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Looking ahead

Our fifth birthday is a good time for the Subject Centre to review progress and look ahead to the next period. It is also a time of change in the wider national context. We are now leaving our first organisational form, the Learning and Teaching Support Network, and are entering into our new context, the Higher Education Academy. Consequently, it is a time for us to ask how well we have met the needs of our academic community, and how we can meet them better in the future. We also need to consider how best to help you to respond to the policy directions of government and of institutions.

The Subject Centre started officially in January 2000, and we are now reaching the end of our fifth full academic year. Over that time, we have developed a substantial amount of published and online resources, a growing number of partnerships and a bustling programme of activity aimed at enhancing the quality of learning and teaching in our three subject areas. These achievements have been guided by the advice and assistance of a large number of colleagues who have generously given their time and energy. We have benefited enormously from the insight and expertise that colleagues have contributed through advisory groups, special interest groups, working groups, workshops, publications and personal contact. It is hard to see how the

community could have better supported us, and we hope that this also reflects a feeling that the Subject Centre is working on your behalf, and responding to your priorities.

Looking ahead to the next five years, we are confident that we can continue to respond to these needs. We are not complacent and know that we need to be alert and sensitive to the changing environment. We know that the success of the Subject Centres nationally has raised expectations among decision-makers. The new Academy will be asked to take a stronger role in government priorities in higher education, whether in developing the concept of professional standards, extending access to wider social groups, or improving the quality of the student experience. Like all Subject Centres, we are currently undertaking a formal review of our strategy, with a view to responding more effectively to the changing national and international environment. We hope you will continue to help us in this endeavour, and to feel that in doing so you are contributing to promoting the values of higher education, and to improving the quality of learning and teaching in languages, linguistics and area studies.

Michael Kelly

Director of the Subject Centre

Languages Work



*They don't all speak English you know**

September 27th 2004, the European Day of Languages, marks the launch of the **Languages Work** brand. This campaign, funded by the DfES as part of the National Languages Strategy, will promote the value of languages in the workplace.

Developed by CILT, the National Centre for Languages, its product range includes a handbook for intermediaries such as careers advisers and language lecturers, an activity folder containing curriculum materials for use in schools, a CD-Rom, website and information suitable for young people and adults. Consultation with stakeholders and the target audience, especially pupils at Key Stage 3, has led to a strong brand direction also benefiting collaborating organisations such as the Subject Centre, UCML and the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS).

Three key messages underpin the campaign:

- It's a multilingual world
- A little language knowledge can make a lot of difference
- Languages will improve the quality of your life

Case studies of graduates using languages at work are included in the handbook and on the website. They all show how languages have helped them progress in industries such as Media and Technology where English is not the only means of communication.

From October 2004, regional events throughout England will give higher education institutions, colleges, schools and careers services the opportunity to learn more about **Languages Work**. Your local Comenius Centre and Regional Language Network will be in touch closer to the time.

For general languages and careers enquiries, contact careers@cilt.org.uk. For further information about the project, visit www.languageswork.org.uk or contact Dominic Luddy dominic.luddy@cilt.org.uk

**94% of the world population do not speak English as their first language. 75% do not speak English at all.*

Employability in Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies

How employable are graduates in LLAS subjects? What does it mean to be employable? What is the role of teaching staff in preparing students for the workplace after their studies?

Over the past few years the First Destinations Survey (FDS), a survey of graduates' employment situation six months after graduation, has demonstrated that languages graduates are among the least likely graduates to be unemployed, second only to graduates in medicine and related disciplines. However, a survey published in the THES in October 2003 found that graduates in Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies performed much less well when only graduate level jobs were considered. Although many reasons for this relatively poor performance were advanced (such as graduates undertaking temporary work abroad), the article provided a strong wake-up call to the LLAS community. Irrespective of the merits or demerits of the survey, it has shown that teaching staff in LLAS can no longer afford to be complacent about the employment prospects of their graduates.

Many will feel that the employability of graduates is of little concern to them. However, the changing ways in which Higher Education is financed will mean that the employment prospects and possible financial rewards of studying LLAS subjects will play a greater role in influencing student choice than was the case in the past. As we move towards the government's 50% Higher Education participation target, the graduate employment market is very different to the graduate employment market of 10 years ago. A university education is no longer the preserve of an elite; it is increasingly becoming the norm. A degree is no longer an automatic passport to a good job; it merely ensures entry to the graduate job market.

The Subject Centre is committed to assisting teaching staff in helping their students enhance their employability. For this reason, the Subject Centre is undertaking a number of activities relating to employability. We are currently producing a guide for teaching staff in LLAS which will be placed on our website shortly. We are also collecting rationales for studying languages, some of which are strongly related to employability. We continue to recognise concerns about the recruitment of students and feel that linking recruitment with employability is a

very helpful way of encouraging more students to do LLAS subjects. The Subject Centre is also involved in the HE Employability group that includes representatives from CILT and other languages staff who are particularly interested in employability.

The skills gained by students studying LLAS subjects leave us with no cause for concern. The year abroad that forms part of most degree courses in Languages and Area Studies equips students not only with language ability, but also with experience of dealing with other cultures, independence and an increased self-confidence: we know that these are the sorts of skills that employers value highly and the year abroad is an experience which is integral to our subjects, but very much the exception in other disciplines. We also know that employers value work experience and a work placement outside the UK stands students in very good stead for their future employment prospects. It is not simply a matter of having these skills though - students need to recognise that they have them and those who teach them are usually in the best position to help them in this.

Of course, enhancing the employability of students on graduation is not the sole responsibility of those who teach them. Students themselves need to be encouraged to take responsibility for their employment prospects. Partnerships with employers and institutional careers services are also vital in ensuring that students are able to reap the rewards of their degree courses in later life. It is also important to remember that every student is different - some students will be well equipped with good prior work experience and good personal networks of contacts - others may be considerably disadvantaged in this regard. Teaching staff are well placed to help and encourage students who lack confidence or who need help in identifying the skills that their studies have given them.

If ever concerns about employability could simply be left to students and the careers service, those times have now passed. The graduate job market is increasingly competitive as more and more as graduates compete for each available position. It is more important than ever that teaching staff help their students prepare for life after university. However, the unique skills offered by degrees in our disciplines offer strong grounds for optimism about the future.

For more information on the Subject Centre's employability work please visit www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/employability.aspx or contact John Canning: j.canning@soton.ac.uk

Recent Subject Centre Events

Residence Abroad

May 2004

This event, hosted by the British Council, followed on from an expert focus group meeting on residence abroad (RA) in 2003. The event focussed on current issues in RA and explored examples of good practice both in the preparation and support offered to students.

Presentations from Robert Crawshaw (Lancaster) and Andrea Reiter (Southampton) on the modules attended by Year 2 students in their institutions emphasised the importance of preparing students thoroughly. Syd Donald (Leeds) then considered the ways in which students can be supported during RA through the appropriate use of Year Abroad logs and Personal Development Planning (PDP). Opportunities for students to boost their employability through the experience of RA were also highlighted. Diane Appleton (Liverpool) demonstrated how online resources developed by the careers

service can encourage students to focus on career planning, while Uwe Zemke (Salford) and Françoise Tidball (UWE) promoted the benefits of work placements for enhancing student employability.

A period of residence abroad also serves to enhance students' maturity and personal development. A case study of the ultimate gap year in Mexico was the theme of a presentation by Clare Mar Molinero (Southampton). John Canning (Subject Centre) concluded the proceedings with an introduction to topical issues of safety and risk.

Following on from the two recent events held on residence abroad, the Subject Centre is in the process of collating resources on RA which will be made available on our website shortly.

Linguistics in Applied Linguistics MA Programmes

May 2004

This event considered the role and place of linguistic theory in Applied Linguistics programmes which addressed issues such as:

- How to give students grounding in the theoretical approaches to language needed to inform views gained through practice (Christopher Brumfit)
- What theories to teach and how to incorporate them meaningfully into the programme through a process-oriented approach (Roger Hawkins)
- How to take students from theory to application, from 'Banking' Linguistics knowledge to meeting 'Long-term goals' in professional development (John Field)
- How to develop research skills in students who are largely progressing to practice rather than research (Marjorie Lorch)
- How to deliver distance programmes in Applied Linguistics to teachers 'in practice' (Pamela Rogerson-Revell)

In addition Catherine Walter presented her research which indicated considerable variance in the balance and scope of Linguistics across programmes; some will offer no core modules in Linguistics, while others teach syntax, phonology and lexis as part of a general language analysis module.

This thought-provoking event highlighted that Linguistics, in this context, should help students to meet their needs in both a practical and a research environment. This means treading a careful line between what aspects of Linguistics academics may feel are important and what students actually need to know.

Full articles will be available shortly on the Subject Centre's website.

Reports and materials from our past events are available on our website at www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/events/archive

Understanding the World:

Developing interdisciplinary area studies to meet the needs of the 21st century

March 2004

The conference of the Area Studies Project began with a plea by Sir Harold Walker, former UK Ambassador to Iraq, to maintain Area Studies programmes in the UK. In the light of current events in Iraq and Afghanistan it is imperative that universities produce graduates who understand the languages and cultures of regions such as the Middle East.

The keynote address was followed by parallel sessions led by practitioners from a wide variety of disciplines. Themes included the intellectual endeavour and disciplinary identity of Area Studies, interdisciplinarity, residence abroad, language learning and teaching specific subjects on Area Studies programmes.

There has been relatively little thought about what core intellectual concerns may unite diverse Area Studies such as European Studies, American Studies and African Studies but interdisciplinary approaches to key ideas such as globalisation, glocalisation, borderlands, migration and the post-national have been discussed as possible key themes for Area Studies.

It is exciting to see discussion taking place across such a wide variety of disciplines and area specialisms. The conference has helped to strengthen the growing sense of community in Area Studies. Sir Harold Walker's speech and some of the presentations are now available on the Subject Centre website.

News in Brief

Scotland, Languages in Higher Education and the future

In March 2004, Scottish CILT organised an event to mark its partnership with the Subject Centre. The opening address was given by George Reid, Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament. Other speakers included John Macklin (University of Paisley), Roger McClure, (SHEFC), Alison Phipps (University of Glasgow) and Barbara Fennell (University of Aberdeen). Please email c.w.gregory@stir.ac.uk for a full event report.

European Languages Portfolio

The Nuffield Foundation and the University of Southampton funded 10 projects to implement and evaluate the European Language Portfolio. The findings were presented at a Subject Centre workshop examining how the ELP might be integrated into teaching and learning and link language learning and careers. More information can be found on the events pages of our website: www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/events/archive (9 Feb 2004)

Current provision and trends in Modern Languages in Higher Education

The Subject Centre and UCML are collaborating on a DfES funded project to provide statistical data on current provision and trends in modern languages, map vocational routes and carry out six case studies. The findings of the project will be published in the autumn.

Area Studies Library Collections

As part of the Materials Bank project the Subject Centre has started to collect information about special collections of relevance to the teaching and learning of Area Studies.

To find out more, go to www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/collections

Criticality

May 2004

The interim findings of an ESRC-funded project on the *Development of Criticality among Undergraduates in Modern Languages* were presented at this event. Presentations from the research team were followed by discussion, including contributions from experts on the wider implications of criticality research. For more information visit www.critical.soton.ac.uk

Pedagogical Research

The projects funded under the Subject Centre's Pedagogical Research fund concluded in January 2004. Final reports and a report on a methodology workshop held to support the projects can be downloaded at www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/prf.aspx

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- Free copies of other Subject Centre publications

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Forthcoming Events

Subject Centre Events Autumn 2004

We are in the process of finalising our events programme for next academic year. The table below shows some of the events we are planning but more details of our programme are available on our website www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/events

Date and Location	Event
13 November 2004 Dublin City University	Subject Centre Pedagogical Forum at the conference of the International Association for Languages and Intercultural Communication (IALIC) This forum will be dedicated to pedagogical research and practice, with a focus on innovation in the field of intercultural education and training.
24 November 2004 CILT, Covent Garden	The tangled Web – making sense of copyright in developing and exploiting on-line resources This workshop will address a number of key issues in using third party copyright materials in developing teaching and learning resources. Speakers include Helen Pickering from HERON (national HE copyright clearance service).
26 November 2004 Women's Library, London Metropolitan University	Linguistics and Literature This event will consist of four sessions that will give a short account of the intellectual base for the field together with practical sessions on applications of linguistic techniques to literary studies.
Autumn 2004 date and venue to be confirmed	Is Area Studies a discipline, a multidisciplinary discipline or a meeting point for a variety of disciplines? This one-day conference will examine the disciplinary identity of Area Studies in collaboration with UKCASA.