

Opening the Door to Language Learning

The Opening the Door to Language Learning Project, which began in October 2002 and is funded by the European Socrates programme, aims to widen participation in language learning and cultural awareness. The Subject Centre is leading the project which will be setting up a number of mini-projects to explore ways of increasing access to language learning opportunities, of encouraging greater motivation to learn languages and of supporting learner independence. The target group for the project is non-traditional language learners who do not normally have access to the resources available to those following traditional language learning courses.

We have partners in Belgium, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

We are setting up a number of experimental 'models' in order to try out some ideas which include: opening university resource centres to the general public; language 'taster' sessions; language roadshows; tandem partnerships; and encouraging use of the European Language Portfolio. These experiments or trials will lead to the publication of a handbook for language teaching providers which will include case studies (from our trials), local information on the best ways to attract and support learners, materials to use with learners (who will mainly be learning independently) and links to other sources of information.

Current Activities: Phase One

UK: In the UK we will be working with 8 universities to test out a number of ways in which Language Centres can provide access to their resources (on the web or in their resource centres) to the local community. The scheme will offer learners a membership 'package' which might include use of a resource centre, sessions with a learning advisor, tandem learning partnerships with students and use

of learning support tools such as the European Language Portfolio. The key feature of this project is that the learners will not be following a taught language course and that costs to learners are limited (preferably free).

BE: In Belgium our partners (based at the Lessius Hogeschool, Antwerp) are offering a distance learning package which comprises: learning pathways with a focus on 'non-school' languages (Spanish and Italian). Learners will access lessons via the Internet and be supported by language teaching staff and an in-house portfolio.

HU: Our Hungarian partner from CUP will be taking a series of roadshows out to rural schools in the remotest part of the country. Each school will form the base for an exhibition of materials, mini-lessons and short talks. Parents and others from the local community will be invited to attend at the end of the school day.



The Lingua Project Partners Back Row (L to R): Eamann O'Heigeartaigh (IE), David Bickerton (Evaluator), Paula Davis (Project Manager UK), Birgitta Henriksson (SE), Anne Gallagher (IE), Mariann György (HU), Jone Grigaliuniene (LT). Front row (L to R): Alison Dickens (Project Director UK), Sonia Mora (ES), Carmen Pinilla (ES), Inge Lanslots (BE), Marie Weaver (Project Secretary UK).

News in Brief

Collaboration Programme in Modern Languages in Higher Education

In the January 2003 white paper, The Future of Higher Education, the government indicated that it expected more collaboration between HEIs and departments to deliver courses. The Collaboration Programme in Modern Languages in Higher Education has now been running for eighteen months and is testing, through ten projects, different models of inter-institutional cooperation involving in total some twenty four institutions and six languages plus Linguistics. For more information about the programme, the projects and our findings to date, visit the 'Collaboration Programmes' web pages at www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/collaboration

Rethinking Pedagogical Models for E-learning

In March 2003, the Subject Centre invited bids to undertake a research and dissemination project in rethinking pedagogical models for e-learning in our subject areas. The project will be funded at up to £35,000 over the period August 2003 to December 2004. Applications were submitted in April 2003. Project bids will be reviewed by the selection panel in May 2003 and the successful project will be notified in June so that the project may begin in August or as soon as possible thereafter. More details about the successful project will be reported in the next edition of Liaison Light.

'Why Study Languages?' CD New Edition

The 'Why Study Languages?' CD has received a warm reception across all sectors of education and feedback has been both positive and informative. The CD is now being revised, to include updated statistics on graduate employability, a selection of graduate 'case studies' and more male role models. Additional presentations on Area Studies and Linguistics will also be included. The updated CD will be available in July 2003. Watch our website for more details: www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk.

European Day of Languages

Don't forget the European Day of Languages on Friday 26th of September! Now is the time to start planning your events. This may be a good time to visit schools. **Why not take your Languages Box along?** More information and ideas about the day will be posted on our website soon.

IE: The University of Maynooth, in collaboration with the Universities of Limerick and Cork will be adopting a similar model to that of the UK, and will be supporting their learners with packs of materials in the target languages – French, Spanish and Irish – together with access to advice surgeries. They already have some 130 applicants at Maynooth for 100 places.

LT: The University of Vilnius, in Lithuania, is collaborating with the British Council to set up a series of Open Days at which potential learners will be given ideas and materials to get them started (or restarted) with learning English.

ES: In Zaragoza a private provider of language learning, M.T. Servicios, is collaborating with the local library to set up a satellite resource centre for the general public. Support from language teachers will be offered at certain times and the materials used will be donated to the library at the end of the project.

SE: Our Swedish partner from Adult Education will be promoting Spanish and together with the national centre for distance learning will provide and monitor distance learning courses for adults.

Future Activities: Phase Two

Phase Two will begin in early 2004 in which each partner will trial a different model (probably one that has already been tried by another partner). These results will feed in to the final good practice handbook to be published in the third and final phase of the project, which ends in October 2005.

For further information on the project or for details of how to participate contact: Paula Davis (Project Manager) at the Subject Centre on p.davis@soton.ac.uk.

The Subject Centre is also involved in another Lingua-funded project - Join the Club: Community Language Clubs. This project aims to establish a network of community based language learning clubs for non-traditional language learners. For further information about Join the Club, visit the project web-site: www.jointheclub.net

JOIN THE CLUB!

YOUR COMMUNITY LANGUAGE CLUB

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The Sum of all Projects

A rich variety of projects, at different stages of development, are under way in our subject areas. Each project demonstrates the enthusiasm, energy and innovation of colleagues involved, who devote time, often on top of their other work commitments, to pursuing an idea and putting it into practice. The range of projects undertaken reflects the need to bring additional income into departments, especially where core income is under pressure. And it reflects the flexibility of the short-term project as a means of trying out new ideas to see if they will work.

The Subject Centre has been both a giver and receiver of project funding, as readers of this newsletter and visitors to our website will quickly see. Among the most recent projects we have been able to fund are three initiatives supported by additional LTSN allocations. The projects for extending good practice in less widely used and less taught languages are designed to strengthen languages, which may be of vital importance to the country, but typically lack a critical mass of staff and students in any one institution. Collaboration between teachers in different departments is a key aspect of these projects, both as a means of sharing ideas, and as a means of sustaining provision at national level.

The projects in pedagogical research, managed for us by CILT, are intended to build up the research base available to inform teaching and learning. This is of particular importance at a time when the link between teaching and research is being sharply questioned by government ministers. But it is also important for ensuring that our teaching is informed by subject-specific research, which is much more likely to have an impact in practice than more generic educational research.

The Area Studies Project brings together Subject Centres across the humanities, arts and social sciences. They are co-operating to raise awareness of interdisciplinary issues and to provide support in the form of seminars, workshops, web pages, newsletters and networking for colleagues working in Area Studies. These, and the two Lingua projects we are involved in, are able to draw on the preliminary lessons of the HEFCE-funded Collaboration Project, which is now in its second year, managed by the Subject Centre in partnership with UCML.

The results of these projects will all feed into workshops, conferences and networks, as well as into the growing resource base available through the Subject Centre website. Our Guide to Good Practice and our Materials Bank are a principal means by which we can maintain and disseminate the results of projects, and were themselves developed with project funding from LTSN. They are a vital link in the chain, since the limitation of project funding is that all too often the outcomes of projects disappear with barely a trace once the funding period ends, and participants move on to new projects.

Since its beginnings some three years ago, the Subject Centre has worked to identify and disseminate the outcomes of projects, beginning with the results of the FDTL projects in languages and linguistics, but offering a home to any projects in our subject areas. This is closely linked to our commitment to supporting projects throughout the stages of their development. Our most recent project is to rethink pedagogical models in e-learning. We announced the call for bids in March and are looking forward to guiding it through its stages over the next year or so.

We believe that the task of bringing projects together and amplifying their impact is vital to the future health of our subject areas, as well as ensuring that the public funding devoted to them is effective in improving learning and teaching in the longer term. It is for these reasons that the Subject Centre seeks to achieve the 'sum of all projects' in our area. By gathering them together we aim to create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. This will be a key role for the new Academy, proposed in the HE White Paper.

According to current plans, Subject Centres and LTSN more generally will be joined with other agencies and initiatives to provide a larger support network for third level education. It still remains to be seen what shape the proposed centres of teaching excellence will take, but at LLAS, we confidently expect that, like current and past projects, they will have a strong need for the kind of support and dissemination that we will continue to provide for our subject areas.

Michael Kelly, Subject Centre Director

Materials Bank

Looking for a bank that is truly co-operative, only makes ethical investments and shares its profits with its customers?
Open an account with the Subject Centre's Materials Bank. With everything from multiple choice Linguistics questions to ab initio Spanish on the web, this bank has a wealth of teaching ideas and materials authored and deposited by teachers of Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies. And all of it can be downloaded for free by colleagues in the UK academic community.

Like any other bank we also welcome deposits. And you can be sure of our interest! So if you have authored materials (text, web or software) that you would like to pay in, contact us now with details.

The Materials Bank – the bank that likes to say yes, ja, sí, oui, 是, jes!

Guide to Good Practice

*"An important new resource for lecturers."
"Very impressive."
"Very user friendly and informative."
"I wish this had been available when I started out in my career."*



These are just a few of the plaudits we have received for the Guide to Good Practice. The Guide (which can now be viewed at www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/resources/guidecontents.aspx) contains a collection of commissioned articles written by recognised authorities in their field and reviewed by an editorial board. It also contains documents from the related Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) projects. The collection of over 100 articles is aimed primarily at higher education teachers, both those new to the profession and also more experienced staff wishing to find out about new areas. The Guide is an integral part of the Subject Centre website, and it is our intention that it will continue to be updated and viewed as a valuable resource.

Extending Good Practice in Less Widely Used and Less Taught (LWULT) Languages

Following a call for bids issued in December 2002, seven small-scale development projects funded by the Subject Centre are now under way. Each project focuses on an element of the dissemination and transfer of innovative practice in the area of Less Widely Used and Less Taught Languages (LWULT).

As a whole, the LWULT Project aims to address the particular needs of those teaching minority languages. These include low student numbers, a lack of appropriate materials and a shortage of experienced teachers. The response to the call was overwhelming, with a large number of very high quality bids received. Of these, seven projects were funded, covering a wide range of topics and languages, including Arabic, Bulgarian, Hindi and Portuguese. Issues of cultural awareness, materials for independent learning in face-to-face or distance teaching, innovative uses of technology and the development of appropriate pedagogies are also to be addressed.



(L to R): Karima Soutsane (Durham), Mohamed Guenuni (London Met.), Gregory Toner (SOAS) and Hitomi Masuhara (Leeds Met.) discuss the dissemination projects.

The initial networking meeting took place at London Metropolitan University on 19th March. Here, project partners met as a group for the first time and Vicky Wright (Academic Coordinator for Languages) briefed the group on the project's administration, activities and progress to date. Overall, the first meeting was characterised by the lively and pleasant atmosphere of collaboration. It was a valuable opportunity for partners from the different universities to meet one another, to develop and strengthen new and existing networks of co-operation, to raise questions and to consider issues together. In this way, the day marked a very promising beginning for this new and exciting project.

Summary of projects funded

Name	Institution	Project Title
Eun Bahng	SOAS Language Centre	The identification and description of Hindi learning and teaching materials
Gregory Toner	University of Ulster	Computer-assisted practice activities for Irish language learners (CAPAILL)
Hitomi Masuhara	Leeds Metropolitan University	Cultural Twist: a language learning framework with cultural awareness activities
Jim Dingley	University College London	Materials for an online course in an LWULT language (example: Bulgarian)
Margaret Anne Clarke	University of Portsmouth	Developing web-based resources and educational materials for the online learning and teaching of Portuguese
Randal Holme and Karima Soutsane	University of Durham Language Centre	Finding your way in Arabic
Steve Cushion	London Metropolitan University	Interactive Learning for Arabic

Pedagogical Research Fund

The Subject Centre has received additional funds from the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) for 2002-2003 to support a Pedagogical Research Fund for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies in Higher Education. The project is managed at CILT through CILT's partnership in the Subject Centre.

Following an overwhelming response to the call for proposals six projects have been funded, at least one in each of the three areas covered by the Subject Centre. Funded projects are as follows:

- Languages**
 - *Peer and self-assessment in conference interpreter training* (University of Leeds)
 - *The Portfolio as a Learning Tool in Languages: an Effective Means of Embedding Good Learning Practice or Palliative for Languages under Threat?* (University of Central Lancashire)
 - *Ab initio language teaching in Scottish Universities* (University of Paisley)
- Area Studies**
 - *Listening & Learning: Student & Staff Perceptions of Oral Assessment in American Studies* (Liverpool Hope University College)
 - *Teaching across Cultures: Anglophone Area Studies and Student Diversity in an International Context* (University of Wales, Lampeter and the University of Gloucestershire)
- Linguistics**
 - *Teachers into researchers* (University of Bristol)

A one-day research methods workshop was organised as part of the Pedagogical Research Fund project to support funded projects in developing their research methodologies and, as part of that process, providing opportunities for projects to network and share expertise. A number of workshop places were also offered to external participants involving a greater diversity of projects and expertise in that process. The workshop was led by Professor Rosamund Mitchell from the Research and Graduate School of Education at the University of Southampton and covered the following areas:

- Project Design and Management;
- Collecting and interpreting interview data;
- Collecting and interpreting questionnaire data.

The projects will run for one year and will produce a report of findings which will be published on the Subject Centre website at www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/prf.aspx.

Forthcoming Events

Implications of the HE White Paper: Policy and Strategy for Languages 21 May 2003 at (SOAS), London, Representatives from HEFCE and the LTSN will join Michael Kelly (Subject Centre), Hilary Footitt (UCML), Richard Towell (University of Salford) and David Robey (University of Reading) to lead discussions on the HE White Paper, the National Languages Strategy, links between pedagogical research and university teaching and learning, the 'New Landscape for Languages' study conducted for the Nuffield Foundation and the Collaboration Programme in Modern Languages in HE.

Identifying, Teaching and Assessing Key Skills in Linguistics

23 May 2003 at CILT, London

In undergraduate and postgraduate education there is an increasing emphasis on the acquisition of general skills in addition to subject specific knowledge. However, while departments have much experience in constructing academic curricula, they may find it less straightforward to outline the key skills being taught for a particular programme and to state how those skills might be assessed implicitly as part of academic tasks and activities. The Subject Centre Linguistics Group is organising an event to discuss these issues in the context of current practice in the discipline.

Set texts? New Approaches to the Teaching of Literature in Languages and Related Studies

6 June 2003 at CILT, London

This one-day seminar will explore innovative approaches to the teaching of literature in or translated from languages other than English. Particular emphasis will be placed on the evolving role of literature both as a subject of study in its own right and as a tool of study in other disciplines.

Register at www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk or email llas@soton.ac.uk.

The Area Studies Project

The Area Studies Project was set up to support the teaching and learning of Area Studies in UK institutions of Higher Education. Launched in 2002, the project seeks to foster a sense of community between practitioners of a broad range of Area Studies courses. The Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies is co-ordinating the project in partnership with five other Subject Centres:

Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (GEES)
History, Classics and Archaeology
Sociology Anthropology and Politics (C-SAP)
English
Economics.

Each of the six Subject Centres in the partnership has developed its own Area Studies related project, to identify and support elements of Area Studies within or relating to their own disciplines.

When it comes to teaching and learning, Area Studies courses have much in common. The multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature of Area Studies means that discipline identity is not as clear-cut as it might be in other subjects. Moreover, courses are often taught across two or more departments which increases the complexity of course design and administration. The Area Studies Project aims to address these issues.

Marketing Area Studies courses is especially important in a Higher Education market which is increasingly competitive and increasingly diverse. Strategies can be shared to increase the market for Area Studies, whilst demonstrating the skills with which these multidisciplinary courses equip students. We also hope to explore ways of encouraging more school leavers to do Area Studies courses. The first event of the project was held in London on 14th March 2003. This was a meeting for practitioners of Less Commonly Taught Area Studies. (See the event report below for details). A second event, *Hybridity, contact zones, borderlands, liminal spaces: interdisciplinarity and inter-cultural learning in Area Studies curricula* is due to take place in London on 6th May 2003.

Apart from meetings, conferences and workshops organised by the Subject Centre, the Area Studies Project is supported by resources on our website. This includes our Good Practice Guide, which incorporates entries on different Area Studies. Additionally, we are launching ATLAS, a new publication designed to discuss and exchange ideas on teaching and learning issues in Area Studies. The first issue is due out in May 2003 and can be viewed on our website or in printed form (please contact us to join our mailing list). We also have a discussion list called the *Area Studies Network*. The postings keep members informed about Area Studies events and subject association meetings as well as providing a forum for discussion about teaching and learning issues in Area Studies.

For more details about the Area Studies Project, visit our website at www.lang.itsn.ac.uk/areastudies.aspx or contact Marie Weaver m.weaver@soton.ac.uk

Less-commonly Taught Area Studies Meeting.

Twelve practitioners responded to an open invitation to a meeting To discuss issues surrounding less commonly taught Area Studies. Those present included representatives from African Studies, Asian Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Caribbean Studies, Eastern European Studies and Latin American Studies. The discussion centred on key issues in Area Studies including interdisciplinarity and course design, recruitment, the role of language teaching on Area Studies programmes, study abroad and dealing with university administration.

A key area of concern was the threat of programme closure by decision-makers beyond the provider departments. While recruitment has been difficult in some cases, most of the programmes represented at the meeting have maintained healthy levels of student interest. Nevertheless, they are continually threatened by ongoing processes of institutional restructuring.

Those present shared ideas on strategies to support and enhance the profiles of their departments and particularly of the Area Studies programmes they offered. Despite pressure to remove language studies and the year abroad from the curriculum, most of those present agreed that these elements were instrumental in attracting students to their courses. It was also agreed that more needs to be done to demonstrate both to students and to university administrators the transferable skills and job opportunities from which Area Studies graduates benefit.

Finally, it was agreed that teachers on Area Studies programmes should seek to be more visible within their institutions. This might be achieved through involvement in cross-departmental committees and through ensuring that innovation and achievements at departmental level are publicised and acknowledged at the level of the institution. These activities are vital in raising the profile of Area Studies programmes and ensuring that their value is recognised within institutions and across the Higher Education community at large.

Tell us about your projects

In addition to projects funded and coordinated by us, the Subject Centre is interested in all ongoing projects relating to teaching and learning in our three subject areas in higher education. If you are involved in such a project please tell us about it by emailing llas@soton.ac.uk. Links to projects, with a short description provided by you, will then be added to our website.

Introducing... the new Academic Coordinator for Area Studies

Dr John Canning has recently joined the Subject Centre to coordinate the Area Studies Project. He will be responsible for expanding the Area Studies Network and implementing a programme of activities, events and publications. John holds a PhD in Human Geography from the University of Bristol. His thesis examines nationalism and national identity in the Eastern Townships region of Quebec. He can be contacted on j.canning@soton.ac.uk



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