



# Subject Centre projects



The Subject Centre is currently working on a number of research projects. Full reports on these and other reports are available at [www.llas.ac.uk/projects](http://www.llas.ac.uk/projects)

## Investigating Longer Term Employability in the Humanities (ILTEH)

The ILTEH project is investigating the employability of humanities graduates several years after their graduation.

Through in-depth interviews with a range of humanities graduates we are investigating how they are applying what they gained during their higher education experience to their jobs, looking at so-called soft, hard and transferable skills as well as subject knowledge.

We have asked graduates to comment on how they found the transition from student life to the world of work, how their courses prepared them and how their aspirations and expectations were met by the higher education experience.

They have spoken about their motivation for taking up a humanities degree, how they experienced the initial period after graduation and how other interests and influences have impacted on their career paths.

Our respondents represent a number of different discipline areas, work in different fields and have graduated over a period of some thirty years, so whilst they can by no means be classed as a homogenous group, there are number of themes and issues arising which are common to many of them. A report of our findings is to be published in the New Year.

We are still interested in talking to graduates of archaeology and area studies. Please contact Becky Allan ([R.Allan@soton.ac.uk](mailto:R.Allan@soton.ac.uk)) if you are prepared to be interviewed for this research or know of former students, friends or colleagues who might be.

## Reusable learning objects for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies

We are currently involved in two e-learning projects, both of which are looking at the design, delivery and use of learning objects in the teaching of languages, linguistics and area studies.

Briefly, learning objects are: small, digital and self-contained units of learning that can be broadly (but not exclusively) described as context independent, reusable and adaptable. The first small-scale project is looking at how a learning object can be developed for the humanities since most learning objects are being modelled on the needs of the sciences and are therefore very different in nature. To do this, we will be taking existing materials that are stored in our materials bank, adapting them

## Investigating attitudes to reading among modern language undergraduates

The Subject Centre has recently undertaken a project which has sought to investigate attitudes to reading among modern language undergraduates following a request from our Literature and Culture Special Interest Group.

Seven universities from across the UK took part in a questionnaire survey which aimed to explore the following issues:

- Students' attitudes to reading in their first language and in the foreign language;
- Students' perceived level of competence in the foreign language;
- Students' experience of reading in the foreign language;
- Students' attitudes to reading different genres.

Approximately 600 questionnaires were returned by students in years 1 to 4. Languages covered by the survey include Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. Data from the questionnaires is currently in the process of being analysed but initial findings seem to suggest that there are differences in both attitudes and approaches to reading between first and final year students.

The outcomes of the project will be published later in the autumn and we will also be reporting on the findings at the 'routes into reading' conference to be held on 20 October in London. See our website for more details ([www.llas.ac.uk/events](http://www.llas.ac.uk/events)).

and evaluating them with the help of teaching colleagues and learners. This will involve taking whole courses or modules and reconfiguring them into small independent units that can be used as part of a course or as a stand alone learning resource.

The second project (L<sub>2</sub>O) which is a regional consortium of universities and 16 - 19 providers (led by the University of Southampton) involves a much larger scale collection of resources. This is being done via a consortium of universities and colleges who are developing a repository of resources to be shared across the sector. Here the project team will be developing a template for describing and presenting learning objects which allows for the activities and resources (text, video etc.) to be used independently and adapted to create new learning objects. Both projects are due to complete in 2006.

# Pedagogic research



We are supporting pedagogic research in our subject areas through research methods workshops and working with other Subject Centres in the arts and humanities

## Pedagogic research in arts and humanities

In the 2003-2004 the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) went into its fifth and final phase. Previous rounds of FDTL were fruitful for the humanities with funded projects in Modern Languages, English, History and American Studies. However, in Stage 5 the humanities failed to secure any funding from the bids submitted (3 bids in Celtic Studies, 16 in Theology and Religious Studies, 5 in Philosophy and 5 in Classics).

Colleagues in the Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies (PRS) led an expression of concern to the HE Academy on behalf of all the humanities subject centres. The Academy has responded by funding a small project that sets out to investigate why humanities bids performed so poorly on this occasion. This Project is being undertaken by Ellie Chambers who is a professor at the Open University's Institute of Educational Technology and editor of Arts and Humanities in Higher Education.

Whilst it would be erroneous to pre-empt the findings of the Project, our discussions so far have identified a number of questions that require investigation. Firstly, will humanities disciplines 'fall behind' other disciplines in teaching and learning development and pedagogic research? Secondly, are humanities practitioners failing to communicate adequately with practitioners in the sciences and social sciences, many of whom were on the review committee? Thirdly, do humanities disciplines have their own methodologies of research into teaching and learning that differ from the social science methodologies of disciplines such as Education? If so, what needs to be done in order to convince the growing numbers of professional educationalists of their validity?

It is clear that the current situation is a matter of serious concern. It is imperative that practitioners across the humanities undertake scholarship into teaching and learning that is embedded in the discipline and thereby communicates with other practitioners in the field.

If you have any comments about the funding of teaching and learning research in the humanities or have any views on the philosophies and methodologies of pedagogic research, please contact John Canning at LLAS (jc9@soton.ac.uk).

## Introduction to methods for pedagogic research in Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies

Until recently, LLAS only offered workshops in research methods to successful bidders for pedagogic research projects. In June 2005 we ran our first pedagogic research workshop open to all members of the LLAS community. All available places were filled within days of its first announcement demonstrating the extent to which the LLAS community recognises the importance of good quality pedagogic research.

The workshop was led by Academic Coordinators John Canning and Angela Gallagher-Brett. No previous experience of using social science research methods was assumed. Topics covered included questionnaire design and analysis, in-depth interviewing, focus groups and ethics. The workshop also brought attention to the depth of research that exists into the use of social science research methods and some of the debates that have been ongoing in the social sciences including Education. This includes the need to understand the position of the researcher vis-à-vis the subjects of the research - it is imperative to address the impact and dynamics of the teacher-student relationship, especially when conducting practitioner-led pedagogic research.

“ ...stimulating!  
Feel eager to get on  
with pedagogical  
research... ”  
Participant at the workshop

Not only will a better understanding of research methods will enable practitioners to undertake better quality research themselves, but it will help to recognise the strengths and shortcomings of existing research. Following encouraging feedback we have decided that the workshop will be repeated in January 2006. Details will be in the e-bulletin and on our website soon.

More details of our programme are available on our website

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

**20 October • School of Advanced Study, University of London**

**Routes into reading**

This one-day conference will discuss issues relating to foreign language reading among students following programmes which include the study of foreign language literatures. It will report on the findings from a major research project into modern language student attitudes to reading (see p.2)

**9 November • Westpark Conference Centre, University of Dundee**

**Visual communication and the teaching of Modern Languages, English and Intercultural Studies**

This seminar will explore ways in which visual texts, particularly film and television may illuminate and enhance the teaching of Modern languages, English and Intercultural Studies.

**10 November • CILT, Covent Garden**

**Starting out in the HE Languages**

**Department: a one-day course to support new academic language staff at university**

This day is aimed at academic staff who are new to teaching languages in Higher Education. The course intends to cover a range of topics, both pedagogical and more general, facing new language teaching staff.

**11 November • CILT, Covent Garden**

**Enhancing the student learning experience in Modern Languages**

An event for the exchange of ideas on language teaching, including PDPs, teaching and assessment and support for dyslexic students.

**14 November • CILT, Covent Garden**

**Sharing good practice in teaching Area**

**Studies: enhancing the student experience**

Colleagues are invited to share ways in which they have impacted upon enhancing the overall learning experience of Area Studies students.

**14 December • University of Southampton**

**E-Learning Symposium**

The overall aim of the symposium is to consider how e-learning pedagogy is shaping the direction of thinking in Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies.

## Higher Education Conference 2006

### Crossing frontiers: Languages and the international dimension

6-7 July 2006, University of Cardiff

#### Call for papers

Papers are invited on the following four themes:

- Working across sectors
- The curriculum
- E-learning
- Teacher training

Papers may be theoretical or practical in nature but should have a strong focus on pedagogy. European and international perspectives on any of these themes are particularly welcome as are papers from other sectors such as secondary, further and adult education.

**Deadline for submissions: Friday 28 October 2005**

To submit your proposal and to read more about the topics to be covered by this major HE conference, please visit [www.llas.ac.uk/cardiff2006](http://www.llas.ac.uk/cardiff2006)



**LLAS  
Languages  
Linguistics  
Area Studies**



**UCML  
University Council  
of Modern Languages**



Association of University Language Centres in the UK and Ireland

**SCHML**  
Standing Conference of  
Heads of Modern Languages  
in Universities

### Call for bids: 'Workshop to go' project, 2006

We are inviting bids to develop training packs and run two regional training workshops for HE staff. Participants at the workshop will then be expected to 'cascade' the training within their institutions.

#### Who is eligible to bid?

Staff teaching in UK Higher Education Institutions are eligible to submit a proposal.

#### Submitting a proposal

Go to our website for more information about submitting a proposal and to download an application form.

#### Possible themes:

- Use of new technologies
- Pedagogic support for teachers
- Pedagogic support for learners

Additional topics to those listed above are welcome.

### Join our mailing list

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and receive:

- this newsletter
- other Subject Centre publications
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