

Liaison

Magazine

Issue 4 : January 2010



features:

Thriving in
difficult times

teaching:

Hurricane Katrina

viewpoint:

The impact of Bologna

students:

NUS Student
Experience Report

teaching:

Intercultural cinema

700 words:

On teaching
field linguistics

Liaison is published twice a year by the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (LLAS), part of the Subject Network of the Higher Education Academy. We are a publicly funded service, providing UK-wide support and services for higher education in languages, linguistics and area studies. Details of all our activities are available on our website: www.llas.ac.uk

As well as updates on LLAS work, *Liaison* features a wide range of articles on topics relating to languages, linguistics and area studies. The next issue will appear in July 2010. We welcome contributions. If you would like to submit an article, propose a book review or respond to an article published in *Liaison*, please contact the editor, Paula Davis (pd2@soton.ac.uk).

Views expressed in *Liaison* are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of LLAS.

Website links are active at the time of going to press.

You can keep in touch with LLAS by joining our mailing list (www.llas.ac.uk/maillinglist), coming to our workshops, seminars and other events (www.llas.ac.uk/events) or exploring our website. *Liaison* is distributed to languages, linguistics and area studies departments across the UK and is available at www.llas.ac.uk/liaison. If you would like extra copies, please email llas@soton.ac.uk

Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies
Avenue Campus
Highfield
University of Southampton
Southampton
SO17 1BF

Phone: 023 8059 4814

Fax: 023 8059 4815

Email: llas@soton.ac.uk

Web: www.llas.ac.uk

LLAS team:

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Jackie Bailey | Web and Publications Administrator |
| Dr Lisa Bernasek | Academic Coordinator (Literature and Culture) |
| Kate Borthwick | Academic Coordinator (e-Learning) |
| Dr John Canning | Senior Academic Coordinator (Area Studies) |
| Carol Churchouse | Administrator (UCML) |
| Dr Erika Corradini | Academic Coordinator (Projects) |
| Paula Davis | Subject Centre Manager |
| Alison Dickens | Assistant Director (HE Programmes) |
| Angela Gallagher-Brett | Senior Academic Coordinator (Languages and Related Studies) |
| Laurence Georgin | Links into Languages Assistant Programme Manager (Regional Centres) |
| Dr Graham Gilchrist | Senior Web Developer |
| Jessica Hawkins | Routes into Languages Assistant Programme Manager |
| Liz Hudswell | Assistant Director (Operations) |
| Mandy Jeffrey | Links into Languages National Programme Administrator |
| Becky Jennings | Web and Publications Manager |
| Professor Michael Kelly | Director |
| Rebekah Mann | Administrator |
| Fiona McConnon | Links into Languages Programme Manager |
| Heather McGuinness | Routes into Languages Programme Manager |
| Sue Nash | Senior Administrator |
| Matt Reynolds | Web Developer |
| Dr Sarah Rule | Academic Coordinator (Linguistics) |
| Jo Shelton | Links into Languages Assistant Programme Manager (Information) |
| Lina Soura | Routes into Languages Programme Administrator |
| Marie Weaver | Administrator |
| Vicky Wright | Deputy Director |

Editors: Paula Davis and Lisa Bernasek

Design: Becky Jennings and Jackie Bailey

Welcome

Issue 4 : January 2010

Welcome to the fourth edition of *Liaison*, the biannual magazine of the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (LLAS).

2010 heralds the tenth anniversary of LLAS. During the past decade we have been working hard to build sustainable learning communities through providing professional development opportunities, the topic of Mike Kelly's foreword. One of our recent CPD activities was a workshop for heads of department on "Thriving in difficult times". As a follow-up to this event, Mike has also written some helpful guidance on anticipating and acting upon the threat of departmental cuts.

This year is also an important landmark for the Bologna Process, which set itself the goal of developing the European Higher Education Area by 2010. We feature timely viewpoints from Anca Greere and Gail Taillefer on the impact of Bologna in Romania and France. Further insights on recent developments in languages come from John Canning, who keeps abreast of LLAS-related news items for the LLAS news blog and has picked out some highlights from recent months.

Liaison, like the rest of LLAS's activity, is very much a team effort. Teamwork is also a strong feature of the HumBox project, which is developing a free, online repository of humanities

Liaison is printed on FSC Mixed Sources grade paper containing 50% recovered waste, and printed using vegetable inks.

resources – Margaret Tejerizo tells us more.

The student voice is much in evidence in this issue: Aaron Porter presents the findings of the NUS Student Experience

Report; we hear from students who have benefited from LLAS bursaries; and mature student Deborah Adams shares her enthusiasm for studying the English language. Julia Horn, Director of the Centre for Career Management Skills at the University of Reading, highlights a useful online employability resource for postgraduate students.

Graduate Vicky Heslop tells us how studying languages led to an unexpected career in Rugby (not the Warwickshire market town, but the sport!); and we learn how the Routes into Languages regional consortia have been inspiring children to learn languages through the media of sport and film.

Film also provides inspiration for older students as Claire Thomson demonstrates in her article on teaching intercultural cinema. And Anna Hartnell reports on how teaching Hurricane Katrina has led her students to question previously held assumptions.

We sign off with some regular features: reviews (from Pierre Larivée and Marina Orsini-Jones), 700 words (Peter Austin on field linguistics), and, finally, Mourad Diouri gives us a tantalising taste of Arabic.

A big thank you, as always, to all of our contributors. And remember if you would like to contribute to the next issue or comment on any of the articles you have read in this issue, please get in touch.

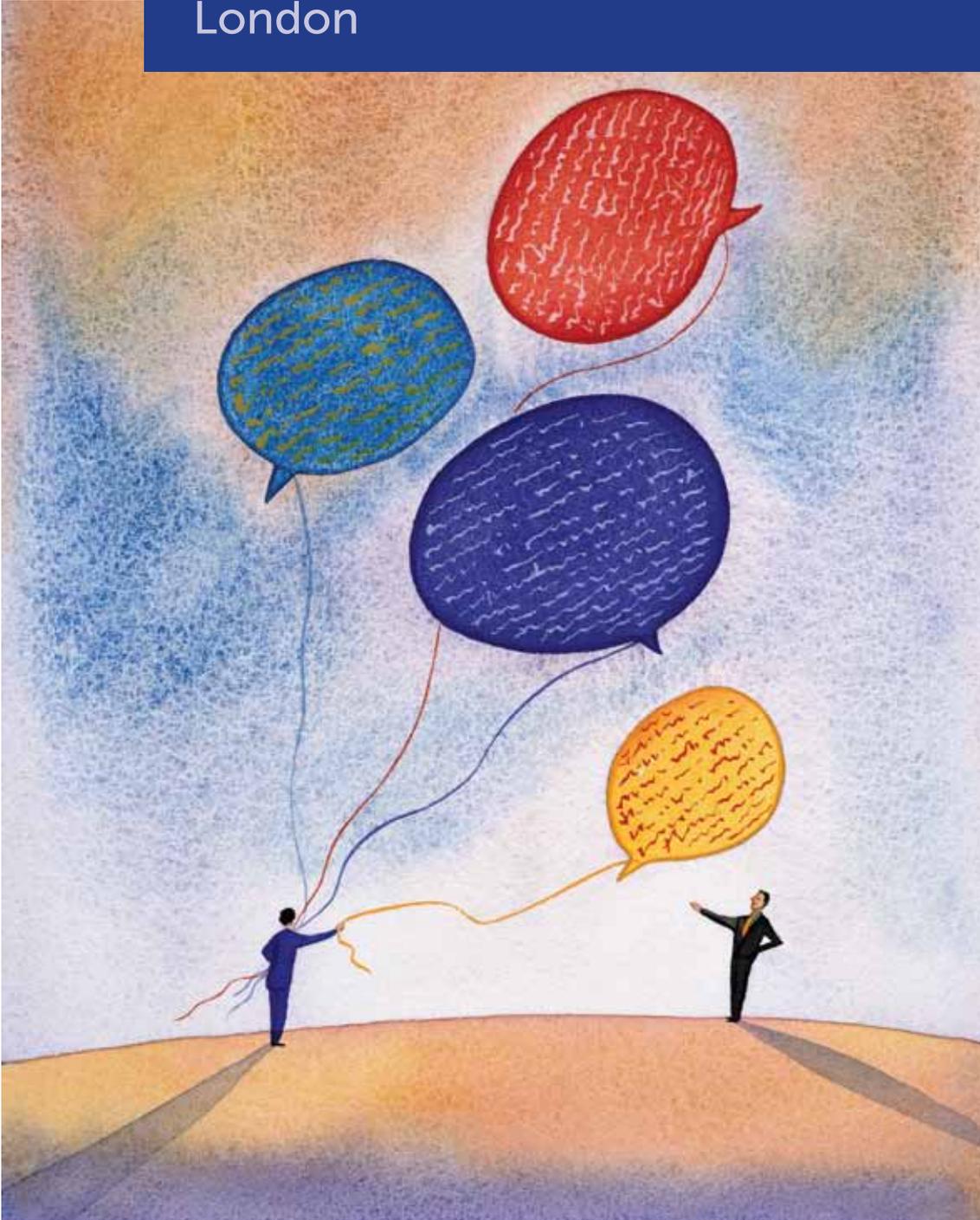


Paula Davis, Editor



Languages in higher education 2010: Raising the standard for languages

1-2 July
London



The Subject Centre's fifth biennial conference for languages in higher education. It aims to bring language teachers and researchers together from across all areas of the languages curriculum to celebrate all that we have achieved so far and to share ideas on ways in which we can take languages forward into the next decade. We are fortunate this year to have the support of the European Union funded Language Network for Quality Assurance (LanQua) which will bring a broader, European perspective to the conference.

For more information visit:
www.llas.ac.uk/conf2010



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Building sustainable learning communities



All of the academic communities in languages, linguistics and area studies are deeply committed to learning and teaching. In the first instance, our priority is to give our students the best possible learning experience and to enable them to realise their potential to the full. In order to achieve this, we seek to increase our own knowledge and expertise through professional development. In this sense, we are both teachers and learners.

LLAS, like our sister Subject Centres in other disciplines, has the specific task of providing opportunities for this professional development to take place. We have found the most effective way of achieving this is to mobilise the expertise of our communities, and give colleagues the chance to discuss issues and exchange ideas. In this way, we seek to amplify and disseminate the knowledge and creativity that already exist, and to build effective learning communities.

The facilitation of learning takes many forms. Perhaps the most dynamic form is the kind of collective reflection that took place at our recent workshop on “Thriving in difficult times”, discussed later in this issue. It brought together heads of department and subject leaders to consider strategic and operational issues in the current environment of uncertainty. The pooling of experience proved powerfully supportive. At the other end of the academic career path, our workshops for new academic staff have also demonstrated the value of shared reflection on issues of common concern. Undoubtedly, such face-to-face discussions provide memorable learning experiences and develop our professional expertise.

In the digital age, a good deal of our learning now takes place online. An increasing array of techniques now enables colleagues to communicate and share experience electronically. In this sense, e-learning is not just something we offer to our students; it is also something we use to develop our own learning. The LLAS website is a rich bank of materials, resources and guides to good practice. We are currently working on the HumBox project, discussed later in this issue, which will give even greater opportunities for colleagues to exchange materials and to add their own touches to each other's work.

When individuals or departments spend their time and money on these activities, they are improving their ability to do their jobs as educators. Their students are very direct beneficiaries. The case is therefore readily made that investment in professional development provides excellent value for money. The argument is essentially the same at national and local levels.

In the context of increasing pressure on the public funding of higher education, the value of professional development will need to be reasserted. The precise forms it takes will vary over time, and so will the resources available to support it. Ultimately, the quality of the education we provide depends on our commitment to contribute to each other's professional development. We will all be strengthened by participation in the learning communities which we have created together.

“...investment in professional development provides excellent value for money”

Professor Michael Kelly,
Director of the Subject Centre for Languages,
Linguistics and Area Studies

news

John Canning, Erika Corradini, Hannah Doughty, Jessica Hawkins, Heather McGuinness and Joanne Shelton highlight recent news and activities within languages, linguistics and area studies.

Worton Review

In October Michael Worton, Vice-Provost of University College London submitted his *Review of Modern Foreign Languages provision in higher education in England* to HEFCE. Professor Worton noted the continuing sense of crisis in the modern languages community about student numbers and research funding and observed that many individuals do not sense the existence of a modern languages community, instead preferring to identify with their own language discipline.

Professor Worton made 17 recommendations including the need for LLAS, CILT, language departments and language centres "to work together to promote a clear and compelling identity for MFL as a humanities discipline". He also said that universities need to work to address any tensions between language centres and MFL departments and recommended that a forum be set up with representatives from CILT, DCSF, BIS, HEFCE, universities, schools and employers to agree a common message about the value of languages.



National Student Survey

The annual National Student Survey (NSS) offers students the opportunity to share perceptions of their learning experience during the final year of study. The Higher Education Academy is supporting higher education institutions in interpreting and using the NSS data effectively and LLAS is exploring ways of working with departments in our subject areas.

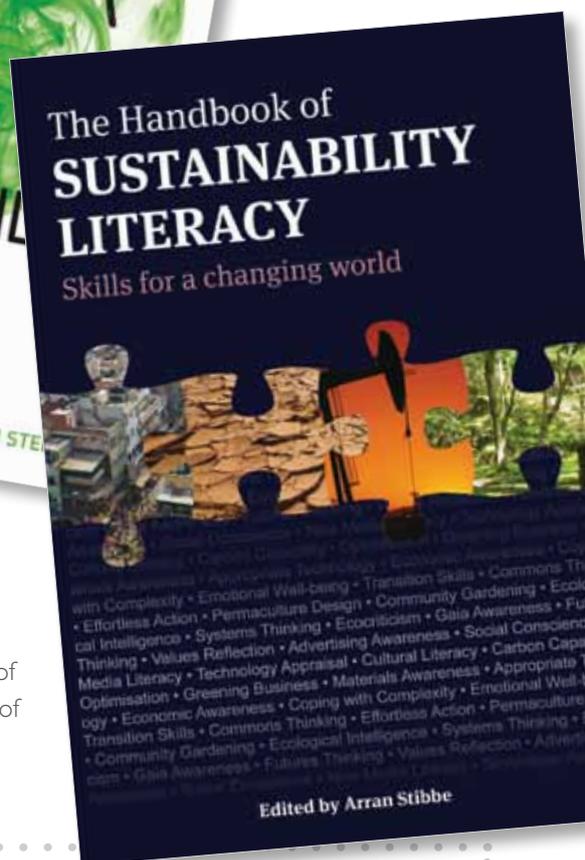
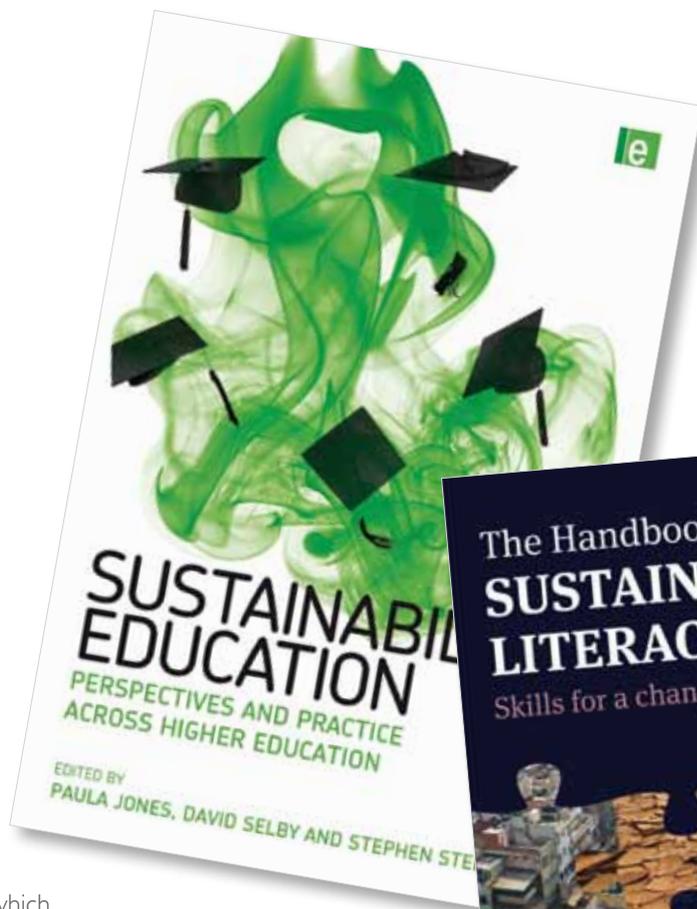
Data from 2008 and 2009 shows that nearly 90% of LLAS graduates are satisfied with their overall learning experience. Student feedback in particular has been identified as an area in which improvements can be made. However this does not necessarily mean that students require more feedback; it could be that they would benefit from more guidance on using existing feedback more effectively.

**the
National
Student
Survey**
www.thestudentsurvey.com

For more information visit:
Higher Education Academy NSS homepage: www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/research/surveys/nss
LLAS statistics homepage: www.llas.ac.uk/statistics

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

ESD has been identified as a key priority for the Higher Education Academy this academic year. In December we held a seminar on teaching linguistic fieldwork and sustainability in partnership with the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). In March 2010 we have an event examining sustainable development as it relates to area studies and development studies. John Canning from LLAS has contributed a chapter on languages, linguistics and area studies to a multidisciplinary book which examines sustainability across the higher education curriculum. Edited by Paula Jones, David Selby and Stephen Sterling from the Sustainable Futures Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (University of Plymouth), *Sustainability education: perspectives and practice across Higher Education* will be published by Earthscan in 2010. The Academy has also co-funded the publication of *The Handbook of Sustainability Literacy* edited by Arran Stibbe from the University of Gloucestershire, available online or in hard copy.



Meeting the current challenges: the humanities and employability, entrepreneurship and employer engagement

This successful conference, which took place in London on 23 October, was organised by LLAS in collaboration with other humanities Subject Centres.

Professor Sir Deian Hopkin opened the day by emphasising the key role of universities in the recovery of the British economy and exploring the relevance of humanities skills in this complex process.

The conference offered a wide variety of parallel sessions on the promotion of employability in the humanities. The sessions dedicated to making the case for the humanities and engaging employers in curriculum design stimulated lively discussions on the relevance of humanities skills in the development of a marketable professional profile.

Delegates commented very positively on the employers' panel and found employers' involvement in the event extremely helpful. The conference was thought to be timely and informative with participants expressing a keen interest in co-operation between employers and academics in the humanities.

“A very helpful, focused and well-organised event”

Conference attendee

Scotland

Internationalisation and modern languages in Scottish further and higher education: a scoping study

This study investigated the impact of internationalisation strategies on modern language provision in Scottish further and higher education and was carried out by Scottish CILT on behalf of LLAS.

Key findings include the following:

- Scottish internationalisation strategies have been driven both by financial and socio-economic concerns. The majority of initiatives have focused on inward recruitment of international students and transnational education.
- A number of Scottish government-funded projects currently underway are aiming to increase outward mobility of domestic students.
- Numbers of international students have increased substantially since 1998-99. By the end of their tertiary education, these students are more likely to have been exposed to multilingual and multicultural settings than their Anglophone counterparts.
- Institutional web pages dedicated to "international students" tend to provide generic information in English, i.e. they tend to ignore students' differing cultural information needs.

www.llas.ac.uk/about/566#furtherreading



Wales

llwybrau at ieithoedd Cymru

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) has announced three years of funding from 2009-10 to enable HEIs in Wales to join the Routes into Languages programme.

The Director of Routes into Languages Wales is Ceri James of CILT Cymru, the National Centre for Languages in Wales. Working in partnership with the central team for Routes at LLAS and nine universities across Wales, the Wales consortium plans to use examples of best practice from England, where Routes has been in action since 2007. We look forward to hearing more from the Wales consortium.

www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/cymru

Around the UK

Northern Ireland

LLAS has funded a project which will track the careers of languages graduates from Northern Irish universities since 2006.

The project, led by John Gillespie (University of Ulster) and David Johnston (Queen's University Belfast) will compile a database of graduates and will make recommendations regarding careers advice and the marketing of modern languages in Northern Ireland. The project report will be published this summer:

LLAS has also agreed to fund a student conference on the theme of "Language and identity". A group of undergraduate students from the two universities are working together to organise this conference.

UK

Links into Languages

Since launching in April 2009, Links into Languages has been offering support and advice to the languages community. Throughout England, Links regional and local support centres have been welcoming visitors to resource libraries, providing meeting spaces for teachers and language professionals to network, and delivering Links professional development courses.

Links professional development courses focus on the most important priorities and challenges in languages education and have been developed in



consultation with national agencies and experts. Each course is delivered by a highly experienced trainer, and is run in every region where there is a Links centre. In addition to the Links courses, each regional centre has designed its own programme of professional development for languages based on the demands and requirements of those living in the local area.

The regional centres, in collaboration with the Association for Language Learning (ALL), have also been supporting the first phase of LinkedUp projects. The LinkedUp award scheme offers financial support for innovative curriculum development projects carried out by groups of schools and colleges. LinkedUp is working with CILT, the National Centre for Languages, on the Languages Employer



Engagement programme, funding a further 18 project networks specifically aimed at bringing together employers and young people to make the case for language learning. The next deadline for applications is 15 February 2010 and the outcomes of all these projects will be available on the Links into Languages website.

For more information about events and regional centres, and to join the mailing list, please visit www.linksintolanguages.ac.uk

Routes into Languages

There have been a number of developments in the Routes into Languages programme this year, including expansion into Wales (see page 7).

Around the country regional consortia are engaging an ever increasing number of schools and colleges in a wide range of language learning activities. These include events inspired by the 2012 Olympic games, partnerships with local cinemas, and teaming up with local football clubs.



Ever wondered about judo in Japanese or football in French? Working with local schools our regional project managers have been demonstrating how effective these activities are in inspiring young people to enjoy and achieve in languages. There are also projects to support AS/A2-level teaching and learning as well as information on how languages can be useful in future careers.

The National Networks for Interpreting and Translation have scheduled a programme of events for a variety of audiences, from large-scale careers events aimed at language undergraduates to taster sessions with A/AS-level students.



The Routes Two Years On Conference on 27 October was an opportunity for the regional consortia and the National Networks to showcase their achievements. It also gave delegates the chance to engage in discussion about the role we can play in the future of languages in schools, colleges and universities.

For more information about events and to join the mailing list, please visit www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk

Happy 10th Birthday LLAS

We're celebrating 10 years of supporting languages, linguistics and area studies teaching in UKHE.

We'll be holding 10 in 10 celebrations throughout the year.



Visit www.llas.ac.uk/10in10 for details.

Have your say!

Have you been inspired by something you've read in Liaison?

Have you got a brilliant idea for a new feature or article?

Do you have a burning question or a strong viewpoint?

*Then don't keep it to yourself. Get in touch with the editor, Paula Davis
pd2@soton.ac.uk
023 80593970*



Four horizontal lines for an address, located on the right side of the postcard.

Languages in the UK - is it really all doom, gloom and *Dharug*?

John Canning picks out a selection of recent articles from the LLAS news blog. For links to these articles and many more visit www.llasnews.blogspot.com

Last year we learnt that languages were removed as a compulsory subject at Key Stage 4 to stop pupils bunking off school. Language entries at GCSE, A-level, Standard Grade and Higher Grade went down (again). School teachers are scripting GCSE language exams. All miserable news and all too familiar. At least the primary schools will save us - actually perhaps not. A fifth aren't even ready to start teaching languages.

The LLAS news blog was set up in 2007 to monitor news stories of interest to our subject communities. Stories such as those above have ensured that hardly a week goes by without a story about the problems facing languages. Universities are concerned, employers are concerned, the Government is concerned. At least we can be comforted that someone is concerned. As long as everyone continues to notice that languages are declining, we have hope.

In February 2009 the European Commission expressed concern about the lack of native English speakers trained as interpreters. The Commission will lose one-third of its native English interpreters by 2015. In June a British Academy report raised concerns that the future of world class research in the UK could be undermined by the decline in language learning.

Behind the headlines of course we know that the picture is more complex. More students are studying Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Russian - not enough to compensate for the decline in French and German, but more people want to study them.

The most interesting part of maintaining the blog is finding those stories with a slightly humorous edge which detract from the doom and gloom.

The popularity of *anime* and *manga* among teenagers is reputed to be an important factor in the current revival of Japanese studies in UK universities, but could *Tintin* save the day for French in the UK? The International *Bande Dessinée* (BD) Society's meeting in London caught the attention of *Times Higher Education* (*THE*). Ann Miller, Senior Lecturer in French at the University of Leicester told *THE* that around six French departments offered specialist BD courses and most feature it somewhere in the syllabus. Laurence Grove from the University of Glasgow reported on increasing numbers of researchers seeing themselves as "BD scholars".

Many adults regret their failure to learn a foreign language well; the unnamed British woman who popped to the toilet before checking into her "hotel" in Dannemarie on the French-Swiss border is probably among them. In a manner fitting of a classic British sitcom, a meeting

"...could *Tintin* save the day for French in the UK?"

finished, the doors were locked, and she proved that you really can spend the night at the *Hôtel de Ville*.

Meanwhile, closer to home, pedestrians negotiating roadworks in Cardiff were urged to look left in English and right in Welsh.

The English language provides

enough problems of its own.

Laurie Fendrich, Professor of Fine Arts at Hofstra University in New York confessed in her blog to having misused English words including "bemused" and "nonplussed" for years. She writes: "I recently found out ... that I've been using the word 'bemused' entirely incorrectly. Not that I've used it every day, but I've used it enough. And it turns out that when I have used it, I've thought it meant mildly amused. Not so. It means confused or bewildered, baffled or perplexed."

"Mwah" (a superficial air kiss) and "meh" (used to express feelings of "don't care" or disappointment) were among new words in the 2009 edition of the *Collins English Dictionary*. Hey-ho (or heigh ho) has made a comeback, nothing to do with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, but a word which, like "meh", can express disappointment, e.g. after missing a bus. Interestingly, using "hey-ho" to express this meaning is actually a revival of a phrase dating

from at least the 16th century. It's like *C'est la vie*, suggests Duncan Black, one of the Dictionary's editors.

Hey-ho may serve a useful purpose for Bournemouth Council employees who may no longer be able to say "*C'est la vie*". Non-English phrases, particularly those in Latin, are being





clamped down on as elitist and exclusionary, e.g. (sorry – I mean for example) *quid pro quo*, *pro rata*, *vice versa*, *pro bono*, *ad hoc* and *ad lib*.

Not everyone is happy about this – Mary Beard, Professor of Classics at the University of Cambridge, told the BBC that it is “the linguistic equivalent of ethnic cleansing”.

Want to enhance the employability of your students? Personal Development Plans? Employability modules? Talks from careers advisors? Develop your employer links? Instead, you may wish to encourage them to work on their accent. A survey reported that one-third of employees had changed their accent to improve

their career prospects. People from Liverpool and the Midlands were most likely to do this. Apparently, the Queen’s English is the easiest to understand.

Cornish speakers invoked the spirit, though maybe not the humour, of Mark Twain’s “reports of my death are greatly exaggerated” when the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) declared the language to be extinct. UNESCO identified over 2,500 languages under threat, and more than a dozen languages are down to their last native speaker. However, revival and even resurrection is possible. *Dharug*, an Aboriginal language which died out in the late 19th century is now being revived in a Sydney classroom.

Finally, what are the languages of the future? Chinese? Arabic? Urdu? The University of Wyoming’s course unit “Interstellar Message Composition” addresses the important question of how we might communicate

with life from other planets. Douglas Vakoch, Director of Interstellar Message Composition at the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) Institute in California (how did he get that job?) says: “Some day [when] we detect a technological civilisation around a distant star, one of our most critical decisions will be whether we should reply, and if so, what we should say.”

GCSE Klingon anyone?

Keep abreast of languages, linguistics and area studies news at the LLAS news blog www.llasnews.blogspot.com You can also follow us on Twitter at http://twitter.com/hea_llas

Dr John Canning is Senior Academic Coordinator (Area Studies) at the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies.



The impact of Bologna



The Bologna Declaration of 1999 was a pledge by 29 countries to reform their higher education systems in order to create overall convergence in a European Higher Education Area. Today, the Bologna process involves 46 countries and its main priorities are: the introduction of a three-cycle system (bachelor/master/doctorate); quality assurance; and recognition of qualifications and periods of study. Here, Gail Taillefer and Anca Greere give their personal viewpoints on the impact of Bologna in France and Romania respectively.

For more information on the Bologna process visit the official website: www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/Bologna

Bologna à la française: academic culture shock?

Gail Taillefer argues that as the Bologna Process is founded on primarily Anglo-Saxon notions, such as transparency, accountability, quality assurance, benchmarking, etc. it does not automatically translate into the French-Latin model of higher education.

A year before Bologna, the *Déclaration de la Sorbonne* (May 1998) sought to encourage university exchanges and greater harmony among different systems of higher education in Europe. How has the Bologna process played out in France since then?

Response on a national level...

The official national response came as a body of laws. The *Licence-Master-Doctorat* reform set up the three cycles of diplomas, a semester system and the European Credit Transfer

System (ECTS). An independent external assessment agency (*Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur*, AERES) was created and the Diploma Supplement (DS) was made obligatory. Further laws have been passed reinforcing the European Higher Education Area and addressing student guidance and employability, granting landmark autonomy to institutions in financial and human resource management, and implementing national teacher assessment and training.

...and on a local level

At the *Université Toulouse I Capitole*, ECTS dates from 1997, ERASMUS *obligé*, but the DS has only been partially implemented. The International Relations office was awarded the European quality label for lifelong learning, and the Toulouse School of Economics was one of the first to benefit from a new status allowing it to set up a foundation. Bilingual French and English / Spanish Bachelor's programmes have been set up in law and economics; more



and more classes are being taught through English; and an inter-university online Portfolio of Experience and Competences has been developed.

Critical analysis

Critical voices are heard from academics and Bologna experts (Fave-Bonnet 2007, Troquet 2007). Difficulties have been identified by the official Bologna Follow-up Group, including issues of semesterisation, transparent assessment, implementing the DS, links with the world of work, and bringing quality assessment in line with international standards.

More fundamentally, the Bologna process is seen by many teachers and students as a challenge to deep-seated cultural issues. Resistance is strong against what is seen as a heavy-handed, top-down governmental power play to turn hitherto nominally

Why such paradoxes?

France has a heritage of conflict between the ideals of republican egalitarianism and republican elitism. This has resulted, on the one hand, in theory and research-oriented “catch-all” universities open to all high-school leavers, and on the other, in highly selective business and engineering schools which put more emphasis on employability, performance and practical competences (D'Iribarne 2006). A second explanation is to be found in the highly centralised, top-down structure of French civil and administrative life. Thirdly, the Latin relationship with money makes it difficult to move from a means-based economy to a results-based model.

The Bologna process thus raises fundamental issues of academic culture shock in France. Nevertheless, the 2009 *Stocktaking Report* (Rauhvargers

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“The Bologna process is seen... as a challenge to deep-seated cultural issues”

“equal” universities into free-market competitive institutions. The term *assurance qualité* is seen by many as demeaning, student assessment of teachers is widely rejected, and the credibility and impact of AERES are seriously questioned.

et al. 2009), which compares countries on ten indicators of achievement of Bologna process goals, shows France to be among the “greenest” countries (on a descending scale from dark green through yellow to red). The *ancien régime* is evolving at its own pace.

Dr Gail Taillefer is Professor of English for Specific Purposes and Director of the University Language Centre at the University of Toulouse (*Toulouse I Capitole*).





Changes to professional translator training in Romania

Anca Greere shares her personal experience of how the Bologna process has had a positive impact on professional translator programmes at Babeş-Bolyai University.

In Romania, as in many other European countries, the Bologna reform gives rise to apprehension among university administrations, complaints among staff and miscomprehension among students. Institutions have repeatedly voiced concerns regarding an alleged decrease in quality inherent to the system of mass higher education promoted by Bologna. Staff have reacted negatively to the amount of time and effort involved in the transition from pre-Bologna to Bologna programmes, a transition often involving a reduction of undergraduate programmes from four to three years of study and a subsequent expansion of postgraduate programmes from one-year to two-year structures. Students often perceive Bologna as a chance to

time I have found that the Bologna requirements could be made to work in our favour; obliging the Department to reflect more thoroughly on the quality of its programmes and to make relevant adjustments resulting in long term educational and professional achievements.

Until recently, the European Master's in Translation Studies and Terminology had a one-year structure, and was often considered superfluous, insufficiently motivating and financially onerous by potential candidates. The programme often made use of knowledge and skills acquired in the undergraduate applied modern languages programme, making it difficult for graduates of other programmes to cope with the tasks; student mobility was impossible to

specialised training and the second cycle becomes compulsory and no longer deemed superfluous. At the end of the undergraduate programme students may choose a Master's programme to further enhance their professionalisation potential or they may choose a programme that completely changes their professional track. This means that students applying for the second cycle are better focused on the profession they are training for and, hence, are more motivated. In expanding the Master's curriculum to two years we have readjusted our objectives and now offer content which is more accessible to students of any background, and is reinforced by professional experiences such as internships, field trips and student exchanges. The dissertation now has sufficient time allocated to it and represents a summative evaluation of professional training.

In summary, our recruitment pool has grown, our students are better motivated, learning opportunities are more varied and our curriculum is now more comprehensive. Undoubtedly, Bologna has been the triggering force.

“...our recruitment pool has grown, our students are better motivated...”

enter the job market sooner, without acknowledging that the training they receive at undergraduate level is general, not specialised, making it impossible for “Bologna graduates” to find a higher status job unless they also access the second cycle.

My personal experience with Bologna is, however, a positive one. For the past five years I have been involved in curriculum redesign and syllabus planning for the Department of Applied Modern Languages at the Babeş-Bolyai University in Romania. During this

incorporate in the programme as there was insufficient time; and the final dissertation was being elaborated simultaneously with, not subsequent to, the development of specialised competences, thus putting increased pressure on students.

The changeover to the 3+2 Bologna structure easily addresses the shortcomings of the 4+1 system, providing a more direct incentive to continue studies at specialised levels. The three undergraduate years offer the basis for future

Dr Anca Greere is Director of the European Master's in Translation Studies and Terminology at the Department of Applied Modern Languages, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca.



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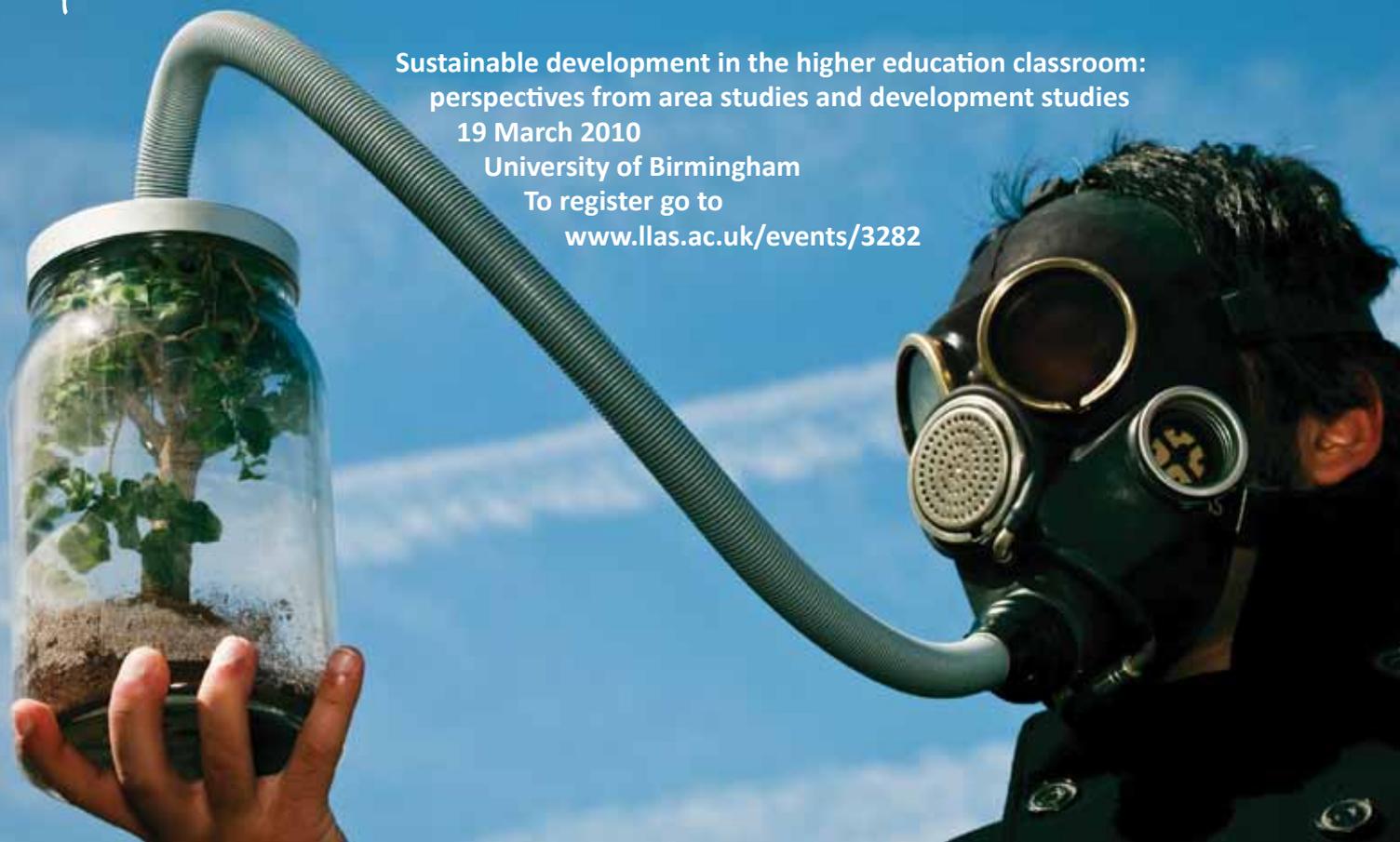
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Why not tune in to HumBox? Songs for the humanities

Margaret Tejerizo tells us how she has been inspired by participating in the HumBox project, which is developing a collection of free online humanities teaching resources.

Spring encounters

In the spring of 2009 an enthusiastic group from various humanities departments at British universities met at the University of Warwick to find out about a new initiative with the attractive and somewhat enigmatic name of HumBox! Over the first few sessions of the day we discovered more and more about this collaborative development which involves four Higher Education Academy Subject Centres: English, History, Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (LLAS), and Philosophical and Religious Studies. We learned too that HumBox forms a part of the JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) and the Academy's Open Educational Resources (OER) programme which is funded by HEFCE. One of the chief objectives of this particular OER programme is to make a wide range of high quality, peer-reviewed teaching and learning resources, which have been devised by academics, freely available to lecturers and all those engaged in teaching and learning.

This first meeting was led by Alison Dickens, the project director from LLAS, and during the course of the day we were introduced to other members of the HumBox team and we were able also to have some practice in the more technical aspects of the project. By the close

of this introductory day participants had been inspired by what seemed to be both an innovative and highly practical project, and the prospect of a two-day event in September left some months to start preparing and working through the guidelines we had been given. Each partner was invited to produce some 40 items or more, and on the journey back to Scotland I thought back to "The Winter Festival", a Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies (CRCEES) event we had hosted in 2008-09. It struck me that many of the lectures and other presentations in that series (given by experts in the languages and cultures of countries such as Latvia, Russia and

had been encouraged to report back to colleagues on this first introductory HumBox session and enthusiasm for the project quickly spread!

Autumn reflections

Project participants met again in September, by which time many had already deposited materials in HumBox. Over the summer months there had been a great deal of communication between and among the partners, carried out largely by email and the HumBox blog. The purpose of the second gathering was to analyse the peer-review system to ensure quality materials at all times. The two-day meeting passed very

“It was very easy to see how materials could be adapted and used in many different teaching situations...”

Estonia), would provide ideal resources which eventually could be entered into HumBox. Our ambition, however, would be to have HumBox materials dealing with all the cultures covered by the Slavonic Studies Section of the School of Modern Languages and Cultures at the University of Glasgow, and those of CRCEES partner institutions, ranging from Czech and Polish to Hungarian and Uzbek. We

quickly and participants were able to examine some of the resources which had already been stored in the repository. These ranged from an inspiring series of lecture slides on crime in Victorian literature to an outstanding set of interviews dealing with political issues in Spain today. There are also remarkable materials for the teaching of novels by the Spanish writer Galdós which will

doubtless prove to be challenging and exciting for students! It was very easy to see how materials could be adapted and used in many different teaching situations and also provide fascinating wider backgrounds for many subjects and courses. We learned how to assess materials and how to look for and address issues in resources that may need improvement before being deposited for general use. As well as the many other items on display the new HumBox information leaflet was available. Two of the key phrases from the leaflet are "Sharing made simple" and "...if someone else has already developed a learning resource similar to what you need, then download and adapt it".

Winter conclusions

As the project ends in spring 2010, many partners are using the winter months to deposit, review and perfect HumBox resources. Funding has provided scope for preparing new materials since small payments can be made for the provision of additional resources or for the improvement of existing ones. From the sampling which was carried out in September I am certain that this will be a most successful project and that the academic community both nationally and internationally will benefit greatly. However, HumBox is not reserved for the university lecture theatre since it will also be

available to the wider community. After its official launch in early 2010 anyone will be able to deposit and download resources. As a team we will meet again in January when, it is hoped, there will be a wide range of resources in HumBox covering many different aspects of the world of the humanities. For further insights please visit HumBox at www.humbox.ac.uk



and be ready for some amazing tunes in 2010!

Dr Margaret Tejerizo is Senior Lecturer in Russian Studies at the School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Glasgow.

The screenshot shows the HumBox website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'HOME', 'BROWSE', 'FAQS', and 'ABOUT' links, and a search bar. Below the navigation bar, the page title is 'Supporting students: motivation (Resource)'. The main content area features a video player showing a woman speaking. Below the video, there is a section for 'Attached Files' listing two video files and one PowerPoint presentation. To the right of the files is a 'Description' section and a 'Resource Metadata' section. At the bottom, there is a 'Toolbox' section with various icons.

Teaching resources can be browsed using tags and subject keywords.

The title of the resource is shown and previewed in the main window.

A description of the resource will assist you in deciding whether it is suitable for your teaching needs.

The list of files that make up this resource are indicated here. This resource contains 2 videos and a PowerPoint presentation.

When a resource is deposited you can attach tags to indicate subject areas and teaching types.

The comments window allows users of the resource to comment about its usefulness.

The toolbox enables you to bookmark the resource and remix it with your own activities.

A Creative Commons licence shows you what you are allowed to do with the resource.

The author of the resource is clearly shown. Selecting the author will take you to their profile page.

Language Through Sport

Vicky Heslop explains how her decision to study languages at Bath led to an unexpected sporting career:

I would have laughed myself silly if someone had told me, on leaving secondary school, that in ten years' time I would be running an award-winning sports programme.

At school I was an academic all-rounder and I enjoyed all creative subjects, but I was not exactly a natural sportswoman. Like many other members of my family I had a natural aptitude for languages and was fortunate to have regular visits to France throughout my childhood for family holidays, where speaking French was part and parcel of the experience. However, at that point I did not see languages as a future career. Instead I began my A-levels aiming for medicine, but hedging my bets with chemistry, biology, English and French. Within weeks of starting I changed course, dropping biology for Italian and unknowingly setting sail for an entirely different destination.

Next I headed to the University of Bath to study European studies with French and Italian. In my first year at Bath I took up rugby, and I was

hooked. The sport became an integral part of my student life, and I was sad to leave it behind for a year to study in Italy and France. However, I met some fantastic people and really developed my languages, enabling me to make great friends across Europe. Returning to Bath for my final year, I jumped back into rugby, joining Bath Rugby Ladies' team and qualifying as a coach. I stayed on at Bath to complete an MA in Interpreting and Translating, setting my sights on an international linguistic career. However, towards the end of my studies and during subsequent temporary languages work, I came to realise that I craved more scope for creativity. In January 2007, I started a short-term, part-time administrative role for Bath Rugby Community Foundation, for which I had previously volunteered as a coach. Within weeks I was working and coaching full-time and loving every moment.

The Community Foundation is part of Bath Rugby Professional Club, and runs a diverse range of sport-based projects covering areas from literacy

to anger management, and financial skills to disability inclusion projects. When the planned introduction of mandatory modern foreign language provision for Key Stage 2 pupils by 2010 was announced, the Foundation decided to use my skills to set up a new project. Language Through Sport was launched in September 2007 to coincide with the Rugby World Cup in France. While in France, volunteering as an interpreter for the tournament, I ran sessions at a local primary school where I taught the pupils English through the medium of rugby and active games. Everyone had a whale of a time, and the class teacher noted how engaged all the pupils were, in particular a small group of boys normally very hesitant at using English.

Returning to Bath full of energy and ideas, I started running the programme in local primary schools. Working with classes over a period of six weeks each, I received a huge variety of reactions. In one school that I was visiting for the first time, the children were quite shocked





to find that I was not in fact a French man as they had expected! Nonetheless, they worked really hard and we had lots of fun. Our *finale* for the project was to play a whole game of Tag Rugby entirely in French, using vocabulary that the children had learned during the previous weeks through a range of other active games. For me, one of the greatest moments with that particular group was seeing the pupils who had in the first week said “I can’t do French” dashing around alongside the “sport refusers”, all yelling at each other in French, huge grins on their faces.

Having taken the project to primary schools across the local area, a friend put me in touch with colleagues at Bath Spa University, who had heard about my work. This linked me to a whole new sector of working with teachers and trainee teachers which is now a key part of my work, and I regularly run teacher education sessions across the South West region and beyond. Having been

“...the children were quite shocked to find that I was not in fact a French man as they had expected!”

taught by inspirational teachers myself, it is great to create and share ideas with teachers who have to adapt their skills to the constantly evolving requirements of the classroom.

In May 2008, Language Through Sport was recognised with a Parliamentary Citizenship Award for Innovation. Since then the programme has gone from strength to strength and looks set to continue growing and expanding for some time to come. Resource packs to accompany the programme have been produced, and workshops for primary and secondary

pupils and teachers have been run across the country.

In October 2009, my travels took me even further afield, when I represented the UK at the First International Conference of Languages and Sport in Trieste, Italy. I had always hoped to return to Italy for language work, but I never imagined that I would be representing my country in a sporting context, let alone as part of such an exciting and dynamic project. I only hope the next few years will bring me as much unexpected fun and enjoyment in my work as the last three.

For more information about the Language Through Sport programme or resources, please contact vicky.heslop@bathrugby.com

Vicky Heslop is a Community Officer for Bath Rugby Community Foundation.



Routes into Languages snapshots

The Routes into Languages regional consortia for the West Midlands and Yorkshire and The Humber provide snapshots of recent activity in their regions.



West Midlands

www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/westmidlands

The Routes into Languages programme aims to pilot initiatives that transform attitudes to language learning and motivate learners through new experiences. A further ambition is to identify sustainable patterns of working which exploit existing resources to maximum effect. The West Midlands consortium has carried out a number of projects that are designed to meet these challenges.

Foreign Language Assistants – an undervalued resource

The Language Ambassador scheme, which takes university students into schools to share their passion for languages, is now well embedded in Routes consortia across the country, with hundreds of students visiting schools every year. Activities range from providing language support or mentoring, to delivering language clubs and master classes, or recounting highlights of the life-changing experience of work or study abroad. Building on this success, in the West Midlands the use of Foreign Language Assistants (FLAs) who work in local schools has proved a natural extension of the student ambassador scheme. Like undergraduates, the FLAs are close in age to pupils, and they share common interests. In addition, their

current classroom skills help ensure that the varied activities they engage in are interesting, good fun and relevant. Using language assistants in Routes events can also contribute to meeting the requirements of the new curriculum such as intercultural understanding and communication with native speakers.

One of the most valuable examples of work with FLAs has been our themed cultural days, with pupils attending workshops delivered by native speakers from all over the world. A recent *Jour de la Francophonie* saw FLAs from the Ivory Coast, Congo, Guadeloupe and Quebec teaching pupils about their home countries and cultures, including geography, history and religion, not to mention local culinary delights! FLAs can inject fresh energy and contribute new perspectives, helping to broaden understanding of languages in a global context. The benefits for the assistants are just as important as for the pupils. Many are aspiring teachers and have commented that the experience has given



Routes into Languages activities taking place around the West Midlands



“Trying out karate in Japanese and handball in Spanish gave teachers an insight into the student experience”

them the opportunity to develop new skills and to work with students from a wide variety of schools. They have also enjoyed the opportunity to share experiences and ideas with other FLAs.

Joan Hoggan, Language Assistants Adviser at the British Council, has commented: "The FLAs are young, dynamic native speakers who can make a positive contribution to language, cultural and international activities of all types. For the FLAs themselves the Routes project provides an excellent opportunity to meet up with other FLAs in a different context, and outside of the environment of their own school."

Active Languages for teachers and students

Combining languages and sport is a particularly popular means of motivating learners, and West Midlands universities have long explored this approach, e.g. through the Aston versus Birmingham Sauerkraut football cup. For reasons of sustainability, it makes sense to support schools to adopt this approach themselves, so the West Midlands consortium is now working closely with the Youth Sport Trust on a project called Active Languages. A member of PE staff and a language teacher from each participating school attended a one-

day training session led by Routes into Languages and the Trust, during which they took part in practical sessions delivered by schools already engaged in similar projects.

Trying out karate in Japanese and handball in Spanish gave teachers an insight into

the student experience, and helped generate new ideas. The consortium then funded ten schools to pilot their own projects combining sports and languages in the curriculum. Plans currently underway include teaching orienteering in German, real tennis in French, and an annual, week-long sports and languages festival. With the support of the schools, we intend to produce a booklet for circulation to schools across the West Midlands, showing how the projects have worked and how every school can "DIY". The hope is that, in the longer term, each success will encourage others in the local area to become involved and take the project from strength to strength.

Also on the theme of sport, the West Midlands consortium held an Active Languages Olympic Day to celebrate the European Day of Languages. Students competed in teams to produce Olympic bids in the target language for cities in French-speaking countries. Winning teams were awarded gold, silver and bronze medals engraved with "Routes into Languages 2009". The day celebrated the hard work of the teachers and student language leaders and further embedded the idea of sports and languages in the minds of younger students.

Routes into Languages is about making connections and joined-up thinking. As the Links into Languages programme has now been launched, offering professional development opportunities and support to language teachers, initiatives such as Active Languages offer an ideal illustration of how Routes and Links into Languages will be working closely together in the West Midlands.



Professor Pam Moores is Director of the West Midlands consortium for Routes into Languages.



Kat Stevenson is the Project Officer.



Routes into Languages: Yorkshire and The Humber

www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/yorkshire

Since its foundation in 2007, the Routes into Languages consortium for Yorkshire and The Humber (YH) has provided an exciting portfolio of activities involving over 60 schools and colleges across the region.

The consortium aims at balancing the requests and needs of schools at particular transitions in the learning cycle by introducing new and innovative ways to experience language learning. These include cross curricular language study activities, linking languages with employability and entrepreneurship, conducting revision with student ambassadors, and online tandem exchanges.

Projects, run in successful collaboration with nine partner universities, have been extremely well received by pupils and teachers alike and feedback has been very positive.

Throughout the region, projects combining film, new media and languages have been readily supported by our consortium. In Sheffield, Year 11 students from several schools were involved in grammar revision sessions within the context of film-making and then went on to produce

“Pupils became Huw Edwards or Fiona Bruce for the day but in a foreign language!”

short films entitled “*UK in one minute, innit!*” The production was then screened at “Showcomotion” in Sheffield. Another example of a successful cross curricular activity was the production of news programmes in French and German. Pupils became Huw Edwards or Fiona Bruce for the day but in a foreign language! They used the TV studios at the University of Hull and were involved in creating, directing and filming their programme. Thirty-two students attended the day, accompanied by four teachers.

In July, a highly successful event uniting sport and languages took place at the University of Leeds, co-organised by Routes into Languages Yorkshire and The Humber and the Youth Sport Trust. Active Languages involved 14 schools, each one represented by two teachers from MFL and PE departments. The event started with talks highlighting activity that has taken place in various

parts of the country combining sport and languages. Practical sessions for the teachers in Tag Rugby with French and trampolining with French followed. Schools were invited to submit a proposal to run a pilot project in their school linking languages and sport and, if successful, each school will be awarded £1,000.

Another highlight of YH activities during the past year was the second outing of Eurofest held at Selby College. This was in collaboration with the North Yorkshire Educational Business Partnership (NYEBP) and six local schools, and was sponsored by the University of Hull, Regional Language Network Yorkshire and Humber, and Novotel, Leeds. Eurofest is a simulated trade fair, where students create and sell a new product or



research and promote a tourist region in a realistic business environment using the target language. A panel drawn from the invitees (students and staff from the consortium as well as business and local authority representatives) judged the performances and awarded prizes. Eurofest won the 2009 European Award for Languages and the Euro London Appointments Business Language Prize, which included a cheque for £1,000. Eurofest will form one of the final sustainable, replicable products of the Routes into Languages project.

The theme of employability and entrepreneurship continues in the consortium as a database of 60 Business Language Champions (BLCs) has been created over the past two years. These BLCs have been invited to join the “Why Study Languages?” and “Languages at Work” events. The outcome of this close collaboration

is a DVD entitled *“Now You’re Talking!”* which focuses on entrepreneurship and employability in relation to languages and addresses key messages at different points in the education cycle and the world of work.

Linguastars, a two-day residential hosted by the University of Leeds in July, saw 30 Year 12 students take part in target language workshops in French, German and Spanish. They also participated in taster seminars in interpreting and world cinema, focused on presentation skills, and they gained a crucial insight into studying languages at a university. The feedback was extremely positive and hopefully it encouraged them to stay on to complete A2-level courses and continue to study languages at degree level.

A major strength of the YH consortium is its continuation of student ambassador work with schools and colleges. “Cool”, “awesome” and

“interesting and exciting” are some of the adjectives used by pupils to describe work undertaken with student ambassadors, whether it be individual or class support in schools, taster sessions, revision days, “Why Study Languages?” events or online tandem learning. Each project highlights the positive influence of university students on young people.

During the third year of the project, the consortium looks forward to the exciting possibility of inspiring more young minds to study languages through engaging and motivating activities.

Claire Barber is the Project Manager for the Routes into Languages Yorkshire and The Humber consortium based at the University of Hull.



Why study languages...? 2010 calendar

A classroom calendar for teachers to use with students

The aim of this calendar is to introduce pupils to languages they may not be familiar with. The calendar features 12 languages (one per month). It also includes questions that are designed to generate classroom discussion.

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Thriving in difficult times

Michael Kelly outlines key strategies for anticipating and responding to the threat of departmental closure.

“Thriving in difficult times” was the topic of a recent workshop for heads of department that LLAS ran in partnership with the University Council for Modern Languages (UCML). After a decade of declining numbers studying languages in higher education and several departmental closures, the credit crunch has added an extra twist, bringing the likelihood of cuts in public spending. Not surprisingly, for many heads of department the primary objective is now survival. This article explores how departments in the LLAS subjects can not only survive, but can even thrive in these difficult times.

Universities are fundamentally about people and the relationships between them. “The University” is often spoken about as if it were independent of the individuals working in it. When we don’t like a decision which has been made, we often make comments like “The University wants to reduce costs”, or “The University has decided to withdraw some programmes”. Universities are large organisations and even senior colleagues can feel like a small cog in a big machine. However, to thrive we have to think differently.

If you are a department head, a subject leader or a language centre director now (or would like to become one in the future), you need to understand that you can make a difference and that your ideas and your decisions affect what will happen,

for good or for ill. The following ideas are drawn from the experiences of numerous colleagues, and some of them may help you to improve your ability to lead your group to success, by taking a forward-looking approach, winning friends and influencing people.

Lead by strategy

A strategy looks to the future, not to the past. Without a strategy, you can only react to what the Vice Chancellor (VC) or the Dean says or does. You need to focus on some clear ideas of what you want to achieve and how you plan to achieve it. That will be a good basis for persuading other people to support you. It is best if you can develop a clear strategy for your department, with an explicit action plan. It will need to be compatible with your institution’s strategy, and will be more effective if you can show that your strategy will help the institution to achieve its broader objectives. You may also think about how your ideas mesh with national strategies, such as supporting strategically important and vulnerable subjects, or widening participation.

Focus on ideas, not personalities

Whether in discussion with your Dean or senior management or with the colleagues you are managing, try to avoid allowing conflicts, tensions or uncertainty to become personal issues. It is a lot easier to solve a problem than to repair a relationship.

Know how decisions are made in your university

Knowledge is power, and you need to gain as much knowledge as possible. Be aware of how things are done in your institution. Does the VC make the most important decisions or are most matters left to Deputy VCs or Pro-VCs? Is the Senate an important part of the decision making process? Do the Deans make the strategic decisions at your university? The answers to these questions will vary by institution. In all cases, you need to know who is leading on which issues and make sure to direct your comments and suggestions to the right person.

Nurture relationships

Develop your network of contacts, and don’t neglect opportunities to strengthen relationships, even at routine events, or when meeting people outside the institution (sports, hobbies and interests). Make sure you know the “hot buttons” of people with influence. And make sure you have your antennae out for hints of change or shifts of attitude.

Know the lie of the land

Be sure to know who are your friends and champions, and give them good support. Identify the neutrals and observers, who will need some work to convince of your ideas. And know your enemies and sceptics, so that you can work to change their view or reduce their opportunity to do damage.

“Don’t keep the problem under your hat until it is too late to do anything”



Know your senior management

The VC, PVCs and senior officers (Director of Finance, Registrar, etc.) make strategic decisions for the institution. Even if you don't know them personally, be aware of how they may respond to your ideas.

Make friends with...

Your Dean

The Dean (or equivalent) is the most important operational manager from your point of view. She or he can inflict a lot of damage or conversely give you vital support. It is worth investing a lot of time and effort to

develop a good relationship with your Dean and to make him or her fully aware of what you are trying to do.

Heads of other departments

They can be good allies - they face many of the same issues that you do and understand your difficulties. Of course, they may be in competition with you for resources too. Try to focus on areas of mutual interest.

Key support staff

The senior management and Dean are important, of course, but don't neglect to nurture good relationships with their personal assistants - these

individuals can give you very good information, and they also make the decisions about whether you are worthy of their boss's time.

Your own department

You are an academic leader and a "herder of cats". It is not always easy to build an effective team that will work together and share a common goal. But it will be important to get as close to this as you can. And don't underestimate the support they can give you, for example by drawing on their own networks of contacts.

Responding to threats of closure

Over the past ten years LLAS has received many phone calls and emails about threatened departmental closures. While we cannot lobby your senior management or the funding councils, we will help in any way we can. The University Council for Modern Languages (UCML), the University Council of General and Applied Linguistics (UCGAL) and the UK Council of Area Studies Associations (UKCASA) are able to help with any lobbying.

By the time we receive notification of a closure, the final decision has often already been taken by senior management, so be alert to seek advice and help as early as possible. Don't keep the problem under your hat until it is too late to do anything.

If you are faced with a problem

which could lead to closure or downsizing, here are a few points to consider:

- how is the problem being presented to you?
- can you find a plan which addresses the problem as presented or offers a compromise? For example:
 - if there is a budget deficit look for ways that savings could be made or income increased
 - if student numbers are low try to negotiate a lower quota or explore ways to boost recruitment
 - if research funding is a problem, develop a strategy to increase research income
- ask specific questions, e.g. how is a budget deficit calculated?

Know exactly who or what is being closed or threatened. Some languages?

All languages? Who is affected? Is there going to be a reorganisation? Are there likely to be redundancies? What are the consequences for current students? Be open to departmental mergers and/or reorganisations.

You may need to examine your staffing structure. If a department has a lot of senior staff on high salaries who are due to retire in the next few years, redundancy packages could be explored. Alternatively these staff could be encouraged to fund their posts through research projects, so other funds are freed for addressing a budget deficit or investing in other areas of activity. Can administrative support be rationalised? Are teaching staff being employed as efficiently as possible? These are all difficult decisions of course, but it is your responsibility to explore them and make them if necessary.

Opportunities for LLAS subjects

At the LLAS “Thriving in difficult times” workshop, the participants worked in groups to explore strengths and opportunities for languages, linguistics and area studies at the present time.

Strengths identified included:

- cross-disciplinary interaction enables institutions to offer distinctive provision, e.g. integrating linguistics and psychology
- ability and potential to offer languages to all students
- the student body at large is multilingual and multicultural
- collaborations between languages, linguistics and education enable extended provision of Applied Linguistics and English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- other alliances and groupings are possible, e.g. with business schools
- increasing identity of a “Modern Languages” community
- successful “flagship” programmes can help support important associated programmes which recruit less well
- competitive advantage, e.g. some languages are only taught in one institution
- small group teaching is good for student satisfaction
- political importance of some languages, e.g. Welsh

Opportunities identified included:

- the internationalisation agenda can be built into all degree programmes
- employability: can respond to government emphasis on well-rounded interculturally competent graduates
- transferable skills
- cultural capital of certain foreign cultures, e.g. popularity of *manga* and *anime*
- the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) are particularly important to UK government and business and we have many experts in the languages and cultures of these countries
- further development of international networks from existing contacts
- current poor economic environment offers opportunities and demand for learning new skills and enhancing employability
- opportunities for collaboration between institutions

You are the head of department

These two fictional scenarios were among those presented at the “Thriving in difficult times” workshop:

.....

The University of Salisbury is a small research-intensive institution. The School of Modern Languages offers programmes in French, German, Spanish and Italian. The School always meets its quota of students and a standard offer is BCC at A-level. However, the A-level offer is well below that of other humanities departments in the university: ABB is usually required for English and AAB for Law. Salisbury’s senior management claims that the low offer for modern languages is impacting on Salisbury’s position in the league tables. Provision in Modern Languages has been put under review and the Head of Languages has three months to come up with a viable business plan.

.....

The University of Harrogate has been teaching Japanese since the 1950s. The Japanese government endows a chair and has donated considerable sums of money to the University Library for the provision of Japanese books and journals. Senior management proposes to close the Japanese Department as it did poorly in the 2008 RAE compared to other departments at Harrogate. Colleagues complain that they have little time for research as they all have to do a lot of language teaching. The senior management responds that contact time is too high and that teaching Japanese is too expensive. The Japanese government is making representations to the University and to HEFCE. Eventually it is decided that the Department of Japanese will merge into the School of Modern Languages, an action which it successfully resisted in 2002. The School of Modern Languages only teaches European languages at present and resistance to the merger remains among the Japanese Department staff. The School of Modern Languages has been given one year to come up with a viable business plan for Japanese.

What would you do?

What would you do if you were head of department at either of these universities? Send your response to these scenarios or any of the issues raised in this article to llas@soton.ac.uk, and we will publish a selection of your comments in the next issue of *Liaison*.



Who can help?

Whether you are thriving or threatened, LLAS staff are happy to talk things through with you and point you in the direction of help. We will keep your situation confidential and we will not inform anyone outside LLAS unless you specifically ask us.

Professor Michael Kelly is Director of the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, and until recently was Head of the School of Humanities at the University of Southampton.



Beyond the PhD: a new perspective on the careers of arts and humanities PhD graduates

Julia Horn argues that to fully appreciate the impact of PhD study in the arts and humanities, we have to explore career stories over the long term, and be attentive to the unexpected.

Careers are individual stories of people's lives. They are culturally embedded, historically specific, autobiographical narratives. The very word "career" encompasses a western history of ideas: about the value of work in one's life; about a life unfolding across time; and about the relationship between personal and social roles.

There are a number of important questions one may ask about contemporary careers. What roles and functions does work play in our lives? Can appropriate work lead to self-fulfilment? How do individuals talk to each other about their careers in public and in private? What ethical, religious or philosophical ideas have influenced contemporary notions of "career"? How have all these ideas changed over time?

When we think of careers in higher education, we think primarily of moving into a first job after education. This is only natural – it is the first stage that all graduates will have to proceed through. Yet, to only see a career in this narrow window of time is to limit many things: the interplay between work and other aspects of an individual's life; the development of new interests and capabilities over time; and changes in forms of work.

A heavy focus on the first few months after graduation is a crime which the league tables commit, when

they take account of the Destinations of Leavers in Higher Education statistics as part of university rankings. These statistics take a snapshot of graduate destinations six months after finishing a course, and have long been used by careers services to indicate the sectors to which their graduates are attracted. The problem with these statistics arises when they are used retrospectively to judge, via employment outcomes, how successful a course of higher education has been. When this happens, some groups of students – arts and humanities students, PhD graduates, the career "undecided" – can appear less "employable" than they really are. Indeed, students who go travelling can appear, in tables like these, as "better" than those who are working

The main aim behind a new web resource, Beyond the PhD, created by the Centre for Career Management Skills (CCMS) at the University of Reading, is to make visible what happens to arts and humanities researchers after the PhD. The website is based around audio clips of interviews with recent PhD graduates that provide insights into their personal career experiences. It is widely known that arts and humanities graduate researchers do not all find academic posts, and that many spend time in temporary positions in the years following the PhD. It is not clear what happens to those researchers who do not pursue an academic career, either immediately or in the longer term. The number of PhD graduates in arts and humanities is

"...the lives and careers of former PhD researchers are varied, sometimes unexpected, and never boring"

in non-graduate jobs, perhaps in sectors where the only way in is to start at the bottom. More concerning, from my point of view, is that for PhD graduates, six months is insufficient time either to inform careers services of trends in employment, or to measure the impact of the PhD itself.

relatively small, and because there are few obvious destinations to head for, careers advisors, supervisors and graduates themselves worry that uncertain times lie ahead.

Yet what the team at CCMS found was that the lives and careers of former PhD researchers are



varied, sometimes unexpected, and never boring. Nearly every PhD researcher, after the PhD is completed, experiences a period of uncertainty. If seeking posts outside academia, individuals often start in a sector at a level significantly below their capabilities via voluntary work, work experience or entry-level posts. However, once in work, the vast majority of our interviewees would quickly be promoted or would be able to move into more senior posts by moving between organisations.

A great number of the individuals who were interviewed do not fit typical career paths. They might combine several different jobs, using their academic specialism in a freelance capacity, continuing to publish in their academic field, or pursuing creative writing. Many had found and developed niche posts or moved across several fields. Some had

disappointed graduate employers by getting bored in traditional graduate schemes. Others had fought hard to be taken seriously as candidates for such posts. I would argue that all of the individuals featured on Beyond the PhD are very

“employable”, but a significant number of our interviewees were employable on their own terms, and these terms do not always fit harmoniously with employers’ expectations.

Just as interesting as the stories of work are the comments that PhD graduates make about the role PhD research has played in their lives: how it affects their personal identities and their subsequent careers. Many of our interviewees explain in very articulate ways the links between their PhD research and their current roles. For example, Liz argues that the PhD has changed not only the way she thinks but also how she behaves and communicates with others. Chris draws direct links between research skills and his work

at the National Audit Office, and continues to publish academic research in his spare time. John, now working in learning technology, doesn’t see his core identity as changed by the PhD, but “it is something that informs everything I do”.

This is not the kind of insight we can pick up from statistics about

the destinations of PhD graduates, but it gives us an important sense of how a period of PhD research can have unexpected, and hard to measure, ramifications and benefits.

Beyond the PhD is a non-didactic resource. This means that it neither offers to solve individual career dilemmas, nor offers a single model of how to “develop” or “manage” a career. Rather, in addition to the personal audio narratives, the site includes a range of journalistic opinion pieces and video discussions, which each explore a particular approach to understanding and developing a career. We believe a site like Beyond the PhD



can give individuals better insight into the lives of others, without divorcing a “career” from the cultural, social, economic and political contexts in which it unfolds.

Beyond the PhD

www.beyondthephd.co.uk

Centre for Career Management Skills

www.reading.ac.uk/ccms

Dr Julia Horn is Joint Director of the Centre for Career Management Skills at the University of Reading.



Teaching Hurricane Katrina

Anna Hartnell traces the experience of teaching Hurricane Katrina to undergraduate students, and the way the topic challenges assumptions about the meaning of “America”.

For the past two years, students in my African American Experience class have overwhelmingly named Hurricane Katrina as the most “memorable” topic studied on the course. Discussing Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech on the same day that Barack Obama was inaugurated as the 44th US president was pretty special, as was teaching Obama’s *Dreams from My Father* as the course’s conclusion. But it was Spike Lee’s epic documentary *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* – and the conversation about Katrina that ensued – that proved to be the most captivating.

The African American experience

poverty would prompt a long overdue national conversation about race and class. Instead, the media storm that followed the hurricane cast Katrina’s predominantly black victims as somehow to blame for their predicament in the drowning city. As exaggerated and often entirely fabricated media stories began to circulate about the goings on in the Superdome and Convention Center – the places of “last resort” for those unable to adhere to the mandatory evacuation order – the reporting of Katrina conformed to myriad racist stereotypes that have long linked black communities to violence, crime, familial

African American experience?

Such questions prompted a valuable exploration of the boundaries that demarcate objects of academic enquiry – the borderline between natural and social disasters, and the possibility that our understanding of nature might itself be socially constructed, for example. The attempt to understand why Katrina might be part of an African American studies module was also complicated by the fact that most of the students in the class could remember the media coverage in the late summer of 2005. *When the Levees Broke* thus re-situated and nuanced perceptions already formed as a result of a global media event.

I often find that when studying issues around US race relations, students from the UK tend to be quite quick to condemn America as an inherently racist nation without pausing to think about the ways in which racist discourses shape the British national narrative. The predominant media coverage of Katrina in this country followed a similar pattern, and greeted the images of mostly black US citizens abandoned in the Superdome and Convention Center with shocked outrage, decrying the fact that a nation which had relatively recently tolerated the sins of slavery and segregation could have atoned so little for its shameful past. But Katrina’s international co-ordinates unsettle some of the easy assumptions about Britain’s supposed “tolerance” of racial minorities. New Orleans was itself once a slave port, and so testifies

“...the study of Katrina alienates students from some of their assumptions about the US...”

undoubtedly presents one of the most powerful and convincing challenges to exceptionalist accounts of US history. Yet teaching the trajectory from slavery to emancipation, through Reconstruction and Civil Rights, and concluding with the historic election of the first African American president in 2008, can evoke the misleading sense that the advancement of black America conforms to the master narrative of US progress. Katrina, and particularly its effects on New Orleans, dispelled any such optimism.

In the storm’s aftermath hopes were high that its vivid exposure of disproportionate levels of black

dysfunction and welfare dependency.

The seminar room, though, offered opportunities for a more considered, reflective and constructive conversation that went some way towards unpicking this vicious racist logic. Many students struggled to put into words what they wanted to say about Katrina, but this difficulty generated a number of important questions: Why was the reaction to Katrina so different from that to 9/11? What implications did the mislabelling of Katrina evacuees as “refugees” have for the storm’s largely black victims? And should we even be studying Katrina at all in a course about the



to the thin line that separates US racism from European forms of racism that were, after all, the architects of race-based slavery and colonialism. Again, this was an issue that was aired in the reflective space of the seminar.

New Orleans is a key location within black Atlantic cultures, and while within the US it is often viewed as America's most "European" city, the case for it being the nation's most "African" city is equally, if not more, compelling. For while the French Quarter is seen to recall Louisiana's French and Spanish colonial past, the fact that large numbers of African Americans attend the city's spiritual churches, which have links to voodoo, signals the persistent influence of West African culture on New Orleans. Interestingly both of these labels have contributed to the overriding sense that New Orleans is somehow "foreign" and "other" to the United States.

Katrina exacerbated this existing process of "othering" the city: the widespread disavowal of the

catastrophe as somehow akin to a "third world" disaster zone was a distancing move that rendered the experience altogether "foreign". President Bush memorably reinforced this perception when, following an aerial tour of New Orleans on 2 September 2005 he remarked: "I've just completed a tour of some devastated country"; he also claimed to "know the people of this part of the world are suffering". People "from this part of the world", Bush insisted, would not be forgotten.

The President's evident alienation from the region proved disastrous for the hurricane's victims – federal forces took five days to reach storm-struck Louisiana. But the way in which the study of Katrina alienates students from some of their assumptions about the US proved to be very valuable. Images of American power bolstered by the Bush administration's so-called "war on terror" were confronted with a rather unfamiliar - even uncanny - vision of the US landscape. Spike

Lee's documentary in particular opens up avenues for re-reading America in the wider contexts not only of transatlantic black cultures but also environmental issues like climate change which disproportionately afflict vulnerable communities.

Contrary to the didactic thrust of much of Lee's film-making, *When the Levees Broke* provides a rich format of shifting conversations that consistently challenge the viewer's ability to form stable conclusions about the storm's significance. My own assumption that showing the students a four-hour documentary would probably test their powers of concentration to breaking point was also disproved by the attention and thought they gave to Lee's haunting tribute to the victims of Katrina.

Anna Hartnell
is Lecturer
in American
Literature and
Culture at the
University of
Birmingham.



“Cultivate the Nation, Don’t Nationalise Culture!”

Intercultural cinema in a small language department

Claire Thomson recounts her experiences of teaching Scandinavian film and interculturality to MA and undergraduate students.

In 2006, Lars von Trier addressed a one-minute filmic challenge to the Danish National Canon project, instigated by the then Minister of Culture. Sitting cross-legged on a table, von Trier cuts the white cross out of the Danish flag, patching together the remaining red scraps. With the now suggestively revolutionary flag fluttering atop a pole, the words “Cultivate the Nation, Don’t Nationalise Culture!” appear. Enraged at the inclusion of his own film, *Idioterne* (The Idiots, 1998) in the canon, von Trier

cultural arbiter and national icon.

I teach three cinema courses at UCL. Two of these, Nordic Cinema and Cinema and Nation, are optional modules for the MA Film Studies in the Centre for Intercultural Studies; the third is a second-year BA option on Nordic Cinema, which, typically for a “content course” in a small department, has to attract students from across the institution, as well as supplementing language and literature teaching for BA Scandinavian Studies students. All three

“...film analysis and film theory are useful tools for training students to be critical cultural operators...”

then exhorted the Danes to fly their flag upside down as a protest against racism and intolerance.¹ I often recount this cultural skirmish to language students embarking on the study of film, for it raises questions about the status of cinema as (“national”) art, the state’s role in financing, defining and re-appropriating “culture”, the negotiation of collective identities on screen and in public debate, and the film *auteur* as

courses, though they assume different types of knowledge on the part of the students, pose the same central challenge: when teaching cinema in a national context, how can we avoid the trap of reading narrative, character, setting, etc. as expressions of a pre-existing, homogeneous national culture?

This issue is just as valid for those being offered a *smörgåsbord* of national cinematic traditions divorced from

¹See www.humanisme.dk/danmark/dannebrog-initiativ.php for an account of the dispute and campaign (in Danish).



An abstract painting featuring a central white rectangular area with a textured, slightly mottled appearance. This white area is framed by large, vibrant red triangular shapes that point towards the corners. The entire composition is enclosed within a thick, dark, almost black border that has a rough, hand-painted quality. In the upper right corner of the white area, there are some faint, dark markings that appear to be the letters 'HSC'.

language learning, as in our MA, as it is for students taking a language or area studies degree. And in both cases, I would argue, there is an intimate connection between (a) learning to analyse film *qua* film and (b) learning to think critically about the construction of histories and cultures. In insisting that essays pose, and answer, questions such as “how does this sequence construct its meaning through spatial composition, editing, lighting, camera movement...?”, we empower students to understand cinema not as a simple conduit for the history and characteristics of a given nation, but as a socio-historical resource that reveals how a national community imagines itself as such in different ways at different times, and invites reflection on how different forms of art mediate these imaginings. Put differently, film analysis and film theory are useful tools for training students to be critical cultural operators, regardless of their familiarity with the language or culture in question. I have found that, perversely, structuring courses as a grand narrative of periods and *auteurs* (Golden Age—Dreyer—Bergman—Dogma 95—intercultural cinema) allows the students to discern the operation of film historiography and national narratives, as well as their “postnational” subversions.

The cinema of the Nordic countries offers a rich case study in cinema history and its constructions of identity, and not merely because cinema in the region is blessed with charismatic directors and generous state support. More interesting are the tensions and synchronicities that emerge from teaching these five national cinema traditions together. The establishment of a Department of Scandinavian Studies at UCL almost a century ago (Hilson 2009) was an accident that looks like an intention; but the infrastructural

complexities of a multi-language department are compensated for by the opportunities to problematise, in teaching and research, the notion of “national” languages and histories. Scandinavianists must demonstrate an understanding of the historical interconnections between Nordic cultures and yet function as specialists in one Scandinavian language. So too with Nordic cinema: recent scholarly interest in transnational cinemas (Hjort 2005; Hjort and Petrie 2008) finds an ideal case study in the long-established co-production practices between the Nordic countries, where the Nordic Council’s Film and Television Fund mandates the use of multinational cast and crew. At national level, ongoing negotiations about the best use of state support have led to impassioned public debates about minimum standards of, e.g. “Danishness” in terms of language, director, actors and crew, setting, and theme.

The idea of “interculturality” is central to much current film theory (e.g. Naficy 2001) and describes a fairly slippery but observable phenomenon in contemporary Nordic

cinema. Intercultural cinema is acutely sensitive to – and plays a role in producing and disseminating – shifts in Nordic social imaginaries to embrace increasing ethnic heterogeneity.

A new generation of filmmakers splices classic Swedish imagery with narratives of immigration and hybridity, bringing the bombs of Beirut to the Stockholm playground (Zozo, 2005) or the trafficked sex worker to the villas of Malmö (Lilya-4-Ever, 2002). Danish cinema often focuses on the architecture of the welfare state, exploring how emerging intercultural communities share space (1:1, 2006; Out, 2006).

A grasp of the canonical themes and images that are re-appropriated in these films is of course necessary for a full understanding of the collision and melding of cultures they explore; but so too is an analytical vocabulary that can account for the shot-by-shot fabrication of the intercultural encounter. Recent film theory (notably Marks 2000) allows for a focus on the ways in which film privileges the visual dimension over the verbal or narrative in the communication of the

meeting with an “other” culture, often gesturing to the other senses, and thus reliant on the audience’s recourse to memories of smell, touch or taste. I have found students responsive to the idea that film communicates meaning beyond the reach of natural language; non-assessed film diaries can facilitate discussion of affective, bodily responses to audio-visual stimuli, thus enriching textual analysis and, ultimately, forcing reflection on culture and identity as everyday practice.

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Claire Thomson
is Lecturer in
Scandinavian
Film and Head of
the Scandinavian
Studies
Department at UCL.



Getting started in academia

LLAS occasionally offers small bursaries for students to attend conferences and other events. Alison Dickens presents a summary of the feedback received from eight students who have recently benefited from such awards.

The Subject Centre supports the academic development of students through a range of activities. The *Début* journal, the first issue of which is due out later this year, publishes undergraduate student articles. Our annual student essay competition invites students to comment on their learning experience, and in this edition of *Liaison* we hear from one of last

year's runners-up.

During 2008-09 we supported four students to attend the Moving

Forward post-graduate conference organised by the University of Aberdeen and

we funded four student places on the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Language Documentation Summer School. Students tell us what these experiences meant to them: "The Moving Forward postgraduate conference has been a wonderful experience for me. It has broadened my understanding of the boundaries of researching in the field of humanities and social sciences. It has also been an exceptional opportunity to be introduced to people and subjects from disciplines other than mine."

Doaa Hamada, Leicester

"This was the first time I have presented my doctoral work outside my home university, and the whole process is at first rather inhibiting. However, those two days at Aberdeen, meeting other students from different universities and fields of research and discussing our work, have been exhilarating to the point that I have felt encouraged to participate in other conferences."

Margaux Whiskin, St Andrews

"Presenting my paper in a supportive and encouraging atmosphere provided a good introduction to conferencing, stimulated new areas of thought and allowed me to meet and chat with other postgraduates from different countries and universities engaged in different areas of study, which nonetheless informed my own work."

Mark West, Glasgow

"The conference offered two great opportunities: meeting with other graduate students from both related and rather different fields, resulting in very interesting and rewarding conversations, and secondly, the great chance to present my own paper to an interested and positively critical audience."

Martin Modlinger, Cambridge

"The Summer School contributed immensely in helping me gain insights into new approaches in linguistic research. This has helped me to refine the methodology of my PhD project."

"wonderful"

"rewarding"

"fruitful"

Samuel Atintono, Manchester

"It is significant to learn from the professors in their fields as well as to interact with them and students with similar interests.

I will use the tools from this Summer School in my study."

Gabriel Arellano, UCL

"Perhaps one of the features that I most appreciated from the Summer School was the persistent remark that we have to consider our documenting project not as an individual one but as part of a major project that belongs to the scientific community."

Gerardo Ortega-Delgado, UCL

"The workshops and tutorials were particularly useful as they allowed for a fruitful exchange of ideas on both signed and spoken languages. The opportunity to attend lectures by published linguists was also extremely beneficial for me. Because I enjoyed and benefited from this Summer School so much, I hope to attend next year's Summer School in the Netherlands and perhaps give a presentation myself."

Sam Lutalo-Kiingi, UCLAN

Alison Dickens is Assistant Director (HE Programmes) at the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies.



I fell in love with my own language

Deborah Adams was runner-up in the 2009 LLAS student award competition. In her prize-winning essay, Deborah tells us how she became inspired to study the English language.

One of my early memories is of going on holiday and making friends with a small Spanish girl; we must both have been about six. I remember being amazed and not a little envious at her ability to yammer what appeared to be fluent gibberish to her parents, and to have them understand and react. I was astonished that communication could occur so easily in an entirely different code, and languages began to fascinate me. Regrettably, however, the schools I attended did not seem to share my interest in all these different, indecipherable codes, and after a somewhat undistinguished educational career, I left school at 16. Although I had picked up the standard smattering of French, I was as linguistically challenged as the standard inhabitant of these islands.

Nonetheless, there was a tiny flame of interest still faintly flickering in the rusty linguistic compartment of my brain, and consequently when, at the elderly age of 45, I finally made the decision to study for my long-overdue degree, my logical choice of subject was languages. I have now studied Spanish at this level, and that tiny flame is burning brightly, fuelled by the oxygen of understanding different cultures, different grammatical structures, and the heady, voluptuous feeling and sound of different pronunciations. I have even been

inspired to study a classical language, Latin, and was surprised by how the rigid structure and logic of that language engaged me. However, it was the fact that the course also required me to take certain modules investigating English language that provided the real shock.

I fell in love with my own language, English.

This has truly astonished me. Who could have known that there was so much to discover in something I had been using without thought since I was about twelve months old? But the further that one delves into the English language, the more there seems to be discovered, and the more there seems available to inspire.

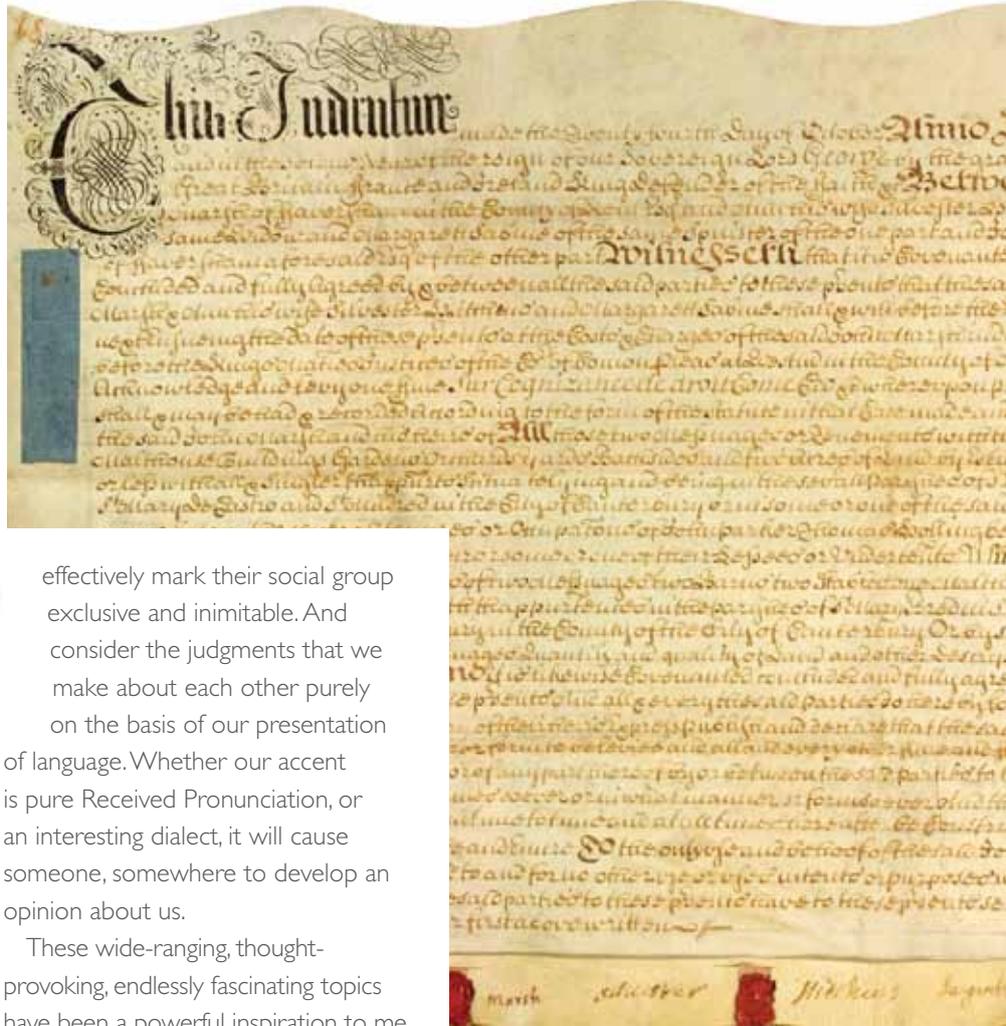
Take the fascinating history of the language. Its development from Anglo-Saxon, Old Norse, and Norman and Latin influences is not only enthralling, but also explains the rich seam of vocabulary available to the English speaker or writer: Our language seems to be embedded with the history of those who have come before us, leaving their indelible imprint as they crafted this astonishing tool. Germanic or Latinate synonyms for most words, coupled with frequent French adaptations of Latin, provide a massive well of vocabulary, allowing meanings to be so finely nuanced that it is unsurprising that the British Isles has produced such an array

of literary giants.

In this way, my enthusiasm has been fired not only for the sound, feel, structure and functions of language, but in the way that it can be used so beautifully to encompass emotions and communicate messages so profoundly and precisely. It has been equally inspirational to study stylistics to appreciate how great writers can manipulate our remarkable language to such stunning literary effect.

And consider the extraordinary diversity of our language, and its phenomenal global spread over the last few centuries. Because of British colonialism, and then the cultural and economic dominance of the USA, the language is now effectively a *lingua franca*. There are at least a billion people who speak English, even if only at a fundamental level, and it is internationally considered the language of science, business and aviation. It is quite astonishing to reflect on the amount of technological progress that can be made when global communication has been made so much simpler.

Think about the incredibly flexible and dynamic nature of our living language, with its ever-growing pantheon of new vocabulary being added to on a daily basis, as our tongue stretches to accommodate the requirements of our age. There can be



effectively mark their social group exclusive and inimitable. And consider the judgments that we make about each other purely on the basis of our presentation of language. Whether our accent is pure Received Pronunciation, or an interesting dialect, it will cause someone, somewhere to develop an opinion about us.

These wide-ranging, thought-provoking, endlessly fascinating topics have been a powerful inspiration to me, and have caused me to make a U-turn on my original intention to continue with Modern Language studies, since I now would very much like to specialise in Applied Linguistics. I still have a true fascination for the detail and structure, the musicality and rhythm of foreign languages, yet have come to appreciate those elements even more keenly in my own native tongue.

Language, whether used in talking or writing, is a central part of us all; it is through this medium that we conduct our relationships, express our thoughts, construct our identities and effectively live our lives. The English language has proved to be an important and immensely inspiring area of study, because it teaches us of our history, our heritage, and our culture. And, as I now realise, to properly understand our own language is to properly understand ourselves.

very few now who do not use the net to google and twitter, download emails, upload photos, and read or even write the occasional blog. What would someone have understood of that sentence even twenty years ago?

Relating to such social and cultural developments, it has been fascinating to consider how the English language has been adapted into the new media that have arisen out of current technology. The endlessly flexible nature of English has allowed chatrooms, instant messaging, text messages and email to develop their own unique paradigms of standard usage, and it has been most interesting studying the varieties of verbal creativity possible within these different texts.

And take the way that English literacy practices vary across different social and cultural contexts, with different social groups manipulating the language in ways that differentiate them from others, to establish their unique position in society. It is fascinating to see how teenagers of every generation invariably create new vocabulary, new grammatical structures, and new pronunciations to

“These wide-ranging, thought-provoking, endlessly fascinating topics have been a powerful inspiration...”

Deborah Adams wrote this essay while studying for a degree in Humanities with English Language at the Open University. As *Liaison* went to print Deborah was awaiting her final results.

NUS Student Experience Report and language students

The Student Experience Report presents a wealth of data on the student experience of higher education. Aaron Porter compares the findings for language students and the student body as a whole.

In November 2008, the National Union of Students (NUS) launched its Student Experience Report. This wide-ranging research looks at UK students' experiences and expectations before and during their studies, covering all areas of student experience from course quality to post-course employment plans, and from views on accommodation to finance issues.

The NUS has received funding from HSBC to carry out an annual Student Experience Survey for the next three years. We appointed GfK NOP, a market research company, to carry out an online survey of current and prospective students, and a total of 3,135 current students and 250 prospective students were interviewed in addition to two extensive qualitative research phases.

This article extracts the national survey data and some of the specific data for language students.

Overall feelings about university

Nearly three-quarters of students (74%) reported that they were enjoying university and for modern language students this figure rose to 81%. Those who were not enjoying university cited poor teaching and

concerns about debt as the main reasons. 85% of students (87% of language students) were pleased that they had decided to go to university.

Choosing a university and course

When asked their top three reasons for going to university, less than a third of students (28%) reported that they were going for the experience itself, though this rose to 37% for language students. Over two-thirds (68%) said that they are going to university to gain qualifications with more than half (53%) saying they are doing so to improve their chances of getting a job, and just under half (44%) attending to improve their earning potential.

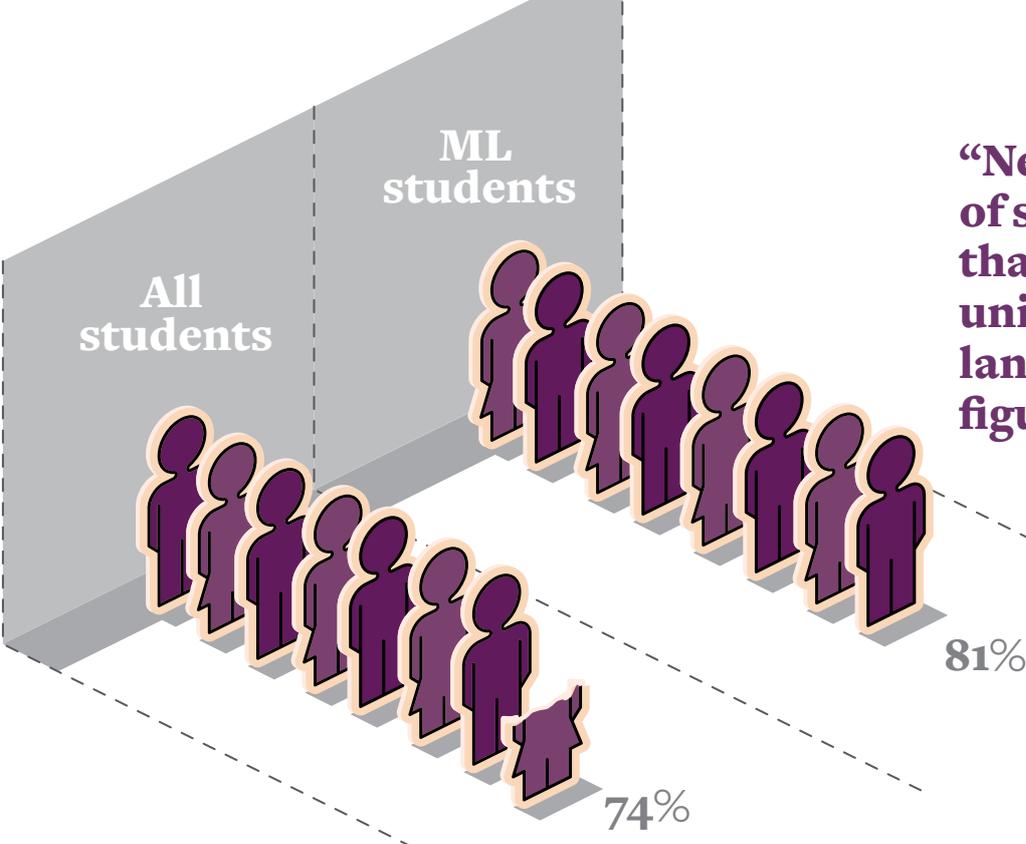
The survey identified four main categories of students, related to their motivation for going to university:

- academics - those who want to focus on learning and gaining academic skills, and are likely to go on to postgraduate study
- next steppers - those with a clear career goal who have chosen their course with that in mind
- option openers – those who do not necessarily have a clear goal and tend to select a course they believe they will enjoy and be good at

- toe dippers - those attracted to university for the lifestyle, who hope to have more opportunities open to them because they have obtained a degree.

The research found differences between the reasons why students pick certain institutions. Less than half (45%) of students at research-intensive Russell Group universities picked their institution because "it had the course / subject I wanted", compared with 71% of students at the newer, post-1992 universities. In contrast, 81% of students at Russell Group institutions said their main reason for picking their university was because of its academic reputation, compared with just 24% of those at post-1992 universities. A third of students choose their university because it is the closest to home. This is especially true for students from a poorer background (53%) compared with their richer counterparts (22%).

When asked for their top three reasons for choosing their course, all language students surveyed reported that the course matched their interests (compared to 89% of all students). The next most common reasons were "the options / flexibility to study what



“Nearly three-quarters of students reported that they were enjoying university and for modern language students this figure rose to 81%”

I wanted” (47%) and the quality of teaching on the course (42%).

Quality and quantity of teaching

Satisfaction with teaching was high, with 85% of students rating the quality of teaching and learning they experienced as good or excellent, rising to 89% for language students. The research also found a significant difference between students’ perceptions in teaching quality. Students at Russell Group, or pre-1992 universities are much more likely to rate the quality of teaching they have received as good to excellent, compared to those at post-1992 institutions.

Students receive an average of 15 contact hours and do 16 hours of private study per week, although this varied by institution and subject. We do not have data on the contact hours for language students but it is interesting that only 65% of language students said that they were satisfied with their contact hours compared to the national average of 75%.

Personalisation

Although 92% of students were given the opportunity to provide feedback about their course, only 51% of these

students believed that their feedback was acted upon. The percentages were the same for language students.

In the context of discussions surrounding supporting the learner voice it was encouraging to see that while only 23% of students feel involved in shaping the content, curriculum or design of their course, 57% said that they wanted such involvement.

Coursework and feedback

A quarter of students reported that they had to wait more than five weeks for feedback on their coursework. Only 25% received individual verbal feedback on their assessments, compared with 71% that would like such feedback. Of language students, 39% cited three to four weeks as the length of time it took to receive feedback, with 24% reporting times of less than three weeks, 21% more than five weeks, and 17% “impossible to tell due to the variation”.

Facilities and resources

Language students generally seem more satisfied than other students with the facilities and resources on campus, with 80% saying that the books on

campus meet their needs compared to 75% of all students; 88% saying library access and opening hours meet their needs compared to 84% overall, and 84% saying that computer access and opening hours meet their needs compared to 79% of all students.

Post-course plans

46% of students responded that they would be going straight into permanent full-time employment, 34% would be looking for work, and 6% said that they had no idea what they would do once they finished their studies. A fifth of final year students said that the careers advice provided by their university did not meet their needs.

Further information:

NUS Student Experience Report 2008
www.nus.org.uk/PageFiles/4017/NUS%20Student%20Experience%20Report.doc

Aaron Porter is
 Vice-President
 of the National
 Union of Students.



La prononciation française pour de vrai

Review by Pierre Larrivée

I may not admit it in public, but I think we know that one of the weak points of language teaching is oral expression, and there are all sorts of reasons for this. Whatever we say, the context of the classroom is still centred around the teacher's oral expression rather than the students'. Oral expression is hardly tested, except at university level after the Year Abroad which is assumed to provide the osmosis necessary to acquire the accent. Such tests are, however, generally not preceded by any extensive teaching. The uninterrupted flow of speech is made up of a number of features that are difficult to identify, let alone correct: as far as I know, the tradition of corrective phonetics has simply not made its way to Britain. This may be to blame for the fact that few things put off the British student more than having their accent corrected. This is one of the factors behind the notorious difficulty to get our students to say anything, let alone in the target language, for fear of appearing inaccurate, uninformed, or uncool.

To teach oral expression supposes an awareness of the mechanics of sounds and melodies of the target language, plenty of examples that allow rehearsal of difficult points for the speakers of particular languages, and examples from native speakers. All this is provided by Penny Sewell's *La prononciation française pour de vrai* (roughly translated, "The real pronunciation of French"). This comes as a set of three DVDs explicitly targeted at post-GCSE learners. It is structured into a series of 24 lessons

that cover the phonetic elements of French. The first disk deals with accentuation, rhythm, the infamous mute "e", the syllable, the linking of syllables, and intonation; the second with vowels; and the third with consonants, including the crucial and crucially challenging /r/. Each lesson of between four and 20 minutes has the format of a lecture, with the camera focused on the author. She provides us with elements of descriptive phonetics about how sounds are pronounced, followed by examples of words and then sentences to be repeated, and stretches of discussions with native French speakers. Liberal use is made of useful written boxes in a corner of the window, allowing links to orthography to be illustrated and exploited. Exercises are included and a testimony section provides us with the full discussions conducted with the native speakers which are used elsewhere as illustrations. As this is very much destined for the English-speaking learner, contrasts and parallels between French and (British) English are made to the advantage of the learner.

The contents are accurate, cover the ground and the lessons are well organised. A commendable feature is the occasional reference to the fact that there are other varieties of French than that of the Paris *bourgeoisie*, to which the teaching of French is still today too often confined. Reference to major French regional accents is made, and to French outside France. Different ways of speaking according to situations and social classes are mentioned, with focus on register. This



Penny Sewell
(2009)

ISBN: 9780956179609

Available from www.soundsfrench.co.uk

is a welcome addition, without which students faced with informal French may find themselves at a loss.

The question that arises is how this material is to be best used. It would take some resolve on the part of the younger learner to go through the 24 lessons at home. The format and duration of the material would certainly make it a good complement to language classes at A-level and beyond.

Some aspects could have been developed, of course. It would be unfair to bicker about language slips on the part of a near native speaker who takes great pains to express herself clearly and at the right pace. Having the list of contents

read out in a 24-minute clip does not seem the best way to introduce the material: why not simply print it somewhere to extend the fairly meagre 11-page booklet? The fact that the author looks sideways at her laptop rather than at the camera is a bit off-putting at times, and different visual stimuli could have been utilised. These minor points should not detract from the fact that this resource is an excellent addition to the toolbox of the teacher of advanced French, and a much-needed one too, in view of the difficulties of teaching spoken expression. I certainly shall be using it myself with my students as an occasional element of language teaching.

Pierre Larrivé is
Reader in French
Linguistics at
Aston University.



Developing undergraduate research and inquiry

Review by Marina Orsini-Jones

The recent Higher Education Academy publication *Developing undergraduate research skills* by Mick Healey and Alan Jenkins expands on previous related publications by these two authors, who can be credited with having raised the profile and visibility of the teaching-research nexus in the UK higher education (HE) sector (e.g. Healey 2005; Healey and Jenkins 2006; Jenkins and Healey 2009). In fact, it takes forward the work illustrated in another paper (Jenkins, Healey and Zetter 2007) and has a similar look and feel - a brief overview of each relevant theme or topic is followed by examples and case studies of inquiry-based undergraduate research practice from a variety of HE institutions mainly in the UK, North America, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and the Netherlands.

The publication provides a great wealth of both theoretical and practical guidance on how to support undergraduate students to develop as researchers. It illustrates how a research ethos can be successfully integrated in the undergraduate curriculum and suggests that there are "four main ways of engaging undergraduates with research and inquiry: research-led; research-oriented; research-based; research-tutored" (p6).

Many inspirational case studies are provided that could be adapted and used in other HE institutions. For example, at St Mary's University College in London second-year students display and defend assessed poster presentations on their draft research plans for their dissertation in the format of an academic conference with all academic staff and students



Mick Healey and Alan Jenkins
(2009)
York: Higher Education Academy
ISBN: 9781905788996

from other years in attendance (case study 2.4, p32).

While I found the content of the publication very useful, I was a bit challenged by the way it was structured and presented. For example, it starts with an “argument, origins and scope” section (p5), but the reader is immediately presented with a case study (p8) that breaks up the flow of the theoretical underpinning. I feel that the reader would have benefited from having more explanations of the teaching-research nexus before the case studies were introduced. For example, pages 15-24, which contain background information on the argumentation, could have come before the case study mentioned above. This results in a fragmented presentation of the main arguments. In fact, all the case studies could have been put at the end, preceded by a table listing their title and page number. A table would have also made it possible for the authors to cross-reference them easily. In the current format it can prove difficult at times to locate the case studies as only their numbers and not their page references are provided in the text.

As for the case studies themselves - and I am speaking with my linguist hat on here - perhaps the next related publication could include more examples from non-English speaking countries (only one here). Another drawback, very much a matter of personal taste, has to do with the style of writing in places. I do not like to be addressed as “you the reader” (p15).

I would nevertheless like to strongly recommend this publication. As someone who teaches research skills to undergraduates, I am sometimes overwhelmed by their fear of research. The suggestions made by Healey and Jenkins, both in this paper and related ones, have helped me to dispel the myths that some undergraduates have and reassure them that research can

be simply “what is new to them”, as long as they can approach it with an inquiring mind.

The references section is also very useful. I would only like to add one title, which was probably not yet published when this paper was finalised: Gina Wisker's *The Undergraduate Research Handbook*, which incidentally pays a big tribute to Mick and Alan's work (Wisker 2009, p3).

I would like to conclude by welcoming this new addition to the already very helpful Higher Education Academy e-library “shelf”.

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Marina Orsini-Jones is Principal Lecturer in the Department of English and Languages at Coventry University.





Début

The Undergraduate Journal of Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies

Début is a new online journal aimed at showcasing scholarship and research carried out by undergraduate students. The first issue will be published in 2010.

Submissions

Début welcomes scholarly papers written by undergraduate students in languages, linguistics and area studies. Each paper is reviewed by two academics or postgraduate students with expertise in the subject of your paper. Papers could be based on dissertations, year abroad projects, class projects or your own independent research.

www.llas.ac.uk/debut

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700 words on... teaching field linguistics

As part of our regular series inspired by “700 reasons for studying languages” (www.llas.ac.uk/700reasons) and “international reflections” (www.leedsmet.ac.uk/internat/reflects), we invited Peter Austin to write 700 words on teaching field linguistics.

Within linguistics, the past ten years has seen a major growth of interest in fieldwork, generally understood to mean the first-hand collection of data from speakers of one or more spoken or signed languages or varieties in use in their social and cultural context. Fieldwork plays an important role in two main areas of linguistics:

- description and analysis of little known minority languages, especially those that are endangered as a result of pressure from larger more powerful neighbouring languages, resulting in children no longer learning them at home
- sociolinguistic and dialectological research where the concern is to identify linguistic variants and link them to social differences (like gender, ethnicity, social group) or regional locations.

These are of course not mutually exclusive. So, for example, the Deafness,

Cognition and Language Research Centre at University College London is currently documenting British Sign Language (BSL), including regional and social variants, to create a primary corpus on which to base a grammar and dictionary of BSL. There are often applied linguistics and language policy components that combine with or grow out of fieldwork, e.g. advising authorities on language choice in mother tongue education.

A number of UK university departments undertake teaching and training in linguistic fieldwork, usually under a label like linguistic field methods or sociolinguistic methods, e.g. Bristol, Edinburgh, Essex, Kent, Manchester, Queen Mary and SOAS. Such courses typically cover research methods for data collection and analysis, including techniques for audio (and occasionally video) recording, transcription, interviews, qualitative

and quantitative data analysis, and writing up results. Also covered are research ethics, including informed consent, anonymity of consultants, avoidance of harm, and potential impacts of research on individuals and communities.

Descriptive linguistic field methods courses usually involve working with a speaker of a language not known to students in the class (and occasionally never previously documented) beginning with phonetic transcription, and developing analyses of morphology and syntactic structure. The typical method employed is elicitation where the speaker is asked to translate sentences from English into their language (“How do you say: ‘The man saw the woman’ in your language?”) or creating sentences and checking if they are well-formed (“Is it OK to say ‘...’ in your language?”). More adventurous instructors will

“Field linguistics is an excellent... way for students... to learn about ‘real world’ language problems and solutions”

ask the speaker to tell a story to record narrative text showing more naturalistic language in actual use. Such courses are very demanding for students as they have to cope with listening to and analysing new language data with no grammar books or dictionaries to guide them, at the same time preparing relevant questions and items for checking when they next meet with the language consultant.

Field methods courses of this type have been established in university curricula for some time, but they often fail to deal pedagogically with a range of issues that come up in “real” fieldwork, like that which students might undertake in an MA or PhD. These issues are relevant whether the fieldwork takes place in a remote location abroad or more locally, such as among particular communities in the UK. They include:

- health and safety (both of the

student and the group they work with)

- dislocation and culture shock, equipment failure, and living in unfamiliar conditions
- working outside the classroom, laboratory-like context with multiple speakers and dealing with the complexities of their lives requiring (often delicate) negotiations about availability and competing demands on their time
- handling conversation and the apparently uncontrolled flood of input that comes from living and working closely with a group
- understanding and dealing with the expectations that individuals and communities might have about what the student is expected to “give back” in compensation for time spent doing language work.

At SOAS we cover these in separate workshops and during a two-week

field trip to Guernsey where students get first-hand experience with *Djermésiais*, the highly endangered language spoken there.

Field linguistics is an excellent, though challenging, way for students to bring together knowledge and skills from a wide range of areas in linguistic theory and practice, and to learn about “real world” language problems and solutions. Fortunately, a range of textbooks and resource materials are now available to support teaching and learning, some of which are listed below.

Professor Peter K Austin is Märit Rausing Chair in Field Linguistics and Director of the Endangered Languages Academic Programme at the School of Oriental and African Studies.



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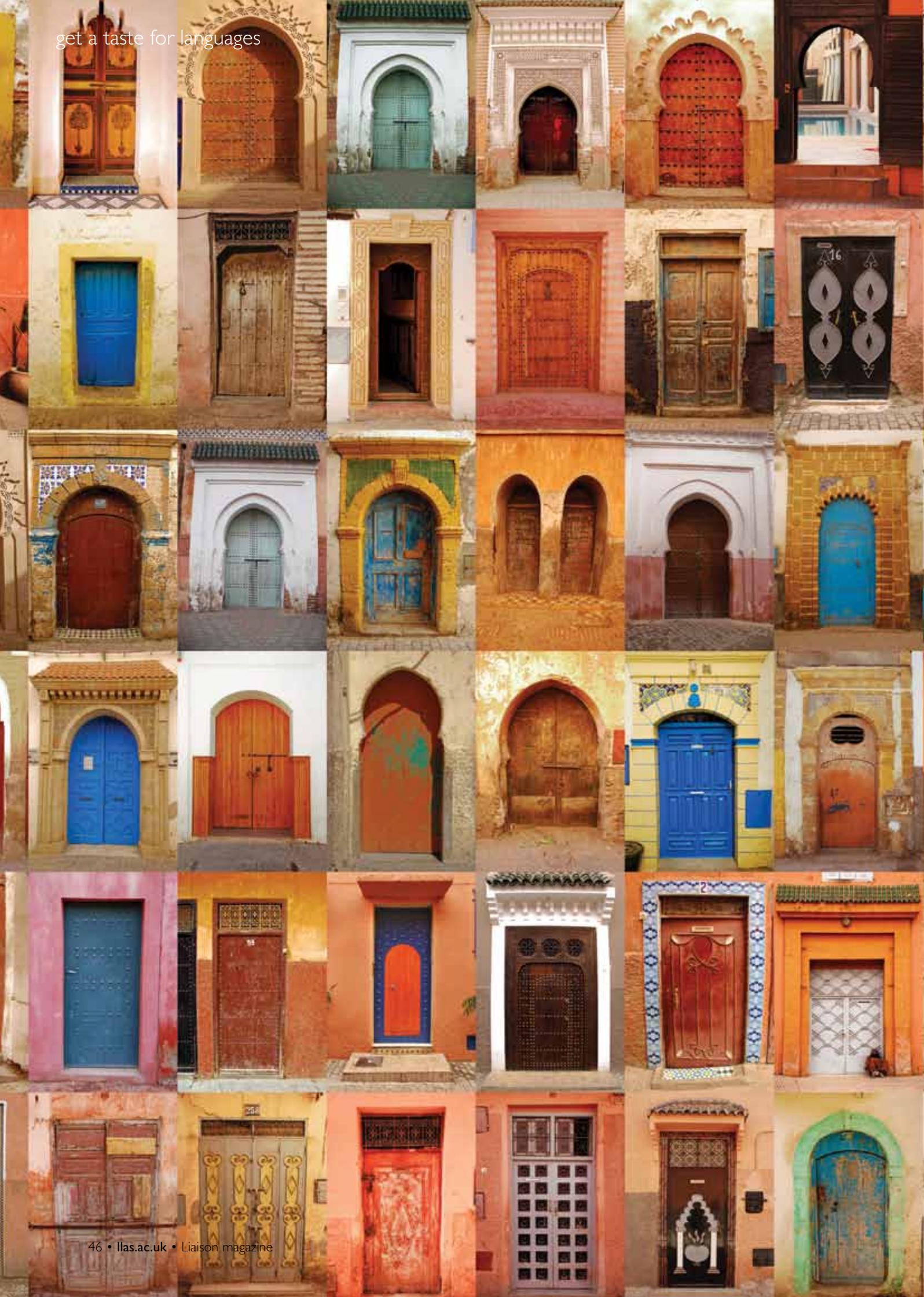
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get a taste for languages



A taste of Arabic

Mourad Diouri offers a sample of one of the fastest growing languages among foreign-language students.

You already speak Arabic

You may be surprised to know that you already speak some Arabic! Most non-Arabic speakers can probably recognise Arabic loanwords like algebra, algorithm, alchemy, camel, Sahara and zenith.

But you may not have realised that the following everyday words are originally Arabic: alcohol, average, candy, coffee, hazard, magazine, mask, mattress, racket, soda, sofa, sugar, syrup, zero, and many more!

Arabic, like many languages, has a capacity to absorb and accommodate other languages and vice-versa. Arabic is a major source of vocabulary for many languages with which it has come into direct contact. European languages like Spanish, Portuguese, Maltese and Cypriot Greek as well as Asian languages like Persian, Urdu, Bengali, Turkish, Malay and Indonesian have all been influenced by Arabic.

The Spanish language has absorbed by far the largest proportion of words (around 4,000) due to its direct contact with the Islamic civilisation. English has around 3,000 loanwords in addition to 5,000 derivatives.

With the spread of Islam to Western Europe, throughout the Middle Ages Arabic was regarded as a *lingua franca* and the language of scholarship, literature, science and trade, not only in Andalusia but across the world.



Arabic loanwords in English

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| alcohol | <i>al-kuḥl</i> | الكحول |
| algebra | <i>al-jabr</i> | الجبر |
| arsenal | <i>dār al-ṣināʿah</i> | دارُ الصَّنَاعَةِ |
| average | <i>al-awāriyah</i> | العَوَارِيَّة |
| checkmate | <i>al-shāh māt</i> | الشَّاه مات |
| candy | <i>qand</i> | قَنْد |
| coffee | <i>qahwah</i> | قَهْوَة |
| hazard | <i>al-zahr</i> | الزَّهْر |
| magazine | <i>makhāzin</i> | مَخَازِن |
| mattress | <i>maṭraḥ</i> | مَطْرَح |
| sugar | <i>sukkar</i> | سُكَّر |
| zero | <i>ṣifr</i> | صِفْر |

Arabic in a nutshell

Arabic is the fifth most widely-spoken language in the world, and has been an official language of the United Nations since 1973. It is currently the official language of 25 countries, the third most common after English and French. Arabic is part of the Semitic linguistic family, which includes Hebrew and Aramaic.

Arabic is spoken by more than half a billion native speakers across the

Arab world, from North Africa to the countries of the Middle East and the Gulf states. This is in addition to 250 million non-native speakers.

The Qur'an (literally "the recitation") is one of the earliest surviving documents of written Arabic and is considered by Muslims to be the book of divine guidance and the final revelation of *Allah* (God) for mankind.

Arabic is regarded as a universal

language for Muslims worldwide. Muslims, around one-fifth of the world population, use Arabic daily as the liturgical language of Islam (e.g. in prayers, greetings, etc.). It is the essential key to understanding and appreciating the teachings of the Qur'an and Muhammad, the prophet of Islam.

One language, many dialects

There are three types of Arabic: classical, modern standard and colloquial.

Classical / Qur'anic Arabic is the language of the Qur'an, the poetry of pre-Islamic Arabia, and the classical literature of the Golden Age of Islam.

Modern standard / literary Arabic, known as *al-fusha* ("the pure"), is the descendent of classical Arabic. It is the literary language of the contemporary Arab world, used in spoken and written forms in the media, printed publications and formal speeches. It is understood by educated Arabic speakers and is used depending on the degree of formality and the situation.

Colloquial / dialectal Arabic is the means of informal everyday conversation among Arabs and is used in some media (e.g. talk shows and soap operas). Some authors also use colloquial Arabic in written form for dialogue in short stories or novels. Many national and regional varieties of dialects exist. The major dialect groups are: Egyptian, Maghrebi, Iraqi, Gulf and Levantine Arabic. The co-existence of both colloquial and literary varieties within one language is referred to as diglossia, making every Arab bilingual.

Well connected Arabic

Among the fascinating aspects of Arabic is the root system which makes the vocabulary remarkably and logically connected. Once you are familiar with how the roots work, you can easily start guessing the meaning of the numerous derivative words and patterns of a single root word. You may even produce words correctly from an established set of patterns.

Verbs are formed from a three consonant root which is combined with patterns consisting of prefixes and suffixes. From each root one can derive up to 15 verb forms. From these forms come many derivative words which are the main source of constructing vocabulary in Arabic.

For example, from the three consonant root **د ر س** (d-r-s) we can derive:

| | | |
|----------|-----------------|------------|
| to study | <i>darasa</i> | دَرَسَ |
| to teach | <i>darrasa</i> | دَرَّسَ |
| school | <i>madrasah</i> | مَدْرَسَةٌ |
| student | <i>dāris</i> | دَارِسٌ |
| teacher | <i>mudarris</i> | مُدَرِّسٌ |
| studying | <i>dirāsah</i> | دِرَاسَةٌ |
| teaching | <i>tadrīs</i> | تَدْرِيسٌ |

All these words share the three consonants **د ر س** (d-r-s) and are connected to the meaning "learning". Some roots have as many as 200 derivatives.

Script and sounds

Arabic script

Arabic script is one of the world's major forms of writing. Although it seems quite daunting to unravel, in fact it is much easier to read and write than it looks!

The Arabic alphabet has 28 letters, each with a cultural, religious or philosophical significance. Written from right to left, it is cursive by nature (i.e. most letters are connected together), both in handwriting and in print. There are no capital letters and each letter has four written shapes depending on its position in the word. Arabic is enriched by numerous pronunciation and vocalisation markers. These are normally omitted in writing except in children's books, the Qur'an and elementary schoolbooks.

Arabic calligraphy

It would be difficult to over-emphasise the importance of the art of Arabic calligraphy. Unlike Roman language scripts, Arabic calligraphy has not fallen out of everyday use, and is regarded as a major expressive and decorative art form. It is used to write Qur'anic verses, poetry and sayings in spectacular composition and astonishing beauty. Calligraphers, with their artistic talents and commitment to precision and elegance, are held in high esteem.

Arabic sounds

At first, Arabic's unique sounds might seem unpronounceable and intimidating to the foreign ear, especially the sounds that have no equivalent in European languages. However, with diligent practice and careful listening, anyone can master these sounds.

A final note

Recently, the study of Arabic as a foreign language has become highly sophisticated and in great demand. New innovative strategies and technologies are emerging to modernise and enhance the learning and teaching of Arabic. These include immersive teaching environments, blending standard and colloquial Arabic, and e-learning. These techniques help give students of Arabic the skills they need to communicate with Arabic speakers or in the Arab world, whether their main goal is study, business, or travel.

Mourad Diouri is e-Learning Lecturer in Arabic Language Studies at the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World (CASAW), University of Edinburgh. He has developed the website www.e-arabic.com



Events calendar

More information: www.llas.ac.uk/events

Out of the Box: using HumBox for sharing and showcasing teaching resources

Date: 26 February 2010

Location: University of Sheffield

Join us at the launch event for HumBox, and discover how to publish and showcase your own humanities teaching resources online! This one-day event will present the HumBox, an online space for publishing and sharing your humanities teaching resources. The day will feature a demonstration of HumBox, hands-on practice and presentations from some of our 12 HE partners describing their experiences - and the lessons learnt - from publishing their teaching content openly online.

Introduction to methods for pedagogical research (stages 1 and 2)

Date: 4 and 5 March 2010

Location: Woburn House, London

This workshop is designed for those who are new to pedagogical research and who have no previous experience of social science research methods. Stage 1 will cover topics such as questionnaire design, in-depth interviewing, classroom observation and ethics in research. Stage 2 will focus on issues in quantitative and qualitative analysis of pedagogical research.

Sustainable development in the higher education classroom: perspectives from area studies and development studies

Date: 19 March 2010

Location: University of Birmingham

Climate change is an issue which affects all of us and the need for all graduates to be able to make a positive contribution to a sustainable future is becoming ever more apparent. This event explores how students of area studies and development studies can engage with sustainable development and will be of interest to colleagues working in these and related disciplines, including languages. Whether you are experienced or new to ESD, this event is for you.

Life and work in academia: event for new lecturers in languages, linguistics and area studies

Date: 15-16 April 2010

Location: Aston Business School Conference Centre, Birmingham

Aimed at new teaching staff (less than two years' experience) in languages, linguistics and area studies, this workshop aims to complement generic Postgraduate Certificate courses offered by institutions. The workshop will also be useful for experienced staff who are new to the UK, and finishing and recent PhD students seeking academic employment. Topics will include: classroom issues; career promotion and progression; university citizenship; making the most of the Subject Centre; good practice in e-learning; and assessment.

Learning Object Creator (LOC) workshop

Date: 20 April 2010

Location: JISC RSC West Midlands, University of Wolverhampton

This blended-delivery workshop will be of interest to teachers with an interest in, but little experience of, online materials development. The workshop will introduce the new online version of the Learning Object Creator (LOC), an authoring tool for the creation of online learning material which is designed to be easy to use and includes in-built pedagogical guidance for the creation of effective materials. Participants will be asked to complete some pre- and post-workshop tasks, and after the workshop they will have unlimited access to the tool and the opportunity to join our online community of developers.

Languages in higher education conference 2010: raising the standard for languages

Date: 1-2 July 2010

Location: etc.venues, Prospero House, London

In recent years, languages educators have been at the forefront of innovative and creative approaches to supporting the discipline and enhancing the student learning experience. However, these are challenging times for languages, which require ever more creative and strategic action in order to ensure that languages in all sectors of education thrive. The fifth biennial LLAS conference aims to bring language teachers and researchers together from across all areas of the languages curriculum to celebrate all that we have achieved so far, and to share ideas on ways in which we can take languages forward into the next decade.





Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies
Avenue Campus
Highfield
University of Southampton
Southampton
SO17 1BF

Phone: 023 8059 4814
Fax: 023 8059 4815
Email: llas@soton.ac.uk
Web: www.llas.ac.uk