Learning Technologies

EUROCALL 2002

The annual conference of the European Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning - EUROCALL – was held this year at the University of Jyvaskala, Finland.

The theme of the conference was: **Networked language learning a link missing?** with keynote speeches from:

- Prof. Leo van Lier (Monterey Institute of International Studies) **Challenges and Opportunities in CALL: A systems view**
- Dr. Kaisa Kautto-Koivula (Senior Manager, Nokia Ventures Organisation) **Future Learning Environments: Opportunities and Challenges**
- Prof. Uschi Felix (Monash University) **Teaching languages online - Deconstructing the myths**
- Dr. Gilly Salmon (Open University Business School) **Future Learning Encounters**

Selected papers from the conference will be published in the ReCALL journal and there is currently a call for papers for next year's conference which will take place at the University of Limerick, with a theme of **New Literacies in Language Teaching and Learning**. See the EUROCALL website for details: **www.eurocall.org**

Here the Subject Centre offers some selected highlights from the conference.

Mobile language learning, small-format language learning: reality and possibilities.
Sharon Scinicariello & Jared Bendis, Case Western Reserve University, USA
http://vr.cwru.edu/finland/finland.html

This presentation discussed the actual and potential uses for devices such as mobile phones, pagers, PDAs, MP3 players, tablet PCs with handwriting recognition, even watches and other wearable devices, in language learning.

Although limited in terms of processing power, screen size, input, storage, and connectivity, the advantages of using such devices include the fact that they are cheaper than laptops and PCs. They are also already used by many students (for leisure), and they are portable and personal – students can download only what is of interest or use to them, they provide opportunities for short, frequent language learning activities.

For example video clips with associated tasks, e-books, and many language learning applications can be downloaded via a PC and then the student can take that application with them to practice any time anywhere.

DIALANG Beta version now available

DIALANG is a European (SOCRATES LINGUA Action D) project and provides online diagnostic language testing in 14 European languages based on the Council of Europe 6-level scale from A1 to C2.

Now available in a beta version the program can be downloaded from the DIALANG website at www.dialang.org

Colleagues are encouraged to try out the system which offers Listening, Writing, Reading, Structures and Vocabulary tests which are currently available for Dutch, English, Finnish and Spanish, but other languages will be added in the future. Instructions, Help, Feedback and Advice are available in all 14 languages.

Virtual Mini Labs

Jörg Waltje, Director of the Language Resource Center and Assistant Professor of Modern Languages at Ohio University.
The Language Resource Center at Ohio University has begun to experiment with **Virtual Mini-Labs**. These portable carts containing wireless laptops enable the facilities normally only available in the language lab to be rolled out to rooms designated at certain times for certain languages. The cart is expandable separable and versatile: as much or as little can be added depending on the needs of the user; there are no wiring costs; and because the laptops are wireless they can be used away from the cart itself in other rooms on the same floor.

Native speaking teaching assistants are available to tutor students who are working on a variety of assignments within a room designated as, for example, the "Spanish Lab" on certain afternoons. One-to-one instruction can be offered and students can use the equipment outside of normal teaching hours in a self-access environment. Language learning is thus personalised and differing learning styles can be catered for.

Waltje claims that "students immensely benefit from more one-on-one tutoring, more opportunities for communication with an instructor and with other students, and more interactive multimedia exercises to reinforce grammatical forms and vocabulary."

Subject Centre Calendar

October 2002	December 2002
Workshop: Interactive Whiteboards for Language Teaching 09/10/02 University of Hull	Resources Infomation Day: teaching languages through virtual learning environments 04/12/02 CILT
Workshop: Curriculum 2000 its impact on admissions policies and the HE curriculum 11/10/02 Open University, London	Workshop: Personal Development Planning 05/12/02 British Council, London
November 2002	Seminar: Issues in Postgraduate Training for Linguistics 06/12/02 CILT
Seminar: Teaching Welsh 01/11/02 CILT Cymru , Cardiff	Meeting: Area Studies Network 11/12/02 CILT
Workshop: LWULT (Less Widely Used Less Taught) Languages 01/11/02 CILT	Workshop: Computer-based Assessment Date and location to be confirmed
Information Day: Postgraduate Languages & Linguistics 26/11/02 CILT	

Supporting you more closely

As the new academic year begins, the Subject Centre is more aware than ever of the rich diversity of our subject areas. You will find some of this reflected in our website, which has now been redesigned to incorporate our new Good Practice Guide and Materials Bank. These new resources have been developed with the help of a large number of colleagues throughout the UK. They incorporate a great deal of academic expertise and reflection, and we hope you will find much of close relevance to your own particular area of work.

One of the lessons we have learned is that the logic of subject-specific support is extremely powerful. We believe there is no more effective way of helping you to develop learning and teaching, than by tailoring support to the specific subject in which you are working. This was the big idea behind LTSN and its 24 subject centres, and we have carried it on to address our three main subject areas of languages, linguistics and area studies. But it now needs to be pushed even further.

Our aspiration is to work even more closely with subject specialists, and this year we are taking up the challenge of a still more fine grained approach. We want to tailor our support increasingly in a more tightly focused way. For example, a successful grant application to develop

greater support in area studies will enable us this year to develop co-operation with a group of cognate subject centres. The result, we hope, will be to address specific component disciplines within area studies, such as geography, politics, or cultural studies. It may also enable us to give support to the study of particular areas or countries. Or again, our planned workshop on (and in) Welsh breaks new ground for us in working on learning and teaching particular languages.

If we are to develop further in this direction, we shall need to call on even closer co-operation with the subject associations that serve particular disciplinary areas. We need their expert knowledge of the specific needs of their subject area, and their networks of communication with colleagues working in it.

I should like to conclude, then, by issuing an invitation to colleagues active in associations. Please take the opportunity to consider whether a joint activity between your association and the Subject Centre would bring benefit to teaching and learning in your academic community. Put it on the agenda for your next Executive committee meeting or AGM. Contact us to develop ideas for what we might do together. You know where to find us.

New Subject Centre website

Launched on 27th September at the Subject Centre's Open Day, our website is not only sporting a new look, but features a new (database-driven) infrastructure that will allow easier searching and better access to the wealth of resources offered on the site. These resources now include the Guide to Good Practice in Teaching and Learning and the Materials Bank which are the products of two year-long LTSN funded projects. The aims of the projects were to provide a collection of articles on

teaching and learning authored by key practitioners in the fields of languages, linguistics and area studies (the Guide) and a repository for the sharing of teaching materials developed by colleagues in these subject areas (the Materials Bank). Contributors to the Guide include: Paul Meara, Graham Davies, Keith Marshall, Isabelle Perez, Ron Carter, Peter Skehan, Florence Myles and Dick Hudson. Examples of the materials donated to the materials bank are:

- *Phonetics For Students Of Modern Languages*, Dr Rodney Ball, University of Southampton

- *Question banks and tests for French/German/Spanish*, Valerie Boyle, Loughborough University

- Contemporary *Spanish Language and Culture website*, Gladis Garcia-Soza, University of Essex

- *English for Academic Purposes Online Resource*, Karl Bernhardt, University of Buckingham
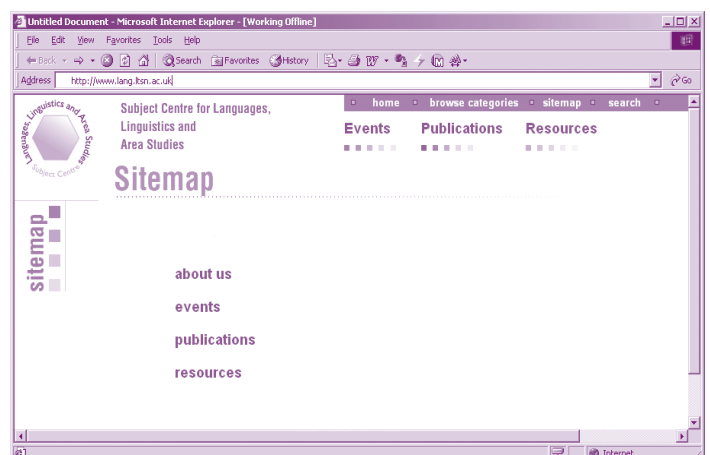
Contact Details: The Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton SO17 1BJ **Tel:** 023 8059 4814 **Fax:** 023 8059 4815 **Email:** llas@soton.ac.uk

Subject Centre Conference 2002

Setting the agenda: languages, linguistics and area studies in higher education, 24-26 June, Manchester Conference Centre.

The Subject Centre stand at the Conference Exhibition

In the autumn a large number of the papers presented will be published on the Subject Centre and CILT websites and a book with the theme 'policy and organisation' will appear in summer 2003, published by CILT. This report will focus on the plenary sessions.

The conference opened with an inspiring plenary address from David Crystal (Honorary Professor of Linguistics, University of Wales, Bangor) looking at the recent linguistic revolution. Most of us are convinced of the need to persuade people of the value of learning languages - Crystal emphasised a real need to go further than this by aiming to capture people's emotions through the arts ensuring that cultural events to support languages are accessible to all members of society.

Uschi Felix (University of Monash) explored the myths about teaching languages on-line - cheaper more effective - saves time. Not true! What is needed is a close look at what we can do and develop its use effectively. This involves investment of money and time but there are real gains to be had such as interaction at a distance which can often be more meaningful. To save time on resource development, we should all reciprocate in sharing resources.

Wolfgang Mackiewicz (European Language Council) provided a European perspective on the development of language policy, emphasising the role of universities in developing their own explicit policies, and the deep commitment of the EU to a multilingual future.

Josef Huber (European Centre for Modern Languages) looked forward to much greater UK involvement in the work of the ECML.

David Robey (Chair of the Collabroration Programme Steering Committee) outlined the scope of the UCML collaboration projects and their importance in exploring models of working together to provide ways of achieving a better experience for our students.

Teresa Tinsley (CILT) looked at the achievements of EYL (European Year of Languages) which celebrated a vast range of languages including community and heritage languages and brought people from all sectors together. Experiences of EYL, particularly in raising the profile of languages in the press, give us a good basis for the work that now needs to be done to inspire people to learn languages and experience other cultures.

Vanessa Davies (Foreign Commonwealth Office Language Group) challenged linguists in HE to address national needs in languages, especially in a wider range of languages, and invited them to enter into partnership with the Foreign Commonwealth Office Language Group.

Closing plenary; the future of languages
Lid King (Director, CILT) looked forward to the National Languages Strategy to be announced in the Autumn and likely to focus on early language learning, and on the needs of business. There will be a need to define 'entitlement' otherwise the gains made by the national curriculum in extending languages to all could be lost.

Hilary Footitt (Chair, UCML) started by saying that the UK sees citizenship and education inextricably linked to employment and economic factors. As linguists, we can engage with the economic agenda (by providing joint degrees, work placements, entrepreneurial type preparation) or we can subvert it. The inclusion agenda is also of key importance. It would be instructive to undertake a class or postcode mapping of the take-up of languages, along the lines of that done for health service provision.

Left to right: Mike Kelly, Uschi Felix, David Crystal, Philippe Delcloque

Terry Lamb (President of the Association for Language Learning) talked of the growing significance of community languages which could be offered as part of degree courses and IWLPs, helping to attract under-represented groups. We need to offer qualifications, recognise the importance of these languages and change attitudes towards bilingualism - something which would also support the learning of European languages.

Mike Kelly (Director, Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies) spoke of the need to reinvent ourselves, for curriculum innovation and to look beyond the UK at the global market.

Conclusions

Declining student numbers, the importance of promoting the value of languages and intercultural understanding to school children and taking forward the widening participation agenda all point strongly towards a need to promote languages and offer increasingly innovative programmes spanning a wide range of languages. We also need to develop better marketing strategies and evaluate what we are offering and to whom it is being offered. Over the three days we saw examples of promotional strategies, new models of collaboration and innovation in teaching and learning which suggest that we have much to build on.

Forthcoming events: October - December 2002

Curriculum 2000 - Its impact on admissions policies and the HE curriculum

11 October, Open University, London

The first cohort of Curriculum 2000 students are entering higher education this year and it seems that universities are still not clear on how to react to changes brought on by the new curriculum. Instead of taking advantage of a broadened curriculum, we risk sending out mixed messages to colleagues in schools and colleges. As one respondent points out in a joint QCA/UCAS survey of the impact of Curriculum 2000 (www.ucas.co.uk/candq/curr2000/survey/index.html) *informal* advice from HE institutions does not match the *formal* or official stance - students are regularly told to 'just get 3 A2s' at open days. For a QCA evaluation report (February 2002) of the first year of Curriculum 2000, see also www.qca.org.uk/nq/framework/c2k/research_report_2002 02.asp.

Changes in the take-up of languages at AS and A2 level, as well as changes in the pre- and post-16 language curriculum will impact on the level, content and structure of language courses offered by HE modern languages departments.

There will be speakers from QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority), UCAS, CILT and the Subject Centre. We also hope to bring you Keith Marshall's latest data on admissions and on take-up of languages at AS/A2 level.

Linguistics Postgraduate Information Day

26 November, CILT, London

A second postgraduate information day including an introduction to support and resources available from the CILT library, data collection techniques and a guide to locating research. The event will be free of charge to PhD and MA students in language teaching and learning, and linguistics. For further information and to book a place contact Dawn Ebbrell on **he-enquiries@cilt.org.uk**

Linguistics PG Training Issues

6 December, CILT, London

This event will provide a forum for discussing postgraduate training issues in linguistics. We will be inviting representatives from ESRC, AHRB and the British Academy to answer questions relating to their respective requirements for the training of linguistics students. Other issues that we will be raising are how to develop more collaborative programmes of postgraduate training such as that developed by the North-West Centre for Linguistics. This may be necessary in order to support students and departments where there are only small numbers or where there is a need for extra expertise for a particular aspect of a student's work.

Area Studies Network meeting and new collaboration

11 December, CILT, London

From October 2002, thanks to a grant from the LTSN, the Subject Centre is going to be working collaboratively with 5 other Subject Centres to support the field of Area Studies. Partners in this collaboration are the Subject Centres for Geography, Earth and Enivronmental Sciences; English; History; Economics; Sociology, Anthropology and Politics. By working with colleagues from the disciplines covered by Area Studies programmes we hope to widen our network and increase participation in our activities for Area Studies. One aspect of this partnership will be a new support group, The Area Studies Network. If you would like to join the Network, find out more about it or to contribute your comments and ideas please come along to the meeting which will be held in London. Some of the themes that we will be discussing are: how to raise the profile of the field, how to increase recruitment and how to tackle generic issues for Area Studies such as interdisciplinarity, globalisation and intercultural learning.

Registration for events can be done online at: www.soton.ac.uk/~llas/wkshopregform.html or by contacting the Subject Centre directly at the address given on the front page of this issue.

Subject Centre Projects

Lingua

Open the Door to Language Learning is a 3 year project funded under Socrates that the Subject Centre will be leading with partners in Sweden, Belgium, Hungary, Ireland and Czech Republic. This exciting project aims to trial a number of strategies for helping to encourage language learning among a wider public. Each partner will be reporting on the outcomes of their trials which may include opening university resource centres to the general public, languages roadshows and tandem partnerships which will contribute to a final Handbook of Good Practice. The project begins in October 2002.

Dissemination

Extending good practice in less widely used and less taught (LWULT) languages will work with language practitioners to disseminate and transfer innovative practice in LWULT languages through workshops and a number of funded mini development projects. An introductory workshop has been planned for Friday 1 November 2002 where further details about the project and the bidding process for mini project funding will be given. More details will be published on the Subject Centre website and in the monthly e-bulletin.

Pedagogical research fund

The Subject Centre has recently been awarded funding under the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) tranche 2 funding to support a number of small-scale projects in the area of pedagogic research. The *Pedagogical Research Fund* will support at least three projects focused on the teaching and learning in a higher education context of each of the three areas covered by the Subject Centre. Further information will be available for potential bidders later in the year.

Other Projects

Australian Studies

With the support of an ILT Small Grant, the Centre for Australian Studies in Wales is developing an online survey aimed at gathering information about the background knowledge of Australia among students who are studying Australia in the United Kingdom. The Centre is inviting Area Studies colleagues to contact it with suggestions for improving the survey and proposals for adapting it for other Areas. The deadline for the consultation period is 30 November 2002. The survey is at: http://www.lamp.ac.uk/oz/survey/index.html

Virtual Departments of Minority Languages (VDML)

Showcase materials devised as a follow-up to a recent project workshop (June 2002) can be found at: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/epd/herdu/vdml/workshop/showcase/index.html They were originally devised for use in teaching Danish but have been modified so that they can be adapted to other languages by the teacher.

Introducing... the Subject Centre's new web editor

We would like to welcome Becky Jennings to the Subject Centre. She will be responsible for keeping our website updated with all the latest news, events and topical issues in languages, linguistics and area studies and will be helping us to take the new look website forward. She can be contacted on r.e.jennings@soton.ac.uk