



# Global Skills & Employer perspectives

WARWICK  
APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Helen Spencer-Oatey

December 2017

# Outline

1. Introduction: the viewpoint of a leadership coach
2. Three key reports on what employers are looking for in graduates & on skills shortages
3. Findings on how to explain skills in terms employers appreciate

# Introduction

Comments from  
**Kevin Murray**

Leadership coach, consultant & author

- *The Language of Leaders*
- *Communicate to Inspire*

Both books finalists in the  
Chartered Management Institute's  
Management Book of the Year Awards.

# Introduction

“Leaders who cannot communicate well ... can create organizations which are toxic to work in, filled with turmoil and conflict, going nowhere, achieving little.” (p.2)

“You need to be a better communicator if you want to lead.” (p.7)

Murray, Kevin (2012) *The Language of Leaders*.  
London: Kogan Page.



# Introduction

“Successful leaders know that relationships are the engines of success.” (p.99)

Murray, Kevin (2012) *The Language of Leaders*.  
London: Kogan Page.

# Introduction

**International business requires a combination of:**

- Effective communication;
- Effective relational management;
- Effective handling of cultural factors.

➤ *What is the evidence for this?*



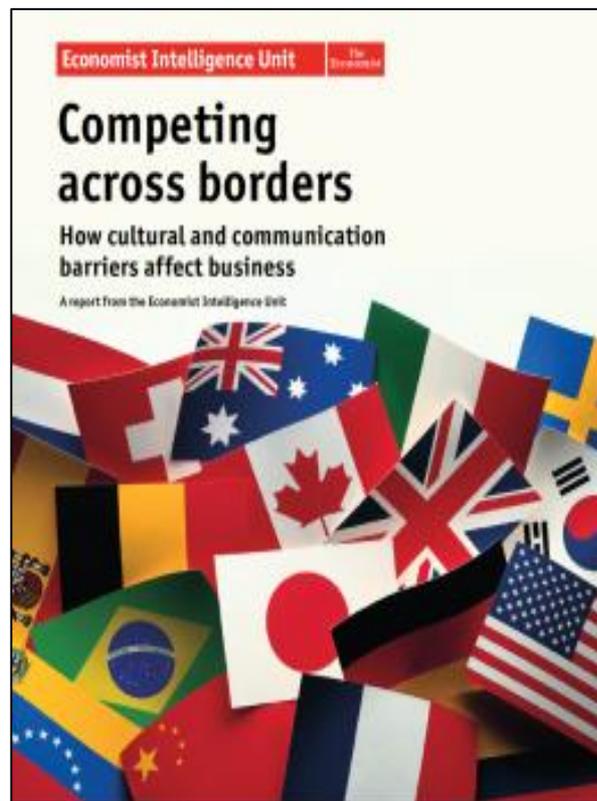
WARWICK

APPLIED LINGUISTICS

# 3 Key Reports



# 1. Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Report: Competing across Borders





# **EIU *Competing across Borders* Report**

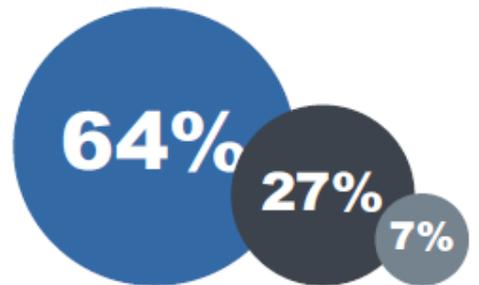
- Survey completed by 572 executives from companies with either an international presence or plans for international expansion;
- In-depth interviews with 8 independent experts/executives from around the world.

# Key findings

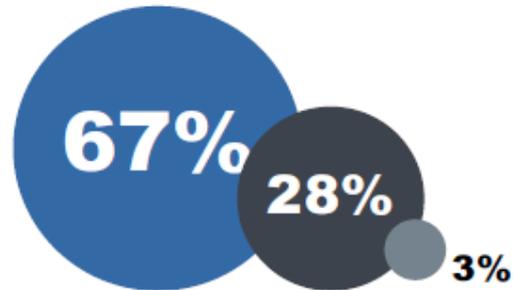
Chart 5

**Q** Please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:  
(% respondents)

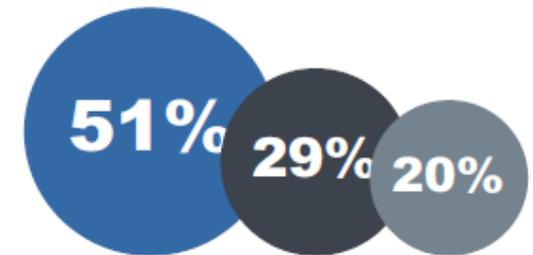
● Strongly agree/agree   ● Neutral   ● Disagree/strongly disagree



Better cross-border collaboration has been a critical factor in the improvement of our organisation's performance in the past three years



The multicultural nature of cross-border teams breeds innovation



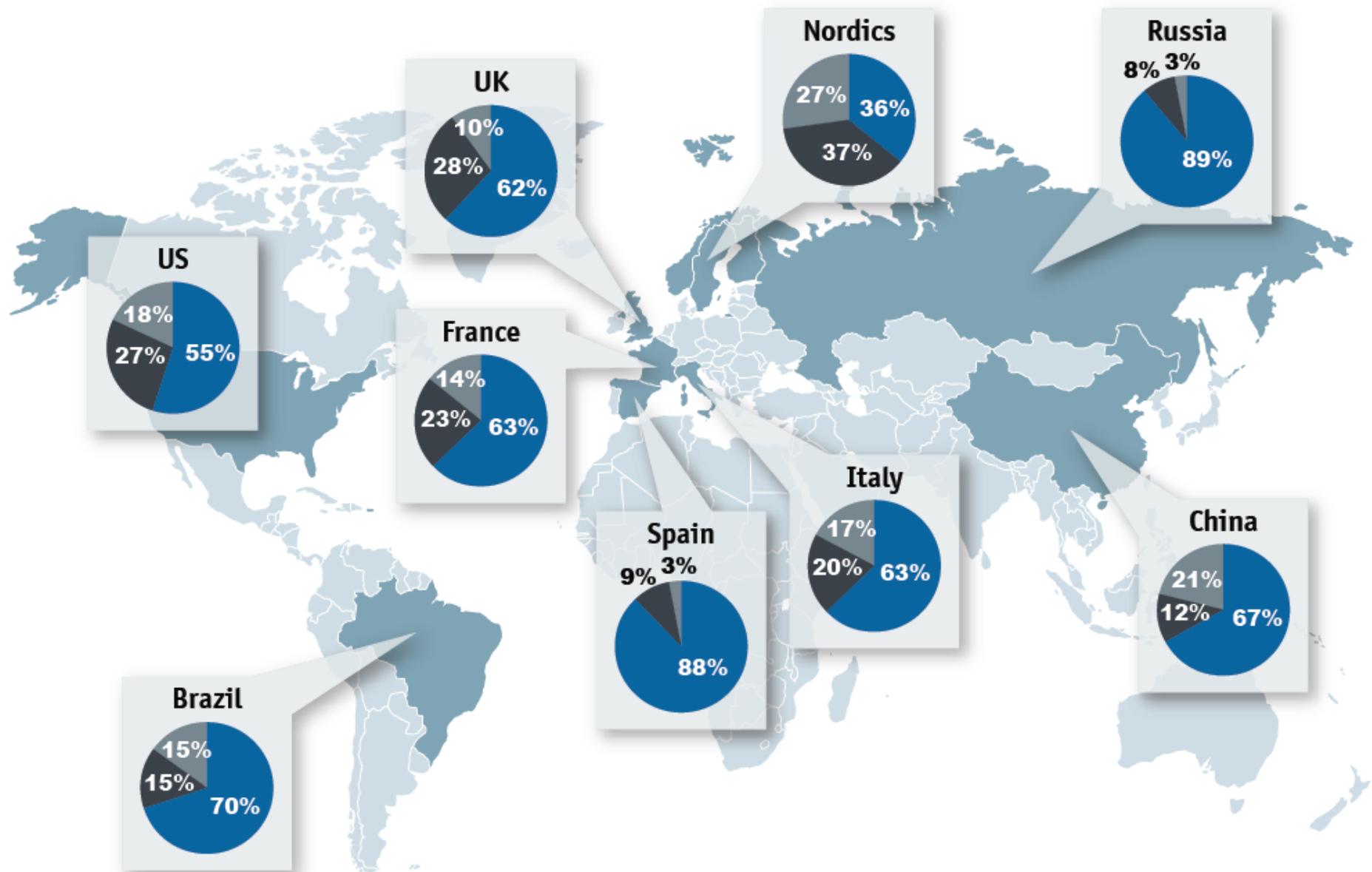
Cultural and linguistic diversity can make it difficult to collaborate internally across borders and with our external partners

Chart 12



How do cultural factors or differences such as language and local customs affect your company's plans for international expansion?

● Hampers a lot/somewhat   ● Does not affect at all   ● Helps our plans for international expansion



# Key EIU report findings

1. The recent economic downturn has been spurring companies into becoming more international;
2. Effective cross-border communication and collaboration are becoming critical to the financial success of companies with international aspirations;
3. Most companies understand the cost of not improving the cross-border communication skills of their employees, yet many are not doing enough to address the challenge.

# Key EIU report findings

4. Misunderstandings rooted in cultural differences present the greatest obstacle to productive cross-border collaboration;
5. Organisations with international ambitions increasingly expect prospective employees to be fluent in key foreign languages.





# ***Global Graduates*** report

- 12 leading employers collectively representing 3,500+ graduate recruits
- Ranked a list of global competencies.

# ***Global Graduates*** report

## **Top 5 qualities:**

1. An **ability to work collaboratively** with teams of **people from a range of backgrounds** and countries [8.2]
2. **Excellent communication skills**: both speaking and listening [7.5]
3. An ability to **negotiate** and influence **clients** across the globe **from different cultures** [4.0]
4. An ability to form professional, global networks [3.9]
5. An **openness** to and respect for a range of perspectives from around the world [3.6]

# Global Graduate word cloud



Global Graduate report, 2011 (agr, CIHE, CFE)

[based on interviews with 12 leading employers collectively representing 3,500+ graduate recruits]

# Summary so far:

- Key skills often mentioned are
  - Multicultural team working
  - Effective communication across culture and languages  
i.e. Complex mix of skills associated with language, culture and relations.
- Many organisations want to recruit graduates with ‘global skills’.
- *Yet are employers able to recruit such graduates?*

### 3. CBI/Pearson Education & Skills Survey 2017: Helping the UK thrive



# CBI/Pearson Skills survey

- Survey was conducted February to April 2017
- Responses received from more than 340 organisations
- Participants ranged in size from firms with fewer than 50 employees to those with more than 5,000; SMEs accounted for nearly a third of respondents (30%)
- Respondents were drawn from all sectors of the economy, ranging from manufacturing (14%) and education (14%) to professional services (11%) and construction (10%)
- There were responses from all parts of the UK, with almost half of participants (47%) having at least some employees in Northern Ireland, Scotland and/or Wales.

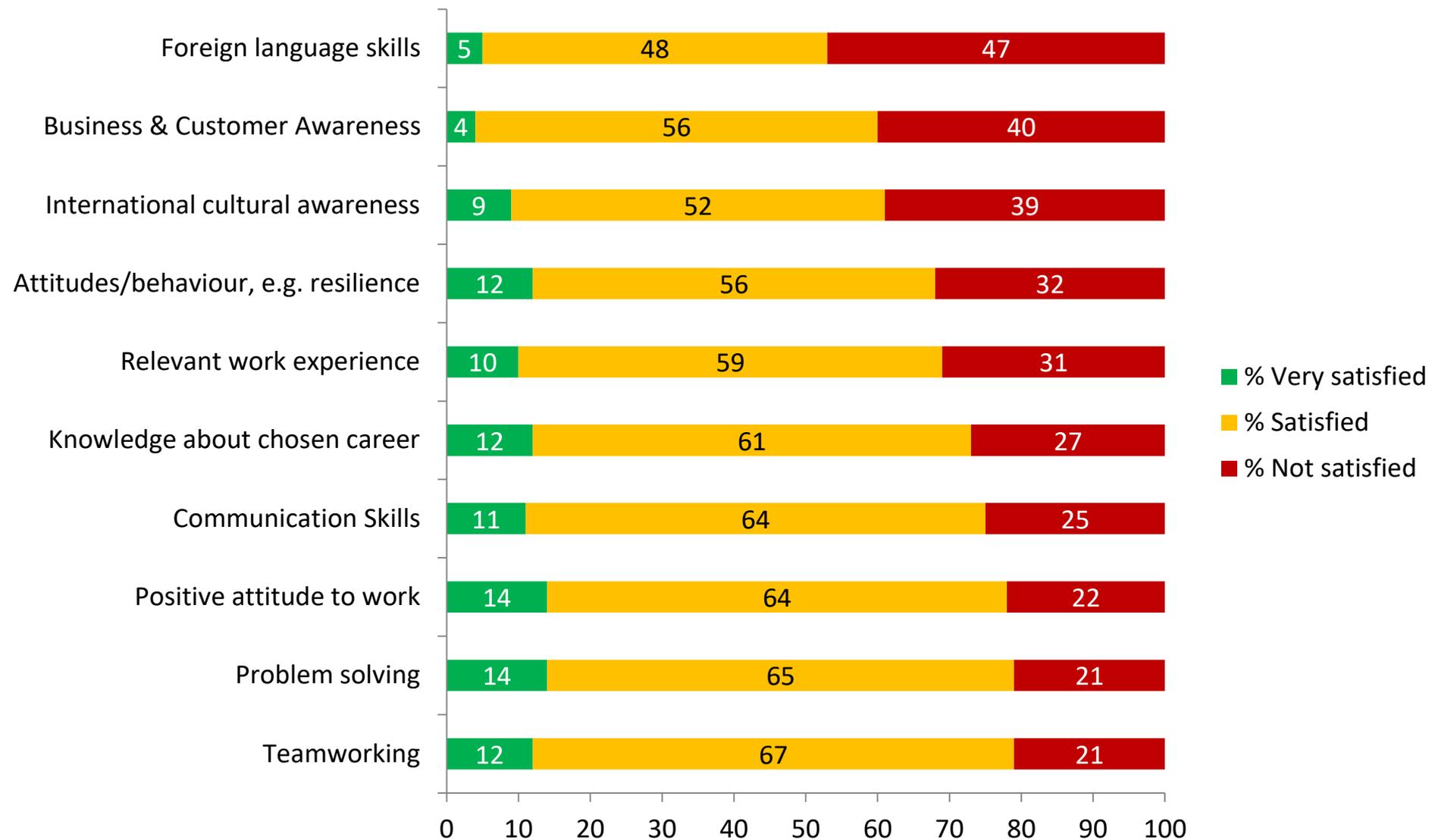
# CBI/Pearson Skills survey: Employers' main focus

- Employers' main focus: the attitudes and aptitudes that will enable graduates to be effective in the workplace.
- Cited as among the three most important factors by 90% and for more than half it ranks as the single most important factor (55%)

# CBI/Pearson Skills survey: key skills weaknesses

Key areas where graduate job seekers are seen as having weaknesses:

- Foreign language skills (with 47% reporting dissatisfaction);
- Business and customer awareness (with 40% reporting dissatisfaction);
- International cultural awareness (with 39% reporting dissatisfaction);
- Graduates' attitudes and behaviours of self-management and resilience (with 32% reporting dissatisfaction).



## CBI/Pearson Education & Skills Survey 2017

# Demonstrating 'Global graduates' qualities to potential employers

# The need for preparation

“It is simply not enough to seek an international experience—the experience itself has little value for an employer. The savvy job seeker must be able to speak about this experience in terms of the transferable skills that he or she developed while abroad and how they can be applied to the workplace. For many students, this can be an enormous challenge.”

[Matherly](#), n.d. p.9

# What you need to demonstrate

- Ability to creatively solve problems by applying familiar concepts to unfamiliar situations;
- Skills to contribute effectively to an ethnically diverse team;
- Self-confidence, yet ability to listen and learn from people whose value systems are different;
- Willingness to take personal risks and act independently;
- Flexibility and adaptability to rapidly changing situations;
- Basic command of the local language, and ability to use it in practical situations;
- Ability to imagine, forecast, analyze or address business situations from a different cultural frame of reference.

[Matherly](#), n.d. p.10

# Questions to ask yourself

1. What am I trying to communicate to a potential employer about my international experience? About its relationship to my academic major?
2. What skills did I learn abroad? What cross-cultural competencies did I develop?
3. How much detail do I need to provide on my resume to ensure that this experience has meaning to a potential employer?
4. Where should I include this experience on my resume so that it will have the most impact and support what I am trying to communicate?

Matherly, n.d. p.10

# Preparing for an interview

Think through the following:

1. What key competencies is the employer seeking for this position?
2. Aside from technical skills, what are the other interpersonal qualities the company desires? An ability to work in teams? Flexibility? Creative problem solving?
3. What are the two or three best stories from my time abroad that will illustrate that I have these qualities? Can I tell this story in a compelling manner? How will I relate this experience to the job for which I am applying?

[Matherly](#), n.d. p.10

# Want to learn more?

Here are some follow-up ideas:

- Take our [Stage 3 workshop](#)
- Look at other people's suggestions:
  - [Study abroad.com](#)
  - [The ambitious bee](#)
  - [San Diego State University](#) careers advice
  - [Times Higher Education](#) article