

## Setting priorities

As the Subject Centres enter their seventh year, our activity has grown enormously, responding to the needs of our academic communities. The LLAS website reflects this in offering a wide range of materials, guides to good practice, and up-to-date information on events, initiatives and projects. The Higher Education Academy, of which we are part, is similarly responding to the needs of institutions, carrying out an extensive range of research and development, and managing programmes and services at national level.

The agencies which fund us have many initiatives and priorities, varying across the four countries of the UK. At the last count, government and funding council policies have set some 27 priority areas of action, from Assessment to Widening Participation. Each of these is important, and for each one, there is a depth of expertise in Subject Centres and in the Academy team in York. However, 27 areas cannot all have equal priority, and discussions are therefore under way to establish areas which all Subject Centres will include among their own priorities over the next period. Two areas are emerging as common to the whole Subject Network, with strong resonances for LLAS.

Higher education is increasingly required to respond to the needs of the economy, preparing students for the world of work. This requirement is currently being intensified, and 'engagement with employers' is increasingly emphasised by government agencies. This is likely to be a feature of future funding, and it is likely that growth in student numbers across the sector will be dependent on the direct involvement of employers in partially funding that growth. The Subject Centre

already offers a good deal of material on employability and careers, and we shall be exploring how we can assist colleagues to engage more directly with employers, both directly and through their representative organisation. We shall be helped in this by the activities of the *Routes into Languages* programme, which is getting under way, and by the expertise of our partner body, CILT, the National Centre for Languages.

A second area of increased concern is assessment. This periodically hits the headlines with debates over improved results at degree level, and suggestions that league tables are driving up students' results. It has also emerged recently from national student surveys that students are more anxious about assessment than about other areas of their academic experience. Institutions are coming under increased pressure to address these concerns, and it seems likely that assessment will be a prominent preoccupation of institutional audits. LLAS already provides a good deal of information on the principles and practice of assessment in its various forms, and we shall be seeking to increase the support we can offer in this area.

These two areas are common to all the Subject Network, and we hope that by focusing on them together for a period, we shall be able to give greater support to the academic community. These areas fit well with our own concerns, and we shall continue to seek the advice of our community on how best to pursue these and other priorities for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies.

**Michael Kelly**  
Director of the Subject Centre

## Dearing Review into Languages

In September 2006, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills asked Lord Dearing to advise him on what action should be taken to address the fall in the number of pupils studying languages at Key Stage 4.

The Languages Review interim consultation report was published in December and the final report is due this month. Lord Dearing is not recommending a return to compulsory language learning at Key Stage 4 at this time, but instead favours a 'middle way', which would develop the Government's performance target approach and promote the use of alternative methods of accreditation, e.g. the Languages Ladder. Key proposals in the interim report include making languages a standard part of the primary curriculum; changing the content and assessment of the secondary curriculum to respond to the needs and interests of young teenagers; and seeking the engagement of multinational companies to promote interest in languages. The interim report is available on our website: [www.llas.ac.uk/news](http://www.llas.ac.uk/news)



# Subject Centre update



The Subject Centre has been engaging in a number of activities over the past few months

## Languages update

### Transition into higher education

Following on from the recent survey of undergraduate attitudes to reading, the Subject Centre will be carrying out a project which examines the transition into higher education in modern languages.

This will be a qualitative study focusing on reading and its associated tasks. It will involve a review of relevant literature, an examination of curricula at both A-level and in HE, and interviews with students on year 13 A-level courses and year 1 degree programmes. The project will be undertaken in close cooperation with the special interest group for literature and culture and will include several universities and schools/sixth form colleges.

### Routes into Languages

Staff at LLAS are working with CILT and UCML to get the Routes into Languages Programme underway.

Routes into Languages is a £4.5 million programme funded by HEFCE to increase and widen participation in language study in higher education as well as support the role of languages as a motor of economic and civil regeneration.

The Programme Steering Group has now considered the bids for the research projects. The results of the bidding process can be found on the Subject Centre website ([www.llas.ac.uk/routes](http://www.llas.ac.uk/routes)).

The other strands of the Programme will be

- Four regional consortia, each led by a HEI, formed and funded to carry out work with other sectors to encourage



the take-up of language study at all levels. More information about this appears on page 4 of this newsletter.

- Two national networks, one for translation and one for interpreting, which will help to promote these as viable career paths and meet the national need for translators and interpreters.

### Supporting students' learning in Modern Languages Aston University, 3 November 2006

Supporting students' learning in Modern Languages was the second of two workshops organised under the Subject Centre's *Workshops to Go* scheme and led by Pilar Teran from the University of Brighton.

This workshop presented an opportunity for language teachers/tutors to explore practical ways in which students' learning inside and outside the classroom can be supported. The main objective was to integrate ideas in current research from three important areas of students' learning (active learning, reflective teaching and formative feedback) into language teaching methodology. Four key themes were identified as essential in enhancing the process of language learning:

- developing students' learning skills
- enabling students to take more responsibility for their learning
- encouraging students to do more in the classroom
- integrating the target language into the students' daily life

A detailed report on this event is available on the Subject Centre website: [www.llas.ac.uk/events/archive](http://www.llas.ac.uk/events/archive)

## Area Studies update

### Area Studies and the globalised world

British Library, 27 February 2007

LLAS has joined with the British Library Eccles Centre, the Canadian High Commission in London and the UK Council for Area Studies Associations (UKCASA) to organise a major conference, *Area Studies and the globalised world*. We are delighted that the conference will be addressed by sociologist Lord Giddens, author of *The Third Way: Renewal of Social Democracy* (1998) and the Canadian essayist, novelist and philosopher John Ralston Saul. There will also be panels on higher education and diplomacy, as well as a presentation on the rich resources of the British Library. Register at [www.llas.ac.uk/events](http://www.llas.ac.uk/events)

### Collaborative Centres in language-based Area Studies

Five collaborative centres in language-based Area Studies have been funded under a joint initiative between the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

Centres will be funding masters' studentships, doctoral studentships and post-doctoral research as well as providing intensive language training and cultural preparation for students. Other activity includes developing Virtual Research Environments, funding visiting researchers, and offering language training to academics, businesses and the public. LLAS is currently exploring ways of working with the centres.



© Centre for Excellence in Multimedia Language Learning

## Linguistics update

### Why study Linguistics?

These materials are intended as a resource for raising interest in language study and awareness of Linguistics as a discipline among young people aged 14-19.

They can be used by schools at options and careers events and by universities as part of open days and taster events. They include three PowerPoint presentations: 1. Language facts, figures and myths, 2. Options for study at university and future careers, 3. Student voices. The materials will be distributed on CD to Linguistics and English Language departments and will be available for purchase by schools. They will be published later this year.

## Working with Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs)

In addition to working with the Languages of the Wider World CETL and the Multimedia Language Learning CETL (see below), we have also identified a number of CETLs that have a small LLAS element and/or that share common themes and interests with our constituency.

These include assessment, e-learning, employability, linking teaching and research, and outreach. We have set up a network group for these CETLs to facilitate cooperation and the sharing of ideas. Further information is available on our website:

[www.llas.ac.uk/cetls.aspx](http://www.llas.ac.uk/cetls.aspx)

### Centre for Excellence in Multimedia Language Learning (CEMLL)

[www.arts.ulster.ac.uk/lanlit/cetl](http://www.arts.ulster.ac.uk/lanlit/cetl)

Based at the University of Ulster, the Centre for Excellence in

Multimedia Language Learning (CEMLL) promotes dynamic, technology-enhanced teaching and learning.

Using a multimedia lab environment, CEMLL's focus is on supporting computer-based activity in class. The networked infrastructure allows easy sharing of multimedia files and also facilitates group and individual communication through headphones and microphones. The teacher can monitor student progress, assess understanding as a task is performed and provide discrete, personalised assistance when and where it is needed.

A recent survey, undertaken by LLAS on behalf of CEMLL, showed that there are around 50 institutions in UK Higher



### Teaching sociolinguistics to undergraduates

Lancaster University, 16 November 2006

This event was organised by Paul Kerswill and provided an excellent forum for discussion relating to the teaching of a variety of aspects of sociolinguistics.

The presentations covered a wide range of issues such as

- curriculum design (Language and Gender)
- undergraduate skills (Sociophonetics)
- data collection and ethics (Dialectology)
- learner perceptions and experiences (Bilingualism)
- new media (Language and the Media)

Feedback from the event indicated that participants welcomed the opportunity to share personal stories about teaching, to gain new ideas on how to engage students with linguistic theory and to hear about innovative approaches using web pages and blogs for assessment and teaching. In addition, as the day covered a broad range of topics, there was something new and different for everyone, including those who had come from other fields of Linguistics. A full report on the day is available on the Subject Centre website: [www.llas.ac.uk/events/archive](http://www.llas.ac.uk/events/archive)

Education which have a digital lab facility of some kind. On 15 March, CEMLL is hosting a symposium in London, entitled *Digital Language labs: exploring good practice* and welcomes practitioners to share examples of good practice in the use of digital labs for language teaching. For more information and to register for the event, visit [www.llas.ac.uk/events](http://www.llas.ac.uk/events)

Karin Duffner, Ulster

### SOAS-UCL CETL in 'Languages of the Wider World'

[www.lww-cetl.ac.uk](http://www.lww-cetl.ac.uk)

The SOAS-UCL CETL

aims to enhance and promote excellence in the

teaching and learning of languages that do not have a large presence in UK Higher Education (the languages of Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, the Netherlands, Russia and Scandinavia) but which are of increasing strategic importance, locally and globally. This is achieved through innovations in, and provision of, materials, teacher and learner techniques, research into language pedagogy, and dissemination and outreach. The CETL has greatly enhanced the language learning facilities at SOAS and UCL. Examples of projects that have contributed to these are: the production of listening materials for teaching (e.g. Indonesian, Hausa, Chinese and Dutch); learners' workshops (e.g. "Surf and Learn"); a series of research seminars with guest speakers (e.g. Zoltan Domyei, Vivian Cook); research into teachers' needs; and the London Community Languages Conference.

Itesh Sachdev, SOAS





More details of our programme are available on our website [www.llas.ac.uk/events](http://www.llas.ac.uk/events)

## 9 March • Woburn House, London

### Preparing our students for the languages professions: implications for the curriculum

This conference takes a broader perspective on the languages professions and their possible implications for undergraduates. It will consist of presentations on innovative university language programmes, which are designed to prepare students for the world of work as well as papers from a range of employers who will highlight their needs and the graduate skills of particular importance.

## 15 March • SOAS, London

### Digital language labs

This one-day event aims to bring together digital lab practitioners as well as those involved in policy making and management, in order to share examples of good practice in the use of digital labs for language teaching. Focusing on how labs are used in teaching and learning, rather than on the technology itself, delegates will have an opportunity to discuss their language teaching with their peers and to share practice-based research.

## 4 April • University of Manchester

### Postgraduate conference: Identity formation

This will be the first ever conference to incorporate all the departments in the Faculty of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures at The University of Manchester. This inaugural event aims to be all inclusive and embrace all modern foreign languages; it will treat the notion of 'Identity Formation' in literature, art, film and media studies.

## 10 July • University of Southampton

### Linking teaching and research conference

Increasingly, HE institutions and individual staff are being defined as led by either teaching or research and the link between research and teaching is by turns derided and hotly defended. This conference aims to delve beneath the rhetoric and explore the complex relationship between teaching and research in Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies. Keynote speakers are Professor Clare Mar-Molinero, University of Southampton and Professor Alan Jenkins, Oxford Brookes University.

## Recently funded projects: Pedagogic Research Fund Phase 3

Following the recent bidding process LLAS has funded nine projects under the Pedagogic Research Fund phase 3. The projects will be published in April 2008. For further details, including a list of successful bids, visit: [www.llas.ac.uk/projects/prf3.aspx](http://www.llas.ac.uk/projects/prf3.aspx)

## Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning Group

This year's interdisciplinary conference will be held at Clare College Cambridge, on 10-11 September 2007. Confirmed speakers include Alison Phipps, Balasubramanyam Chandramohan and Shân Wareing. Full details will be available on the LLAS website soon. The group now has a webpage at [www.heacademy.ac.uk/itlg.htm](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/itlg.htm). This page will soon include last year's projects on the Internal Economy of the University (Neill Thew) and a literature review by Angelique Chettiparambil Rajan. Essays from the Problem-based learning workshop in December 2005 will also be published. Bids for this year's project on the interdisciplinary student experience are about to be assessed.

## Workshops to Go

The Subject Centre is now in its third year of funding for Workshops to Go projects and is pleased to announce that it has increased the number of projects it is funding this year. There will be four workshops available in 2007 on the following topics:

- Assessment and feedback (Leeds)
- Setting up and managing online discussion (Imperial)
- Using MS Office Templates to create learning materials (Aston)
- Using glossaries for translation and language learning (City)

Each workshop will be run twice, once in the host institution and a second time in a different region. It is also still possible to request previous Workshops to Go for your institution on the following topics:

- Supporting international students
- Intercultural communication skills
- Developing and using E-portfolios
- Supporting students' learning in modern languages

Please contact the Subject Centre for more details: [llas@soton.ac.uk](mailto:llas@soton.ac.uk)

## Call for bids: Routes into Languages regional consortia

Routes into Languages is currently inviting bids to lead four regional consortia in which English higher education institutions will work with each other and with schools and colleges to enthuse people about studying languages. Each consortium will develop a three-year programme of collaborative activities to promote languages. These will particularly target groups that are currently under-represented in higher education. Bidders will be notified in May 2007 and will begin their work as soon as possible after 1 August 2007. Deadline for bids: 30 March 2007. For more information visit: [www.llas.ac.uk/routes](http://www.llas.ac.uk/routes)

## Student award competition: closing date 16 March 2007

The Subject Centre is giving students the chance to offer their opinions and experiences in a 1000-word essay entitled 'What advice would you give to students starting your course?' This opportunity is open to anyone studying Languages, Linguistics or Area Studies as part of their HE course. There is a £250 prize for the winning entry, which will be featured on the Subject Centre website. For further details see [www.llas.ac.uk/news](http://www.llas.ac.uk/news).

If you would like some competition postcards and/or posters, please contact [llas@soton.ac.uk](mailto:llas@soton.ac.uk)

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