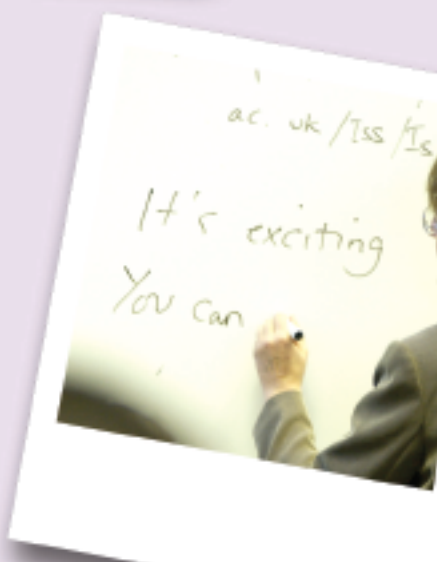




LLAS DIGEST 2005

Articles, projects and resources from the
Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies



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LLAS: THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Professor Michael Kelly, Director
of the LLAS Subject Centre,
looks ahead to the next phase
of Subject Centre activity

OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS the Subject Centre has worked to provide support for the large and diverse academic communities in languages, linguistics and area studies. That support has taken many forms, including accurate and up-to-date information on what is happening in our subjects, a regular programme of events on topics of immediate relevance, and practical assistance for projects and initiatives. This has been achieved both through the dedicated team at Southampton and through the growing number of partners across the UK with whom we collaborate closely.

We now know that our work will be funded for the next five years. It is a year since the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) was formally subsumed into the new Higher Education Academy. During that time, as with all twenty-four Subject Centres, we have continued our activities largely unaffected. As the Academy's role slowly comes into focus, it is clear that the continuity of our work will be maintained over the next five years. However, it is also apparent that the Subject Centre will be invited to take on a wider remit in supporting staff in higher education.

Over the next five years we therefore expect to reach out in a more concerted way to a wider range of stakeholders. This raises important questions for us. For example, should we offer more information and services that are of direct interest to students? We know that some students already visit our website, but should we develop a more student-oriented section of it? Should we do more to support secondary school teachers? We know that many teachers value the links we offer with colleagues in higher education, but should we develop a more systematic approach to the issues of transition from secondary to HE?

Should we be more active in developing policy? We already have close relations with many policy-makers and with representative associations, responding regularly to requests for briefing, but should we take a more pro-active role in seeking to influence public policy on behalf of our subjects? These are questions on which we particularly invite the advice of HE colleagues: how best can we support your relationships with students, with colleagues in other sectors of education, and with policy-makers at national and regional levels?

We are acutely conscious that higher education is more than ever an international activity, and that our subjects are pre-eminently engaged in the preparation of students for life in the wider world. We shall continue to promote the recognition of this dimension within the Academy. But we shall also need to ask how far the remit of the Subject Centres Network should extend to supporting education beyond the borders of the UK.

This digest provides something of the flavour of our current work, offering up-to-date information and analyses on key issues affecting our subjects. It also points to future lines of development. We hope it will be useful to readers and that it will help to spark ideas and initiatives that will help you to extend your knowledge, enrich your practice, and enhance your students' experience.

MICHAEL KELLY
Director, LLAS

PROMOTING LANGUAGES THROUGH CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

OVER THE PAST YEAR the Subject Centre has been working actively on promoting languages by establishing stronger relationships with other sectors. This is in accordance with the role envisaged for higher education in the National Languages Strategy (DfES, 2002) and with the recommendations of the Footitt Report (2005).

A one-day event was recently organised on cross-sector collaboration which brought together languages practitioners from the secondary, 16 to 19 and HE sectors as well as representatives from the Association for Language Learning (ALL), CILT, the National Centre for Languages, local education authorities, the Specialist Schools Trust and other organisations. This event focused on providing both a strategic overview of universities' outreach work with other sectors and a series of individual case studies of cross-sector projects in action.

Following on from this, the Subject Centre has begun the process of mapping HE outreach activities so that examples of good practice can be more effectively disseminated and so that institutional priorities and barriers can be identified and explored. Information received so far suggests that universities are already engaged in a diverse variety of projects which support languages in other sectors. These include:

- Enrichment activities for 'gifted and talented' school students
- Master classes and AS/A2 revision days and classes on specific themes
- Taster days
- Question and answer sessions

- Conferences for schools on different themes, e.g. Languages Work
- Lectures, films and discussions on cultural themes to which schools are invited
- Staff development activities for modern foreign languages teachers in secondary schools, but also increasingly in the primary sector
- Visits to schools
- Providing undergraduates to work with school classes
- Projects linking undergraduates and school students
- Email pen pal projects
- Buddying and mentoring schemes using Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs)
- Promoting language centre activities to local communities and businesses
- Providing courses and resources for the wider community

The Subject Centre is also currently producing two presentations to encourage learners to continue with language study and to assist HE staff in liaising with their local schools. The first of these is aimed at learners in the 16 to 19 age range (years 11 to 13) while the second is focused on younger learners in Key Stage 3, aged 11 to 14.

For more information on all these initiatives, see the Subject Centre website at www.llas.ac.uk

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ANGELA GALLAGHER-BRETT

LEADING THE WAY IN INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING AND LEARNING

THE AREA STUDIES PROJECT which ran from 2003-2004 (see over) identified interdisciplinarity as a key issue. The opportunities and barriers presented by interdisciplinarity have been framed in discussions about teaching styles, learning styles, assessment, quality assurance and the overall coherence of an individual student's programme of study.

However, interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary ought to be considered by all teachers in higher education. Although most institutions offer joint and combined degree courses, many practitioners are unaware of the teaching and learning issues this raises. The idealisation of the single discipline course in UK higher education has often led to practitioners seeing multi / interdisciplinarity in terms of barriers rather than looking at the opportunities this provides. As well as in area studies, these are important issues in language teaching as many students combine language study with another subject area. It is always helpful to ask how language study

impacts upon the successful study of business, engineering or social science and vice versa. It is essential to understand if and how students are making sense of their programme of study as a whole.

LLAS has been at the forefront of forming a special interest group for all HE Academy Subject Centres to discuss these issues as they affect all disciplines. There is interest from science subject centres as well as those in the humanities and social sciences. We hope to inspire more practitioners to think about the importance of the multidisciplinary student experience and to explore ways in which a student's study of one subject can enhance their understanding of another subject. Moreover, we must ensure that students are rewarded and not penalised for bringing interdisciplinary insights to their work and to recognise how perspectives from other disciplines can enrich our own teaching practices.

JOHN CANNING

WORKING TOGETHER FOR LINGUISTICS

IN SEPTEMBER 2004 the Subject Centre held a meeting to which all Linguistics subject associations were invited to discuss key issues for the discipline and potential strategic action that could be taken to address them. This meeting was initiated by the Philological Society and brought together representatives from The Linguistics Association of Great Britain (LAGB), The British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL), The British Association of Academic Phoneticians (BAAP), The University Council for Modern Languages (UCML), The Association for French Language Studies (AFLS) and the Philological Society. One of the key drivers for the meeting was to co-ordinate a conference for the discipline that would have a core strategic element, similar to the Subject Centre conference for languages held in 2004. It was generally agreed that this would be a useful enterprise on which associations could collaborate. However, in order to identify what strategic questions might be addressed, a broader picture of the current status of the discipline would be needed. Representatives from UCML reported on a recent study that had been conducted (with DfES funding) to support the National Languages Strategy (Footitt 2005). This analysed trends in the number of students studying languages, as reported to The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). The statistics (for the period 1998-2002) shed considerable light on the recent (downward) trends in take-up of languages at degree level and highlighted regional patterns of provision for particular languages. Thus researching both the current number of students studying the subject and recent trends in student numbers seemed to present an excellent first step for this initiative.

In 2003 the Subject Centre purchased and analysed HESA data (in collaboration with CILT, The National Centre for Languages) for both Modern Languages and Linguistics for the academic year 2002/3.

Clearly these statistics do not reveal patterns in provision and the group subsequently decided to collectively purchase the data for the years 1998 to 2001 in order to make a comparative analysis of trends. Contributions towards the cost of the data and its analysis were made by all associations which, in itself, demonstrated that there was a sense of 'common cause' among all participants which could subsequently form the basis of a more long-term and formalised partnership. This proposed partnership was the basis of considerable discussion at the third meeting of the group which is now working on a proposal for the setting up of a council of subject associations which would provide a forum for the discussion of issues affecting the provision of linguistics teaching and research in UK higher education. This proposal is currently under consideration by participating subject associations and will be taken forward, as appropriate at the next meeting of the group in the autumn. As far as the purchase and analysis of the HESA data is concerned this is also ongoing and will be reported on during the next academic year.

Statistics analysed by Sarah Joy (CILT)

Reference

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ALISON DICKENS

AREA STUDIES PROJECT: A REVIEW

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT: By 2002, it had become evident that collaboration between Subject Centres was essential if the needs of teaching staff on area studies programmes were to be met adequately. It was recognised that many of these teaching staff identified themselves primarily as economists, geographers, political scientists, historians etc. and were more likely to be reached through those subject centres than through LLAS. This resulted in the Area Studies Project - a partnership between LLAS and five other Subject Centres funded by the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) now part of the Higher Education Academy.

The Project initially highlighted some difficulties concerning the scope and identity of area studies. Area studies includes the diverse concerns of American Studies, African Studies and Middle East Studies, but there had been little interaction between different area studies, little in the way of core intellectual concerns and few would have acknowledged that

there was such a thing as an area studies community in the UK.

It is through furthering a sense of community and providing a space to consider the concerns of area studies in general, as opposed to the concerns of specific area studies and specific disciplines, that the Area Studies Project has achieved a major success.

Achievements

The Project has initiated discussion of the disciplinary identity and intellectual endeavour of area studies. Unlike most subjects taught in higher education, area studies has not developed its own disciplinary culture and modus operandi and is, according to its benchmarking statement, multidisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary and thereby delegates assessment to the criteria set out in the benchmarking statements of contributing disciplines, e.g. English, History, Modern Languages etc (QAA 2002). However, the Project has inspired some practitioners to develop and publish their thoughts about the nature of area studies (see Ellis 2005, Phipps 2004).

The Project has enhanced the visibility of area studies in higher education and has fostered a greater sense of community. New networks and cross-disciplinary relationships are being formed. The Project facilitated the formation of UKCASA (www.ukcasa.ac.uk) which has brought the Subject Centre into contact with new people and has enhanced links between teaching and research in area studies.

We have recently convened a group that meets twice a year to discuss interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary teaching and learning throughout the whole Subject Centre Network. Issues about course structure, assessment and learning styles in area studies programmes have enabled LLAS and Area Studies Project partners to encourage colleagues in other subject centres to consider how they may reach out to practitioners in their disciplines teaching on multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary programmes.

The future

Although the Area Studies Project came to end in 2004, LLAS has continued to build upon this work. Events have taken place on 'The disciplinary identity of Area Studies' and 'Teaching globalisation'. LLAS is committed to ensuring that its activities continue to support the longer-term sustainability of area studies and that area studies practitioners who identify with any discipline can continue to look to LLAS for support in enhancing the experience of the students that they teach.

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JOHN CANNING

SUBJECT CENTRE PARTNERSHIPS WITH SCOTLAND, WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND

SINCE 2002 the LLAS Subject Centre has been working to establish formal partnerships with colleagues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to help us deliver activity which will be geographically close to our communities there. This has been a rolling programme starting with Scotland, then Wales with the newly formed partnership in Northern Ireland just beginning to get off the ground.

Scotland

Scottish CILT, at the University of Stirling, provides the managerial and administrative support for colleagues in Scotland. A Subject Centre Advisory Group for Scotland has been established which is currently chaired by Dr Barbara Fennell, Head of the School of Language and Literature in Aberdeen. Professor Richard Johnstone, Director of Scottish CILT is also a member of the Group. It meets several times a year and has organised a number of workshops on different themes and in a variety of locations. An event held in March 2004 to launch the partnership included George Reid, MSP and Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, John Macklin, Principal of the University of Paisley and Roger McClure, Chief Executive of the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council.

After the presentations there were opportunities to discuss the key issues that had arisen from the day, and to suggest priorities for the Advisory Group. Opportunities to network with colleagues and workshops for those teaching the literary and cultural part of modern languages degrees were highlighted as priorities.

Since the inaugural conference, SCILT and the Scottish Advisory Group have organised two very successful events, one on 'Applied Linguistics and the teaching of English' and

'Modern Languages and the other on the pedagogy of foreign literatures and cultures'.

Wales

CILT Cymru in Cardiff acts as the key contact point for our activities in Wales. Keith Marshall (CILT Cymru and the University of Wales Bangor) convened an advisory group, which is chaired by Eric Sutherland, former Vice Chancellor of the University of Wales, Bangor. A very stimulating launch event was organised in March 2005 in Cardiff. The proceedings were opened by Jane Davidson, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning in the Welsh Assembly Government. There were also presentations by Phil Gummet, Chief Executive of HEFCW and Isabella Moore, Director of CILT, the National Centre for Languages. Events on cross-sector collaboration, distance learning and teaching area studies are envisaged for the coming year.

Northern Ireland

The Subject Centre team has been working with colleagues at the University of Ulster and Queen's University Belfast to determine what activities would be welcomed by staff in HE in Northern Ireland. A meeting is planned to look at HE priorities for a national languages strategy in Northern Ireland. The new Centre at the University of Ulster, funded under the Area of Excellence initiative will provide administrative support for the Subject Centre activities for two years after which responsibility will be transferred to NI CILT based at the Queen's University of Belfast.

All Subject Centre activities are open to colleagues across the UK. The aim of these partnerships is to provide a means to develop activity of particular concern to the specific national contexts of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

LIZ HUDSWELL

THE NATIONAL LANGUAGES STRATEGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This is the Executive Summary of a report written by Hilary Footitt and commissioned by the DfES. The full report can be downloaded free from the DfES website www.dfes.gov.uk/research or purchased in hard copy from the DfES for £4.95

HILARY FOOTITT
University Council of Modern Languages

CONTEXT

This study was commissioned by the DfES as a contribution to the development of the Higher Education element in the National Languages Strategy, set out in *Languages for All: Languages for Life* (DfES, December 2002). The Higher Education part of the Strategy aims to increase the numbers of students who are taking an active part in learning foreign languages in HE in England, and encourage Higher Education to work with schools to support the Strategy overall. The research for the project was directed by Hilary Footitt, on behalf of the University Council of Modern Languages (UCML), and managed by the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies. The analysis of data was undertaken by CILT, the National Centre for Languages.

AIMS

The project aimed to:

- map national/regional trends in HE languages provision
- establish institutional factors which promote and extend language learning in HE
- map trends in the development of professional and vocational language routes in HE.

METHODOLOGY

The project used four main sources of information:

- Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data in order to examine national/regional trends in HE languages provision
- Qualitative research - interviews in 6 case-study universities with key senior players in the institutions, in order to establish institutional factors which promote and extend language learning in HE
- Undergraduate and postgraduate course descriptions at the HE HEFCE-funded institutions in order to map trends in the development of professional and vocational routes in HE degrees in universities
- A pilot project at one institution to explore the motivations of non-specialist language learners taking courses uncredited in their degree programmes.

CONCLUSIONS

The National Languages Strategy

The credibility of the National Languages Strategy is low among senior managers in Higher Education (Section 5.4). 'The National Languages Strategy, as far as HE is concerned, is at best described as warm words. There are neither carrots nor sticks in it for HE as it stands at present, and every university responds to one or the other'.

The perception of senior HE staff is that the Strategy will have no effect on their institutions unless it is made specifically relevant to Higher Education (Section 5.5). Suggestions for this include:

- additional earmarked funding
- initiatives to ensure a regional spread of languages
- continued support for minority languages, and a possible widening of the definition
- systematic and durable support for cross-sectoral activities to increase the take-up of languages in schools and colleges.

The evidence of the qualitative research is that institutional perceptions of languages play a considerable role in their survival within a university (Section 4.2), which makes the low credibility of the National Languages Strategy among senior personnel a matter of some concern.

Diminishing national/regional capacity

The evidence of this study is that there has been a marked national decline in the numbers of undergraduates taking languages, either in single honours, joint honours, or in combined degrees. Over four years (1998/9-2001/2) UK domiciled students taking languages at English universities fell by 15% (French down by 19% for example), at a time when overall HE numbers were expanding (Section 2.1).

The shrinkage in numbers has been unplanned, with the result that, whilst all English regions have been affected, some (the North West, the East and the West Midlands) have experienced reductions above the national average (Section 2.2).

Undergraduate numbers in strategically important languages (classified as group A in the Parker Report), like Arabic, Chinese and Japanese, have also fallen by 12%, 16% and 27% respectively. The numbers of UK domiciled postgraduate students in these subjects (including PGCE) are low, and this has clear implications for the supply of teachers and specialists in the future (Sections 2.3, 2.4).

With these changes, the institutional map of language provision shows an increasing concentration of undergraduate numbers in particular types of HEIs. 46% of the total national complement of undergraduate language students in 2001/2 were located in 14 Russell Group institutions, although 7 of these had also experienced a decline in undergraduate language numbers. All but 3 of the non-Russell Group pre-'92 institutions had seen declining enrolments - 10 had lost more than 20% of students since 1998/9. Nearly half of the post-'92 universities had at least 30% fewer language undergraduates in 2001/2 than in 1998/9 (Section 2.5).

The perception of languages as a subject in difficulty is now widely shared across the whole sector: 'We've reached the point where survival strategies can't be maintained' (Section 3.3).

The shrinkage in language capacity at national and regional level in Higher Education, with institutional concentration of provision, and evidence of a narrow student class profile (Section 2.6), represents a major challenge for the successful implementation of the Languages Strategy nationally and regionally. Unless the unplanned diminution in provision is publicly perceived as a matter of national strategic concern, university managers are likely to continue to deal with the consequences of subject decline in purely institutional terms. Formal mechanisms are needed to address the consequences of changes in provision for national capacity and regional access to languages, and to provide annual information on developments in this area.

International strategy

The institutional policy which seems to be of major importance in supporting languages is the international policy. Here, however, there is a wide variety of levels of explicit policy development. Whereas all the institutions in this study had very detailed teaching and learning strategies, the existence of fully documented international policies was much more uneven (Section 4.1.3).

As well as this sometimes narrow institutional understanding of International Policy there is a tendency for many undergraduate and postgraduate courses to use 'international' in their titles without any obvious consensus as to what the word might imply for course content, pedagogy, or professional practice (Section 6.3).

Although a number of professional bodies accredit courses which are 'international', languages do not always form part of their accreditation practices and dialogue with institutions (Section 6.7).

Widening participation in language study

In all the case-study institutions, subject staff were highly committed to a range of outreach programmes to schools and colleges. These cross-sectoral initiatives however were institution-based, and financially vulnerable - dependent on staff good will, and financed by creative virement locally, or by fixed-term institutional pump-priming (Section 5.5.2): 'The thing that shocks me most is that there's a tremendous resource in universities, ... a resource for schools actually. But we can't do it on good will'. Given what the available data has suggested about the social class of language applicants, the growing institutional concentration of undergraduate language courses, and the general decline in numbers, it seems to be crucial to develop and support these activities.

Factors influencing demand

The universities in this study expressed considerable concern about the likely impact of the introduction of variable tuition fees in a subject area like languages which was already suffering recruitment difficulties, and where undergraduate degrees were often four years (Section 5.3).

Although the range of courses preparing students to operate internationally is large, and language routes in them are available at a variety of starting levels, the evidence is that many of the possible subject combinations (Creative Arts, Communication, Engineering, Architecture, Technologies) are not taken by students (Section 2.1). The messages about 'How to study languages in HE' and about 'careers with languages' might be helpfully reframed as 'HE courses which prepare students to operate globally', with a clear public message that students can continue studying their chosen (non-language) interest, but could set it within an international context.

Current (imperfect) data indicate that there may be as many as 20,000 'non-specialist' students taking languages as part of a non-languages degree (Section 2.7). The evidence of the pilot study (Section 6.8, and Annex D) suggests that students learning languages in this mode are motivated less by specific career intentions, and more by a belief that languages are part of a broader demonstration of 'graduateness' in an international setting: 'an accepted view ... that languages are an essential and invaluable part of the make up of a high profile graduate'. Since the numbers of these students is thought to be potentially considerable, it is important to obtain more precise information about their language learning motivations, which can then serve to inform future promotional activities, and stimulate further demand.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Communicating the National Languages Strategy in HE

1. The DfES, in consultation with appropriate bodies, should produce an information sheet for Senior Management groups in universities, emphasising the importance the Government attaches to the role of HE in the National Languages Strategy, and outlining the steps it is intending to take.
2. The Secretary of State, with HEFCE and UUK support, should be invited to host a Vice Chancellors' 'Languages Leaders' event at which the importance of the National Languages Strategy and the expected contribution of HE could be discussed.

Safeguarding provision at national and regional level

3. DfES and HEFCE should formally designate certain Modern Foreign Languages as subjects of strategic national importance.
4. HEFCE should explore with HEIs, and bodies representing HEIs' interests, the possibility of instituting a notice period of 12 months before the closure of any language departments offering undergraduate teaching.
5. HEFCE, in conjunction with RDAs, should take a more active role in examining the implications that falling languages provision may have for student access at the regional level, and should consider providing additional funding to university departments if there is a powerful case that falling provision in a particular region would hinder access to languages which are important to national/regional development.
6. The National Languages Strategy HE Stakeholders Group should monitor year on year numbers at undergraduate and postgraduate level per language, per region, per type of institution, and per type of course, and provide ministers with a regular update on language capacity in HE, with information on gender, disability, ethnicity and social class.

Developing International Strategy

7. The DfES International Strategy (November 2004) should encourage universities to see the benefits to their UK students of a fully developed international policy which might include: strategies for the provision of study/work placements and for an extension of Erasmus take-up; steps to encourage the international dimension for staff at all levels; strategies for internationalising the curriculum; institutional language policy; strategies for promoting an inclusive international community within the university.
8. A DfES/HE Language Link Group should be set up, with CILT support, to begin a formal dialogue with professional bodies about their mutual understanding of international competence in the professions in order to extend professional accreditation of relevant HE courses. At the same time, the Higher Education Academy should encourage a broad discussion among institutions of the implications of 'international' in degree titles.

Widening participation in language study

9. With the help of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and the existing Regional Languages Network, the DfES and HEFCE should set up a funded Languages Outreach Project for each region, bringing together a consortium of universities to develop outreach activities in regional secondary schools, and colleges, including: provision of language learning materials; development of Ambassador/Buddy schemes; motivational road shows; taster courses; open days.
10. As a support for this, the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies should survey the range of language outreach activities across universities in England, and encourage the sharing of good practice in this area.

Stimulating demand

11. The DfES, with CILT and the Subject Centre, should develop its suite of 'Languages Work' material to include information for students which focuses on the international/global context of professions, and lists HE courses which prepare for them.
12. As the new variable tuition fees structure is put in place from 2006, the DfES should encourage the development of Languages Strategy bursaries and scholarships, specifically targeted on able linguists from less advantaged backgrounds.
13. The DfES should ask the Association of University Language Centres (AULC) to conduct a national roll-out of its pilot study of non-specialist learners in order to gain information on their motivations which could then be fed into future National Languages Strategy promotional material.

NATIONAL LANGUAGES STRATEGY: UPDATE ON PRIMARY LANGUAGE LEARNING

THE NATIONAL LANGUAGES STRATEGY (DfES, 2002) established the provision of an entitlement to language learning for all primary school pupils aged 7 to 11 (Key Stage 2) by 2010. The entitlement is defined as follows:

Every child should have the opportunity throughout Key Stage 2 to study a foreign language and develop their interest in the culture of other nations. They should have access to high quality teaching and learning opportunities, making use of native speakers and e-learning. By age 11 they should have the opportunity to reach a recognised level of competence on the Common European Framework and for that achievement to be recognised through a national scheme. The Key Stage 2 language learning programme must include at least one of the working languages of the European Union and must be delivered at least part in class time (p. 15)

It is envisaged that networks of schools (both primary and secondary) will work collaboratively in order to implement the entitlement which will be delivered by means of a series of pathways, including:

- Specialist language teachers
- Existing primary teachers
- Outreach working
- Language assistants and others with strong language skills (e.g. language undergraduates)
- Wider language learning opportunities offered by other bodies
- ICT and e-learning
- Innovative partnerships with schools in other countries

TEACHER TRAINING

PGCE courses for primary languages are now offered by a number of higher education institutions in French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. Some service providers have also been involved in a joint initiative launched by the Teacher Training Agency and the Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale in 2001 (and supported by CILT, The National Centre for Languages), which established links between institutions in the UK and France. Germany and Spain have also subsequently joined this scheme.

PATHFINDER LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

In 2003, 19 Pathfinder LEAs were established and provided with funding to pilot diverse projects in teaching languages to primary school pupils and to investigate strategies for early language learning. They have been working with the DfES to develop a national Key Stage 2 framework for languages.

KEY STAGE 2 FRAMEWORK

The Key Stage 2 MFL Framework is now available for consultation in draft form at: www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/ACF35F.doc

The final version of the Framework will be obtainable in September 2005. It foresees a role for language learning in developing creativity, supporting oracy and literacy, promoting the international dimension in education and providing general benefits for pupils across the whole curriculum. The Framework consists of five learning objectives:

- Oracy
- Literacy
- Intercultural understanding
- Knowledge about language
- Language learning strategies

LANGUAGES LADDER

In line with the National Languages Strategy, a national recognition scheme is also being introduced which will complement both the Common European Framework and existing qualifications such as A-level, GCSE, NVQs. This will enable learners at all levels to gain accreditation for their language skills. It will support primary language learning by easing the transition from primary to secondary schools.

More information about the languages ladder can be found on the DfES website at: www.dfes.gov.uk/languages/languagesladder.cfm

Further information about primary languages is available from the website of the National Advisory Centre on Early Language Learning at: www.nacell.org.uk

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ANGELA GALLAGHER-BRETT

WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN LANGUAGES, LINGUISTICS AND AREA STUDIES: AN OVERVIEW

THE GOVERNMENT has set a target that 50% of 18-30 year-olds will experience Higher Education by 2010. A key commitment is to increase participation amongst groups traditionally under-represented in higher education. These include people from certain socio-economic groups, people from certain ethnic minority groups, disabled people and first generation entrants.

Widening Participation (WP) as being promoted by the government is about increasing the participation of certain groups of students in HE, not simply about increasing numbers. Any institution planning to charge variable fees in excess of the standard fee for any course will be required to enter an access agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) (DfES 2003:19). This includes the provision of bursaries for certain types of students (OFFA 2004).

Some activities often thought of as WP are not WP as understood by the government - not all diversity is WP. These activities include:

- Admitting students with lower grades than normally required
- Offering 'remedial' classes for certain groups of students
- Recruiting mature students (WP is concerned with students under 30)
- Adult education
- Going into schools to promote particular subjects

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND EMPLOYABILITY

WP is not just about recruitment, but also about retaining students. Institutions and departments must ensure that students are appropriately supported and do not drop out of HE. There are also important issues about employability after graduation as there is evidence that students from traditionally underrepresented groups are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed than their peers from the same institution (Brennan and Shah 2003).

Under the Disability Discrimination Act institutions have legal obligations towards disabled students, which extend to issues such as assessment, residence abroad, library access, disability support services and accommodation services.

CHALLENGES FOR OUR SUBJECT AREAS

- LLAS recruits poorly from students from lower income Socio-Economic Groups (SEGs) in comparison with other subjects in HE (let alone the population of 18-year-olds in general)
- The government's strategy depends upon encouraging individuals with Level 3 qualifications other than A levels (e.g. Advanced GNVQ, vocational A levels etc.) to enter HE. Most of these qualifications are vocational in nature and not always suitable preparation for studying arts, humanities and social science subjects
- Foundation degrees are a large part of government strategy, but relatively rare in LLAS subjects (see Connell 2004)
- Higher Education in Further Education is also an important part of the WP strategy. Most HE courses in FE institutions are in vocational disciplines
- There are very few 'Access to HE' courses (for those aged 21 and over) in languages, although there are a lot more general arts and humanities access courses
- Languages in particular continue to be perceived as an increasingly elite subject in an increasingly mass higher education system

OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR SUBJECT AREAS

- The Tomlinson report (Working Group on 14-19 Reform 2004) affirms a student's entitlement to studying languages after the age of 14. For example, the report suggests that language study may be a requirement for those studying tourism
- Adult education and business classes in languages continue to recruit well, particularly at beginners' level
- Institutions are responding well to changing student demands and are offering languages alongside business and other vocational subjects
- Regional partnerships are an important strategy for WP and synergies developed through initiatives such as Regional Languages Networks, Comenius Centres, Languages Work, CILT and their partners in HE, FE and schools mean that LLAS departments are well networked on a regional basis
- WP offers opportunities to discuss important issues surrounding the transition from A level into Higher Education (see Claussen 2004)
- Students from ethnic and linguistic minorities in the United Kingdom have not been as well targeted as they could be by languages and area studies programmes. Claussen (2004) suggests the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum in languages could be a reason for this

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

The Subject Centre aims to help teaching and support staff in LLAS subjects by providing information about WP and facilitating the exchange of good practice. With this in mind what can the LLAS Subject Centre do to support practitioners in Widening Participation? The following questions are aimed at assisting this discussion.

- **The GCSE to A level transition is important. Are students doing vocational courses who would benefit more from doing A levels? If so what can we do about it?**
- **Is it acceptable / feasible / possible to admit students with lower grades in order to fill undersubscribed courses?**
- **How can LLAS departments recruit from students with level 3 qualifications other than A levels/ Scottish Higher qualifications?**
- **What can the Subject Centre / LLAS colleagues do to get more sceptical colleagues to consider these issues?**
- **What are the responsibilities of LLAS teaching staff regarding WP?**
- **What are the impacts of WP on course structures, assessment procedures and pastoral support?**
- **How have policies on recruitment and retention changed as a result of WP?**
- **How does WP relate to multidisciplinary programmes including languages and Institution Wide Language Programmes (IWLPs)?**

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JOHN CANNING

ENHANCING THE EXPERIENCE OF DISABLED STUDENTS

THE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT, PART IV

With the final stages of the Disability Discrimination Act coming into force in 2005, it is an appropriate moment to consider how students with disabilities are accommodated in their studies of languages, linguistics or area studies. Oliver defines a disability as "(i) the presence of an impairment; (ii) the experience of externally imposed restrictions; and (iii) self-identification as a disabled person" (Oliver 1996 cited in Holloway 2001: 599). The term 'disability' therefore includes a whole range of conditions ranging from sensory impairments (affecting vision or hearing), mental health issues, specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia), chronic conditions causing pain or fatigue, and Autistic Spectrum Disorders as well as the more obvious physical impairments affecting mobility or dexterity. Vitally, it should be remembered that most disabled people are not wheelchair users.

Institutions that are found to discriminate against disabled students, either in their selection of potential students or by substantially disadvantaging existing students are liable to be sued in the County Courts (in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or Sheriff Courts (in Scotland). However, good practice, based on strong partnerships between teaching staff and institution support services will ensure positive experiences for students with disabilities.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Some accommodations will benefit the learning experience of all or most students. Printing handouts in a readable and large size font, ensuring that overheads and PowerPoint slides (use at least 30pt in a sans serif font) can be seen throughout the classroom, making notes available on the Internet after the lecture are examples of accommodations which could be made for students with dyslexia or visual impairments, and from which almost all students will benefit. It is particularly important that teaching staff do not make assumptions about what individual students can and cannot do. An institution's disability unit will help to ensure that appropriate accommodations are made for each individual student with a disability. The guide by Doyle and Robson (2002) is excellent for helping to accommodate a wide range of disabilities.

ASSESSMENT

Most institutions have long made accommodations for students with disabilities. They may be allowed extra time in examinations and/or use a computer instead of having to handwrite an exam, but the merits of alternative versus equivalent assessment are disputed (Sharp and Earle 2000). Alternative assessment may involve a student who cannot take an oral exam writing an essay instead. Equivalent

assessment aims to ensure that students with disability are assessed on the basis of the same skills as students without a disability. Allowing students with dyslexia to use a computer is sometimes given as an example of this, but Sharp and Earle argue that this would involve the assessment of different skills, as the non-dyslexic student will be "...tested on their ability to produce intelligible prose *unaided by computer*" (Sharpe and Earle 2000: 195 emphasis in original). The relative costs and benefits of compensation for students with disabilities with regard to fairness for individual students and the public interest in the reliability of assessment are the cause of much debate.

RESIDENCE ABROAD

As a student on residence abroad is usually undertaking a requirement for a UK degree and is registered at a UK institution. If, during their period of residence abroad, they are disadvantaged because of their disability, they could take legal action against the UK institution. It is a mistake to believe that because residence takes place outside the UK, it is outside the scope of UK law and good practice. Staff can make good use of their area-specific knowledge and contacts to ensure that students are able to make the most of their residence abroad (see Canning 2004).

OTHER SUPPORT

Support for teaching staff is available from the National Disability Team and the Scottish Disability Team as well as from support services within institutions. The Disability Rights Commission website has an excellent 'Frequently Asked Questions' section. The European Disability Forum provides helpful guidance about disabilities issues throughout the European Union.

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- Scottish Disability Team www.sdt.ac.uk
- European Disability Forum www.edf-feph.org

JOHN CANNING

PEDAGOGIC RESEARCH AND THE RAE

Professor Richard Towell, Chair of the Subject Centre Advisory Board and Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Media and Social Sciences reflects on the relationship between pedagogic research and the Research Assessment Exercise.

EVEN THE MOST DISPASSIONATE OBSERVER of the British university scene must perceive a degree of irony in the fact that our universities may be in danger of becoming the only major business which funds little or no research into its primary activity: specialised teaching and learning. The reasons why this is so are multiple and will be presented below. As is often the case, it appears to be nobody's 'fault', more of a product of the (lack of) interaction between parts of the 'system'. But, at the same time, ensuring that research into specialised teaching and learning in HE is properly funded through the dual funding system seems to be nobody's responsibility. And that can't be right.

Under the dual funding system, a considerable part of the money/time which will be available for research funding depends on the grade or score obtained by a unit at the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and which individuals have contributed to that outcome. Research into HE teaching could be submitted either to the Education panel or to a discipline sub-panel. Both are likely to indicate their willingness to accept research of this kind as long as it falls within their criteria and the overall definition of research. By doing so they will have fully met their obligations to this area: specialist sub-panels will probably even go out of their way to invite pedagogic researchers to explain in a defined number of words how their submission meets the definition.

However, if we are to judge by past experience, research managers within institutions are likely to be very wary of actually testing out the effectiveness of these processes. Even relative failure to achieve the required outcome will have immediate consequences both for the funding of current activities and for the prestige of the institution. They are therefore very cautious about who they submit and where they submit them. The new 'four star' system may assist a little as it appears to lessen the importance of the overall profile but there is no hiding the fact that obtaining the 'international' ratings will be very demanding. The managers' task will be to construct a coherent submission, wrapped in a coherent narrative, which presents the research unit and the individuals within it, as world leaders working as a team to develop and promote the areas central to the discipline. Where they decide to submit to education, they will seek to concentrate on those areas which are most significant for teaching and learning in a generic sense. Where they submit to a specialist sub-panel, they will concentrate on advances in knowledge perceived as central to the discipline, however defined. In either case, they are likely to perceive specialist pedagogic research as marginal to their objective. Also, based on past experience, they may have doubts about the absolute quality of the research. The proposed returnees may well not have done a Ph.D in pedagogic research but in their own discipline, such as one of the Humanities. As a result they may not have at their fingertips the full panoply of social science research - experimental design, questionnaires, sampling and statistical analysis; other methodologies may not yet have credibility. Neither of these would or should be surprising as Ph.D.s of this nature are very thin on the ground and

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few individuals have gone through even the M.Res. level of training in this area. They may also not be part of a community of scholars who share their interest. The basis of their work in a discipline militates against this. These factors have in the past and may well in the next round discourage research managers from submitting to any panel those whose main centre of interest is in pedagogic research. In doing so, they will be confident that they have fully discharged their duty to the institution.

The result of these groups of people (panels and research managers) doing what they think is best within their immediate frame of reference may well be the relative absence of specialised pedagogic research from the RAE. The inevitable consequence is that there will be little or no QR funding to develop it in the future. Everyone will have done their job as it has been defined: the outcome should not be a surprise. But the conclusion seems inescapable: it will leave HEIs with no mechanism for funding research into their primary activity, specialised teaching and learning. It is, of course, possible to argue that this kind of research could be funded through the other part of the dual funding mechanism, the research councils, here mainly the ESRC. But, here again, their necessarily highly selective funding choices

focus on the generic educational research base for the education system as a whole of which specialised HE can only be a minor part.

What then can be done to escape from what seems to me to be a fairly fundamental contradiction? From the position we are in at the moment, we must encourage all the panels to be as receptive as they can be to pedagogic research. But they cannot and should not compromise on standards: encouraging poor research is in no-one's interest. We must encourage research managers not to exclude high-quality specialist pedagogic research simply because it is marginal to their central narrative and/or may not contribute to their notion of critical mass in a defined domain. But above all, we must provide proper research training and a career pathway for those who wish to become our research leaders in this area and who have the capacity to do so. That, it seems to me, is the collective responsibility of the Subject Centre Network and the HE Academy. It may not be possible to do a great deal in time for 2008 but surely we must build on the work done to professionalise higher education teaching by putting in place proper training for specialised pedagogic researchers.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

LLAS HAS BEEN ASKED by the HE Academy to respond to HEFCE's consultation document on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

DEFINING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As a Subject Centre we were reluctant to settle on a particular definition of sustainable development for two main reasons. First, there is the uncertainty about what sustainable development is and it would be unwise to impose a particular definition that may exclude practitioners who may be able to make an important contribution to the debate. Second, by the nature of the concerns of their disciplines, languages and linguistics practitioners can be excited by the language of sustainability in and of itself. LLAS practitioners may also be interested in English language understandings of sustainable development and translating these discourses into other languages and cultures.

OPPORTUNITIES

A crucial opportunity for LLAS is the examination of local responses to what are often framed as global issues. What role does culture play in the way that people in specific localities respond to environmental issues? How do we react when we learn that communities of people are learning English in order to both oppose and take advantage of the existence of multinational corporations? What does this mean for the future of minority languages? What happens to

a language if its only speakers are displaced by conflict, economic pressure, environmental degradation or the pursuit of opportunities elsewhere? And why should we care? Do we even have a right to an opinion?

Environmental issues have often inspired student year abroad projects in LLAS. Conflicts over the location of nuclear power facilities or wind farms bring what are often framed as global issues into the local arena. Language and area studies students are well placed to observe human responses to environmental concerns. After all, the explanations for how climate change is taking place are scientific, but the local, national and global responses are profoundly human. Culture plays an important role in informing our understandings of why scientists may be believed, ignored or dismissed. LLAS students, we presume, have an interest in understanding other cultures. This has a strong ethical dimension reflecting in the concern our students have for 'distant others'. Language learning and the study of other cultures place students into a social and geographical space where they engage with these 'others'. On becoming sustainability literate, students will gain a greater understanding of the implications their choices may have on others.

Tourism and trade are both important ways in which individuals engage with cultures other than their own. Whilst

languages have struggled with recruitment in recent years, higher education programmes in tourism have flourished. The disengagement between languages and tourism is a cause of concern, but the changing nature of the tourism industry offers many opportunities and challenges for the study of LLAS. The rise of cheap flights across Europe has brought countries and cities rarely visited by people from the UK into the realm of the weekend break. Cheap (and quick) air travel, in many respects, makes the challenges for students much greater. Arguments about the erosion of authenticity must be made with the greatest amount of care, but destinations that were once the preserve of a privileged few (who included languages and area studies students) are open to all. For instance, ten years ago, the beaches of Bulgaria and bars of Tallinn were barely known to Western Europeans. Whilst one must be cautious about seeing the democratisation of travel to these places in the negative, is there the danger that students will be less concerned about becoming embedded into the culture of their study? Will students in Spain and the South of France feel less attached to their place of study when they are a cheap two-hour flight from home, than in the days when only a real emergency warranted an expensive flight or long overland trip home? The implications for ESD are not simply related to the large ecological footprint that air travel leaves (itself a key concern), but how does this impact upon the development of intercultural competence? Does this make students less concerned about the people in the localities in which they study, now that they can come and go more easily?

Intercultural competence is not only concerned with the engagement across geographical space, but it can also be a bridge to translate the disciplinary gap between the humanities and the sciences. LLAS practitioners undoubtedly have a role to play in investigating how scientific observations about climate change (for example) are translated linguistically and culturally. In pedagogic terms sustainability literate graduates will have a critical understanding of how discourses of environmental issues are created for public consumption and how the framing of these discourses impacts (or fails to impact) upon human responses. Although the melting of the polar ice caps can be empirically observed using satellite technologies, to what extent do we really understand what the implications of this process are? Science itself is a highly contested discourse, but the language used to encourage action on the part of individuals, governments, business, non-governmental organisations, individuals and other agents is even more so.

The emergence of English as a global language, global issues raised by literary texts, and discussions about the intellectual concerns of area studies are issues that have interested LLAS

practitioners. ESD has been perceived as being aimed at the action of individuals and it is critical that ESD equips students to see the responsibility of state and corporate actors towards issues of sustainable development, as well as individuals.

BARRIERS

Despite the opportunities identified above, it is evident that LLAS disciplines have a long way to go before practitioners recognise the full potential of ESD. The main barriers concern, not a lack of interest in environmental issues, but more a failure to identify ways in which ESD may be integrated into the disciplines. There is a real danger of ESD being seen as something that is 'bolted on' to the curriculum. The prevailing scientific discourse within which ESD has been framed may prove to be a very strong barrier if practitioners see ESD as an issue for sciences, but not for the humanities and social sciences. The space for engaging with ESD through discourses of globalisation, global justice and intercultural competence needs to be widened to ensure that ESD is not seen as a matter for the sciences, but is seen as something for all disciplines. Confusion about ESD in the LLAS community is not always related to a lack of teaching of these issues, but a conflict in the vocabulary used to describe global and local processes and human responses to them.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite identifying many possible opportunities, significant barriers to engagement are evident. Whilst there are examples of teaching about responses to environmental issues in LLAS, there is little evidence that ESD has captured the imagination of practitioners at present. The possibilities for ESD in LLAS will depend to a large degree on the direction taken by the funding councils, but it is evident that the Subject Centre as well as the funding councils and other partners need to make substantive efforts to inspire people. LLAS is keen to be an activist in this area to ensure that our constituency is able to see that sustainable development is inherently culture-bound and is not merely a technical concern for certain other disciplines. We will endeavour to translate the ESD agenda out of its scientific framework of reference and into a vocabulary that makes the debates more accessible to the LLAS community.

The consultation document can be found on HEFCE's website www.hefce.ac.uk

For a more detailed version of this report, practitioner reflections on ESD, a bibliography and a glossary, please visit the ESD section of the LLAS website. www.llas.ac.uk/projects/esd.aspx

JOHN CANNING

RETHINKING PEDAGOGIC MODELS FOR E-LEARNING:

A survey of pedagogic practice in e-learning in Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies

FROM AUGUST 2003 TO DECEMBER 2004 the University of Sheffield carried out a research project funded by the Subject Centre to produce an analysis of pedagogic practice in, and challenges for, the development of e-learning in languages, linguistics and area studies. The outcomes of this project draw on the evidence of e-learning practice from six institutional case studies plus an analysis of questionnaire data and three literature reviews. The following are extracts from the report.

For the purpose of this study, two basic definitions of e-learning were used. The first is from the DfES (2003):

If someone is learning in a way that uses information and communication technologies (ICTs), they are doing e-learning.

This definition has the advantage that it is inclusive and covers any use of technology in educational settings. The disadvantage of it is that it is pedagogically neutral and does not define in any way the nature of e-learning practice. The second definition comes from JISC (2004):

Learning facilitated and supported through the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to include: delivery of courses, online assessment, student to student and student to teacher communications, use of Internet resources and other learning activities.

This is more comprehensive and demonstrates that e-learning development impacts on the whole of the learning and teaching process and is more than just development of content and resources.

AREAS COVERED

- Drivers for and barriers to e-learning innovation and development
- Pedagogic constructs of e-learning
- E-learning design and production
- Use of technology
- The learner experience and learner support
- Assessment
- E-tutoring
- Staff development
- Research in e-learning

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Out of this study have come particular pedagogic issues and insights relating to e-learning pedagogic practice in

Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies. These are summarised below:

Key findings

1. E-learning innovation is happening because of the commitment of individual enthusiasts through incremental transformation of traditional courses into e-learning courses.
2. E-learning is not one pedagogy but multiple pedagogies that are situated in existing pedagogic practices of face-to-face learning
3. E-learning pedagogy builds on existing pedagogies but continues to be adapted in the light of experience and student feedback as an iterative process. E-learning is being conceived in terms of traditional learning, but rethinking the nature of pedagogy and e-learning often occurs retrospectively.
4. E-learning pedagogies of particular significance and with the greatest potential for enhancing student learning are: autonomous learning, online communication, collaborative learning, learning communities, inter-cultural understandings.
5. Despite the beliefs of both staff and students in these case studies that these methodologies are successful, it is not clear what pedagogical designs lead to their successful implementation.
6. There are different pedagogic practices across the disciplines of languages, linguistics and area studies which are also resulting in different e-learning practices. There are also pedagogic differences in e-learning between undergraduate, graduate and professional programmes.
7. Most e-learning in these case studies is blended learning with courses using a combination of online and face-to-face methods. However, it is not clear how the online methods and activities integrate with face-to-face methods and activities.
8. Languages, linguistics and area studies have a powerful internet resource base. However, it is not clear how these internet resources can be integrated into e-learning. From the evidence in the case studies, they seem to add value to autonomous learning and group discussion, but we do not yet know how this is designed and facilitated.
9. Time and time-management are big issues in e-learning both for staff and students. In these case studies, the development of e-learning was always more time-consuming than expected, and online teaching took more time than face-to-face teaching. Students also found that their

workload increased because the e-learning environment required them to absorb more information, to be reflective and to keep up with a group.

10. Institutional management and administrative infrastructures have not yet adapted to the particular challenges of e-learning, for example asynchronous timetables, virtual recruitment of students, quality assurance in cyberspace, asynchronous online working of staff and students and intellectual property rights.

11. Widening participation is an important outcome for e-learning that has had demonstrable benefits for the institutions in these case studies. There are also other social benefits to e-learning that need further investigation.

12. Some of these case studies have shown that there are good marketing and commercial outcomes of e-learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. E-learning pedagogy needs to put more emphasis on learning and teaching processes and less emphasis on content and technology. There is a tendency to believe that the functions of the technologies being used are pedagogies in themselves.

2. More research needs to be carried out on the ways in which students learn through these pedagogies and the relationship between pedagogic objectives and learning designs.

3. There is a need for more detailed practitioner narratives on how their pedagogic beliefs can be articulated and integrated into the learning design of e-learning with the technologies being used.

4. There is a need for the development of generic protocols relating to online native language communication in the interests of inclusiveness and equality.

5. Staff development should be provided alongside the development of e-learning as an experiential process. Developing and designing e-learning materials linked to evaluation is the most effective form of staff development for understanding e-learning pedagogy.

6. Staff development should include experiential methods for introducing teachers to e-tutoring. E-tutoring builds on traditional teaching but has many unique skills and competences that need to be practised to be developed and the full scope of e-tutoring needs to be understood.

7. There needs to be further investigation of the nature of multi-disciplinary teams to develop e-learning and how this is organised. For example, is design, production and technical support something that is provided institutionally?

8. Any future research into e-learning pedagogy should attempt to capture visual representations of e-learning materials and learning environments - this gives direct

evidence of how pedagogy can be integrated into e-learning and adds considerable value to written narratives and links to resources.

9. Practitioners should be encouraged to develop research into the theory and practice of e-learning, as reliable research-practitioner data informed by theory is in short supply.

10. The next step in the development of e-learning pedagogy for the subject network could be the development of an e-learning pedagogic framework. This could combine a conceptual framework of relevant pedagogies, based on empirical research, with the collation of evidence of good practice. Detailed practitioner and learner narratives together with visual representations of learning designs and technologies would provide expert case studies and facilitate a deeper understanding of what it means to develop and sustain high quality e-learning.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the evidence and the range of pedagogic practice provided by the case studies and literature reviews it is clear that e-learning pedagogic practice in languages, linguistics and area studies is still emerging and evolving. In this respect, it is no different from other subject disciplines. Pedagogic models of e-learning are still underdeveloped and to date have been over-dominated by an emphasis on technology. E-learning research is still problematic in terms of how its theoretical and conceptual basis has been articulated and by the methodologies that are being used.

Languages, and university language centres in particular, seem to be at the forefront of e-learning development and, perhaps disproportionately, taking on the responsibility of being institutional 'champions' for e-learning. It is interesting to speculate why this might be the case. Is there perceived to be a greater potential for developing e-learning in language and linguistics courses? Is there a particular affinity between the pedagogy of language and linguistics and e-learning? Are practitioners more innovative than in other subject disciplines? Or is it that languages and linguistics courses are seen to be 'safe' options in terms of innovation and experimentation and it is therefore a status issue?

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E-LEARNING: REUSABLE LEARNING OBJECTS

THE SUBJECT CENTRE is currently involved in two projects supported by JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee www.jisc.ac.uk/) and the Higher Education Academy relating to the sharing and repurposing of learning objects. The outcomes of both projects will be shared across the sector via the Subject Centre's Materials Bank (www.llas.ac.uk/mb) and the JORUM repository (www.jorum.ac.uk).

WHAT IS A LEARNING OBJECT?

In its broadest sense the term learning object may refer to any resource that can be used for learning. However many learning resources do not have specific learning objectives (i.e. were not designed for learning) attached to them nor do they contain any directed learning activities (e.g. exercises, reflection activities, tasks etc.). Thus a more narrow definition of learning objects (as opposed to online learning resources) might be more useful. Such a definition may include reference to the following:

- Learning objectives - explicit statement of pedagogic purpose/learning outcome
- Learning activities - learner tasks relating to the content of the resource
- Granularity - may be limited in terms of time and/or number of activities contained (i.e. the learning object is generally a unit of learning that is smaller than a course or module)
- Interactivity - require 'learning by doing' from learners
- Reusability - can be reused or adapted (repurposed) for use in other contexts
- Aggregation - can be collated to build bigger units of learning (e.g. sessions, modules or courses)
- Independent/self-contained units - they can stand alone in the sense that a learning object encompasses all its own necessary resources
- Digital - can be delivered/accessed electronically
- Metadata tagged - are described in such a way as to enable them to be stored and retrieved (electronically)

The following are some example definitions:

- Any digital resource that can be reused to support learning (Wiley 2000)
- A learning object is a self-contained block of learning that fulfils a single, stated learning objective...can be launched and assessed independently...used within multiple learning management systems...employ a broad array of media (ASTD: 3)

- At its most basic level, a learning object is a piece of content that's smaller than a course or lesson. But the learning object doesn't exist in a vacuum; it's one of three interdependent components:
- the learning object itself
- metatagging, or the standardized way to describe the content in code
- a learning content management system (LCMS) that stores, tracks, and delivers content

(Mortimer 2002)

Although there is considerable variance in current definitions of learning objects, there appears to be general agreement that learning objects would ideally be small, digital and self-contained units of learning that can be broadly (but not exclusively) described as context independent, reusable and adaptable. However, as Koper (2001) points out, in practice these models of learning objects are not sufficient as there will always be "a structural relationship between tasks and resources in the context of a unit of study." (Koper 2001: 5) In other words learning objects do need some kind of containing framework for them to be meaningful and reusable. Thus working with the concept of a learning object in the context of real materials is one of the main objectives of the projects currently being supported by the Subject Centre.

THE PROJECTS

Current interest in learning resources as learning objects (or learning activities) is driven by a number of issues, some of which are technical, others of which are pedagogical. On the technical side much work has been done in recent years to develop systems whereby electronic content can be stored, retrieved and shared. Much of the work in this area has related to the description of content using a common set of metadata fields (e.g. author, title, description, format) that is consistent across databases/learning content management systems. Thus, one database will be able to retrieve (harvest) content from other databases with whom it is interoperable (with whom it shares metadata fields). The Subject Centre was recently involved in a project to work with educational metadata in order to share pedagogic resources and now has the capacity to share its data with other members of the Subject Network either directly or via the HE Academy Connect service (www.connect.ac.uk). Allied to this concept of sharing content JISC is about to launch a learning object repository (JORUM) which will allow subscribers (UK HE &

FE institutions) to centrally store and share learning resources across the sector. Finding ways of producing or adapting resources to go into JORUM has thus formed a further objective of the projects described here.

From a pedagogical point of view there are a number of drivers, not least of which being to provide learners with the means to construct their own learning, in ways that correspond to both their individual learning style and to the particular learning outcomes they are working towards. From a teaching point of view, collaboration in the development of learning resources and the sharing of those resources between colleagues is seen as a way of reducing effort and repetition. Add to this the growing development of distance programmes, which rely on electronic delivery and learner independence, and the case for manageable and self-contained units of learning is strengthened. However, as anyone who has ever used a course book or other resource with explicit learning objectives will know, using other peoples' content is by no means the whole solution, thus reusing resources actually involves some level of adaptation or repurposing.

Reusable learning objects for llas and the humanities

This small-scale project seeks to explore what a learning object might look like in the context of LLAS and the broader humanities. Much current work on learning objects relates to more scientific disciplines where it could be argued it is easy to 'contain' knowledge and to deliver it in 'bitesize' pieces (see Universities' Collaboration in eLearning (UCEL) www.ucel.ac.uk/rlos). This is being done through a short practitioner survey, websearches and a review of selected materials from the LLAS Materials Bank. The latter will involve both describing the resources in terms of learning objectives, activities, content and target learners and repurposing them in various ways to produce learning objects of the type described above.

L₂O

The L₂O project is a being developed by a regional consortium of universities and 16 - 19 providers (led by the University of Southampton) which is collecting and evaluating language learning objects for storage in a central repository (in this case JORUM). The main aim of this project is to actively work together across institutions to not only share existing objects but to share activity types (which have greater potential as shared resources) across the sector.

Thus this project will primarily be looking at activities, rather than content, based on the principle that a learning activity is:

"...an interaction between a learner and an environment (optionally involving other learners, practitioners, resources, tools and services) to achieve a planned learning outcome." (Beetham :2004)

Both projects are due to complete in 2006.

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING OBJECTS

Both projects build on the expertise and systems of the e-languages team (developers of English for Academic Purposes learning objects), also based at the University of Southampton. Some sample EAP materials can be found at: www.elanguages.ac.uk

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ALISON DICKENS

WHAT THE TEACHERS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT HOW UNIVERSITIES CAN HELP:

A survey of secondary schools in the UK

IN RECENT YEARS, many more universities have started to develop relationships with schools. Some of these relationships have been national in structure, but most have been local with secondary schools and colleges in their area. Whilst anecdotal evidence has accumulated about their nature and the procedures and activities they have given rise to, there has been no systematic investigation of this phenomenon. The current school session (2004-2005) has seen the status of modern foreign languages (MFL) at Key Stage 4 (14 to 16 year olds) reduced in the National Curriculum in England from a compulsory to an optional subject. Teachers are therefore alive to the need for help in persuading pupils to choose a language at the end of Year 9 (14 year olds), where previously, for most of them, it was compulsory. This short paper is the output of a survey of MFL teachers across England.

The aim of the survey was to assess the impact of making MFL optional in England from September 2004 and to suggest measures which could be taken in response to the near certain decline in MFL take-up. After gathering data on the numbers of pupils who started GCSE in September 2004 and the numbers in that cohort who would probably continue with a language to AS/ A-level, the survey moved on to gather qualitative information of interest to higher education (HE) modern languages staff.

Italicised parts of the text below are quotations extracted from 101 teachers' responses to the survey questionnaire distributed to Heads of Modern Languages Departments in secondary schools, further education and 6th form colleges in England in September 2004. All were answers to the question, *What can universities do to help promote language teaching in schools and colleges?*

The responses are categorised according to different means by which universities can provide help.

1. HEIs can establish relationships with schools, undertake school visits and make direct contacts with pupils

- *There should be more liaison e.g. come and talk to students before they make their choices, for example during assemblies and lessons*

- *Network with local schools - languages day etc. Come in to schools to talk about benefits of language learning and careers of recent graduates*
- *Target reasonably able pupils, including those who are not highly motivated, start with year 8 (aged 12/13) (e.g. Northumbria's involvement in 'Languages for Lads' in N. Tyneside)*

2. School pupils can be invited to HEIs and can visit university modern language departments

- *Taster days: e.g. rarer languages, linguistics, culture and society, literature tasters, films*
- *Keep promoting courses and study days. Stress practical benefits/value to employers and gains to students culturally and academically*
- *Invite students for an open day in the languages department for GCSE/AS/A2 support*

3. Undergraduate ambassadors

- *Could language undergraduates 'adopt' a year 13 (17-18 year olds) group and link via e-mail, video conferencing?*
- *Use undergraduates to go into primary schools to give pupils 'taster' sessions*
- *Student placements to assist conversation classes and trips abroad*

Erasmus students are ideal foreign language assistants as volunteers or as an accredited part of their course; Manchester, Glamorgan, Bangor are currently pioneering this. Stagiaires from maîtrise FLE courses in French universities require 60 hours classroom experience.

4. Languages and employment: the needs of industry and individual success stories.

- *Provide case studies of people who use languages in their jobs*
- *Bring graduates to school to talk about careers*
- *Need to emphasise importance of learning a language even if a student is not intending to do a degree in MFL. Also how useful languages are in the world of work*

5. Supply publicity materials

- *Keep sending us as many promotional videos etc as possible. Students hearing and seeing how MFLs are needed and beneficial outside of the school context ups their interest*
- *Provide more concrete evidence that MFL gives access to worthwhile careers*
- *Provide validity of study skills gained via language learning*

6. Universities can lobby

- *Lobby the government - the message on the importance of language learning has still not been received*
- *Ensure the new 14-19 curriculum contains languages*
- *Support MFL teachers when we protest about the dumbing down of subjects*

7. Specialist language degrees

- *Mix languages with other subjects. Promote relevant job statistics and opportunities*
- *Do more combined language courses, e.g. with more popular subjects such as media studies*

8. Non-specialist MFL courses

- *Emphasise a language as a useful subsidiary qualification to non-language degrees*
- *Show pupils the wider use of MFL in other departments (e.g. Business, Science, Law, Medicine, etc)*

9. What can HE staff and secondary teachers learn from each other?

- *Ensure that the lively interaction which takes place nowadays in schools, particularly at AS and A2, is maintained at university*
- *Distance learning for non-specialist teachers*
- *More visits to schools and colleges to see how languages are taught in schools. This would not only allow an understanding of level reached, but also enable an appreciation of what a surprise it is to students visiting some departments to find literature taught and examined in English*

CONCLUSIONS

There were only a couple of comments about HE teaching methods, and there is no great demand for reforms in the HE course structures. However, there is a surprisingly widespread perception that HE is in a position to influence government and exam boards, which is demonstrated through teachers' demands for changes in the National Curriculum, exam syllabi and marking standards. One respondent believes that HE modern languages staff can persuade colleagues in other subject departments to change general entrance requirements to HE.

The most frequent requests are for help to persuade more pupils to opt for languages, from as early as Year 8, by:

- Collaborating with school teachers, current undergraduates, graduates and employers
- Welcoming the pupils into HE departments
- Getting out to talk directly to pupils in schools and colleges
- Helping pupils do well in their classrooms and their exams
- Giving pupils appropriate confidence in their language abilities
- Demonstrating the real satisfactions and benefits of university language learning
- Providing evidence of the employment advantages of a knowledge of MFL

KEITH MARSHALL
University of Wales, Bangor

STUDENT ESSAY COMPETITION

This essay was the winning entry in the Subject Centre's student essay competition.

JOANNA BRITTON
University of Oxford

WHAT MAKES THE BEST LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS OF LANGUAGES, LINGUISTICS OR AREA STUDIES?

To answer this question, we need first to ask some further questions. What should a languages student be able to do after 'the best learning experience'? Speak fluently, if inaccurately? Write with perfect style, but be nervous of mistakes while speaking? Or just be able to say, honestly, that they love learning the language? And is it ever fair to say that grammar accuracy and organic fluency in a language are mutually exclusive? Moreover, in trying to define the 'best' learning experience, should we focus on the most enjoyable one, or the one where most vocabulary or grammatical structures were learnt?

The central factor governing language learning is learner motivation, and the best language learning will arise only when teachers and students dedicate time and interest. No matter how talented the teacher, or how wonderful the facilities, if learners don't want to learn a language, they won't! But while it is difficult to motivate uninterested students, I suggest that the initial responsibility for a good learning experience lies with teachers: a fun, student-centred approach, based on students' interests and learning styles, will both boost exam performance, and also provide the best learning experience.

SIMPLY PUT, AN UNINTERESTED STUDENT WHO HAS NO FUN WILL NOT ACQUIRE LANGUAGE SKILLS, AND WILL HAVE NO LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCE AT ALL, LET ALONE THE BEST ONE.

In the best language experience of all - children learning their native tongue - we see that the greatest motivation is a desire for meaningful communication: children learn language to express themselves. In a classroom, meaningful communication can be promoted in two ways: through the choice of topics, and the choice of materials. Learners will be more motivated if they choose their own topics - or choose from topics suggested by a teacher. Why focus on recycling habits when you can learn the same structures talking about shopping habits? This is not dumbing-down, but makes learning interesting, and is vital for learners at all levels. Indeed, if someone asked me, for example, to talk in English about a favourite sports team, I would be hard pressed to say anything. Ask me to do the same in another language, and my reticence will soon turn to boredom and frustration.

An emphasis on (edited) authentic materials gives exposure to natural language models, and also has an obvious practical application. Furthermore, it is always more motivating if activities are personal, and linked to the foreign culture. I covered the topic of food several times, and the most memorable approach involved discussing which foods we liked and tasting the foods of the other country. (Bringing chocolate into a classroom environment naturally works wonders for concentration). Another factor to consider is that successful learning requires variety. Learners need activities to cover all four language skills and also to accommodate different learning styles. Thus for me, an auditory learner, my knowledge of the future tense in Italian derives not from the hours of

grammar classes I sat through, but from one pop song we listened to once in a class.

The vocabulary, phrases, or grammar structures I have most accurately retained have been those learned while having fun. When relaxed, your learning barriers are lower than when nervous. Thus, having forgotten much of the French I learnt, I can indeed still recite parts of the body from the song 'Alouette'- sung once by a teacher in a bird costume! This is in contrast to much forgotten vocabulary on any number of topics, that I dutifully learnt each week for tests. Indeed, the role of assessment and feedback is also vital. For example, simply setting a list of vocabulary for a test is common, but it would be far better for students to perform role-plays using the same vocabulary in a context. Similarly, more than other subjects, language skills develop continuously and are far more suited to assessment in quizzes or informal chats, than a single final exam, where a bad mark can demotivate, and make students scared of continuing.

Obviously the ideal place to learn a language is the country itself, with an obvious motivation, and relaxed situations in which to learn. Some of these advantages can be extended to classes anywhere, and were exemplified in one weekly German class. Coffee breaks were central to the class; the teacher came along, and was happy to extend them if we were speaking German - if we spoke anything else, we were threatened with immediate grammar exercises! Encouraging students to stick vocabulary / grammar cards up around the home and bring German into everyday life extended this environment. Moreover, rather than receiving homework at the end of the class, we were emailed a short grammar exercise or article every day or two. This encouraged us to make time for language within the week, and made us feel that we should mirror the teacher's extra effort. Even if time and money don't make a daily class possible, the development of Blackboard websites, and e-learning has made the old language mantra 'little but often' even easier. While these suggestions may seem at odds with traditional, text-book based learning, I am not suggesting that people should - or can - learn languages simply by listening to Italian pop music or reading Vogue in French. In helping others to learn English I now see even more the importance of a solid approach to grammar. Toddlers may appear to learn native grammar by osmosis, but I have met no older learners of foreign languages who don't desire simple explanations of grammar rules, and repeated practice of them. For while

grammar can be concealed in songs or topics chosen by learners, most learners become frustrated at their inability to express what they want to without some separate grammar explanation and practice. Thus grammar still plays a vital role in facilitating communication and motivating learners.

In conclusion, I suggest that the best language learning experience enables students to confidently express things relevant to them, and have receptive skills appropriate to their level. This acquisition of skills is directly tied to a student's enthusiasm and love of the language. Simply put, an uninterested student who has no fun will not acquire language skills, and will have no language learning experience at all, let alone the best one. Rather, the best language learning experience will arise, even with students of limited motivation, if teachers and students choose relevant topics and activities, make grammar directly relevant to communication, and, above all, together cultivate an atmosphere of (controlled) fun in the classroom.

SUBJECT CENTRE PROJECTS

IN THE AUTUMN OF 2004, the Subject Centre issued a call for bids for pedagogic research projects and projects to develop materials for the Subject Centre materials bank. The following projects have been funded:

PEDAGOGIC RESEARCH

Name of Project	Project Leader	Institution
A case study of the effects on student attainment, and on retention, of personal development planning (PDP) via departmental mechanisms for improving student learning and through the institutional Progress File	Susan Beigel	University College Chester
East Asian Learners' response to intercultural themes as part of the year abroad in the UK	Tricia Coverdale-Jones	University of Portsmouth
New online learning spaces: Task design and implementation for a synchronous audiographic online learning environment	Regine Hampel	Open University
SS4LL (Study Skills for Language Learners): An Integrated Learner Training Programme	Kirsten Söntgens and Juliet Laxton	University of Southampton
A survey of the ways universities cope with the needs of dyslexic foreign language learners and, in consultation with tutors and learners, the piloting of appropriate assessment methods	Jenny Hill, Yves Le Juen and Jannie Roed	University of Sussex
Investigating the pedagogical challenges and opportunities of Field Trip modules in Area Studies	Jude Davies and Alasdair Spark	University College Winchester

MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

Name of Project	Project Leader	Institution
Graded exercises to develop knowledge/awareness of the structure and function of English Language	Jill Cosh	Anglia Polytechnic University
A language package which focuses on the varieties of the Italian language	Cecilia Gorla	University of Nottingham
University Challenge: a short orientation and listening course for international students	Roger Smith	University of Bristol
Processing Instruction: grammar activities for Spanish and German	Emma Marsden	University of York
Presentation skills for international students	Rosemary Jane	University of Portsmouth
Case Studies for learners of Business Spanish	Catherine McMahon	Glasgow Caledonian University
Online resources for the teaching of British Sign Language	Helen Phillips and Mark Heaton	University of Central Lancashire

We have always valued the contributions made by established pedagogic researchers to our events, materials and other LLAS activities, but it has also been encouraging to see more and more practitioners with research interests outside pedagogy (as well as those completely new to research) seeking to undertake their own investigations into teaching and learning in our subject areas.

As part of our commitment to equipping existing and potential pedagogic researchers with the skills required to undertake high quality research, LLAS has started to offer

one-day workshops in research methods. Concentrating on techniques such as questionnaire design, interviewing and conducting focus groups, the workshop introduces practitioners to methodologies widely employed in education and other social sciences. We also hope that familiarity with these methods will ensure that potential researchers are better placed to compete for national sources of funding with practitioners from disciplines where knowledge and use of these methods is long established.

LIZ HUDSWELL

NEW ON THE LLAS WEBSITE

THESE ABSTRACTS are from just a small section of the articles and materials available on the LLAS website. The website offers free to view resources written and developed by authorities in the fields of languages, linguistics and area studies.

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

The Good Practice Guide (GPG) contains a collection of commissioned articles written by recognised authorities in their field and reviewed by an editorial board. The GPG is aimed primarily at higher education teachers, whether they are just starting in the profession or more experienced staff wishing to find out about new areas. It will also be of interest to postgraduates. It can be quickly accessed at www.llas.ac.uk/gpg.

The following articles have recently been added to the guide.

Writing in a second Language

[Alasdair Archibald](#)

Writing is not only the process the writer uses to put words to paper but also the resulting product of that process. This process and product are also conditioned by the purpose and place of writing (its audience and genre). Writing in a second language is further complicated by issues of proficiency in the target language, first language literacy, and differences in culture and rhetorical approach to the text. Instruction in writing can effectively improve student proficiency in a number of key areas. Approaches to instruction have variously targeted process, product and purpose of writing. More recent approaches both to its teaching and assessment recognise the need to integrate all aspects of writing.

Intercultural awareness as a component of HE Modern Languages courses in the UK

[Robert Crawshaw](#)

This study traces the growing importance attached to intercultural awareness within Modern Languages Higher

Education in the UK. It differentiates between the incorporation of intercultural insight into language learning and the development of 'intercultural studies' as an emerging interdisciplinary field. This development, it is argued, is changing the character of the relationship between Modern Languages and Cultural Studies in the UK. The role of intercultural awareness within the curriculum entails not simply innovative pedagogies and the inclusion of periods of residence abroad as part of undergraduate programmes. It has underlined the value of linking ethnography, history, language, literature, philosophy and psychology in new course combinations. The article reviews the background to this change and the various teaching practices associated with it.

Turning Students into researchers: introduction to research methods in Applied Linguistics

[Marjorie Lorch](#)

The teaching of research methods to postgraduate students in Applied Linguistics presents a particular challenge. For the most part students will come to the course with a humanities degree. Their undergraduate study previously involved reading secondary sources, textbooks or review chapters that summarized large bodies of evidence and spelled out their theoretical significance. In postgraduate study and research, however, primary sources of evidence become crucially important. Students need to become acquainted with a variety of empirical approaches to research questions and must learn to pose questions in such a way that clearly specifies the type of evidence and analysis required to produce the answers being sought. In addition, there are general research skills which are essential equipment for academic pursuits. Training students to become researchers in Applied Linguistics presents a challenge: how to encourage the development and acquisition of the critical skills, conceptual and analytical tools as well as the practical knowledge to enable students to navigate the research literature and develop their own research agenda.

CONFERENCE PAPERS AND REPORTS

The website also contains over 70 papers, many of which are written versions of papers presented at LLAS conferences and workshops. We are currently in the process of reviewing the way in which papers can be searched on the site. The following articles are a just a small selection of papers published over the past year.

Area Studies

Decentring Area Studies

R J Ellis

'Area Studies' has established itself as never before as a label commanding general understanding in the British higher education system. A decade ago, relatively few Area Studies practitioners in the UK would have identified themselves as such, many now do. As a consequence, additional impetus has developed behind thinking about what kinds of generic teaching and learning issues exist for the wide spectrum of Area Studies programmes found in the UK, ranging from Anglophone Area Studies through European Studies to 'Less Widely Taught' Area Studies.

Residence Abroad

The Year Abroad: a critical moment

Rosamond Mitchell, Florence Myles, Brenda Johnstone, Peter Ford

The year abroad component has faced challenges recently, although it represents a life-changing experience for most students. This paper illustrates the importance of the year abroad to the undergraduate language degree, drawing on research evidence arising from an ESRC funded project of the development of criticality in undergraduates. Our suggestion, supported by our empirical evidence, is that the Year Abroad has a powerful role in allowing language students to develop in the domains of the self and the world which in turn helps progression in the domain of reason, and feeds into their ability to engage critically with academic work.

Identifying student needs for the year abroad preparation

Ulrike Bavendiek

The author examines student needs in preparing for the year abroad, looking at the relationship between metacognitive learning strategies and linguistic development during the year abroad, and how students' subjectivities relate to their linguistic development. The author summarises her findings by producing a list of steps that would ideally be included in a year abroad preparation course.

E-learning

Online self-study: the way forward

Cécile Tschirhart

The author describes the "e-packs", developed by London Metropolitan University, and the rationales behind them.

Developed for online use by autonomous language learners, they are also used to supplement taught classes. Although the e-packs have been successful, the author reports that tighter integration with taught material would be beneficial and that both learner and teacher training would be necessary to secure this.

Online languages and reflective learning

Mike Thacker, Cathy Pyle and Anne Irving

This paper describes a programme of university language courses, delivered as a combination of both online and face-to-face teaching. The authors believe that the approach taken can promote learner reflection. Evaluation studies reported a good level of student satisfaction and focus groups indicated an increased quality of student work. Further work to foster greater reflection is discussed.

Education for Sustainable Development

www.llas.ac.uk/projects/esd.aspx

Languages and Sustainability

Alison Phipps

Human Geography /Area Studies (Agriculture and Rural Development)

Guy Robinson

An African-Asian Languages perspective

Michael Hutt

Report into activity of LLAS

John Canning

Recruitment

Storm clouds with a silver lining: new opportunities for language programmes

Tim Connell

Although university language programmes have undergone many difficulties during recent years, there have also been success stories. In this paper, the author balances the negative and the positive, encourages institutions to face the commercial argument head-on and provides a list of perspectives which language course providers can use to promote take-up.

Researching 'Languages Work': why don't teenagers pick languages?

Teresa Tinsley

With the removal of languages from the compulsory curriculum for 14-16 year olds, the post-16 decline in language learning is starting to affect numbers taking GCSE as well. Public debate centres on the importance of pupil choice, and the alleged unpopularity of the subject among teenagers. The 'Languages Work' project has produced materials designed to improve careers guidance in languages, and so increase take up. This paper outlines findings from our development work which sheds light on teenagers' attitudes towards languages and how to address their misconceptions.

Employability

New contexts for university languages: the Bologna Process, globalisation and employability

Jim Coleman

So far, the Bologna Process is changing university studies in all countries except the UK. However, the author posits that the globalisation and commercialisation of HE may overtake the Bologna agenda and goes on to discuss this paradox. Prior strategies for emphasising employability have perhaps been badly-implemented and so suggestions for future improvement are included.

Enhancing student awareness of employability skills through the use of progress files

Dawn Leggott and Jane Stapleford

This study, which was inspired by the Dearing Report, aimed to explore the nature of student perception of their skills development. Taking place over five years and involving 35 undergraduate students, the study found that students had a low awareness of the skills that they were intended to develop and many of them were unaware of the skills requirements of employers. As a result of these findings, Personal Development Plans were used to bridge this gap and it is hoped that the experience gained from this study can be transferred to other contexts.

Widening Participation

Widening Participation and ensuring success: transition from A-level to university

Ian Claussen

A report based on the experiences of students and staff in the School of Modern Languages at Queen Mary, University of London, produced for HEFCE's Excellence Fellowship Awards scheme. The Project investigated staff and student attitudes to help practitioners in the 14-19 years range to understand the future experience of their students and to encourage their students to continue studying languages. It also investigated innovation in HE practice that might have relevance in the 14-19 sector, with focus on the teaching of grammar and problem-based learning for language learners.

MATERIALS BANK

The following are a small selection of over 40 teaching resources available from the Materials Bank Section of the LLAS website at www.llas.ac.uk/mb

Arabic: study materials

Steve Cushion

Steve Cushion, London Metropolitan University, has expanded his Arabic teaching materials, which now include: GISMO 3 Arabic Authoring Package, basic text-editing software for Arabic, and Arabic study material for use off-line. The Arabic Authoring Package enables you to create your own interactive computer activities to develop proficiency in all four skills. You can tailor activities to the

exact needs of your students and over time you can build up a bank of activities to support your classroom teaching. Activities can be carried out either in school or at home.

Bulgarian: materials for an on-line course

Jim Dingley and Florentina Badalanova

The aim of the project was to produce materials that teach Bulgarian to students who have some knowledge of Russian. The materials are not intended to be used entirely for self-study, but rather as a source of auxiliary practice to support classroom work. The materials have been chosen as a sample of what could be offered in different study areas, e.g. general Bulgarian culture (with links to articles on leading Bulgarian writers, composers and painters, as well as to an extract from a short story), newspaper extracts on contemporary events and historical topics. The materials were compiled with the following groups of students in mind: (1) those studying Bulgarian as part of a degree course; the reading materials would supplement other classes where the skills of speaking, listening and writing would be developed; (2) those wishing to acquire a reading knowledge of Bulgarian as part of a social science undergraduate or postgraduate course; (3) evening class students, who could use the materials independently, as a back-up to work done in class.

Irish: Computer-Assisted Practice Activities for Irish Language Learners (CAPAILL)

Greg Toner

CAPAILL is an on-line learning package to help Irish-language learners with some previous experience of the language. The aim of the package is to support students in improving their knowledge and understanding of the language by practising selected topics, with the main emphasis on points of grammar, usage and spelling that are known to cause problems.

Dutch: The Virtual Department of Dutch

Theo Hermans

The Virtual Department of Dutch is an inter-university teaching collaboration programme in Dutch Studies, involving four UK universities. Its web-based, free-standing and interactive self-study packs cover topics in Dutch language, literature, linguistics, history and cultural studies. They cater for different levels of linguistic competence in Dutch, from beginners to advanced. Their use is free.

JOHN CANNING

700 REASONS FOR STUDYING LANGUAGES



THE SUBJECT CENTRE for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies has recently conducted research into rationales for language learning, which has resulted in the production of a taxonomy of more than 700 reasons for studying languages. The collection of reasons is now available as an online database which can be freely accessed from the Subject Centre website at: www.llas.ac.uk/700reasons. A full report on the project findings and an accompanying poster can also be ordered free of charge. Copies of the report have been distributed to staff working in HE modern language departments but huge demand has also been received from secondary school teachers both in the UK and USA. More than a thousand copies have been ordered directly from our website. It is hoped that the 700 reasons will assist in the marketing of languages and in informing the design of courses.

The research involved a survey of both relevant literature and the views of language learners in the 16 to 19 and higher education sectors. Reasons for language learning were found to cover a wide range of themes including: citizenship; communication; economic, social and political dimension; democracy; diversity; employability; equal opportunities;

environmental sustainability; globalisation; identity; intercultural competence; international dimension; key skills; language awareness; mobility; multilingualism; personal and social development of the individual; personal satisfaction and values. Learners who participated in the study placed considerable worth on the personal benefits associated with language learning such as communication, employability, enjoyment and travel. They also identified the importance of languages in enabling them to meet people and make friends, gain an appreciation of other cultures and develop values such as open-mindedness and tolerance. However, in contrast to the personal gains connected with languages, however, learners appeared to be less aware of the existence of broader strategic benefits of language learning for the UK economy, UK national security and EU citizenship.

In order to develop further resources in the future, the Subject Centre team would find it very useful to receive feedback on how these materials have been used, both in HE and in the secondary sector. Please email llas@soton.ac.uk with your comments.

ANGELA GALLAGHER-BRETT

“A language enables you
to communicate with others
without seeming arrogant
enough to expect them to speak English
(sixth former)”

STUDENTS STUDYING LANGUAGES IN UK POST-COMPULSORY SECONDARY AND FURTHER EDUCATION (2000-)

A LEVEL ENTRIES: ENGLAND, NORTHERN IRELAND AND WALES

A level	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	% change 1992-2004 §	% change 2000-2004 §
English*	18,661	17,844	72,196	78,746	81,649	**	**
French	18,341	18,079	15,614	15,531	15,149	-51.5	-17.4
German	8,718	8,575	7,013	6,930	6,390	-43.6	-26.7
Irish (L1 and L2)	295	275	258	258	286	N/A	-3.1
Spanish	5,702	5,743	5,572	5,781	5,966	26.4	4.6
Welsh (L1 and L2)	1,020	952	914	852	919		-9.9
Other languages†			2,530	5,560	6,023		
Russian‡	581	531					
Italian‡	920	945					
TOTAL ALL SUBJECTS	774,364	770,995	701,380	750,537	766,247	4.8	-1.0

§ Percentage changes have only been calculated where the definition of the subject (or group of subjects) has remained consistent throughout the time period.

* Includes variety of subject titles. A level Language and Literature until 2001. From 2002 all types of English A level are included.

** Percentage changes in English have not been calculated due to changes in subject titles included (see above).

† Includes all languages except English, French, German, Spanish, Welsh and Irish (2002-). Italian and Russian recorded separately until 2001

‡ Included in 'Other Modern languages' since 2002

(Source: AQA) www.aqa.org.uk

HIGHER ENTRIES (SCOTLAND)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	% change 2000-2004 §
English	5,301	16,123	28,910	29,624	28,873	
French	3,797	4,272	4,771	4,886	4,614	21.5
German	1,692	2,015	2,206	1,908	1,794	6.0
Spanish	591	831	916	1,045	1,081	82.9
Gaelic L1	41	66	72	75	91	122.0
Gaelic L2	84	114	147	147	139	65.5
Russian	12	5	14	23	17	41.7
Italian	143	188	284	263	269	88.1
TOTAL ALL SUBJECTS	117,045	147,796	164,004	166,885	165,575	41.5

ADVANCED HIGHERS (SCOTLAND)

Advanced Highers were introduced in Scotland in 2000-2001 to replace the Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (CSYS). The numbers taking these exams are relatively low and studying at this level is not compulsory for students wishing to enter higher education. A major reason for the rapid growth of entries in the Advanced Higher Exam is that until 2003, the CSYS and the Advanced Higher co-existed.

	2001	2002	2003	2004	% change 2001-2004 §
English*	461	1,205	1,704	1,720	273.1
French	315	574	636	715	126.0
German	174	252	296	249	43.1
Spanish	53	143	132	148	179.2
Gaelic L1	11	14	11	11	0.0
Gaelic L2	10	11	23	28	180.0
Russian	3	3	4	17	466.7
Italian	10	23	26	14	40.0
TOTAL ALL SUBJECTS	6,769	15,749	16,998	17,185	

* Title changed from 'English and Communication' to 'English' in 2003.

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority www.sqa.org.uk



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