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Want to contact us?

Building the Network

Mike Kelly (Subject Centre Director) reports on the outcomes of our first year of operation.
Working together, we can achieve more than any one of us can manage separately. This is basic reason for the co-operation within the academic community, and the rationale for the LTSN network. It does not abolish competition between universities, but it does offer an underlying sense of our common purpose. For this reason, the Subject Centre places a high priority on facilitating co-operation. By combining our strengths across institutions, we shall be able to respond more effectively to the challenges we all face.

Over the next three years, the Subject Centre, therefore, has the strategic aim of becoming the key meeting point for developing co-operation and networking. We shall aim to develop our work of bringing together individuals, departments, associations and other organisations in the areas of languages, linguistics and area studies. And we shall broaden the network to include colleagues in other subjects and other countries. The main point of this is to enhance learning and teaching, focusing on issues of pedagogy, but also including organisational issues such as academic leadership, student recruitment and policy frameworks.

In our first year or so of existence we have made a good start, and plan to build on this with the help and support of our academic community. In practical terms this involves a range of activities.

Making contacts

We have established an extensive list of contacts, who receive this newsletter and mailings about our activities. Our aim will be to make this a comprehensive list, keep it up-dated and regularly send out relevant information. We will also develop the online and printed contact information on individuals, departments and organisations working in our subject areas. You can already see quite a lot of this on our website and in the Information sheets produced for us by Dawn Ebbrell at CILT.

Meeting each other

We have organised a number of meetings and other events, which have provided opportunities to develop networking and collaboration. Some of these are reported elsewhere in this newsletter. In addition to meetings of our three Specialist Groups and Advisory Board, we have held a series of seminars and workshops, and a programme of Roadshows in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; we have facilitated meetings on benchmarking issues; and we have held information sessions at our centres in CILT and Hull. We plan to

extend these events in the coming year, in an expanded programme, which will also include visits to individual institutions to exchange ideas and examples of good practices.

It will also include what we hope will be a major conference in the summer term of 2002.

Mike Kelly at the Stirling Roadshow, January 2001.

Co-operating in development

We have worked closely with a number of existing projects, including FDTL (Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning) and TLTP (Teaching and Learning Technology Programme) projects, some of whom have disseminated their results in our workshops and roadshows. We are also involved in planning a number of development projects and other initiatives. These include a project with UCML to pilot a number of different approaches to collaboration. At the time of writing, we are hoping that HEFCE will shortly agree to fund this three year project, involving a dozen collaborative sub-projects. If it does, it will be one of the most wide-ranging and ambitious initiatives to promote academic co-operation in the UK, and will result in a number of new networks as well as new resources available to the whole academic community.

Another initiative, taken jointly with UCML, aims to develop an online resource bank for language learning, aimed at promoting languages as a key

graduate skill, for students not specialising in languages. This is also linked with plans to develop language learning networks at local level across the different sectors of education. These proposals for 'e-languages' are in the preliminary stages of planning with HEFCE, but have received strong support from the academic community and from a number of potential partners, including the embassies of France, Germany, Spain and Italy.

Wider partnerships

We have begun to establish partnerships with other national and international bodies working in our subject areas. We are fortunate to be able to work with a number of very supportive subject associations in the UK, and have excellent relations with wider European associations, such as the European Language Council, CERCLES and EUROCALL. We have appreciated the warm support of the cultural services of embassies, and we have developed good working relations with several government agencies, including QAA.

We plan to build and extend these links in the coming years. We can already see the huge potential of the LTSN network, which connects us to colleagues in other subject areas, and with a great deal of generic expertise. The first steps have been taken to link the five Arts and Humanities Subject Centres, who share cognate academic interests. Other groupings are also in prospect, for example, to address the broad interdisciplinary scope of area studies, or to share experience between subjects that are suffering student recruitment difficulties (an issue common to languages and the hard sciences), or who share a particular concern for part-time staff.

Having put co-operation firmly on our own agenda, we have been amazed to discover how many open doors are now beckoning. We can look forward to developing a growing network of relationships with universities, associations, government bodies, and even private sector organisations such as publishers and broadcasters. At this stage, the willingness to co-operate is abundant, and considerably outweighs the desire to compete.

Education is an important component of the new knowledge-based society, and co-operation is well recognised within the knowledge economy as a crucial strategy for achieving better use of our resources and a big extension to our traditional markets. It stimulates innovation and enables us to meet diverse needs. Co-operation only appears to be limited by our imagination and by the resources we have at our disposal. By working together, we can expand both.

Getting down to some serious work at the Stirling Roadshow.

Subject Review: the calm before the storm
Mike Kelly reports

TQA is a receding memory of the mid-nineties, and Subject Reviews are fast approaching: already upon us for some colleagues in Scotland, and promised for 2003-06 for most of our disciplines in England. As part of the process of helping departments to prepare for review, we have been glad to host presentations at our Subject Centre Roadshows by Fiona Crozier, Assistant Director of QAA. Her very clear and helpful explanations have been useful in raising awareness and allaying fears about the process. It is now clear that this is the calm before the storm in two senses.

In the first sense, this period provides an opportunity for departments to gear up, and prepare themselves for the onslaught of review. The new procedures are now piloted and fully documented. For those who want to know about them, there are no secrets and plenty of advice. Preparing the departmental self-assessment and supporting evidence is likely to be hard work but at least it is a known quantity. With RAE submissions out of the way, departments will be able to focus on QAA requirements, preferably getting their responses well bedded down in departmental practice in advance of review. The benchmarking reports, necessary reference documents, will be published very shortly. Teaching and Learning co-ordinators will have a decent lead in time to get all their material together.

However, there may well be another storm brewing, whose harbingers have appeared in public announcement and press speculation. Minister Blunkett surprised most of the sector a few weeks ago by announcing the scaling down of QAA, and of the review programme. Not all departments will be visited, though all are expected to produce a self-assessment. The implications of the change have not been fully worked out, and Fiona Crozier signalled several resulting areas of uncertainty. Press reports have suggested that pressure came from the Prime Minister, and that deals have been struck with vice-chancellors.

Uncertainties have now increased. Government policies were put into suspended animation by the general election, and higher education has taken a low profile in the campaign. The DFEE has just undergone a change of Minister, and the largest funding council (HEFCE) awaits a change of Chief Executive. There is a definite air of unfinished business, which feels rather like the calm before the policy storm.

Can the down-sized QAA survive in its present form? Will the cut-down subject review be the last word on 'light touch'? Will the broader academic community be invited to consult on how all this might develop?

As things stand, heads of department might be forgiven for holding their fire on subject review until the picture swims more clearly into focus. And in the meantime, the effort expended on benchmarking statements, programme specifications and other documents may best be regarded as a useful investment in collective reflection and examples of good practice. After all we may end up valuing them because we think they are helpful to us, rather than because we are obliged to comply with them.

Specialist Groups News

Linguistics Specialist Group - **Alison Dickens reports**

The group has had a very successful first year and has proved to be an essential source of support and advice. Unfortunately, owing to the pressure of other commitments, we have had to say goodbye to two group members (Andrew Spencer and Ronald Carter) but we are delighted to welcome Diane Blakemore (Salford) and April MacMahon (Sheffield) who joined us in time for our final meeting of the year in June. Keith Brown continues as Chair and will steer us through our programme of activities for 2001/2 with his trademark deftness and charm. If you haven't already heard about it one of our key events this year was a cross-disciplinary seminar on the teaching of grammar, hosted for us by Dick Hudson at UCL. Over 60 participants joined us for the event that consisted of presentations on the Nuffield Inquiry for Languages (Mike Kelly, Director of the Subject Centre and Inquiry member), the new curriculum for

GCSE and A level (Chris Maynard, QCA) and the place of HE in the grammar teaching continuum (Dick Hudson, UCL). The rest of the day was devoted to case studies and discussion on the place of grammar within the English, MFL, Linguistics and Teacher Training curriculum and we are very grateful to those speakers who have contributed their papers to our Grammar Supplement (in this issue).

Getting colleagues involved in collaborative partnerships and disseminating information about current practice are two of the Subject Centre's key objectives and so, with this in mind, the Group organised an event on the Teaching, Learning and Assessment of Linguistics for the exchange of ideas between colleagues. As demonstrated in our Needs Survey (see page 13) many of our users see the sharing of expertise between institutions as a key activity for

HE and many indicated that they would welcome the opportunity to obtain teaching materials electronically from the Subject Centre. In order to fill this database the Subject Centre needs contributions from the sector and this event enabled colleagues to exchange ideas on how this might be achieved, e.g. through the setting up of a shared linguistics multiple-choice testing system or through contributing information about locally held resources to a resources database. The Subject Centre is keen to follow these initiatives through and has been seeking additional funding for this purpose. We hope to report on our progress in the next issue of Liaison.

Finally, then, for next year we have several Linguistics events in the pipeline (see p.16) and with the help of our Specialist Group, colleagues in departments and subject organisations we anticipate a very successful year 2001/2.

The Area Studies Specialist Group - **Alison Dickens reports**

The Subject Centre has its own reasons for being grateful to the benchmarking exercise for the light that it has shed on the particular challenges that are faced when trying to identify and define the field of Area Studies. The issue of inter and multi-disciplinary learning has proved to be a key feature of the benchmarking document and was much discussed at the open meeting facilitated by the Subject Centre in February. And this has proven to be a key feature of our Specialist Group for Area Studies in that the Group incorporates colleagues from a wide range of areas and disciplines and our activities have mainly been at the intersection of disciplines in such events as *Ethnography for Language Learners* and *Residence Abroad for Non-linguists* (see http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/events/events_sc_ol

d.html for details). In many ways our map of the field is still very patchy and participation rather light in some areas. A key issue has emerged around the place of languages in Area Studies and we are fully aware that a Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies may not be of immediate appeal to colleagues for whom language and intercultural learning are not key interest.s. In order to address this the Subject Centre is holding an open meeting in the autumn to draw on a wider range of expertise than our rather small Specialist Group allows – we cannot expect it to cover every geographical area currently taught. In addition to this the LTSN has offered to facilitate an Interdisciplinary Studies Group made up of a range of Subject Centres who cover aspects of Area Studies, e.g. Politics, Geography, English

and many more. Indeed we have already set the ball rolling in this direction with our July 2001 event on interdisciplinary and intercultural learning on which we are collaborating with the LTSN Subject Centre for Geography, Geology and Earth Sciences (see page 16 for details). We are also planning at least one joint event on teaching critical theory with the English Subject Centre (see page 7) and look forward to several more collaborative events with Subject Centres and subject organisations.

> For more information on past and future Subject Centre events see: http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/events/ events_sc.html

The Specialist Group for Languages - **Vicky Wright reports**

The role of the Specialist Group is to represent the language teaching community in advising the Subject Centre on the needs of the sector and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas. It is by no means easy to prioritise amongst many pressing needs, but after much discussion, the Group has identified three main areas for future activity. Initial ideas on (i) development of the Centre's web site, (ii) the extension of good and innovative practice and (iii) the promotion and uptake of Languages were fleshed out in the Group's second meeting in February.

One idea, generating considerable enthusiasm, was the concept of a web-based encyclopedia of good practice in learning and teaching. This would become a core element on the Subject Centre site and would relate to all three areas covered by the Centre. With a mix of articles by acknowledged experts in the field, interesting case-studies and links to other sites, it was felt that this would be an invaluable resource which could be easily updated - unlike its paper-based counterparts. Of course, there are all sorts of design implications in terms of look and feel and whether it should be a web-based book or an internet site using 'all the tricks of the web

trade'. It would be interesting to hear ideas from colleagues on how such a resource might be planned or used.

One area to find a permanent place in the encyclopedia (and representing the third area of need identified by the Specialist Group) is the issue of recruitment of students. This entry would cover marketing of languages, the take-up of languages at pre- and post-16, and the latest figures on employability of modern linguists – all areas in which the work of Keith Marshall (University of Bangor), a member of the Group, has gained considerable authority.

I will be reporting on the progress of the web encyclopedia – and the other activities of the group – on the Centre's website and in the next Newsletter.

Planning activities for the academic year 2001-02

Reacting to interest and perceived need, we are planning to hold three events with a particular Language focus during the next 12 months. The first will take place in October and will focus on Curriculum 2000, the new post-16 curriculum from which we are about

to see the first cohort applying for university entry in 2002. The meeting will look at the implications of the new curriculum in terms of admissions and course design and content, including key skills, and will provide a focus for urgent discussion on its impact on the university sector.

The second event will take place in February 2002 and will focus on marketing and student recruitment – we hope that amongst other issues we will be able to report on the state of play in terms of HE applications from the first group of Curriculum 2000 students. The third event is planned for Spring and will take up the idea of research-led/research-informed language teaching to explore how the latest research into language learning and language teaching can inform practice.

Other seminars and workshops planned cover the European Languages Portfolio, funding issues and Languages for Specific Purposes. Information on these and other events will be circulated but please let us know if you have other areas of particular interest that you feel are not being addressed.

News from CILT

Dawn Ebbrell writes

The Subject Centre's HE Resources Collection continues to develop. The following article focuses on a sample of recent acquisitions in the area of teaching and learning in Higher Education as well as additions to the language teaching collection. The materials collection continues to grow with a wide range of electronic and digital resources available for consultation; teaching materials will be featured in future issues of this newsletter.

The collection includes titles covering generic issues in teaching and learning in Higher Education. Edited by Sally Brown, Phil Race and Joanna Bull, *Computer-Assisted Assessment in Higher Education* (Kogan Page 1999) includes chapters from practitioners in the UK and abroad exploring the opportunities and problems associated with computer-assisted assessment. Topics covered include effective design of questions, technical and security issues, adaptive testing and the capacity of computer-assisted assessment to enrich the student learning experience whilst reducing the load on lecturers.

A Handbook of Techniques for Formative Evaluation. Mapping the student's learning experience (Judith George and John Cowan, Kogan Page 1999) is a practical guide to evaluating student learning designed for teachers in further and higher education. The book begins by defining evaluation and its purpose and moves on to outline the range of approaches available, providing guidelines on how to choose an appropriate method. Photocopiable sheets outlining the stages of a range of methods are provided.

Heather Fry, Steve Ketteridge and Stephanie Marshall edit *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (Kogan Page 1999) designed primarily for new lecturers in Higher Education, although it contains much to interest anyone wishing to find out more about recent developments in teaching and learning in the sector. The book is divided into three parts:

* development of practice
* the development of the academic for teaching and learning
* working in discipline-specific areas

Each chapter encourages readers to raise questions by considering the issues in the context of their own experience and institution and are also illustrated by case studies from other institutions.

New acquisitions in the area of language teaching include *Current Trends in Modern Languages Provision for Non-Specialist Linguists* (Mike Fay and Derrik Ferney eds, CILT 2000). This volume includes an introduction by Derrik Ferney which provides an overview of the development of IWLPs (Institution-Wide Language Programmes) over the last ten years and the current challenges which are being faced. Contributions address topics such as embedding and assessing transferable skills, the role of independent learning, dealing with mixed abilities, curriculum development, error correction, the use of multimedia technologies and consolidating non-specialist courses with specialist provision.

Supporting Lifelong Language Learning (Lore Arthur and Stella Hurd eds, CILT 2001) is designed for teachers of any language in post-compulsory education, identifying changes which have taken place in recent years. With a foreword by Alan Moys, Secretary to the Nuffield Languages Inquiry, the book is divided into 4 parts:

* understanding language learning and learners
* approaches to language teaching and learning
* technology and language learning
* assessing progress and the professional context

Edited by Marina Mozzon-McPherson and Roel Vismans, *Beyond language teaching towards language advising* (CILT, 2001), is an outcome of the FDTL funded SMILE project, (Strategies for Managing an Independent Learning Environment). The project aimed to set up successful advisory services in its partner institutions and to organise national events to inform higher education institutions about the practice of language advising. The book is organised in five parts:

* defining the field
* advising and the profession
* models of advising
* advising and learning environments
* advising, learning and teaching

Contributions come from practitioners in the UK and abroad.

The collection also includes a full set of outputs from the FDTL languages projects which includes reports and materials for both learners and teachers covering areas such as staff development, residence abroad, assessment, independent learning and transferable skills. Details of projects and outputs can be found on a new information sheet **FDTL/TLTP Languages Project Outputs**.

Additional new and updated information sheets include:

* Directory of Linguistics associations and organisations
* Directory of associations and organisations for teaching and learning of languages in HE
* Directory of associations and organisations for Area Studies
* Teaching materials for adults: French
* Teaching materials for adults: German
* Teaching materials for adults: Italian
* Teaching materials for adults: Spanish

All information sheets can be found on the web at:
http://www.cilt.org.uk/ infos/info0.htm

Publisher information for the material described above are as follows:

Kogan Page. Tel: 020 7278 0433. Website: http://www.kogan-page.co.uk/

CILT Publications: Available through Central Books Ltd. Tel: 020 8986 5488.

Visit the HE Resources Collection

Since Christmas a series of open visits to the HE Resources Collection have taken place at CILT. The visits gave participants an opportunity to discover more about the range of services and facilities on offer from the Subject Centre and CILT including a discussion based on the results of the on-going user needs analysis survey. Presentations were given on electronic resources available for the teaching and learning of languages as well as an overview of the new A-level specifications highlighting the skills that university teachers can expect incoming students to have. Further events are planned at CILT, including a session for postgraduate students of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics which is scheduled for November. Groups of staff and postgraduate students (e.g. PGCE or MA) from a particular institution are welcome to visit the Resources Library and HE Resources Collection at CILT by prior arrangement. Group visits must be booked in advance by e-mailing visits@cilt.org.uk or by calling 020 7379 5110 x 266.

Janet Bartle reports

C&IT Centre welcomes new Director

In February 2001, Dr Roel Vismans took over from Professor Graham Chesters as Director of the C&IT Centre. Roel, who is also the Director of the Language Institute at the University of Hull, started his academic career in Dutch Studies at Hull. He is currently the President of the Association of Low Countries Studies in Great Britain and Ireland (ALCS) and the Treasurer of the Internationale Vereniging voor Neerlandstiek (IVN; International Association for Dutch Studies). Roel, who has a keen interest in promoting the less widely taught languages, is a welcome addition to the team and he has great plans and hopes for future synergies between the Language Institute at Hull and the Subject Centre. **Email: R.M.Vismans@selc.hull.ac.uk**

C&IT Workshops

Since the last edition of Liaison the Subject Centre has run two C&IT workshops. The first, hosted by the University of Westminster in March and entitled **Web-based learning and teaching for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies**, was aimed at teaching staff in HE with little or no experience of using the web in their teaching.

Mick Short and Dawn Archer (Lancaster) began the day with an overview of the different types of resources available on the web and their potential uses in teaching and learning. Participants then formed small groups to discuss reasons why the web might be useful in the teaching of their subject area, the types of resources available, and the advantages and disadvantages of using the web. Among the advantages was the increased access to a wealth of information and resources. However, the vastness of the web was also considered a potential disadvantage. The development of the skills required to sift through the information available and make more effective use of the resources was seen as crucial. Participants thought that there was a need for help and advice in finding resources.

This was met to some extent by a session from Sue Currell on locating resources. Sue talked about the many different ways of searching for and accessing information on the Internet, pointing participants towards search engines and gateways as well as providing tips on effective searching.

The day also included case study presentations from academics who were more experienced in using the web for teaching and learning. Tony McNeill (Sunderland) spoke about creating web-based resources for Languages, showing examples of websites either created or exploited by language teachers. From the field of Linguistics Mick Short and Dawn Archer took to the floor once more to demonstrate their *Stylistics Toolkit*. Reporting on activity in Area Studies, Sue Currell presented a brief evaluation of how the Internet is being used in American Universities and in English and American Studies.

There was also the opportunity for some practice with a session from Dawn Ebbrell (CiLT) on integrating resources which involved a worksheet-based exercise. Participants discussed the adequacy of the material to meet teaching and learning needs, staff and student support needed, integration into teaching and learning e.g. building it into assessment and the accessibility of equipment.

The day closed with a session from William Haworth (Liverpool John Moores and the WELL Project) who introduced two web authoring tools: *Hot Potatoes* and *WELTS* before giving participants the chance to create their own exercises using these tools.

Feedback from the event showed the day to be a success with participants keen to see colleagues' work, have the chance to explore the web for themselves and carry out some basic authoring, and perhaps most importantly, meet with other practitioners and share ideas and experiences.

For full details of the day's presentations, speakers and further resources please visit the Subject Centre website at: **http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/events/web_wkshop1.html**

Creating Web-based Resources, held in April at the University of Hull, was the second in our recent programme of C&IT Workshops. It was aimed at those who had some experience of the web and what it could offer but who were considering creating their own web-based resources.

William Haworth and Fred Riley (Subject Centre) began the day with an overview of tools for page creation featuring *Netscape Composer, Dreamweaver, FrontPage, Word*, and HTML scripting using a text editor. There was a brief demonstration of each followed by a discussion of their relative merits.

There followed an introduction to Virtual Learning Environments with the focus on the two market leaders, *WebCT* and *Blackboard*. Marina Orsini-Jones (Coventry) spoke about the way that she has used WebCT and her Institution's *Learn Online* system for the teaching of Italian and Paul Chin (Hull) then went on to talk about and demonstrate the use of *Blackboard* at the University of Hull.

Tony McNeill showed examples of web-based resources created by academics. This was followed by Miranda van Rossum (Hull) who demonstrated *Lagelands*, a web-based multimedia beginners Dutch course using *MERLIN*, a virtual learning environment developed at the University of Hull.

To complete the morning's presentations Jim Evans (Warwick) demonstrated the *TELRI* (Technology Enhanced Learning in Research-led Institutions) Project's web-based learning environment and Michael Shade (Brighton) presented some case studies commissioned by the *WELL* Project (Web-Enhanced Language Learning) showing some of the ways that teachers have used the web to enhance their teaching.

The afternoon's hands-on sessions gave participants the chance to try out for themselves some of the tools featured in the morning's presentations.

Michael Shade guided us through the production of a web page with varied text styles, aligned image, text and image hyperlinks, nested bullets, table, background etc. The group then had a go at creating their own interactive web-based exercises, using a variety of authorware - *Hot Potatoes* and *WELTS*, introduced by William Haworth and the Interactive Language Learning tool developed (in part) and demonstrated by Steve Cushion (London Guildhall University).

The general consensus was that it was an action-packed day with lots of ideas, examples, tools and information to contend with! Overall, it was generally seen as a useful opportunity to sample some of the wide range of tools available and participants were given pointers to further information and resources.

For full details of the day's presentations, speakers and further resources please visit the Subject Centre website at: **http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/events/web_wkshop2.html**

Learning and teaching with technology

Janet Bartle's Software Review

The C&IT Centre recently added to its software library two innovative new DVD-ROMs for advanced language learning. *Advanced French: Au coeur de la loi* and *Advanced Italian: Mio padre é innocente*, both come from software company EuroTalk Interactive (**www.eurotalk.co.uk**) and are part of a range which also includes advanced English, German and Spanish DVD-ROMs.

Both are video-based programs, the French DVD-ROM being based on *Fin de Peine*, an episode of the French police series, *Au coeur de la loi*, while the Italian version is based on *Mio padre è innocente* a popular Italian TV film. The films are shown on the computer screen within a simulated television screen which features play, rewind and fast forward buttons. Pressing rewind or fast forward with the mouse allows the user to start the video at any point in the program. The dialogue spoken by the characters in the film is displayed below the video screen (in the target language with no English translation). Users can see the entire scripted dialogue by clicking the script icon and can select any line from the script to play over and over by clicking on a line of dialogue. Users can also opt to view the video full-screen, but this means they do not see the written dialogue or other displayed features. A magnifying glass icon, when clicked, displays various small pictures representing scenes from the video. By clicking on one of the pictures, the user can start the video from a particular point in the story. A dictionary feature enables users to search for any word used in the script. When a word is selected the video jumps to the point in the film where it is used, and the visual representation of the word selected by the user is highlighted on the screen. Again, the target language only is used with no English translation.

A range of activities is built into the programs to test speaking, listening and comprehension. Learners can practise their speaking by taking on the part of one of the characters and recording their own voice. To test comprehension, users can compete in a quick-fire TV Quiz against an on-screen opponent. There are also games and activities such as a Word Search, Vocabulary, Missing Word, "What is the next sentence?," and Spelling.

Navigation through the programs is straightforward, with icons such as forward and back arrows, a life-belt symbol to ask for help. These are consistent with those used in other EuroTalk packages.

These programs give learners the opportunity to listen to authentic language, test their speaking and pronunciation against a native speaker model and extend their vocabulary by learning words and phrases in context. All within a stimulating, modern environment likely to motivate adult learners at a more advanced level.

A full software review, written by language teachers, will appear shortly on the Subject Centre website. For more details about these and any other software titles available please visit the Subject Centre software database at **http://www.hull.ac.uk/cti/resources/searchdb.htm**

Work & Study Abroad

Introducing a new website within the Subject Centre framework
www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/abroad - Artie Vossel-Newman(site developer) writes
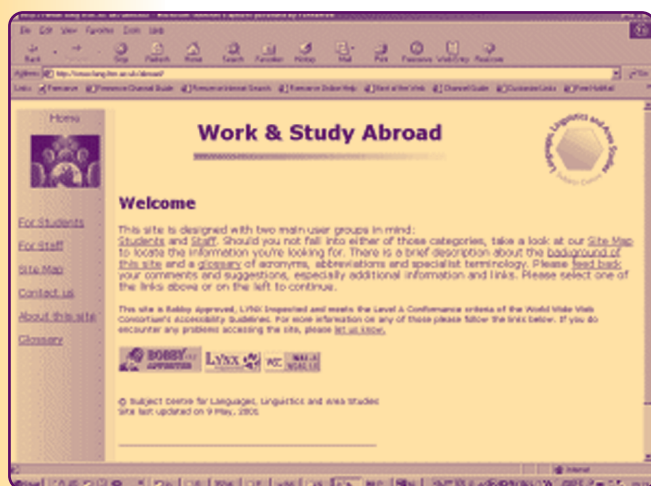
This website is a joint project between the Subject Centre (SC) and the Residence Abroad Project @ PORTsmouth (RAPPORT). As part of their bid for continuation funding, RAPPORT has committed itself to hand over its outcomes, mainly the website, to the SC by the end of September 2001, when their one-year *Transferability Funding* will run out.

At the same time as re-designing the rapport website at **http://www.hum.port.ac.uk/slas/rapport**, Artie Vossel-Newman, whose role is split between RAPPORT and the Subject Centre, has developed the **Work & Study abroad** site which is based on RAPPORT but aims to include links and advice from the other two Residence Abroad Matters (**http://ram.fdtl.ac.uk**) projects: LARA (**http://lara.fdtl.ac.uk/lara/index.htm**) and The Interculture Project (**http://www.lancs.ac.uk/users/interculture**).

There are two main sections in the site, **For Students** and **For Staff**, which can be accessed from the homepage. The following table gives a brief overview of the structure and content of these sections:

For Students	For Staff
Before you go Here, you will find links to Travel Guides and Travel advice. You can get to individual country advice by selecting one of the following World regions (categorization as on **www.lonelyplanet.com**): **Europe, Americas, Africa, Asia, Middle East, Australasia & Pacific**	**Partner Institutions** Some suggestions as to how to maintain contact with partner institutions.
While you're there Encourages students to keep in touch with their host university and to make their experience and recommendations available to others.	**Preparing students** Advice and links in connection with residence abroad preparation
Been there, done that now what? Encourages students to reflect on the skills gained through their residence abroad experience and 'sell' them to potential employers; some careers links.	**Supporting students** Advice and links in connection with supporting students while they are away
For Parents Some advice from RAPPORT for students' parents	**Post Residence Abroad issues** Advice and links in connection with debriefing

Hopefully this little overview will prompt you to visit the site. Any feedback and/or suggestions of further links/materials would be very welcome.

Learning and teaching with technology

Virtual Departments for Minority Languages Project

Terry King reports

University departments across the country could benefit from a new project, 'Virtual Departments for Minority Languages' (VDML). In a new project funded by JISC, collaboration between language teachers from University College London, Edinburgh and Hull, and learning technology staff from UCL has resulted in an intranet site which, in initial trials, has already proved popular with staff and students of Danish at the three universities.

While on secondment with HERDU (Higher Education Research and Development Unit) Jannie Roed (Scandinavian Studies at UCL), in collaboration with Jane Hughes (HERDU), developed the idea for a virtual department to address the problems of small language departments. As the only Danish-language teacher in the Scandinavian Studies department, like many teachers in small language departments, Jannie had worked in isolation. There are limited commercially produced materials for teaching Danish and these are often inappropriate - designed for immigrants living in Denmark. Students have little access to original language materials, such as films and newspapers and restricted opportunities for interaction with other students.

The newly created intranet website links universities across the UK, enabling teachers to pool resources, develop custom-made materials and give feedback on each others' ideas. Teachers can upload and download files, and exchange suggestions on discussion boards.

"The internet enables us to use a wide variety of sources, from video clips to interactive activities, such as shopping from a Danish website," says Jannie. "Students can also hear the language being spoken and access texts during the long summer break." A further advantage is that, through the use of a discussion board, students can practise the target language with a wider group of users than is available in their small classes.

The pilot site has been developed in collaboration with the

Student using a video clip available on the intranet site.

universities of Hull and Edinburgh and is based on the responses to more than 450 questionnaires completed by language teachers and students at the participating universities. Danish teachers devised on-line language learning tasks, while learning technology staff developed a web-based working environment. When the Virtual Danish Department site was tested on students in April, it met with an overwhelmingly positive response. Their detailed feedback will inform the project's future development.

The final stage of the 2-year JISC funded initiative will involve producing a set of guidelines for creating similar sites in other departments. Already the collaboration between participating universities has been very fruitful and interest has been shown by many others.

Further information, the results of the survey and a sample of the materials used on the training day can be seen on the VDML project web site www.ucl.ac.uk/epd/herdu/vdml/

Working with other Subject Centres

An issue that has arisen for several Subject Centres during this, our first year of operation, is the multi and interdisciplinary nature of many of the activities and interests of our respective constituencies. Thus, in order to make our activities as comprehensive and relevant as possible, we need to work together between Subject Centres and across disciplines. To date most of us have been heavily involved in establishing ourselves within the mainstream of the disciplines that we cover, but having completed this set up process we are now looking to each other to help cover the many areas which fall outside this core activity. Thus we are working with GEES (LTSN Subject Centre for Geography, Geology and Environmental Sciences) on an event which addresses the interdisciplinary and intercultural nature of many of our subject areas and will involve a coming together of colleagues, who

would not normally meet, to share experiences and exchange ideas (for details see page 16). Next year we will also benefit from an event organised by the Subject Centre for English who ran a very interesting event on the teaching of literary theory which will be relevant to our colleagues in languages who are engaged in the teaching of literature (see below). We have also identified a need to address (collectively) the issue of language and literacy in HE which would involve input from English, Linguistics and English as a Foreign Language (where there is a great deal of expertise in providing training in academic skills). We look forward to developing more collaborative activities with cognate Subject Centres over the coming year.

SEMINARS: THEORY AND PRACTICE

This study day will consider the value of the seminar in Literary Studies. In particular, it will focus on the 'subject specific' issues involved in seminar discussions where literary theory forms the basis of the subject matter. The use of the seminar on courses which introduce students to theory raises issues about:

- **power relations in the dialogue between staff and students**
- **student participation**
- **preparation for seminars**
- **the choice and provision of support materials**
- **the balance between teaching and learning in seminars**
- **the relationship between seminars and independent learning**
- **the role of the seminar in equipping students for independent work as literary critics**

This seminar was initially run by the English Subject Centre and is to be repeated in collaboration with this Subject Centre (see p.16 for details). Read the seminar report: http://www.rhul.ac.uk/ltsn/english/Events/Past/seminars.htm/

Benchmarking Update

Linguistics

Dr Keith Brown, Chair of the Linguistics Benchmarking Group, reports

The Linguistics benchmarking group had its fourth and final meeting on June 1st when we finalised our benchmarking statement. We then turned it over to QAA who will circulate the document to relevant departments and institutions for comment and who expect to publish the document along with others in the same benchmarking round towards the end of the year.

Our remit as a benchmarking group is set out in QAA's standard introduction to benchmarking statements: 'Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject. They also represent general expectations about the standards for the award of . . . a bachelors degree with honours ... and articulate the attributes and capabilities that those possessing such [a] qualification should be able to demonstrate.'

This is not an entirely straightforward task. The UCAS website records that in 2001 there are 69 Higher Education Institutions offering 645 courses which include Linguistics as part of an undergraduate degree. These include 19 single subject Linguistics honours degrees, a wide range of honours degrees whose focus is linguistic but which prefer the more general term Language, a substantial number of joint honours degrees where Linguistics is combined with another discipline or disciplines, especially a language or languages, a number of combined honours degrees which include Linguistics, and there are also Linguistics modules in other honours degrees. Many HEIs have a department or division of Linguistics, in others Linguistics is taught with English or a modern language and in others there are groups that teach Linguistics within a larger department, school or faculty. Although postgraduate Linguistics is not within the remit of the benchmarking group, it is relevant to note that the subject is widely studied at postgraduate level (the Prospects Postgraduate Directory lists 44 HEIs offering 117 taught postgraduate courses involving Linguistics) which means that undergraduate linguistics is taught within an intellectually stimulating context in contact with ongoing research.

This variety, both of degree courses and of institutional arrangements, reflects the essentially interdisciplinary nature of much linguistic study and is reflected in the academic affiliations and areas of expertise of the members of the benchmarking group. We have also tried to involve the linguistic community as a whole in formulating our proposals. QAA provided us with a 'reference group', a group of similar size and composition to the benchmarking group itself and with the particular remit to review and comment on the recommendations of the benchmarking group. We have placed drafts of the document on the web (**http://www.rceal.cam.ac.uk/benchmark.html**) and asked individuals and Departments to comment; we have visited meetings of BAAL, LAGB and the International Symposium on Bilingualism; and we have hosted an open meeting at the Subject Centre. We are extremely grateful for the many helpful comments from these various sources, most of which have been incorporated directly or indirectly in the document.

We hope that the benchmarking statement will 'describe the nature and characteristics of programmes' in Linguistics and that it will 'articulate the attributes and capabilities' of those with an honours degree in Linguistics. It is important to note, however, that the statement neither lays down a curriculum nor specifies the content of examinations: both of these are the responsibility of the departments and institutions that teach Linguistics, who will determine their own programmes on the basis of their particular interests, their individual research strengths and the needs of their students. We hope, however, that our statement will be useful and relevant to them in this task.

Keith Brown 'on the road' with the Subject Rerview.

Other News

Following comments from a reference group on the first draft of the benchmarking statement for Languages and Related Studies, a revised version of the statement will be released by the QAA for general consultation on 16 July, 2001. This will replace the draft version currently on the Subject Centre web-site. The new statement and response forms will be held on the QAA web-site (www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/currentwork.htm) . The consultation period will end on 16 November, 2001 with publication of the final document on 1 March, 2002.

Many European Year of Languages (EYOL) events are taking place across the country and a number of university departments and Language Centres co-ordinated events during Adult Language Learners Week in May. These events will be doing a lot to promote the benefits of language learning amongst the general community, please give us information if you would like the Subject Centre to disseminate details of your events.

FDTL/TLTP Languages: Update

The DOPLA project

Penny Gravestock reports

The three DOPLA (initial teacher training for foreign language assistants and postgraduate teaching assistants) training centres, Birmingham, London and Sheffield, have contacted local institutions inviting them to send foreign language assistants, postgraduate teaching assistants and hourly-paid tutors to a central teacher training course to be held at the start of next session. These practical courses will be based on the DOPLA model and materials, as used by nearly 40 institutions over the past 3 years (see page 16 for details).

If you are unable to send your assistants and tutors to the regional centres for training, but would be interested in setting up your own course, we still have a limited number of the DOPLA training packs available. It comprises sixteen modules, each containing a tutor script, overhead transparencies and handouts, together with video and audio material, and guidance on how to structure a training course.

Any institution interested in the courses or the training pack should contact Penny Gravestock at the DOPLA Office by email (P.M.Gravestock@bham.ac.uk) or by phone on 0121 414 7978.

The DOPLA book, *Training to Teach Languages in Higher Education*, will be available from CILT in August 2001. This edited volume consists of contributions from experienced language teachers and trainers working in the fields of foreign languages and EFL. It explores major theoretical issues, recent developments and current initiatives in both initial training and continuing professional development for all language-teaching staff working in HE. It will thus serve both as a reference guide for those charged with organising training and as a resource for teaching staff engaged in professional development.

Residence Abroad Project @ Portsmouth (Rapport)

Artie Vossel-Newman and Jim Coleman report

For its final year the Residence Abroad Project committed itself to make three things 'transferable' to a wider audience:

1. The Rapport website, with advice and links for staff, students and others

2. Workshops and Institutional visits

3. The Supporting Residence Abroad (SRA) online distance learning course, offering 20 credits towads an MA in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

1. The website is still live, but is being re-designed and developed to meet accessibility guidelines. Once the project ends in September 2001, the useful content of the Rapport

Jim Coleman and participants at a RAPPORT workshop.

website will be transferred, with other existing and new material, to the new **Work & Study Abroad** website which is hosted on the Subject Centre's webserver (see article on page 6 for more details).

Two well-attended workshops were run in March of this year, one at Heriot-Watt in Edinburgh for the Scottish Universities, and one at the University of Cambridge. The report at http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/events/reports/Artie.rtf outlines details of the issues covered, which included, in alphabetical order:

Accreditation, Assessment & degree classifications; Administration; Careers Service; Cheap Flights; ECTS; Fees; Learning Agreements & Learning packs; Legal responsibilities; Liability/parents; Preparation; Resources and Modularisation; Visits; Websites; 3-year versus 4-year courses.

2. Special attention was given to new QAA guidelines on placements, and to survey data from the Residence Abroad Project proving, thanks to over 1100 questionnaires completed by graduates, the employability benefits that residence abroad brings. One final workshop took place at the University of Portsmouth on 19 June, and one institutional visit was paid to Loughborough university on 16 May. To request a visit to your institution, with a tailor-made agenda to suit your needs, please contact us at: **rapport@port.ac.uk**.

3. The internet-delivered staff development course *Supporting Residence Abroad* has been revised and extended for 2001/2002. Anyone interested can contact the Project Office, **rapport@port.ac.uk** and might usefully be thinking of applying to their department for some teaching relief and for the £550 fee.

ALLADIN Workshop Roundup

Alison Kennard, Project Co-ordinator reports

Since January 2001, ALLADIN has been concentrating on running staff development workshops, both in-house and as external events. These have been attended by a wide variety of participants, with roles as diverse as language tutors, heads of international programmes, librarians & educational support staff, from diverse universities and institutions including King's College London, Nottingham Trent, London College of Printing, SOAS, Kent Institute of Art & Design, Royal Holloway, UCL and the Open University.

The workshops have provided a mixture of hands-on experiences and discussion with colleagues. Themes have included using Virtual Environments such as MOOs (see http://www.well.ac.uk/wellclas/moo/moo.htm) for foreign language acquisition, staff training in the use of Dreamweaver for web page design in a second language, sessions on web skills, on-line resources and authoring tools. Discussions have covered the shift in the role of the teacher from central focus in the classroom to facilitator of student centred learning. They have also covered student learning styles from different art and design disciplines, particularly with the visual and auditory learner in mind and have been accompanied by introductions to mind mapping software and other tools used to support the dyslexic language learner.

Feedback from participants reinforced the message that, in addition to trying out different tools and media, participants valued being able to get a feel for the level of ICT usage in other institutions. They found the events useful launch pads for greater personal ICT involvement and appreciated having several project members on hand to provide support and guidance throughout the day. Supplementary materials alongside websites/resources recommended were also appreciated. The only thing participants wanted more of was time and practice, and stressed their desire for follow up as a result of the workshop.

What was also clear from these events, was the need for continued staff development at all levels of language delivery; while ensuring that sessional staff are adequately supported is essential in terms of access to networks, resources and parity of delivery is important, many full time members of staff have ongoing needs in terms of their ability to learn how to use and how to integrate ICT based resources into their curricula.

While workshops ran primarily with an art, design and media focus, many of the benefits, challenges and questions presented by new technologies were equally relevant to language learners from other disciplines, as well as non-language learners. At all of these events, the level of ICT awareness and confidence in using new technologies for language learning has varied significantly, however a uniting factor has been the enthusiasm and willingness to learn of those attending. This has been born of a better understanding of the ways in which ICT can support language learners and teachers for more effective outcomes. While ALLADIN still has workshops to run in the last two months of its current existence, it will be the job of the institutions to continue the support of their staff in the future.

Visit the alladin website at: http://www.alladin.ac.uk

The Ciel project

Paula Davis writes

The CIEL Project has recently been awarded transferability funding. This phase of the project will run from May to December 2001 and we will be working closely with the following five universities: University of Durham, University of Exeter, University of Huddersfield, Middlesex University and University of Portsmouth. The aims and objectives of the CIEL Project team - to promote independent learning and its integration with the language curriculum - and the regional focus of the Project remain unchanged.

Further information about CIEL can be found on our web-site: **http://ciel.lang.soton.ac.uk**, from where you can download copies of the *CIEL Handbooks on Supporting Independent Language Learning*.

At the end of the Project, many of CIEL's activities will be developed and passed over to the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies. If you would like to continue receiving information about CIEL and other related teaching and learning activities, please join the Subject Centre mailing list. An on-line form is available at **http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/about/maillist.html**

The LARA project materials: Ethnography for Language Learners

Libby Rothwell (Kingston University) reports on how she has been using the course developed as part of the FDTL LARA project to teach students of English and Linguistics.

'I liked the readings and the seminar exercises. Generally, the best thing is that this module really investigates things 'under the surface''.

'It presented an area of linguistics I was not familiar with before.'

'[I liked] finding out that there are cultural notions hidden behind almost all of our activities'.

These comments were representative of the majority of those who participated in *Language and Culture*, a second year optional module within the Applied English Language and Linguistics degree at Kingston University. The module, which has been running for several years, is taught over twelve weeks in semester 2, with two hours contact per week, and up to ten hours a week of guided independent study. About 60 students enrol each year, most of whom are combining Applied Linguistics with another subject. The group normally includes about half a dozen students of French, German or Spanish, and up to a dozen SOCRATES exchange students.

One of the main problems we had encountered was the lack of appropriate background readings in ethnography, so we welcomed the publication of the complete set of LARA project materials. We reorganised some of our existing sessions to make as much use of this resource as possible in the time available. For the lectures, we drew mainly on units 2 (*What is an ethnographic approach?*) and 4 (*Shared cultural knowledge*), and 8-12 which deal with ethnographic methods and data analysis, together with units 13-17, which cover more demanding anthropological concepts. We supplemented these with some of our own material to deepen students' understanding of linguistic and pragmatic perspectives. Students were encouraged to read the extracts for all the units; a number of students reported how helpful these had been, not only for this module, but for the links with other modules at this level. The practical, weekly assignments which formed the basis of seminar discussions and mini-presentations were approved of by almost all the students, although some tasks involving group interviewing posed organisational problems.

The assessment pattern we adopted was in the form of a portfolio: three short formative pieces of work based on the weekly assignments, in preparation for the final summative piece: a small-scale ethnographic project. For each of the formative portfolio submissions, students filled in a self-assessment sheet, adapted from the LARA version. This proved too heavy a workload both for students and staff, although students appreciated the variety and feedback opportunities of the portfolio method. Next time, we plan to give students a 'menu' of tasks, individually weighted according to size and level of difficulty. This will allow them some flexibility in terms of content and submission dates.

The LARA materials have inspired students to produce some excellent and fascinating work. We plan to build on this to develop a fully interactive on-line version of the module. Some of the earlier units will inform the development of a new level 1 module, *Intercultural Communication*, to be launched this Autumn, whilst the last unit (*Belief and Action 2*) prepares the ground for final year studies in critical discourse analysis.

For more information about the Ethnography for Language Learners Materials visit:

The LARA Project http://lara.fdtl.ac.uk/lara/ethno.html

Subject Centre Ethnography Workshop Report http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/as/areaethnollwork.html

A presentation of Southampton University's work with these materials will form part of the Subject Centre's Area Studies Event on interdisciplinary and intercultural learning, 18th July, Totnes, Devon (see page 16 for details).

Juliet Hamilton runs an Alladin Workshop, Southampton University.

Americanisation and the Teaching of American Studies (AMATAS) - FDTL 3 Project

Alan Rice, Project Manager, Reorts

Elvis look-alike contests in Australia and Britain, Disney's theme-park Empire expanding to France and Japan and the worldwide phenomenon of sports stars like golfer Tiger Woods with the ubiquity of the Nike symbol attached to every item of their attire; all these cultural images show America's presence in the world is multi-layered and seemingly all-pervasive. The Americanisation Project (AMATAS) has been set up to interrogate these and other transnational phenomena and to analyse the positive and negative effects of Americanisation.

Although the project focuses on cultural interactions it does so while paying attention to socio-political phenomena such as globalisation and first world imperialism. British/American relations are a very live debate in the culture at the moment. The project aims to provide the academic context for such debates in the culture at large.

The project, led by the University of Central Lancashire in Preston with consortium partners at Derby University and King Alfred's College, Winchester, is avowedly cultural and will be of interest to departments in all Humanities disciplines. It is, of course, especially geared to Area Studies and is the only curriculum-based Area Studies FDTL project. As a curriculum project, it aims to promote the critical teaching of Americanisation to providers in the higher education sector. The project has set up a website **www.amatas.org** to house materials of interest on the subject such as a media log and resources such as academic articles on Anti-Americanism. The project is also developing workshops that will be available to English and other departments from September. They will include:

*   Discourses of Americanisation and Black Intellectuals in Europe: The Case of Chester Himes (Dr. Eithne Quinn - UCLAN)

*   Images from the Black Atlantic in British Collections (Ms. Carol Smith - King Alfred's)

*   Global Media, TIME International and the Ambiguities of Resonant Americanisation (Dr Paul Grainge - Derby)

*   Disney and the European Fairy Tale (Dr. Jane Darcy - UCLAN)

*   Hollywood and Nazi Germany (Dr. Michael Paris - UCLAN)

*   Americanisation and Popular Music (Professor Andrew Blake - King Alfred's)

*   Transatlantic Photography (Dr. Neil Campbell - Derby)

*   The Royal Family and the USA (Dr. Jude Davies - King Alfred's)

*   Transatlantic Seaside Resorts, Britain, North America and Argentina (Professor John Walton - University of Central Lancashire)

*   Anti-Americanism (Professor George McKay - University of Central Lancashire)

For providers in England there is no cost for the workshops. Elsewhere in the United Kingdom, the cost will be travel expenses only. A full syllabus pack including details of all workshops and some specimen syllabi on Americanisation from Britain and elsewhere will be available by the end of August 2001.

In Autumn 2002 to culminate the project there will be an international conference at UCLAN on the theme *Teaching Americanisation in the Twenty-first Century* when both staff workshops and student projects have been running. This will include material on the teaching and intellectual framework of the project, accounts of student experiences and suggestions for case studies in local regions by other universities. We will update material on this and other events associated with the project on the website and through a bi-monthly e-mail bulletin.

> For any further information on the above contact: Megan Taylor mataylor@uclan.ac.uk

European Year of Languages

Clare Mar-Molinero (University of Southampton)

Over the past few weeks we have heard controversial claims surrounding the nature of multicultural Britain. Claims that have suggested everything from the implied degeneration, according to MP John Townend, of Britishness to that of a 'mongrel race', the insistence by Norman Tebbit that 'no multicultural society is a happy one' to the somewhat glib description by Robin Cook that 'Chicken tikka masala is now Britain's true national dish, not only because it is the most popular, but because it is a perfect illustration of the way Britain absorbs and adapts external influences.'

One of the most obvious features of multicultural diversity is language diversity. And it is in response to the urgent need to link multicultural harmony with linguistic harmony that the European Commission has launched the **European Year of Languages** this year. As a European-wide initiative this is timely, with the debates surrounding the increasingly over-burdened EU language policy of official recognition, and translation and interpretation services of all member states' national languages heightened by the imminent entry of yet more states with yet more languages. The tensions between the overwhelming use of English, the desire to maintain equality between member states' official languages, and the demands of so-called lesser-used languages of the minority linguistic communities should, at the very least, underlie the reasons why a consciousness-raising programme designed to promote the learning and teaching of languages and the promotion of linguistic diversity is so important.

Moreover, the debate here in the UK has barely taken place. On the one hand our complacency towards any need to learn another language given the global dominance of English, and on the other a deafness to the existence, here in Britain, of large linguistic communities whose mother tongue is not English, have led to the well-known scenario of negative attitudes towards learning languages amongst the British. It is, of course, a myth that languages are difficult to learn. It is also a dangerous myth to believe that knowing English is enough: the implications for linguistic imperialism and intolerance on the one hand, and the exclusion of the monolingual from the richness of linguistic awareness on another, are only two of the many reasons why this cannot be true.

The **European Year of Languages** is encouraging member states to promote a range of activities to counteract such anxieties or prejudices towards language learning that may exist. In a unique response to this the City of Southampton has brought together the City Council, education establishments, businesses, community groups, social clubs and individuals to offer a programme of language challenges and language celebrations throughout this year. We have been rewarded with one of only four grants awarded to a UK project.

A highlight of the Southampton programme will be the day symposium *The End of Babel?* (see page 16) which we will host to encourage academics, policy makers and community leaders to come together to debate the issues surrounding the promotion of multilingualism in a world that increasingly relies on English. Besides our keynote speakers;

*   Professor Hugo Battens Beardmore (Vrije Universitiet, Brussels)

*   Professor Robert Phillipson (Copenhagen Business School)

*   Professor Mike Kelly (Nuffield Inquiry member, Southampton University)

*   Professor Christopher Brumfit (Southampton University)

who have expertise in a wide range of relevant issues and who all share a passionate interest in shaping national and transnational language policy, we will conclude the day with a colourful Round Table where the speakers will be joined by other panellists to discuss the theme of the symposium.

Talking Point: Area Studies and Postnationalism

Prof. R.J. Ellis, Chair of the Area Studies Specialist Advisory Group (The Nottingham Trent University)

I'm composing this little squib on-line. I found out I needed to write it when I was in San Antonio, simply by logging on in my hotel and reading my emails. When I finish it, I will be able instantly to dispatch it to Southampton in time for it to be featured in the Subject Centre newsletter. Twenty-four hour intercontinental turnaround!

When I send it I could at the same time, just as easily, add the names of several thousand academics to the circulation list - almost literally at the touch of a button - and achieve (some sort of) worldwide distribution. This, in turn, might generate replies - again at the touch of a button. These replies might come from India, Australia, Bulgaria, South Africa, Nigeria, Brazil, Japan. But all of the replies will quite probably be generated on the same software (the multinational Microsoft Corporation's Outlook). Of course the precise software package each uses may not be exactly identical (in my case I'm using Outlook 2000). This will depend on the differing institutional budgets of my respondents, which in turn (in great part) are related to the varying levels of investment made in Higher Education in different countries, states or regions - and these financial variations will be (more or less overtly) influenced by the constraints of IMF regulations (or perhaps even its open dictates), or those of the EEC, or international charities' donations etc. But that we are all using some version of Outlook will almost certainly be the case, since the WTO ensures 'free trade' prevents the emergence of almost all (non-Microsoft!) alternative means for sending emails, since protection of fledgling hi-tech industries is effectively impossible. But emails also plainly work as a means of ready and incredibly cheap dissemination and debate because, broadly speaking, these media still uphold the ideals of the American academics that founded the internet - to enable free exchange of information/knowledge/ideas.

What a congerie of transnational interchanges are involved in this scenario! And with what more-or-less disturbing consequences for Area Studies! Whilst it is plainly the case that the nation-state still makes its appearance in this narrative, it is equally plain that other, more exacting manipulators are at play (thus the IMF, and/or the EEC, or NAFTA, shape any nation-state's policies at least as decisively as domestic politicians). And as the elections of Bush and Berlusconi testify, international corporate bankrolling is playing an ever more important role in deciding who these domestic politicians will be.

Let us call these transnational processes, and (many) others of the same ilk, *centrifugal* pressures on the idea of studying any geographically 'discrete' area (and so Australian Studies mutates into Australasian Studies which may yet mutate into Pacific Rim Studies whilst American Studies [in its European guise] may mutate into Transatlantic Studies, which may yet mutate into Circumatlantic Studies). 'Areas' keep flying apart: expanding, redefining themselves more internationally.

And, in a near-contemporaneous process (though one that perhaps entered its definitive phase rather earlier) Area Studies' old reliance on national boundaries was coming under question from pressures from within - causing what I shall call *centripetal* pressures. Gender and race histories are redefined as being central, rather than incidental, to the economic, social and cultural shaping of any community and though, *of course*, recognising this demands acute international awarenesses, it also demands very precise attention to local conditions and developments. Not all societies are identically patriarchal, for example, but these differences will not match up in any way with national boundaries. The *local* is making its ever more insistent entry into any Area Study at the same time as (and partly as a consequence of) the transnational pressing its case with extra intensity, and the two repeatedly become interlinked (race and gender are certainly *not* 'national issues').

Faced with all this, processes of redefinition are inevitably underway. To take just one example, the long-standing debate about the appropriateness of calling study of the United States 'American Studies' is being revisited with renewed vigour, and not only because of the colonial reverberations carried in the term. Yet what should it be called instead? *United* States Studies now seems a retrograde label just as surely. The intellectual consequences of all this for the teaching of Area Studies in Higher Education increasingly demand full articulation. But so also, relatedly, do the strategic consequences. Taking full account of these intercalated, interrelated centrifugal/centripetal (centrifugal <--> centripetal) processes will be very demanding.

Some sort of revisiting of the curriculum is plainly called for, but this is unlikely to be a simple affair. Simply abandoning American Studies, French Studies, Spanish Studies, and English Studies and substituting Transatlantic Studies will not be effective, and is not being contemplated, not least because it is not immediately obvious how many students would be attracted to such a renominated degree pathway, or how it could possibly be 'scaled'. Yet running Transatlantic Studies alongside these fellow pathways would lack coherence and, probably (again) miss out on student appeal. However, expanding each and every Area Study in each and every institution to take account of this (centrifugal <--> centripetal) complexity, in turn, carries acute resource implications. Area Studies have always had to 'cut' (in several senses) their syllabi according to their staffing, but as what 'Area Studies' might exactly be grows in complexity, in the ways I have been defining, this syllabi-cutting becomes an ever-more exacting task.

But at least (Area Studies practitioners might want to argue) Area Studies can fall back upon one of its oldest claims: that it is, *sui generis*, an interdisciplinary activity. So that, whilst any one Area Study cannot offer any sort of 'coverage' of its subject - and, indeed, never could - the way it approached that subject was distinctive, and meant that a set of intellectual aptitudes (habits? skills?) were being inculcated: an ability to cross intellectual boundaries, to explore a discipline's liminal borders, to draw on and deploy 'interdisciplines' (drawing upon methodologies and theories that 'crossed between' and 'redefined'). Well once, maybe, that was the case. I suspect the claim was always overblown. But it is simply not true now. Every discipline has responded to the massive impact of late Twentieth Century theory (just re-read my title to see how quotidien it has all become!). I myself teach in an interdisciplinary way every day, but I teach English Literature in an English (Literature) department. And the same thing goes for my Media Studies colleagues. Can Area Studies simply cling on to the claim that it is somehow even more interdisciplinary in some way?

Hence the sense that so many Area Studies practitioners have that Area Studies is in some sort of twenty-first century crisis. And hence the SC's proposal to invite Area Studies colleagues to an open meeting of the Area Studies Specialist Group to discuss these and related issues and to a workshop to identify and seek out ways of responding, in a practical way, to learning and teaching issues for Area Studies. Interested? I hope you are. Want to participate or contribute? I hope you do. Please contact llas@soton.ac.uk for further details. Simply press the button on your computer.

Needs Survey Results

Alison Dickens reports

Questions

Key needs

	responses
1. Use of software packages (including CD-ROMs)	20
2. Sharing of expertise across institutions	49
3. Sharing of expertise across the 3 subject areas	20
4. Teaching methodology	35
5. Funding for learning and teaching initiatives and projects	30
6. Quality assurance and benchmarking	25
7. Research into learning and teaching	40
8. Finding and/or producing teaching materials	31
9. Evaluating learning and teaching materials	17
10. Course and syllabus design	29
11. Managing interdisciplinary courses	22
12. Differentiation	10
13. Managing independent learning	29
14. Developing distance learning courses	12
15. Assessment and feedback	13
16. e-learning (e.g. use of the internet and www)	44
17. Sharing teaching resources/methods	27
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19. Free learning and teaching workshops	52
20. Consultation visits	17
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30. Opportunities to publish articles etc. in Subject Centre publications	35
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Subject Area

Languages (including Area Studies with language)

Linguistics

Education

EFL

Area Studies without languages

The story so far

About 200 forms were sent out to Heads of Department asking for the name of a willing volunteer to be our key contact (correspondent) in their department and for that correspondent to answer a few questions about the perceived needs for learning and teaching of their subject area. The role of correspondent will largely be to act as an informant on learning and teaching matters within their department and to disseminate Subject Centre information to colleagues.

We have also distributed the needs survey via our web pages and at many of our events.

The respondents were asked to comment on two items: the key learning and teaching needs for their subject area and the proposed Subject Centre activities they considered most useful to them. Space was given for further comments.

The responses to the first question regarding key learning and teaching needs highlighted a marked preference for sharing of expertise across institutions (49) and e-learning (44). Other issues that were identified as important by a third to a half of respondents were teaching methodology (35), research into learning and teaching (40), finding or producing teaching materials (31), managing independent learning (29). Issues that were given least importance were developing distance learning courses (12), differentiation (10, although one respondent commented that mixed and differing ability classes were a problem), evaluating learning materials (17) and assessment (13).

In response to the invitation to select any from a list of Subject Centre activities that would be most useful, free learning and teaching workshops were considered most useful (52) with other popular choices being the provision of downloadable teaching resources (50) along with a searchable resources database (44). Another activity which was also considered useful was advice on funding for learning and teaching projects and research (45) and the Subject Centre is not only seeking to provide this advice but also to obtain further sources of funding in order to support small projects. Least popular services were consultation visits (17), work in progress seminars (25), assistance with materials production (21) and searchable databases of expertise (27). Having noted a difference in popularity, however, it is worth noting that none of the suggestions rated lower than 17 and most attracted a positive response from a quarter or more of the respondents. It should also be noted that the Subject Centre has continued to distribute this questionnaire and and has included the choice of activities on its event feedback form, so some of the priorities will either change or become an even greater priority, e.g. at a recent Linguistics seminar, where work in progress was presented, many participants indicated that they would welcome more such events. This same seminar consolidated the desire to share materials across institutions through the creation of a Subject Centre database of downloadable, online or locally held materials that can be shared among and across institutions.

Breaking the results down by subject area similar results are obtained for the highest rating needs and activities (e-learning, downloadable teaching resources, sharing of expertise across institutions, searchable resources database, free workshops etc.). However, for Linguistics there appears to be a greater interest in quality assurance issues than for the other areas and Education shows the highest proportion of respondents who consider research into learning and teaching as a key need. It is also worth noting that teaching methodology and differentiation scored proportionally higher among respondents from Education. There were too few responses for EFL and Area Studies without languages to yield useful data at this stage and we will be undertaking some more intensive research in these areas in 2001/2 to obtain more data and create participation from these areas.

Comments were received on a small number of questionnaires and these included an interest in intercultural learning, minority languages, key skills, small group teaching, visual materials for learning and teaching, teaching mixed level and mixed L2/L3 students, using audio files in CALL. The only extra activity requested was help with research methodology training for both undergraduate and postgraduate students. This need was also considered useful by our Linguistics Specialist Group and to this end we have organised, jointly with CILT, a postgraduate information day .

To summarise, therefore, it is evident that the results obtained are useful mostly as a measure of current thinking on a few general issues and as a means of informing/strengthening Subject Centre activities. It is very interesting to see how relatively little importance was given to assessment issues and to distance learning while e-learning and materials design was given quite a high priority. It is also very

encouraging to see how much enthusiasm there is for sharing expertise across institutions and not altogether surprising to see that there is not a similar enthusiasm for cross-disciplinary sharing, although this is something that has already been identified as valuable from within the Subject Centre. The high interest in a resources database and downloadable teaching materials may indicate that we should concentrate our efforts on setting this up, while some of the areas for which there is an apparent lack of concern should probably be investigated further to discover if this is the result of a lack of interest, lack of information in this area, or simply that this is an issue for

which the Subject Centre may not be the first port of call (as yet). All in all, then, further data will be added as questionnaires are distributed at workshops, meetings and seminars and additional surveys will be carried out to obtain more specific data on individual institutions or areas. We plan another mini-survey relating to C & IT for learning and teaching in order to investigate some of the issues around the definition and delivery of e-learning.

> To make your contribution to the survey complete the form at: http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/about/sc_needs_analysis.html

Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages (TNP2)

Paula Davis reports

Vicky Wright (CIEL Project), Paula Davis (TNP), Mike Kelly (TNP) and participants at the TNP meeting, Southampton University.

The Subject Centre is now linking with a network of European partners in a major project to improve languages in higher education throughout Europe.

The second Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages (TNP2) is a three-year project run by the European Language Council and funded under the SOCRATES programme. Set up on 1st September 2000, it involves ninety-six higher education institutions from all over Europe plus six international academic associations. The main aim of the project is to develop recommendations for improvements in higher education programmes in the area of languages. These recommendations are being developed along three themes: *Curriculum Innovation, New Learning Environments* (the European Learning Space) and *Quality Enhancement in Language Studies*. Scientific Committees comprising academics from European higher education institutions have been set up to address each of the three themes. Mike Kelly is the co-ordinator of the *Scientific Committee for Curriculum Innovation*, and the UK representatives on the three committees are: Ian Wallace (University of Bath), Marina Mozzon-Mcpherson (University of Hull) and Lis Lillie (University of Ulster).

During this first year of the project, national reports are being prepared by members of the Scientific Committees. The reports focus on innovative developments in the three project areas. These reports will then be synthesised and complemented by recommendations and examples of good practice. The national reports and the synthesis reports will be made public in due course. We hope that they will be widely discussed in the UK, and a seminar is being planned for the autumn in London.

On 30th and 31st March 2001, Mike Kelly hosted the second meeting of the TNP2 *Scientific Committee for Curriculum*

Innovation, at the University of Southampton. The principal aim of the meeting was to discuss the first draft of the national reports on *Curriculum Innovation*, identifying common themes, so that work may begin on the synthesis report. The meeting was attended by colleagues from Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. It began with presentations of UK initiatives being undertaken at the University of Southampton and in the surrounding region, which are relevant to the work of the Scientific Committee. These included the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies presented by Liz Ashurst, Subject Centre Manager; CIEL (Curriculum and Independence for the Learner) presented by Vicky Wright, CIEL Project Director; ALLADIN (Autonomous Language Learning in Art and Design using Interactive Networks) presented by Juliet Hamilton, ALLADIN Project Officer; and Rapport (Residence Abroad Project @ Portsmouth) presented by Artie Vossel-Newman, Rapport Project Manager.

The discussion of national reports focussed on recent changes in the system of higher education and the impact of the Bologna Declaration, together with innovations in the following areas: traditional and 'alternative' language programmes; the training of language teachers; the training of translators and interpreters; language provision for students of other disciplines; and language studies in continuing education. Arrangements were then made for compiling the synthesis report and Mike Kelly and Paula Davis, Research Assistant, from the University of Southampton, have now begun work on this. Participants will next meet at the European Language Council's European Year of Languages Conference in Berlin at the end of June.

> For further information, visit the project website at http://www.fu-berlin.de/elc/TNP2/index.html

Subject Centre Roadshows

Liz Ashurst (Subject Centre Manager) reports

2001 Subject Centre Roadshow

It seemed fitting that, in our first full year of activity, the Subject Centre should organise a series of regional events. We were keen to introduce ourselves and our activities to those Higher Education institutions which are not funded by HEFCE as the Subject Centre does have a UK wide remit.

The Roadshow was designed not only to allow the Subject Centre to present itself and its activities but also to enable colleagues from neighbouring institutions to meet. Each event included presentations, discussion on issues of common concern, updates on QAA processes and taster sessions on the work of FDTL projects (see pages 9, 10 & 11).

The Subject Centre staff took to the road in January to visit Queen's University Belfast and the University of Stirling. In May 2001 the Welsh Roadshow was hosted by the University of Swansea. The following snippets from the programme may be helpful:

A user's guide to the Subject Centre

Professor Mike Kelly, Director, introduced the Subject Centre and pointed out the various ways that colleagues in all subject areas might use the Subject Centre: by visiting the website, by attending events and by joining the mailing list to receive newsletters and email bulletins on forthcoming events. Colleagues were also urged to tell the Subject Centre what they would like us to do so that the service provided is as effective as possible (see also p.13).

Academic Review: the New Method

Fiona Crozier, Assistant Director of the QAA, provided the most up to date information about the new process for academic review. To view the presentation given at the Roadshow in Swansea, visit our website
http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/resources/reference.html

At Queen's University Belfast: left to right: Fiona Crozier, Assistant Director QAA, Vicky Wright Subject Centre Academic Coordinator for Languages, Liz Ashurst Subject Centre Manager, Elspeth Jones, Director Develop Project Photo by Martyn Boyd, Queen's University Belfast.

Teaching Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies: New needs, new challenges

A roundtable of 'experts' raised the following issues:

Educating students

There is a need to make the curriculum exciting for students and flexible enough to allow non-linguists to take languages to a serious level.

Educating colleagues and decision makers

Languages departments should not be seen as service departments with language teaching staff being 'dequalified'. The casualisation of language teaching is also a serious issue. Language teaching strategies should be underpinned by research so that language teaching and learning is as valued as the content component of language degree programmes.

Working together

Much will be achieved if an atmosphere of collaboration and cooperation is fostered across disciplines, across sectors and across geographical boundaries. The Subject Centre has a key role to play as a way of enabling colleagues to meet.

Benchmarking Area Studies

The benchmarking group has worked hard to define area studies as a concept that 'makes sense' and that which is not more specific to one geographical area than another (it was decided to define an area as geographical rather than cultural). A key feature of the field has been the inter- and multi-disciplinary nature of Area Studies courses (see also p. 12)

Crisis and opportunity

The crisis in recruitment to modern languages degrees provides an opportunity for degree programmes to focus on intercultural skills and to satisfy employers' demands for effective communicators.

Marketing languages

Keith Marshall of the University of Bangor led a very useful session at the Swansea Roadshow on developing a marketing strategy for languages. Materials for marketing languages, he advised, should be sent to teachers and careers officers in secondary schools. As well as including case studies of students who have succeeded in languages, there are plenty of statistics with a good story to tell. For example, modern languages as a whole had more A & B grades at 'A' level than any other subject except maths. The unemployment rate of all modern language graduates in 1999 was lower than that in computing, engineering or business studies.

More statistical information to help in 'Making the case for Modern Languages' will be available on our website. If you would like to know more, or if you can provide case studies of language graduates pursuing successful careers, please contact the Subject Centre.

Alison Dickens leads a discussion on Area Studies at the Stirling Roadshow.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Events in bold type are being organised by the Subject Centre.

JULY 2001

9th July 2001
UCML PLENARY, CILT
Contact: footith@globalnet.co.uk

11th July 2001
C&IT RESOURCES INFORMATION DAY
University of Hull
More info: j.bartle@selc.hull.ac.uk

18th-19th July 2001
CROSSING BOUNDARIES: MAKING SENSE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY AND INTERCULTURAL STUDIES
Dartington Hall, Totnes Devon
More info: http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/events/as_wkshop1.html
Register: llas@soton.ac.uk

SEPTEMBER 2001

1st – 3rd September 2001
EXETER CALL 2001 - University of Exeter
More info: k.c.cameron@ex.ac.uk

6th September 2001
LAGB/BAAL Crossover meeting between LAGB (4th – 6th Sept & BAAL 6th-8th Sept)
University of Reading
More info: http://clwww.essex.ac.uk/LAGB
http://www.baal.org.uk/baalc.htm

17th,18th,19th September 2001
DOPLA PROJECT TRAINING COURSE (PART ONE) - Birmingham
Contact: P.M.Gravestock@bham.ac.uk

20th, 21st September 2001
DOPLA PROJECT TRAINING COURSE (PART ONE) - London
Contact: P.M.Gravestock@bham.ac.uk

26th September 2001
BILINGUALISM SYMPOSIUM
University of Southampton
More info:sn1@soton.ac.uk
Register: cmm@lang.soton.ac.uk

The End of Babel?

Meeting the Challenge of global English in a Multilingual Society
A one day Symposium to celebrate the European Day of Languages
26 September 2001
University of Southampton

Keynote Speakers will include:

• Professor Hugo Baetens Beardsmore (Vrije Universiteit, Brussels)

• Professor Robert Phillipson (Copenhagen Business School)

• Professor Mike Kelly (Nuffield Enquiry member, Southampton University)

• Professor Christopher Brumfit (Southampton University)

27th,28th September 2001
DOPLA PROJECT TRAINING COURSE (PART ONE) - Sheffield
Contact: P.M.Gravestock@bham.ac.uk

OCTOBER 2001

October 2001
INTRODUCTION TO CURRICULUM 2000: IMPLICATIONS FOR HE - CILT London
More info: llas@soton.ac.uk

NOVEMBER 2001

November 2001
LINGUISTICS SEMINAR: TEACHING DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES TO STUDENTS OF LINGUISTICS
More info: http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/events/events_sc.html
Register: llas@soton.ac.uk

DOPLA PROJECT TRAINING COURSE (PART TWO) - Birmingham
Contact: P.M.Gravestock@bham.ac.uk

LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO EVENT (WITH NICK BYRNE)
London School of Economics

POSTGRADUATE INFORMATION DAY CILT
More info:http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/events/events_sc.html
Register: dawn.ebbrell@cilt.org.uk

Postgraduate Information Day
CILT, 20 Bedfordbury, London, WC2N 4LB
Thurs 29th November 2001
10:30 - 3:30

This open visit to the CILT library and the Subject Centre's Higher Education Resources Collections aims to bring students together to discuss issues of mutual concern, find out about resources available for locating research, discover real and virtual networks and how they can be effectively used by research students, gain an insight into the experiences of a graduate student teaching in a department and look at new resources dealing with the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. This visit is offered free of charge to postgraduate students. While lunch is not provided, light refreshments will be available in the morning.

AREA STUDIES: THE IMPACT OF BENCHMARKING & QA
More info: http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/events/events_sc.html
Register: llas@soton.ac.uk

DECEMBER 2001

LANGUAGE FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES WORKSHOP (WITH AULC)
More info: http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/events/events_sc.html
Register: llas@soton.ac.uk

C&IT RESOURCES INFORMATION DAY
University of Hull
More info: j.bartle@selc.hull.ac.uk

TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSING LINGUISTICS
More info: http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/events/events_sc.html
Register: llas@soton.ac.uk