

# Good language skills give firms the exporting edge

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Talking could make or break businesses

On-the-ball companies need to take advantage of a fair wind to avoid missing a 'staggering' export opportunity, according to a West Midlands business linguistics business.

The weak Sterling against the Euro has made British prices competitive: but more businesses need to use the bridge of language to make the most of these opportunities, warns Sue Clarke, of PromoLingua, a Warwick-based language consultancy.

One in five Midlands exporting businesses admit they have lost business contracts abroad because of difficulties with language, according to figures recently released by the National Centre for Languages.

But small and medium-sized firms are waking up to the value of using linguists to give them better prices, deliveries and profits.

Multilingual Sue, who speaks five languages, founded PromoLingua, [www.promolingua.com](http://www.promolingua.com), which promotes language skills in business, and places multilingual professionals into the Midlands. It supplies linguists from Spanish to Mandarin.

The Warwick-based language consultancy also offers a translation service for businesses communicating in leaflets, websites, business reports, letters, legal documents and business reports.

She is keen to help because broadening their business base could help companies survive the credit crunch.

She said: "It is worrying that 20 per cent of companies in the Midlands have lost orders because of export contracts not using the right language skills.

"Solving this problem could make the difference to companies' survival. It's clear that there are financial benefits and sales opportunities that can be created abroad, so companies are screaming out for language skills."

Sue worked for years using her language skills to benefit businesses, including the national Richard Austin (Alloys) at their Coventry base, before launching her language consultancy.

Tim Kelly, director at Richard Austin (Alloys) said: "Use of language skills cut the chains holding back our business, by freeing up our position on suppliers.

"Locating different suppliers meant we enjoyed better costs and a wider availability of materials, which lifted and improved our business."

Sue said: "I helped to build relationships so that we had four suppliers rather than one, bring better

prices and deliveries.

"People in business are also encouraging schools to promote the learning of languages. Using these skills in business is increasingly a benefit."

A recent British Chambers of Commerce survey found that 80 per cent of English exporters could not competently conduct business dealings overseas in even one foreign language.

The National Centre for Languages recently ranked Britain 27th out of 28 European countries in foreign language skills, and chambers of commerce here have welcomed moves to provide more language study in primary schools, break down cultural barriers, and develop vocational business language courses.

For further information about the language services on offer please contact us on 01926 402934 or email us: [enquiries@promolingua.com](mailto:enquiries@promolingua.com).