / accreditation resistance by the adult learners. Course re-structuring and advertising were some of the strategies institutions reported using to overcome the barriers.

Research design and methodology

Aim

The research aimed to establish trends in adult language learning (provision and uptake) in LA funded organisations and FE colleges across England.

Sample

The questionnaire was sent out to all 150 Local Authorities and 393 Further Education colleges in England. Residential colleges offering adult education were included in the FE colleges sample. The sample was obtained from NIACE, the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education and sent to the contact they held on their database for Adult Learning within each organisation.

Questionnaire content

The questionnaire first of all explored the type of adult education provision offered and ascertained whether the LA or FE college could provide language learning data. The core questions on language provision were:

- Languages provided and student enrolment figures for the last academic year (Sep 2003 to Aug 2004), with an indication of trends
- Overall view of learner levels
- Course uptake barriers
- Modes of delivery
- Accreditation and certification offered
- Details of minimum class numbers required and fee charges to the student
- Qualitative data was collected on perceptions of the main barriers to provision and solutions.

Fieldwork and Response

An advance letter and copy of the questionnaire was sent out to the 150 LAs and 396 FE colleges in November 2006, which was followed by a postal reminder in December and an email reminder at the beginning to mid January 2007. A total of 49 completed questionnaires were returned from LAs and 140 from FE colleges, yielding response rates of 33% and 36% respectively. All institutions that replied to the survey were offered a reduced rate membership to ALL should they wish to join.

Response varied by region and this is shown in the table below.

Table: Responses by region

| | Number of LAs responded | Total number of LEAs | % response | Number of FE colleges responded | Total number FE colleges | % response |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| North East | 7 | 12 | 58% | 6 | 21 | 29% |
| North West | 6 | 22 | 27% | 21 | 61 | 34% |
| Yorkshire & Humber | 3 | 15 | 20% | 20 | 42 | 48% |
| East Midlands | 4 | 9 | 44% | 8 | 27 | 30% |
| West Midlands | 4 | 14 | 29% | 22 | 52 | 42% |
| East | 2 | 10 | 20% | 11 | 36 | 31% |
| London | 11 | 32 | 34% | 16 | 53 | 30% |
| South East | 7 | 19 | 37% | 23 | 66 | 35% |
| South West | 4 | 16 | 25% | 13 | 35 | 37% |
| TOTAL ¹ | 49 | 150 | 33% | 140 | 393 | 36% |

1. One responding LA did not give name or contact details – region unknown.

Overview of provision for language learning in Local Authorities and FE colleges

Adult learning in Local Authorities in England

Based on 49 out of 150 LAs

- The majority of the responding Local Authorities described their adult learning as being directly delivered by the LA (a total of 33 out of 49, or 70%). 7 authorities (15%) reported contracting out all of their adult learning and a further 7 (15%) said they operated both direct and contracted out delivery.
- A range of educational institutions and organisations were involved in providing Local Authority adult learning and in many authorities more than 1 institution was drawn in. The most common partners were FE colleges, schools, and community/ voluntary groups reported in 20 (44%), 18 (40%) and 18 (40%) of the responding authorities respectively.
- 5 out of the 49 responding LAs reported they didn't have any adult language learning provision explaining that, for example, the LSC holds direct contracts with colleges or that they deliver some family learning programmes only in the area of AE.

Adult education and language learning provision in FE colleges in England

Based on 140 out of 396 FE colleges

- 86% of the responding FE colleges provide adult education courses (121 out of 140)
- 76% of the responding FE colleges provide language learning opportunities for adults (107 out of 140)
- Regarding FE college links with Local Authorities for language learning, about a quarter of all responding FE colleges reported having some contract work from their Local Authority to deliver language classes. Two thirds said they were not contracted at all by their LA for this.

Adult language learning survey frequency tables

Responses were received from 49 Local Authorities and 140 FE colleges. Five LAs and 33 FE colleges reported not providing any adult language learning. One LA and two FE colleges that did provide language learning could not provide any further information in the questionnaire.

Hence, the tables in this section are based on information given by the 43 Local Authorities and 105 FE colleges that provide language learning opportunities for adults.

Table 1: Languages offered in the responding LAs and FE colleges

All responding institutions, ordered by highest number of institutions offering language

| Language | LAs | % | FE colleges | % |
|--------------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Spanish | 41 | 95% | 100 | 95% |
| French | 40 | 93% | 96 | 91% |
| Italian | 37 | 86% | 92 | 88% |
| German | 35 | 81% | 75 | 71% |
| British Sign Lang. | 35 | 81% | 62 | 59% |
| Greek | 22 | 51% | 52 | 50% |
| Russian | 23 | 53% | 32 | 30% |
| Arabic | 22 | 51% | 32 | 30% |
| Chinese | 20 | 47% | 32 | 30% |
| Portuguese | 18 | 42% | 30 | 29% |
| Japanese | 19 | 44% | 27 | 26% |
| Turkish | 8 | 19% | 15 | 14% |
| Urdu | 11 | 26% | 11 | 10% |
| Dutch | 5 | 12% | 9 | 9% |
| Polish | 8 | 19% | 6 | 6% |
| Welsh | 3 | 7% | 6 | 6% |
| Panjabi | 5 | 12% | 3 | 3% |
| Gujerati | 2 | 5% | 4 | 4% |
| Swedish | 3 | 7% | 2 | 2% |
| Czech | 3 | 7% | 2 | 2% |
| Bengali | 1 | 2% | 2 | 2% |
| Other ¹ | 14 | 33% | 5 | 5% |
| TOTAL | 43 | 100% | 105 | 100% |

1. Includes only 1 or 2 institutions that reported offering Albanian, Catalan, Cornish, Danish, Farsi, Finnish, Hungarian, Lip reading, Makaton, Nepalese, Norwegian, Thai, Yiddish.

Data notes and warnings on the language learner student figures provided in Table 2 below

The learner numbers analysis is based on 41 LAs and 98 FE colleges. Two LAs and 7 FE colleges could not provide any figures on student numbers, hence are excluded from Table 2 only.

The data presented are minimum numbers and will be underestimates of the total number of language learners in these 41 LAs and 98 FE colleges. Please treat with caution and note the following:

- 18 out of 41 LAs said that they could provide **some but not all** data on their student numbers
- 48 out of 98 FE colleges said that they could provide **some but not all** data on their student numbers
- 1 LA and 2 FE colleges provided total student numbers only and are included in the totals only
- 1 LA and 11 FE colleges provided 2005/6 figures only (resulting in missing data for 2004/5)
- 2 FE colleges provided 2004/5 figures only (resulting in missing data for 2005/6)

Table 2: Language learner numbers in 2004-5 and 2005-6

NOTE: These numbers are based on survey responses from about a third of all LAs and FE colleges

| Language | LA learners 2004-5 | FE college learners 2004-5 | TOTAL learners 2004-5 | LA learners 2005-6 | FE college learners 2005/6 | TOTAL learners 2005-6 |
|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Spanish | 13397 | 13990 | 27387 | 11113 | 13910 | 25023 |
| French | 9757 | 9035 | 18792 | 7463 | 8789 | 16252 |
| Italian | 4456 | 4453 | 8909 | 3652 | 4895 | 8547 |
| BSL | 2944 | 2232 | 5176 | 2939 | 2550 | 5489 |
| German | 1453 | 1899 | 3352 | 1102 | 1969 | 3071 |
| Greek | 699 | 956 | 1655 | 630 | 923 | 1553 |
| Arabic | 633 | 318 | 951 | 608 | 421 | 1029 |
| Portuguese | 495 | 416 | 911 | 470 | 521 | 991 |
| Russian | 429 | 338 | 767 | 407 | 399 | 806 |
| Japanese | 349 | 362 | 711 | 340 | 433 | 773 |
| Chinese | 234 | 320 | 554 | 296 | 428 | 724 |
| Turkish | 191 | 162 | 353 | 164 | 267 | 431 |
| Urdu | 89 | 148 | 237 | 87 | 139 | 226 |
| Bengali | 249 | 34 | 283 | 120 | 24 | 144 |
| Welsh | 29 | 68 | 97 | 35 | 12 | 47 |
| Gujerati | 26 | 30 | 56 | 0 | 42 | 42 |
| Panjabi | 26 | 1 | 27 | 19 | 18 | 37 |
| Other languages | 548 | 468 | 1016 | 488 | 471 | 959 |
| TOTAL^{1 2} | 36279 | 37513 | 73792 | 30208 | 38367 | 68575 |

1. The total will not add up to the sum of column entries due to some institutions reporting a total but being unable to give figures by language
2. Caution for comparing across the years as 2004/5 figures will be underestimates. This is due to the number of FE colleges (11) that provided data for 2005/6 only (i.e. could not provide any figures for 2004/5)

Could learners be counted twice if an FE college is contracted by the LA to deliver languages and both have responded to the survey? Yes. However, we asked LAs whether the data they provided included any learners in FE colleges (to check duplication of the reported numbers). Only 9 out of the 43 responding LAs reported that their figures did include some adult learners from contracted FE colleges. From the college names provided, we could ascertain that only 2 questionnaires were potentially duplicating learner numbers in this way. The numbers in these 2 colleges totalled about 500, the data has not been altered in the table above.

Could there be any 16-19 learners included in the FE figures?

We asked FE colleges if the numbers they provided might include any 16-19 learners. Over half of the colleges said that yes, this was possible however, most responded that this would only be a very small number.

Table 3: Do you predict an overall increase or decrease in 19+ language learners for 2006-7?

All responding institutions

| Language | LAs | % | FE colleges | % |
|------------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Increase | 11 | 27% | 22 | 21% |
| No change | 7 | 17% | 24 | 23% |
| Decrease | 23 | 56% | 57 | 55% |
| TOTAL | 41 | 100% | 103 | 100% |

Table 4: Level of language learners: Mean percentage of learners reported at each level

Please note the high numbers of missing responses to this question, 15 LAs and 24 FE colleges did not respond.

All responding institutions

| | Mean percentage reported at each level - LAs | Mean percentage reported at each level – Fe colleges |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Entry level | 37% | 30% |
| Level 1 | 40% | 36% |
| Level 2 | 16% | 22% |
| Level 3 and above | 7% | 12% |
| TOTAL | 100% (n=28) | 100% (n=81) |

Note: We asked institutions to report the approximate percentage of learners at each level. The number of learners at each institution are not taken into account in the above table.

Table 5: Oversubscribed courses reported in LEAs by language and level

All responding institutions

| | LAs | % | FE colleges | % |
|--|-----------|-----|-------------|-----|
| Oversubscribed courses: | | | | |
| Yes, we have too many learners for some courses | 18 | 42% | 26 | 25% |
| Undersubscribed courses: | | | | |
| Yes, we have had to cancel some language courses | 31 | 72% | 90 | 86% |
| TOTAL Base | 43 | | 105 | |

- **Oversubscribed languages:** Spanish (22), French (12), Italian (11), Arabic (8)
- **Oversubscribed levels:** Entry or Level 1 (32)
- **Undersubscribed languages:** French (52), German (49), Italian (36), Russian (19), Chinese (18), Portuguese (14), Arabic (12)
- **Undersubscribed levels:** Entry or Level 1 (91), Level 2 (49), Level 3 (39), Level 4+ (11)

The most common languages and levels are reported are given above. The figure in brackets denotes the total number of institutions (LAs and FE colleges) highlighting this language as over or undersubscribed. View this figure alongside Table 1: Number of institutions offering each language.

Table 6: Modes of delivery for language courses*All responding institutions*

| Mode | LAs | % | FE colleges | % |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Evening/ Twilight | 41 | 95% | 103 | 98% |
| Daytime | 40 | 93% | 77 | 73% |
| Short courses | 30 | 70% | 53 | 50% |
| In-company classes | 10 | 23% | 33 | 31% |
| Weekend | 15 | 35% | 23 | 22% |
| Summer courses | 13 | 30% | 18 | 17% |
| Open, distance or flexible | 3 | 7% | 8 | 8% |
| Blended learning ¹ | 3 | 7% | 2 | 2% |
| Other ² | 7 | 16% | 8 | 8% |
| | | | | |
| TOTAL³ | 43 | 100% | 105 | 100% |

1. Combined on-line and face to face learning

2. Other responses given included family learning, taster sessions.

3. Percentages will not add up to 100% as more than one response could be coded.

Table 7: Accreditation for language courses*All responding institutions*

| Mode | LAs | % | FE colleges | % |
|---|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Non-accredited courses | 38 | 88% | 63 | 60% |
| GCSE, AS/ A2 level | 20 | 47% | 63 | 60% |
| OCN / NOCN awards | 16 | 37% | 48 | 46% |
| CACDP | 23 | 53% | 26 | 25% |
| Internal certifications | 6 | 14% | 18 | 17% |
| ABC awards | 5 | 12% | 16 | 15% |
| OCR Asset Languages | 5 | 12% | 12 | 11% |
| OCR CBLC | 2 | 5% | 9 | 9% |
| NVQ language units | 0 | 0% | 4 | 4% |
| IoL Accreditation | 2 | 5% | 1 | 1% |
| Other external qualification ¹ | 4 | 9% | 8 | 8% |
| | | | | |
| TOTAL² | 43 | 100% | 105 | 100% |

1. 5 institutions reported offering the NCFE qualification which is about to be discontinued.

2. Percentages will not add up to 100% as more than one response could be coded

Table 8: Proportion of students on non-accredited (or internally certified) courses*All responding institutions*

| | LAs | % | FE colleges | % |
|--------------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| None – not offered | 5 | 12% | 33 | 34% |
| Low 0-25% | 6 | 14% | 27 | 28% |
| 25-50% | 8 | 19% | 5 | 5% |
| 50-75% | 3 | 7% | 13 | 13% |
| High 75-100% | 20 | 48% | 19 | 20% |
| TOTAL | 42 | 100% | 97 | 100% |

Table 9: Average minimum class numbers required for languages

| | LA average | Range of responses given | n | FE college average | Range of responses given | n |
|---------------|------------|--------------------------|----|--------------------|--------------------------|----|
| 2006-7 | 9.0 | 4 – 14 | 37 | 11.4 | 5 - 24 | 95 |
| 2005-6 | 9.3 | 5 – 12 | 33 | 10.9 | 5 – 18 | 91 |
| 2004-5 | 9.2 | 5 - 14 | 30 | 10.6 | 5 - 16 | 79 |

Table 10: Charge per hour to the student: Minimum, maximum and average reported ranges for minimum and maximum costs, 2004-5 to 2006-7

Please note the high numbers of missing responses to these questions, the bases (n) are given alongside each year.

| | Response range for min LA costs | LA average min and max cost per hour | Response range for max LA costs | n LA | Response range for min FE costs | FE college average min and max cost per hour | Response range for max FE costs | n FE |
|---------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|------|
| 2006-7 | £0.00-£4.50 | £1.53 - £3.21 | £1.75-£7.80 | 32 | £0.00-£8.00 | £2.77 - £3.93 | £1.50-£16.00 | 66 |
| 2005-6 | £0.00-£4.20 | £1.34 - £2.49 | £1.25-£4.60 | 26 | £0.00-£7.00 | £2.15 - £2.83 | £1.00-£7.50 | 54 |
| 2004-5 | £0.00-£4.00 | £1.19 - £2.09 | £0.90-£4.20 | 24 | £0.00-£7.00 | £2.01 - £2.65 | £1.00-£7.50 | 40 |

Barriers to adult language learning provision and solutions

The questionnaire ended with some open questions asking tutors about perceived barriers to the provision of language learning and strategies used by the college/ institution to overcome these barriers.

Some common barriers reported were: finding good, experienced tutors; funding changes; and exam / accreditation resistance by the adult learners.

Course re-structuring and advertising were some of the strategies colleges used to overcome the barriers amongst others. *See the qualitative open answer files for full answers to these questions.*