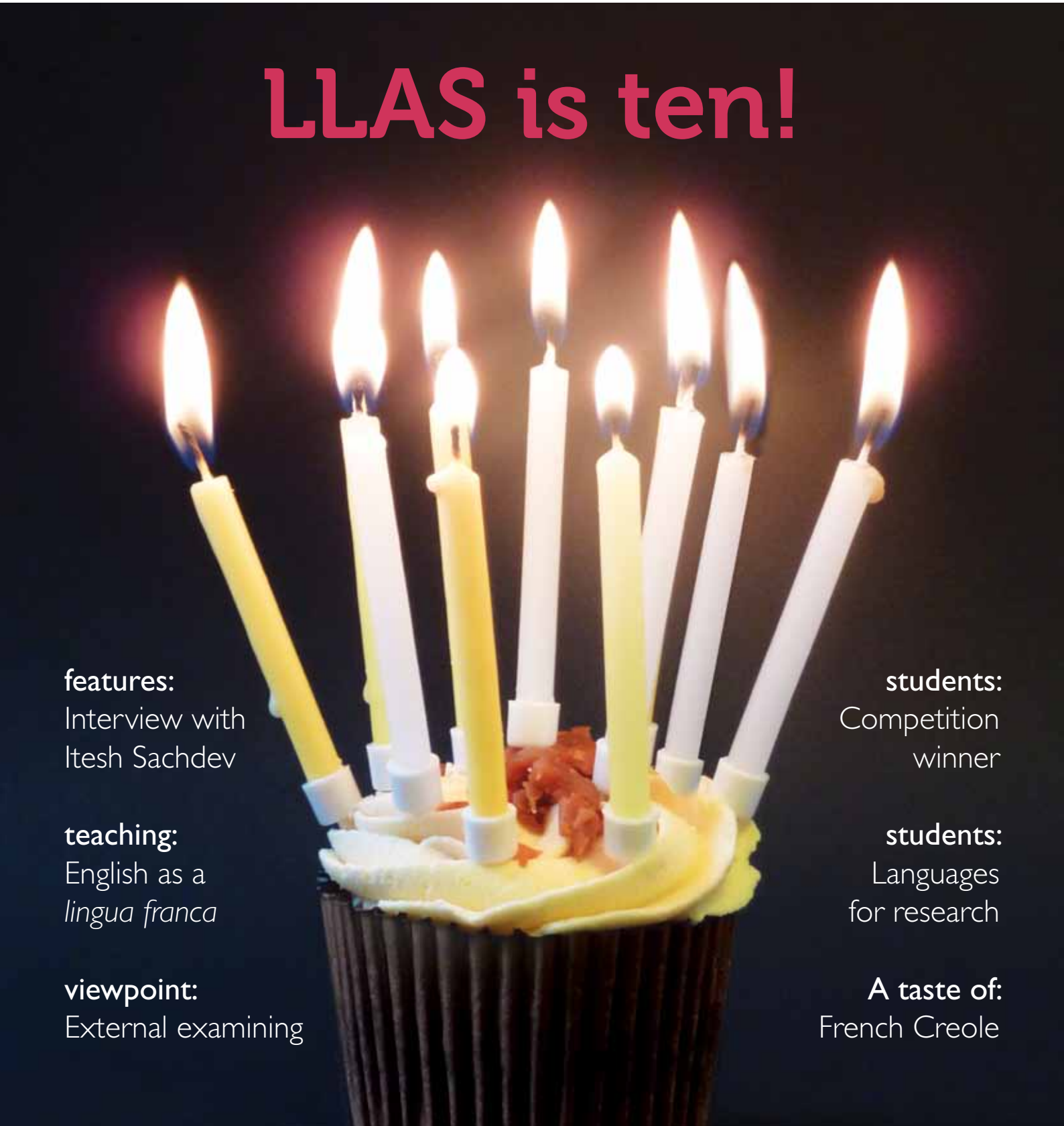
Liaison

Magazine

Issue 5 : July 2010

LLAS is ten!



features:
Interview with Itesh Sachdev

teaching:
English as a *lingua franca*

viewpoint:
External examining

students:
Competition winner

students:
Languages for research

A taste of:
French Creole

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LLAS Languages Linguistics Area Studies

Liaison is published twice a year by the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (LLAS), part of the Subject Network of the Higher Education Academy. We are a publicly funded service, providing UK-wide support and services for higher education in languages, linguistics and area studies. Details of all our activities are available on our website: **www.llas.ac.uk**

As well as updates on LLAS work, ***Liaison*** features a wide range of articles on topics relating to languages, linguistics and area studies. We welcome contributions. If you would like to submit an article, propose a book review or respond to an article published in Liaison, please contact the editor, Paula Davis (**pd2@soton.ac.uk**).

Views expressed in ***Liaison*** are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of LLAS.

Website links are active at the time of going to press.

You can keep in touch with LLAS by joining our mailing list (**www.llas.ac.uk/mailinglist**), coming to our workshops, seminars and other events (**www.llas.ac.uk/events**) or exploring our website. ***Liaison*** is distributed to languages, linguistics and area studies departments across the UK and is available at **www.llas.as.uk/liaison**. If you would like extra copies, please email **llas@soton.ac.uk**

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Welcome

Issue 5 : July 2010

Welcome to issue five of *Liaison*, the biannual magazine of the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (LLAS).

In this edition of *Liaison* we celebrate ten years of LLAS with a compendium of our ten "best bits" from the past decade. Turn to the centre pages to see if any of your favourites are mentioned. Sue Nash, our senior administrator, has been here since the very beginning of LLAS in 2000. So who better to kick-off the first instalment of what we hope will become a regular feature: "Meet LLAS".

Our main feature is an interview with Itesh Sachdev, who reflects on his achievements during his time as Director of the SOAS-UCL Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Languages of the Wider World (LWW-CETL).

This issue of *Liaison* is being published to coincide with our fifth biennial conference, *Languages in higher education 2010: raising the standard for languages*. The theme of standards is reflected in two articles. Firstly, Dick Ellis presents his viewpoint on the changing role of the external examiner. Then, Ole Helmersen and Fiona Crozier describe the work of the Language Network for Quality Assurance (LanQua), a European Commission funded project of 60 partners which is being co-ordinated by LLAS.

Liaison is printed on FSC Mixed Sources grade paper containing 50% recovered waste, and printed using vegetable inks.

E-learning features strongly in several articles: Julien Hamilton-Hart shares his experience of using the Learning Object Creator (LOC) tool, while Rachel Wicaksono describes how she involved students in developing an online tutorial for teaching English as a *lingua franca*. Elsewhere, Erika Corradini and Oren Stone explore the legal issues involved in sharing and re-purposing online resources.

The student voice is prominent in this issue. Besides Daniel Finch-Race's winning entry in this year's LLAS student award competition, we find out "what happened next" to last year's winner, Laura Gent. Meanwhile, two postgraduate research students, Rachel Clements and Brendan McGeever, tell us how they have become converts to languages! And Elizabeth Andersen and Ruth O'Rourke highlight the important role played by student ambassadors in the Routes into Languages programme.

Regular features include Mike Kelly's foreword; a news round-up; book reviews from Jean-Marc Dewaele and Mary Page; and "A taste of …", in which Marie-Annick Gournet turns the spotlight on French Creole. Finally, in a new feature, Irene Macías "has her say" about the attitude of UK budget airlines towards languages.

Thank you to all our contributors and remember, if you would like to contribute to the next issue or "have your say" on any of the articles you have read, please get in touch.

Paula Davis, Editor

recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

Languages for the 21st century: training, impact and influence

1-2 September 2010
University of Sheffield
www.llas.ac.uk/events/6142

We live in a world containing a myriad of different cultures, where clear and effective communication is increasingly important in international cultural, economic, political and social relations, and where facility with foreign languages can have a major impact upon the success of a business, an individual, or a nation.

Languages for the 21st Century: training, impact and influence will showcase new training provision, techniques, technologies, methodologies and research in language teaching, with an emphasis on the advanced or research-focused learner. Particular emphasis will be on the Languages of the Wider World: Africa, East and South Asia, Russia, Central Europe, and the Arab World.

Major conference themes:

- assessment
- benchmarking
- cultural competence
- generational change
- language for research
- materials and curriculum development
- outreach
- research in a global context

The conference is jointly organised and supported by LLAS, the five UK Centres of Excellence in Language-based Area Studies, and the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Languages of the Wider World.

Contents

Issue 5 : July 2010

Foreword

4 Making the case in turbulent times
Michael Kelly

News

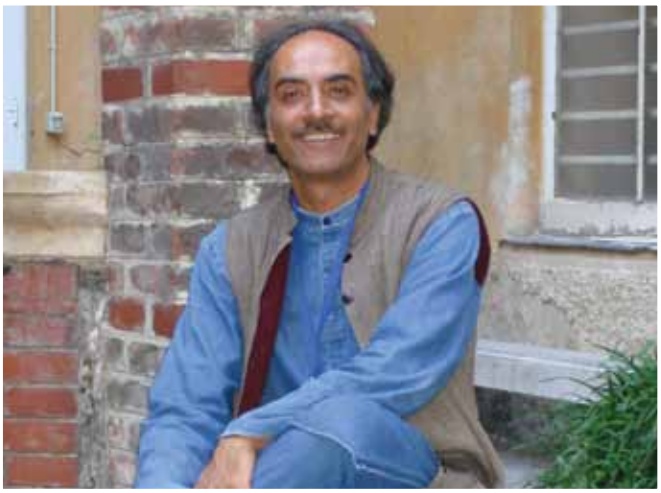
5 LLAS news
8 Languages around the world blog
9 Links into Languages
9 Routes into Languages

Features

10 The future of languages of the wider world: an interview with Itesh Sachdev
Erika Corradini
16 Developing a Toolkit for quality assurance - the Lanqua experience
Fiona Crozier and Ole Helmersen
19 Publish and be damned? Legal aspects of open sharing
Erika Corradini and Oren Stone
22 All in a day's work!
Elizabeth Andersen and Ruth O'Rourke
24 Celebrating ten years of LLAS
Paula Davis and Becky Jennings
26 Meet LLAS: Sue Nash
John Canning
44 Have your say: Even languages are a "frill" for some low-cost airlines
Irene Macías
47 A taste of French Creole
Marie-Annick Gournet

47 Get a taste of French Creole

14 Escape the living dead



10 Interview with Prof Itesh Sachdev

Viewpoint

14 Escape from the living dead: external examining after the naughties
Dick Ellis

Teaching

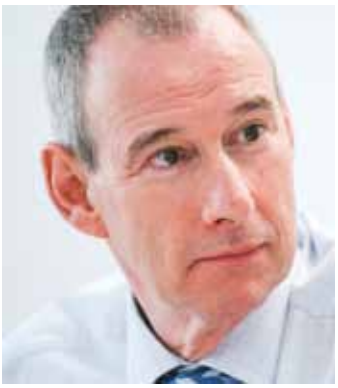
28 Using the LOC tool: an immersive learning experience for the learner
Julien Hamilton-Hart
30 English as a *lingua franca*: creating and sharing an online introductory tutorial
Rachel Wicaksono

Students

32 One very big adventure
Daniel Finch-Race
34 From finals to Fiji... via Ghana
Laura Gent
37 Languages for research: the student perspective
Rachel Clement and Brendan McGeever

Reviews

41 Getting ahead as an international student
Review by Mary Page
42 The acquisition of sociolinguistic competence in a study abroad context
Review by Jean-Marc Dewaele



Making the case in turbulent times

The need for languages, linguistics and area studies has never been greater. As UK higher education turns outwards towards the global environment, the need for our expertise is growing sharply. Our subjects offer valuable knowledge and skills that can make the UK's international engagement more effective and can be the basis for more productive relationships with partners abroad. Potentially, our disciplines can benefit from a rising demand for our expertise.

Our challenge is to make people aware of what we can offer. It is noticeable that the policies of institutions, companies and other organisations routinely incorporate recognition of how important the international dimension now is. However, there is relatively little recognition of the benefits of understanding the languages and societies of international partners. Part of the reason is that people tend to underestimate the difference that language and culture make. At worst, there is an implicit or even explicit belief that the whole world speaks English and either does or should share a common culture.

> "We open windows on the world for all who will listen"

Our academic community knows otherwise. We are resolutely international in our perspectives and correspondingly outward-facing in our teaching and research. We open windows on the world for all who will listen, an attitude illustrated by many of the items in this issue of *Liaison*.

But knowledge also brings responsibility, and we must now take greater responsibility for convincing people outside the circle of the converted. They need to understand what a difference it makes to relationships when they can engage intelligently with the issues of language, culture and society. The fact that they can get by without engaging is part of the difficulty. We need to confront this honestly. And we need to lead them to the richer experience they can have.

Our current challenge is not just to convince funders and policy makers. As Michael Worton pointed out in his Review, the Government has made a large investment in languages and area studies over the past few years. Our task now is to convince the wider public of students, teachers, academic staff in other disciplines, parents, employers and other stakeholders. Without the backing of public opinion, there will be little incentive for policy makers to pursue the initiatives and strategies that have been put in place over the last decade.

Our academic community is broad and diverse with many different groups and perspectives. We will always need to recognise this diversity but we will also be stronger when we can come together and focus on the values we share. This is essential in the increasingly turbulent times higher education now faces.

It is certainly timely that the University Council of Modern Languages is leading a proposal to develop the kind of tools the languages community needs in order to speak with a clear and united voice, to assist our institutions in engaging with the wider world and to show the benefits we bring to society.

The Subject Centre will do what we can to support this work and to ensure that the benefits are felt by all areas of the academic community in languages, linguistics and area studies.

Professor Michael Kelly,
Director of the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies

news

Lisa Bernasek, Kate Borthwick, John Canning, Angela Gallagher-Brett Ceri James, Heather McGuinness, Eugene McKendry and Joanne Shelton highlight recent news and activities within languages, linguistics and area studies.

Around the UK

Scotland

New directions: how languages promote research and internationalisation in higher education, University of Glasgow, 23 April 2010

This seminar was jointly organised by LLAS and the language-based area studies Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies (CRCEES) at the University of Glasgow. It focused on the ways in which language skills support and enhance important areas of university life in internationalisation, research and community outreach. Presentations examined a rich variety of themes, including opportunities for languages in universities' internationalisation strategies and working with migrant communities.

The event was very well received and most participants commented positively on the day. In the words of two of them: "Great selection of speakers... All the presentations were excellent!" and "It was a fantastic and inspiring event. The more events like this, the better!"

Wales

Routes into Languages Cymru has now been in operation for six months and it has been a very busy time for Routes' newest consortium.

The Cymru consortium was officially launched in February at an event called *Wales, Europe and the World*, where almost 400 14-19 year olds came together for a one-day conference and exhibition to learn about the importance of languages in Wales and the wider world. Cardiff Council's Leader, Rodney Berman, opened the event and Roger Carter of HEFCW spoke of their support for Routes into Languages. The event then travelled up to North Wales and Glyndŵr University played host to an equally successful day.

Routes Cymru has recruited a team of student language ambassadors whose enthusiasm to share their experiences with young people, parents and teachers has proved to be an invaluable resource.

Thanks to the partnership of ten HEIs in the Routes Cymru consortium, Wales should look forward to a future packed with exciting events, activities and opportunities for language learning.

Ceri James,
Director of Routes into Languages Cymru

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland CILT (NICILT), based in the School of Education, Queen's University Belfast is currently surveying Queen's PGCE students in all subject areas on their language learning experiences. Findings will be available in due course.

In November 2011, NICILT will host a symposium on *Multilingualism in the knowledge economy: labour markets revisited and corporate social responsibility*. This event will focus on the key relationship between learning and the demands of a knowledge economy in which languages are a central feature. The role of universities in the emerging knowledge economy will be discussed, and also how companies and business understand their new role in this economy. The symposium aims to attract an audience of approximately 60 people, about two-thirds of whom will be local professionals, and one-third will come from the rest of Europe.

Eugene McKendry,
Director of NICILT

Launch of UK Islamic Studies Network

The Higher Education Academy has received funding from HEFCE to establish a UK-wide network for Islamic Studies. The project is led by a team that includes colleagues at Academy headquarters in York as well as staff from five subject centres, including LLAS. The academic coordinator for the network, Lisa Bernasek, is also based at LLAS.

The UK Islamic Studies Network was established to bring together those working in Islamic Studies to enhance teaching and learning in higher education. The network will support academics working in different disciplines and institutions by providing opportunities to share good practice through events, project grants and publications. The inaugural event for the network was held on 25-26 May, and brought together 65 delegates from across the UK to discuss teaching and learning in Islamic Studies. Along with a keynote address by Professor the Baroness Haleh Afshar and two plenary speeches by Professors Robert Gleave and Ron Geaves, the event featured workshops that gave participants the opportunity to discuss both discipline-specific and cross-disciplinary issues.

The Islamic Studies network will host further events in 2010-11 and 2011-12, and will also fund cross-disciplinary projects and publish a quarterly newsletter and a biannual magazine. As part of the network activity, LLAS will be funding discipline-specific projects related to Islamic Studies. A call for project bids will go out in September. LLAS will also run interdisciplinary workshops related to Islamic Studies, and will be developing resource-sharing for Islamic Studies across disciplines using the HumBox repository: **www.humbox.ac.uk**

For more information and details of upcoming activity please visit: **www.heacademy.ac.uk/islamicstudies**

Life and work in academia: event for new lecturers in languages, linguistics and area studies

Fifteen new staff and PhD students met on 15-16 April 2010 at Aston Business School, Birmingham, to talk about academic careers. Areas covered included balancing the different roles of an academic, assessment, creating and sharing resources, promotion and career progression, citizenship and service, and teaching across the whole discipline. The workshop was very well received by the delegates. Reflecting on the event one delegate wrote: "I will perform better at interviews and be more entrepreneurial in my research." Another said: "I consider that this event will have an impact on my teaching in a positive way."

HumBox

The HumBox, an inspiring collection of free humanities teaching resources, was officially launched on 26 February 2010 at the University of Sheffield. Containing over a thousand images, videos, lecture notes and podcasts, HumBox enables lecturers to publish, share and re-use teaching resources.

Developed as part of a UK Open Educational Resources (OER) project funded by the JISC/HEA, HumBox has been designed to make it simple for lecturers to share and review teaching resources. It has been developed collaboratively by four Higher Education Academy Subject Centres (Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies; English; History; Philosophical and Religious Studies) and a dozen academic partners across UK HE.

Michael Pidd, Director of the Humanities Research Institute at the University of Sheffield and one of the project partners said: "One of the particular strengths of the HumBox project is the wide diversity of resources that it can offer. We have uploaded all kinds of materials and the range of teaching resources already uploaded promotes exciting and innovative teaching."

Another project partner, Emmanuel Godin of the University of Portsmouth, sees HumBox as a "fantastic way to build an impact" by publishing excellent teaching and learning resources to complement research materials.

The HumBox community of users continues to grow, fostered by all four Subject Centres whose links with their academic communities have enabled them to channel the culture of sharing in the humanities to create an OER "first" for their disciplines.

Languages around the world blog

John Canning highlights some recent LLAS news stories from around the world. For links to these articles and more visit www.llasnews.blogspot.com

In 2008 after a 20-year debate, the **Portuguese** Parliament finally agreed to adopt a more phonetic form of spelling as used in Brazil, but two years on there is still resistance to change. "It is a bad spelling reform and a political instrument for the expansion of Brazil," says Antonio Emiliano, a Portuguese linguist. The media has been leading the way though schools have been slow to adopt the changes - both old and new spellings will be accepted until 2014.

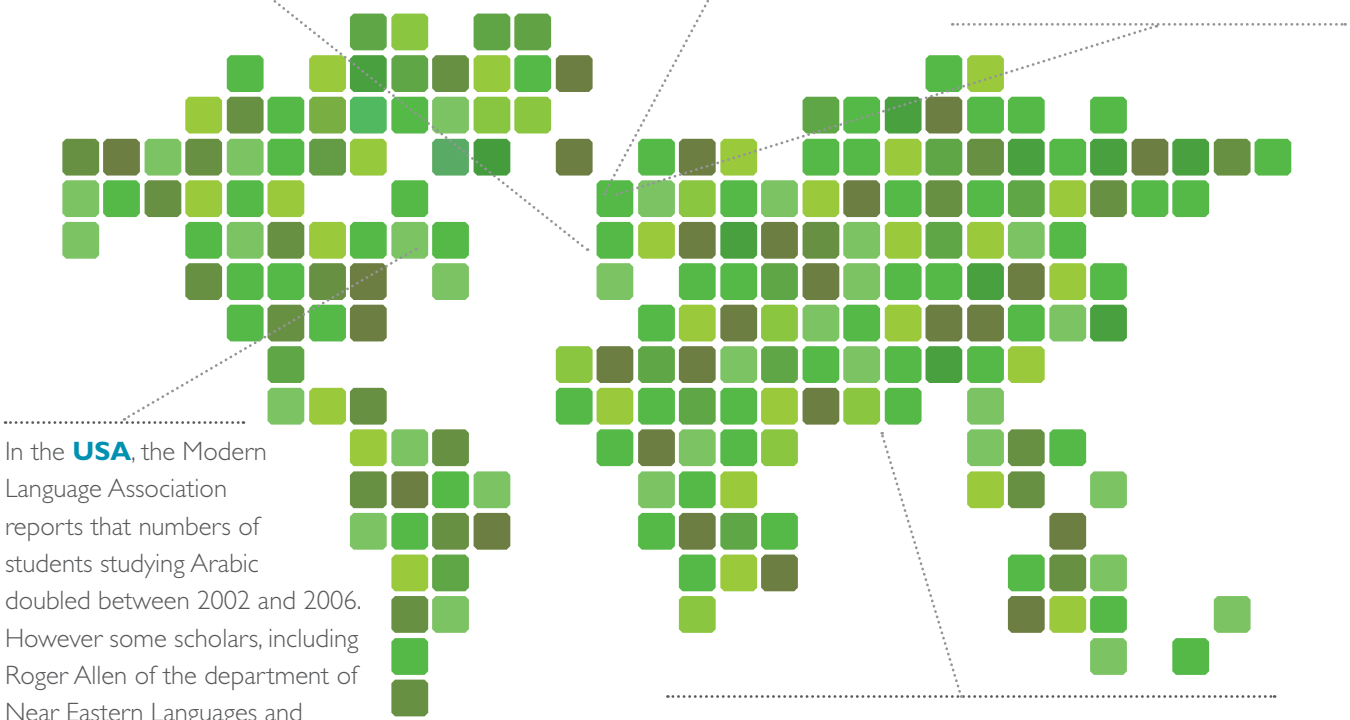
Source: *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 13 April 2010

Irish is compulsory for the Irish Leaving Certificate except for students with learning difficulties. However, recent figures reveal that well over half of students exempt from studying Irish actually studied another European language. "Whether or not this policy should be changed is one of the issues the *Tánaiste* and Minister for Education Mary Coughlan will consider when looking at the totality of the position in the coming months," the Department of Education responded.

Source: *Irish Times*, 14 April 2010

In **Ireland**, Language Commissioner Sean O Cuirreain has expressed concern that Irish speakers are increasingly unable to get service in Irish from state officials, despite an entitlement to deal with state bodies such as local councils in the language. Complaints about the lack of service in Irish have gone up 15% in the past year.

Source: *Irish Independent* 30 March 2010



In the **USA**, the Modern Language Association reports that numbers of students studying Arabic doubled between 2002 and 2006. However some scholars, including Roger Allen of the department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Pennsylvania, have expressed concerns that many students are focusing too much on language and not enough on the cultural context. He has called for an expansion of study abroad programmes to address the problem.

Source: Daily Telegraph 1 March 2010

Boa Sr's death in the **Andaman Islands** at the age of 84 was not only the end of a long life, but also the passing of a language. The last fluent speaker of the Bo language, she was unable to communicate with anyone in her native tongue for the last few years of her life. "Her loss is not just the loss of the Great Andamanese community, it is a loss of several disciplines of studies put together, including anthropology, linguistics, history, psychology, and biology," wrote Narayan Choudhary of Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Source: *The Guardian* 4 Feb 2010

Links into Languages

Now well into their second year, the Links into Languages regional centres are firmly established in their respective higher education institutions. Based in nine universities across England, the centres are becoming integrated into the fabric of university structure in Modern Languages and/or Education departments. For example, in the East Midlands, Nottingham Trent University has worked hard to raise the profile of the Links regional centre through University publicity materials and highlighting the centre's services to teachers in local schools. Links London and the University of Westminster are developing a course designed to support learners with specific needs and to help departmental staff make lessons accessible to all learners.

The continuing professional development programme offered by Links has been well received, and positive feedback has led to refreshing several courses, and the writing of two new courses that may be of particular interest to the higher education community when considering the impact of the decline in uptake at GCSE on Modern Languages departments. *Raising the bar at Key Stage 4* and *Terrific teaching, long-lasting learning* aim to provide teachers with the tools to make the case for continued language study beyond Key Stage 3, with a view to persuading parents, senior leadership teams, and the pupils themselves of the value of learning languages.

Links into Languages regional centres
www.linksintolanguages.ac.uk/centres

Links into Languages core courses
www.linksintolanguages.ac.uk/events

Routes into Languages

Routes into Languages partners continue to work with schools and colleges to take languages beyond the classroom.

Our experience is that we engage pupils' interest by demonstrating that languages are used to communicate in real-life situations and across many careers, and not simply to pass exams. Activities we have used include press conferences with international sports personalities and film-making workshops with teachers and local cinemas.

Routes student ambassadors continue to infuse the Routes programme with energy and commitment. We have 300 ambassadors from over 70 universities working with academics and teachers in schools and colleges.

Routes has developed expertise in collaborative working. Sharing our experiences and resources has helped us to assist university colleagues and enabled our partners to work across different sectors.

At postgraduate level, Routes promotes translation and interpreting through our National Networks. We benefit from working closely with professional bodies and partners in the UK and the rest of the EU; and we have had contact with companies interested in work placements through our translation network. Through its virtual learning platform, the National Network for Interpreting has developed interactive materials aimed at demystifying careers in interpreting.

Joint representation with Links into Languages at the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) conference in March gave us the opportunity to meet headteachers and senior leaders of secondary schools and colleges. Such networking allows us to gauge views on language teaching and learning and stimulates debate.

www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk

The future of languages of the wider world

For the latest in our series of occasional interviews with leading figures from the world of languages, linguistics and area studies, we asked Professor Itesh Sachdev, Director of the SOAS-UCL Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Languages of the Wider World, to reflect on his achievements and his hopes for the future.

Itesh Sachdev was born in Kenya as a third generation Gujarati and had a plurilingual upbringing. He attended primary and secondary schools in Kenya and the UK, studied his undergraduate degree at the University of Bristol, and undertook doctoral training in Social Psychology in Canada (McMaster University). From 1986, he taught and researched the Social Psychology of Language, and Multiculturalism and Multilingualism in Applied Linguistics at Birkbeck, University of London. While at Birkbeck, he also served as Head of the Applied Linguistics Department and Head of the School of Languages, Linguistics and Culture, in addition to being elected President of the British Association for Canadian Studies (2004-6). In 2005, Itesh was appointed Professor of Language and Communication at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and Director of the SOAS-UCL Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Languages of the Wider World (LWW-CETL). He has published in the social psychology of language and intergroup relations, having conducted research with various ethno-linguistic groups including those in/from Bolivia, Canada, France, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, Tunisia and the UK. He is currently also President-Elect of the International Association of Language and Social Psychology.

As your time as Director of LWW-CETL is coming to an end, can you tell us about the CETL and its role in higher education?

Let me begin by saying that it appears that my time as Director of the LWW-CETL is likely to continue until October 2011, as we have several funded projects that will go on after the end of HEFCE funding. One could say, paraphrasing Mark Twain, that "reports of the demise of the LWW-CETL are greatly exaggerated!"

The LWW-CETL was established to stimulate the teaching and learning of languages that did not have a large presence in UK higher education, i.e. the languages of the Middle East, Africa, Asia, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and Russia. After nearly five years of activity, our external evaluator says that we have more than adequately fulfilled our objectives, and that we have had a significant impact on the area. We have literally enhanced the "architecture" of teaching and learning languages of the wider world by improving infrastructures at SOAS and UCL and also in terms of creating materials, providing enhanced models of teaching and learning, and developing accredited teaching certificates and diplomas, while supporting and carrying out research in language pedagogy for LWW.

What were your responsibilities as Director of the LWW-CETL and what did you particularly like about the role?

My role was to co-ordinate and provide leadership for developments and research into the pedagogy of LWW. I particularly liked working with a group of highly talented and committed professionals who were able to enthuse others with their expertise and passion for languages at SOAS, UCL and other institutions across the UK, Europe and beyond. Of course, I was personally delighted with the opportunities to communicate and work with people from all walks of life and from around the world, speaking so many different languages and from so many different cultures – it is a privilege and experience provided to few in the world.

What are your proudest achievements as Director of the LWW-CETL?

I think my proudest achievement is to have worked with a great team and colleague at SOAS and UCL as well as from around the world to significantly redress the great imbalance that has traditionally favoured Western European languages over "world languages". I think this is especially so in terms of further professionalising the teaching and learning of LWW in UK higher education. I believe we have strengthened language teaching and learning communities that have previously been marginalised; we have helped to raise the status of LWW not only in the eyes of those in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, but also for the leaders of various ethno-linguistic communities in the UK and elsewhere. In my opinion we have also helped society to be better prepared for the anticipated global shifts of the 21st century. Interestingly, I would also like to note that the work of the LWW-CETL has contributed to a significant transformation in national and European discourse from the somewhat negative label of "less commonly taught languages" to the more positive and valorised "languages of the wider world" or even "world languages". Finally, in common with many at SOAS, whose work was recognised at an institutional level, I was very proud to be associated with the Queen's Anniversary Trust (QAT) prize in Higher Education awarded to SOAS for the teaching of the languages of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. This was the first ever QAT award to a higher education institution for language teaching.

Have there been any particularly memorable moments during your time as Director that you would like to share?

There are perhaps too many to share here, so I will only mention three. Firstly, some memorable moments came from feedback from the successful local, national and international events that we have organised. Our seminars and conferences featured nationally and internationally eminent and influential speakers and provided exciting and interesting avenues for dissemination and exchange.

Secondly, knowing that LWW-CETL development and work made a real difference also made me proud. For example, an Icelandic lecturer at UCL reported: "From being decades behind, we suddenly found ourselves light-years ahead... [the LWW-CETL] greatly enhanced the student experience but also opened up a whole new world for us as language teachers."

The third memorable "moment" has been reaching out to our local communities and helping raise the status of "community languages". The LWW-CETL has been very active in this area, not only in contributing to the national debate about research and policy but also in valorising the languages of our school pupils. The words of one pupil of Somali origin who attended an event at SOAS were particularly moving: "It was such a fantastic feeling to see books in my mother tongue... it made me feel that my language was also important."

How would you like your time as Director of the LWW-CETL to be remembered?

Ideally, it would be nice to feel that I was able to lead a team whose work made a difference locally, nationally and internationally in the promotion of LWW. We have had very positive feedback from many different people from around the world including Professor Michael Kelly, the Director of the UK Subject Centre for LLAS, who described our contributions as a "step-change" in teaching and learning LWW. I very much hope that the LWW-CETL is remembered for its staff's enthusiasm, commitment and expertise which has led to high quality work in LWW.

What future work will come out of the LWW-CETL's achievements?

In the short term, the LWW-CETL will continue to exist in its current form to see through to completion activities that are currently in proposal form or in their initial stages such as dissemination events, research (via research grants and publications) and materials development in LWW. In the longer term, our work will continue through institutional activities, the delivery of courses which the CETL has helped to develop, as well as through its infrastructural legacy and the embedding of staff. Specifically, there are three aspects that I would like to highlight:

- The development of teacher education in LWW: several of our accredited teacher training courses (certificates and diplomas in Arabic, Chinese, South Asian Languages, and more broadly in "Languages of the Wider World") have just begun, or are about to, and will continue to develop. New developments for other languages and further pathways in higher education are also planned.
- In 2009, SOAS established a Centre for Language Pedagogy to promote research into the teaching and learning of Asian, African and Middle Eastern languages and the development of teaching materials and learning resources.
- The LWW-CETL will maintain an active presence on the internet: its website will be maintained for a further four years, and it will have a virtual presence through Second Life and through social networks such as Facebook, where it will host a Language Exchange to enable LWW language learners to support each other.

What are you personally working on at the moment?

Given that I am a very "social" social psychologist, I have several projects on the go with many collaborators. I will mention four which may be of interest here:

- a research project on the identity and vitality of Bangla and Cantonese speakers in London

- I co-chair an International Taskforce on "Endangered Languages" with Professor Peter Austin
- I am writing funding applications for projects on diasporas with colleagues in several different departments at SOAS, and also on multilingualism with colleagues worldwide
- I am trying to find creative and collaborative ways of alleviating my extreme time-poverty!

I also have three research projects in the pipeline that are worthy of mention:

- state of the art review on teaching and learning languages of the wider world with several collaborators from the UK and elsewhere
- a cross-national investigation of attitudes to multilingualism across regions of Asia
- a project on rhetoric and journal writing across cultures with colleagues from across Spain, the UK and USA.

What do you enjoy most about Languages?

The opportunities they provide for communicating across social and cultural borders.

What is the best language-related experience of your life?

Believe it or not, I have got free or reduced taxi fares in places as far away as New York, Sydney, Istanbul, Venice and Cochin, when drivers speaking Punjabi, Maghrebian Arabic, Kurdish, Italian and Malayalam respectively, were impressed by my apparent "native-like" fluency in their languages. Little did they know that my proficiency was limited to pretty

Languages of the Wider World

CETL SOAS-UCL Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

basic, "tourist-like" conversational proficiency! My façade was severely exposed when, on a flight to Toronto, I decided to try my very limited, but phonologically "native-like" beginners Mandarin on an ethnically Chinese multilingual seated next to me. She replied and carried on the conversation in flawless Hindi (one of my "native" languages), while I spluttered and failed to continue any further in Mandarin – she was from a several-generation, settled and established Chinese community in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta)!

In your opinion, what are the opportunities that the current economic climate offers to LWW?

I am so delighted that you ask about opportunities – I like to be positive! I think in the UK, we have not been very good at using the immense linguistic and cultural capital of our diverse ethno-linguistic communities. For instance, there are over 300 languages spoken in the schools of London, yet we insist on *ab initio* learning of languages in much of the education sector, while providing few means and ways for those who already speak several languages to progress in education, employment and other sectors. Indeed, we do not even aim to profit from the community cohesion opportunities provided by the valorisation of the languages of our communities. This is especially important as economically difficult times tend to exacerbate community cohesion. The neglect of the linguistic and cultural capital in our midst seems to be continuing in spite of the fact (supported by good research) that plurilinguals benefit from significant cognitive and educational, instrumental and economic, health and social/cultural advantages which they enjoy by virtue of being plurilingual. Our society needs to capitalise on this diversity, especially in economically difficult times.

What is the future for LWW?

As they say "the future is bright". For instance, in the present geopolitical conjuncture, it almost goes without saying that the most important historical trend of the last 20 or so years has been the re-emergence of East and South Asia as centres of economic and cultural accumulation after a period of over two centuries of domination by Western Europe and North America. So, for example, there are strong linkages between Chinese industrial manufacturing and primary production in African economies, and it has become a matter of strategic and cultural importance to learn the languages spoken across these economic flows. And I could go on... such examples, in my opinion, strongly reinforce the motivation to teach and learn "languages of the wider world" ...the future is indeed bright!

LWW-CETL
www.lww-cetl.ac.uk

"Our society needs to capitalise on diversity, especially in economically difficult times"

Itesh Sachdev was interviewed by Erika Corradini.

Escape from the living dead:

external examining after the naughties

Dick Ellis dispels the myth of the loneliness of the external examiner

According to Andrea Rayner[1] external examining can be a lonely business. This has not been my experience over the last 20 years. I like to think it's down to the approach I take.

It is perfectly possible for an external examiner to take up the position of imposing an "examination" upon the programme she is externally examining. Why not? The very title seems to suggest that this is the role to adopt. But I think it's a mistake.

Why is the mistake made? In the second half of the 20th century, when staff-student ratios were much lower than now, external examiners usually operated as "examiners". They received all the scripts and were expected to suggest mark adjustments on any of the scripts if deemed necessary. As staff-student ratios rose, sampling of scripts became commonplace and adjustments could only advantage or disadvantage those candidates whose work was reviewed. The introduction of summative, rather than just formative, coursework tasks accentuated the pressure for further change. As the century drew to its close, external examiners were increasingly instructed not to suggest mark changes, i.e. not to "examine" scripts.

An additional role of the 20th century external examiner was to (re-)examine the work of students on the borderline between classifications. This approach was later abandoned because some students might not or could not benefit from such an adjustment. Very often not all of a borderline student's work was available, so decisions on this student might not be sound. Instead it is now maintained the regulations should be decisive and clear and the examiner should focus on the fairness and transparency of these regulations and how they are used. Moreover, students now submit so many different pieces of work (e.g. essays, presentations, exams and displays) that many marks would need to be changed to make a real difference to a student's position *vis-à-vis* borderlines.

It is easy to see where this is leading. External examiners had during most of the 20th century been "examiners" in the usual sense of the word, i.e. they were (re-)assessing the student's work. But now the activities of external examiners have been redefined. Some duties have remained constant, such as perusing exam papers, coursework essay titles, assessment loadings and fitness for purpose. Some other functions have become more standardised or newly added, such as overlooking new module proposals. Therefore the external examiner is no longer "examining" students' work in the usual sense of the word. The facility for altering all the marks in any module(s) up or down remains, but it is very rarely used.

So what is the external examiner doing now? One version is that she continues to think of herself in terms of being an "examiner", but now an examiner assessing the work of the teaching team against the evidence that is shown to her. I don't see things in this way, so rather than explaining how this sort of "examining" process might work, I want to unfold how I see the new function of the external examiner, and how I regard it as an extraordinarily interesting job that is far from being a lonely one.

The external examiner should not just be receiving samples of students' work, texts of examination papers and lists of assignments. She should also receive what the student receives and engages with, e.g. module handbooks,

[1] A. Rayner quoted in Swain, H. (15 May 2008) 'The External Examiner's Role', Times Higher Education [online]. Available from: **www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=401926&sectioncode=26** [12 March 2010]

samples of handouts and other key materials. These can be set beside samples of students' work to build up a picture of how the module operates: the response of students to the various elements of the course; the extent to which learning objectives are being met; the level of engagement with the course; the kinds of teaching strategies being used; the kinds of assessments and their strengths/weaknesses; teaching/learning innovations and their strengths/weaknesses; ... actually, this list is best tailored by the external examiner in dialogue with the other academics involved in a two-way process. I would, however, argue that best practice means that the material received by the external examiner would include student feedback about the module and/or a self-critique of the module's operation by the module leader.

The risk is that the external examiner could slip into the role of "examining" not the student's work but the work of their tutors. Plainly, there should be some sort of real engagement happening, but it should be in the form of a self-effacing, modest dialogue with the module's tutors by the external examiner, in which the examiner learns from the module's delivery and innovations just as much as she critiques it, and talks about common issues and problems, about good features as well as less good ones. It is the duty of the external examiner to open up a dialogue. This is not to say that referencing national standards go by the board, but it should not be a question of a one-way channelling. Opening up a dialogue can create an environment where everybody involved can learn and improve.

Just for once academics can seize hold of the quality agenda and shape it their own way, once the often oddly worded and repetitive tick boxes of the pro forma have been taken care of. I usually meet up with the team in a non-formal context at some point in each cycle and write to them informally alongside any formal form-filling that the "quality gang" requires. And I never forget to tell the institution ways in which it might be making things difficult for the tutors to teach.

"This makes the job of external examining exciting and fulfilling - a voyage of discovery"

This may seem too modest for some. But in Area Studies, at least, where often I'm involved in examining interdisciplinary modules that are exciting, different, and opening up the subject in ways I've never thought of, I think modestly is exactly what is needed. Actually, I think these precepts extend into every discipline.

This makes the job of external examining exciting and fulfilling - a voyage of discovery, during which academics can learn from each other and from their students' work. For this reason, I don't accept that external examining has become a broken system, as is increasingly often suggested. In fact, the opposite is potentially true. Once the sterile, one-way parameters of examination/assessment are broken down in search of a new, more dialogic engagement the work of the external examiner becomes genuinely rewarding and interesting. Problems and difficulties are not threatening at all but become points around which academics can learn how to help students more.

Professor Dick Ellis is Head of the Department of American and Canadian Studies at the University of Birmingham.

Developing a Toolkit for quality assurance – the LANQUA experience

Fiona Crozier and Ole Helmersen describe how the Language Network for Quality Assurance is addressing the need for a subject-specific quality reference tool across Europe.

Higher education institutions are increasingly developing principles, guidelines and reference points to assure the quality of provision. In step with increasing internationalisation and Europeanisation of higher education, it has become increasingly important to develop "common languages" to bridge often very heterogeneous and culturally specific national education systems and ways of expressing levels, students' attainment, curricula, and learning outcomes. The European Commission funded Language Network for Quality Assurance (LanQua) attempts to address these quality issues, i.e. how principles and guidelines can be developed to support quality work in an increasingly diverse education sector, whether such guidelines may be a constraint to creativity, and how the implementation of principles and guidelines may be balanced against institutional autonomy. This article focuses on one element of LanQua, namely the development of a Toolkit.

The main aim of LanQua is to bring universities from across Europe together to develop a common understanding of quality issues in the provision of language and language-related programmes in tertiary education. An increasing number of higher education institutions now adopt the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*. One aim of LanQua is to build on that system and take it further. LanQua does this through the design of a generic Toolkit, which is being launched at the *Languages in higher education conference* in early July 2010 and will subsequently be made available on the project website.

What is the Toolkit?

Basically, the LanQua Toolkit is a set of principles to guide the design, delivery and monitoring of educational programmes and their quality assurance and enhancement in a specific subject or subject area. As such, it will be useful for multiple stakeholders: teachers, students, quality assurance agencies, employers, etc.

Why a Toolkit?

Naturally, teachers of language and language-related programmes are used to working with quality aspects of their practice in many different contexts, e.g. in connection with curriculum design and in their dialogues with national quality assurance and accreditation agencies. The aim of the LanQua Toolkit is not to question those practices, but rather to act as a source of reference for higher education teachers, staff developers and institutions across European countries with the aim of creating improved transparency and "translatability" of programmes and their learning outcomes. In short, it is intended to act as:

- a source of reference for HEIs when designing and redesigning programmes

LANQUA

The Language Network for Quality Assurance

A QUALITY TOOLKIT FOR LANGUAGES

The Language Network for Quality Assurance (LanQua) is developing a toolkit for assuring and enhancing quality in language education. It is producing a European quality benchmark, a series of case studies, and a set of recommendations that will be of interest to higher education learning and teaching staff and quality assurance agencies.

For further information visit:
www.lanqua.eu

Education and Culture DG
Lifelong Learning Programme

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

- a reflective tool for quality assurance and enhancement
- guidance for articulating learning outcomes
- support for institutional quality assurance
- an instrument of flexibility and innovation in programme design
- an explication of academic qualities and competences to be expected of graduates.

The main tool in the Toolkit is a six-stage quality model which describes an iterative cycle from planning through to adaptation of learning and teaching. This is supported by a series of questions intended to ensure that a number of pertinent issues relevant to any HEI programme in languages or language-related areas are addressed and reflected upon in a systematic manner with a view to achieving quality assurance and enhancement. It also includes concrete examples taken from case studies developed by the 60 partners in the network. As such, the central aim of the Toolkit is to support teachers in their work with programme and curriculum design.

One, and perhaps the most important, example of such an issue which needs to be addressed is that of learning outcomes. The purpose of a learning outcome is to state what students are expected to achieve during a course or a module. This is in contrast to aims and objectives, which set out the general purpose of an activity as seen from the teacher's perspective. The crucial quality of the learning outcome is, thus, that it is seen from the student's perspective, or the output rather than the input perspective. This requires particular types of reflection on the part of teachers about what pedagogical and didactic practices are best suited to achieve the learning outcome and about the link between course and mode of assessment used.

What is the Toolkit in concrete terms? An example

LanQua works through five subprojects, one of which is *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (CLIL)[1] . The CLIL method is widespread as a didactic tool in language and language-related programmes in higher education, especially in fields such as business, economics and management, law, natural sciences, engineering and some areas of the humanities. The CLIL approach is understood and implemented in ways which differ from one education system or institution to another and therefore seen as an obvious area to include in the LanQua project and its primary delivery, the Toolkit. By way of example, the Toolkit distinguishes between skills and competences which students are expected to have acquired on completion of a CLIL programme, e.g.

- multilingual competences in a field-specific and professional domain
- awareness and understanding of the national and international dimensions of the professions in the field (this could for example be a law course taught in a foreign language)

and assessable learning outcomes expressed as what students are expected to demonstrate that they can *do*, e.g.

- receptive and productive skills (in the foreign language) to access, process and critically evaluate information in the field of study, to share information, and to identify, analyse and solve problems in multi-professional and multilingual settings.

> "the strength of the LanQua Toolkit is the way it forces a series of issues and questions out into the open"

Conclusion

To sum up, the strength of the LanQua Toolkit is the way it forces a series of issues and questions out into the open in a manner which invites systematic and consistent reflection; questions which anyone involved in higher education as a teacher, professional developer/trainer, or curriculum/programme designer, etc. must continually ask themselves as well as colleagues. It is an additional strength that these questions are posed from the output, or the learner's perspective, rather than from the input, or the teacher's perspective.

Language Network for Quality Assurance **www.lanqua.eu**

Fiona Crozier is an Assistant Director at the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and Ole Helmersen is an Associate Professor at Copenhagen Business School.

[1]The other LanQua subprojects are Intercultural Communication, Language Teacher Education, Literature and Culture, and Language Learning

Publish and be damned?

Legal aspects of open sharing

Erika Corradini and Oren Stone explore some of the legal issues in sharing and re-purposing open educational resources.

During the first year of its existence, the HumBox project (see page 7 for details) energetically addressed the lack of shared resources in the humanities by collecting a broad range of diverse digital teaching resources. It also addressed the lack of an embedded culture of sharing across the humanities disciplines with an active programme of education, peer review and dissemination. Central to its activities was the HumBox itself – an online space for managing, storing and sharing teaching and learning resources.

The legal framework of an open educational repository

One of the many advantages of online spaces like HumBox is that they save educators time by enabling them to draw constructively on what is already out there: they can re-purpose and adapt resources to meet their pedagogical needs with minimum effort. However, there are important legal considerations when sharing and re-purposing open educational resources (OERs), and having gone to the effort of setting up a "one-stop shop" such as HumBox, it would be myopic not to ensure its fitness-for-purpose from the legal point of view. If users were to find themselves (or their institutions) exposed to a legal challenge for re-purposing resources deposited in HumBox, they would no longer feel able to use them with confidence. OER initiatives have moral obligations to their future sustainability as well as to their funding bodies. Those obligations are certainly a driver to ensure that resources are legally safe to use and that the material is licensed correctly.

Technological developments have created a change in the physical environment of education which traditional intellectual property legislation has not caught up with. The basic philosophy of the OER movement, which in the last decade has underpinned vast growth in the creation and use of media-enhanced teaching and learning resources, is that these resources should be for free sharing rather than for commercial use. The Creative Commons (CC) licensing scheme was developed alongside the OER movement as a response to these conflicts between the legal situation and the digital environment, and as an attempt to provide an

"the best way to combat potential unease about the law is by adopting strategies for minimising the risks involved"

easy way for authors to relinquish some of their intellectual property rights, so that their resources could be shared more easily and widely.

Contributors' rights in OER – why they are not a problem

Attribution is an indispensable element of the CC licensing system as it is the most important consideration for academics when agreeing to share their work. This is borne out in an OECD survey (Hylen 2007), whose respondents agreed that "to be acknowledged as the creator of a resource when it is used … adapted or changed" is of the utmost importance to them.

Institutions as the legal owners of the resources contributed are usually also amenable to giving away their educational materials, realising that the benefits outweigh any possible revenue loss. Therefore conflict between the individuals (the creators of OER resources) and their institutions (often the legal "owners" of those resources) and related legal problems can be avoided in this area so long as CC licences are used.

The CC licence means that anyone in the world is free to download, re-use and adapt a lecturer's resource non-commercially, providing they give due credit and license new creations under identical terms. What if a lecturer moves to a different university? The work does not have to be re-licensed. By agreeing to the author's original proposal to make the work freely available under the CC licence, the original institution ensures that nobody needs to ask their permission to re-use the work.

Third party rights in OER – a source of fear and uncertainty?

When online resources first started being adapted from classroom-delivered courses for sharing on the internet, there was considerable unease among teaching staff about the prospect of infringing third-party intellectual property rights, as they realised that the objects of their study had to be quoted and used with care if they were to be publicly accessible. That initial uncertainty and fear is dying down, however. That is partly because a basic understanding of third-party rights and how they work in a networked environment is growing among educators. But there are also good reasons not to perceive the legal environment as a threat. The chief one is that, in the educational sector, the risk of prosecution is tiny.

We have heard lawyers complain, in regard to the CC licensing system, that there is an almost complete lack of case law. But turn the argument on its head, and this situation could be taken as an indicator of how effective the CC movement has been. If a look at the case law reveals that there simply isn't any, then that might very well be because people involved in the open education movement do not tend to infringe the law. The "big tigers" of IPR (electronic journal providers, publishers, the international film industry etc.) will only prosecute individuals or organisations who, in their opinion, are deliberately trying to defraud them of their rights, and thereby deprive them of potential income. But the lack of case law in the area of education seems to be due to the fact there is no deliberate flouting of the law by teachers.

At HumBox we have learnt that the best way to combat potential unease about the law is by adopting strategies for minimising the risks involved in publishing resources. A copyright helper tool is available in HumBox for guiding users through the publication process and we have a swift take-down policy allied to usage statistics, which can be used to thwart claims that any problematic resource was heavily visited while in the "box".

References

Creative Commons Licence
http://creativecommons.org

HumBox
www.humbox.ac.uk

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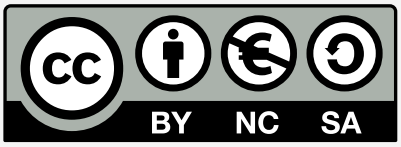

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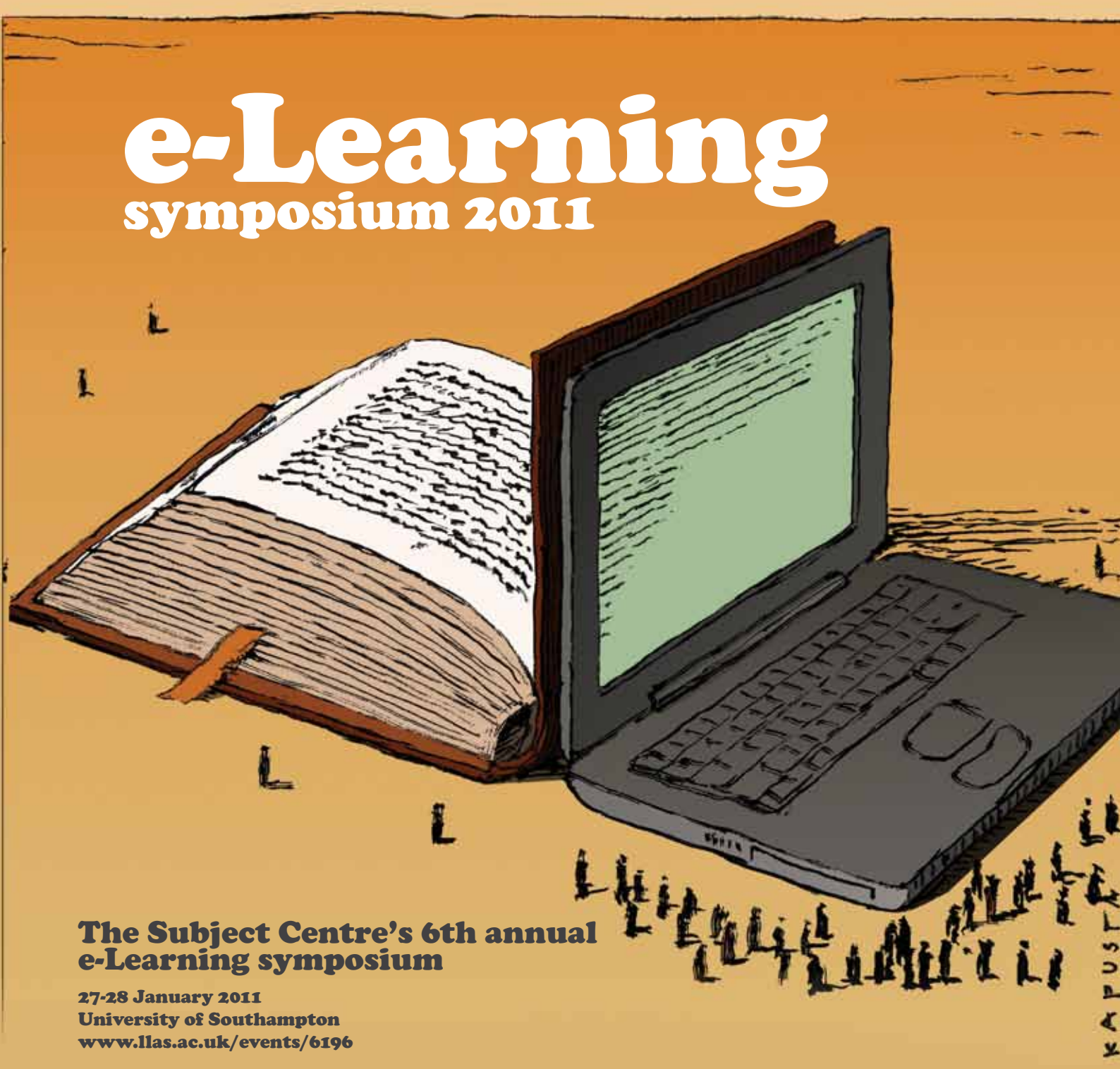
Oren Stone is Subject Liaison Librarian for English, Modern Languages and Film at the University of Southampton.

e-Learning symposium 2011



The Subject Centre's 6th annual e-Learning symposium

27-28 January 2011
University of Southampton
www.llas.ac.uk/events/6196

This popular symposium combines practical activities and guidance with inspiring ideas to fuel the imagination.

- Attend our pre-conference workshop for discussion, guidance and tips on teaching and learning with technology
- Attend the main symposium event to hear about the latest research and developments in technology-enhanced learning

e-Learning symposium 2010

See videos and information about our last symposium at: www.llas.ac.uk/events/archive/3251

QR-code: try this on your mobile phone

All in a day's work!

The Routes into Languages regional consortium for the North East update us on recent activity in their region and also look to the future.

Festival of Culture events taking place in Newcastle

It's 9.15 am and undergraduates Jack Mellor and Tom Harman are watching 150 Year 9 students file into the assembly hall at Laurence Jackson School, Guisborough, where Jack and Tom will deliver a presentation on the benefits of studying languages. Are they nervous? "Who? Us or the pupils?" quips Tom. "We've done our training and this must be our fifth visit this year and we've been in touch with the Head of Languages here all week" explains Jack, "So no, not really. We know what to expect." And with that, Jack highlights a distinctive aspect of the Routes North East (NE) consortium. Although it is not a new concept to dispatch students into schools to motivate and inspire young people, Routes NE has developed an original model: the presentations are organised independently by a group of students known as the School Visits Team. These rigorously-selected, enthusiastic students meet regularly in the Routes NE office at Newcastle University, where they are co-ordinated by the Project Manager and liaise with another active student group, the Festival Support Team.

The idea underpinning this activity was to train a group of students who would "own" part of the Routes project and thereby maximise contacts with schools. Teachers recognise the charisma students have as role models for school pupils and have welcomed their involvement warmly. Beside school visits, Routes student teams are also involved in major cross-consortium events that bring together partner institutions and stakeholders, particularly the Festival of International Culture. The fourth Festival was held on 22-23 March at Newcastle University and on 30 March at Teesside University. The Festival offers a wide range of activities to primary and secondary school pupils from the Scottish border to South of the River Tees who gather to celebrate cultural diversity.

The *Linguacircus*, a circus-style performance of diverse cultural activities, is available to primary school children who have the opportunity to showcase their own dance, song or sketch to celebrate languages and cultures. The events for 12-18 year-olds include workshops in Bollywood, Salsa and African hip-hop dancing, and tasters in languages such as Russian, Dutch, Portuguese, and British Sign Language. Accompanying teachers are able to participate in training sessions about using film in language teaching and primary-secondary level transition in language learning. The smooth delivery of this rich and varied programme is facilitated by the team of Routes

routes into LANGUAGES North East

student ambassadors.

But back to Jack's and Tom's visit: an hour later, they leave the school to warm praise from teachers and pupils. Elsewhere in the North East, Simon McLoughlin tidies away the French-speaking sock puppets that have "helped" him deliver his Key Stage 1 lesson in his placement school, while Emma Davies prepares for the European Commission translation competition and Laura Jenkins readies a presentation on Welsh culture in Argentina. What connects all of these language students and graduates? They are Routes NE student ambassadors!

Back in Newcastle at the Routes office, Ruth Thompson, member of the Festival Support Team, pieces together a Dutch anagram as her fellow ambassador, Sarah Hartley cleans Chinese calligraphy brushes in preparation for taster sessions. Their outreach work is fun and relevant to their career aspirations. It has presented them with challenges they have met with energy and enthusiasm and which have enriched them as individuals.

Jack sums up his experience with Routes thus: "The past six months have been great fun. My lowlight was travelling up to Alnwick at 6 am in the pouring northern rain to deliver a presentation! But when you get such good responses from the teachers and pupils, it's worth it."

With funding due to end in August, what does the future hold for the student ambassadors team? First-year students involved in the school visits will continue – regardless of funding – to sustain contact with North East schools through these visits; second-year students will set off on their year abroad, while those who were appointed ambassadors for the project in 2006-07 will return to Newcastle in September bringing along the experience, self-assurance and focus a year in the field has given them. Meanwhile, final-year students will leave to enter the job market with well defined employability skills.

Elizabeth Andersen, Project Director and Head of the School of Modern Languages at Newcastle comments: "I am very determined that the student ambassador scheme will continue. The benefits of it are too great to be lost:

- stimulating and fostering interest in languages among school pupils is essential in the present climate
- the student ambassadors' work enriches the life of schools, heightens the positive perception of degrees in modern languages and promotes social cohesion between home and exchange students through team work
- students develop an impressive portfolio of transferable skills crucial to the job market which gives them a significant advantage in terms of employability.

Once the funding has come to an end we hope that our stakeholders' and partners' support in the Routes Steering Group will help us to sustain the project's most successful elements. It would be such a waste to lose the contacts that have been established with schools in the region through the work of colleagues in Northumbria University (roadshows for Year 9), Durham, Sunderland and Teesside (masterclasses and taster sessions for Years 11/13), and Newcastle where a web-based learning platform (**www.universed.co.uk**) and web resources (**http://linguacast.ncl.ac.uk**) were developed. The student ambassadors are at the heart of this work."

The past three years of Routes NE culminated in an employability event in June. Student ambassadors were invited to prepare for the job market by learning how to maximise the value of their Routes experiences in job applications. The last word goes to Ruth O'Rourke, North East Project Manager: "If the destinations of former ambassadors across all five universities are anything to go by, I can rest assured that the present cohort are destined for great things."

"Teachers recognise the charisma students have as role models for school pupils"

Elizabeth Anderson is Director of the North East consortium for Routes into Languages.

Ruth O'Rourke is the Project Manager.

Celebrating ten years of LLAS

1. *Liaison* magazine

www.llas.ac.uk/liaison

This magazine, *Liaison* is published twice a year and distributed to everyone on our mailing list (2121 people for issue four). It contains LLAS news as well as articles on broader issues affecting our disciplines, most of which are written by our community.

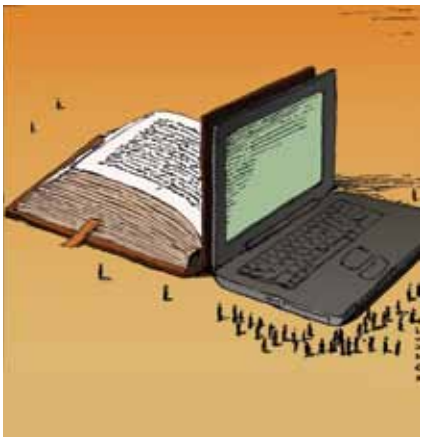
"I think the new Liaison magazine is superb (I actually look forward to reading it), professional and informative."

2. Why study languages website

www.whystudylanguages.ac.uk

This multimedia website developed by LLAS supports the promotion of language learning at all levels.

"The promotional material is invaluable for inspiring our students."



3. E-Learning symposium

www.llas.ac.uk/events/archive/3251

Our fifth annual e-Learning symposium, held at the University of Southampton in January 2010, attracted 72 participants over two days and was also streamed over the internet.

"The e-Learning symposium ... [is] a necessity for the ML community in the HE sector."

4. Languages in higher education conference 2008

www.llas.ac.uk/conf08

Our biennial conference, which was held at York in July 2008, attracted 187 delegates, including representatives from employers.

"The LLAS conferences are remarkable in drawing together a huge range of colleagues from across the sector to talk constructively about pedagogic and strategic developments in ML."

5. 700 reasons for studying languages

www.llas.ac.uk/700reasons

The *700 reasons* suite of materials comprises a research report, searchable database and classroom poster, which are used for marketing languages and helping educators to promote language study.

"According to the Worton Review, languages, linguistics and area studies needs to build an identity for itself in order to attract students and raise its profile. The LLAS Subject Centre has already made important contributions in this area by producing material such as ... the list of 700 reasons to study languages ... I hope that it will continue to receive the necessary support to carry on this excellent work and play a leading role in the subject community."

In the March 2010 LLAS e-bulletin we invited colleagues to join our tenth birthday celebrations by letting us know what they considered to be our "best bits". The following is a summary of the 93 responses received to our online survey to date.

6.

Good practice guide

www.llas.ac.uk/gpg

The good practice guide has been a key part of the LLAS website since 2001. It contains a collection of commissioned articles written by recognised authorities in their field.

"The good practice section is always stimulating."

2000-2010 Celebrating 10 years

The Higher Education Academy

LLAS Languages Linguistics Area Studies

9.

Why study languages calendar

www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/calendar

The aim of this calendar is to introduce pupils to a wide range of languages including some with which they may not be familiar. It features 12 languages together with questions designed to generate classroom discussion.

"The why study languages calendar has been a super resource, sparking interest and debate at a number of levels."

7.

Materials bank

www.llas.ac.uk/mb

The materials bank contains teaching materials in a wide variety of formats which our community has agreed to disseminate via our website so that they may be used more widely.

"The good practice guide and materials bank are excellent resources. They're well organised, easy to navigate and full of useful materials and information."

8.

Thriving in difficult times event

www.llas.ac.uk/events/archive/3258

This workshop, held in London in September 2009 in collaboration with UCML, was organised at relatively short notice in response to concerns about a loss of capacity in our subject areas. Fifty-one Heads of Department attended the event.

"Thriving in difficult times provided excellent advice and an opportunity for shared reflection amongst a wide range of language professionals."

10.

The learning object creator tool

www.llas.ac.uk/loc

The learning object creator (LOC) tool is a simple authoring tool for teachers, which has been specifically designed to enable them to create their own e-learning materials without the need for technical support or training. It is available free of charge to colleagues in UK higher education institutions to use for educational purposes, and can be used for any subject area (not just languages).

"I have attended two workshops on the learning object creator tool which I found very useful indeed. I have been using learning objects within my own work ever since."

To add your views to our online survey visit **www.llas.ac.uk/10in10/survey**
This summary was compiled by Paula Davis and Becky Jennings.

For the first in a new feature we invited long-serving senior administrator Sue Nash to tell us about her work at LLAS.

Meet LLAS: Sue Nash

If you have been to an LLAS event, applied for a project, telephoned us or emailed **llas@soton.ac.uk** you will probably have had contact with Sue Nash, LLAS's senior administrator. Sue grew up in the Townhill Park area of Southampton where she still lives today. After leaving school she took a secretarial course at Eastleigh College where she learnt typewriting, book-keeping and shorthand. She then worked for an insurance company and in an architects' office before joining the University of Southampton's "temp bank" in 1994 after her first child was born. During a short stint working in the University library, Sue spotted an advert for a nine-month job in the Language Centre. Other projects and roles followed which included working on a resource project, being a receptionist in the languages resources room and helping out on pre-sessional courses for international students. In 2000 Sue became administrator for the newly formed Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies. I caught up with Sue to ask her about her work at LLAS over the past ten years.

What does your day-to-day work involve?

It is never boring and no two days are the same. A big part of my job is reading enquiries sent to us on the LLAS email address and making sure that they are passed on so that the right person gets the message. I support the academic co-ordinators and am particularly involved with area studies events. I book rooms, organise travel and catering, deal with invoices and finance, HR stuff and the

Photo credit: Matt Reynolds

Sue busy at work back in 2000

monthly e-bulletin. I also act as PA to the LLAS Director Mike Kelly and as a fire warden for the building.

What has changed most in the ten years you have worked here?

The team has expanded greatly and with it the workload! When I started it was just Mike Kelly, Vicky Wright

"The team has expanded greatly and with it the workload!"

and me – Alison Dickens and Liz Hudswell joined us shortly afterwards. Now there are many staff and more administrators including those working for Routes into Languages and Links into Languages. I am now the senior administrator, so it is my responsibility to ensure that all the administrative work gets completed on time.

What do you like about working at LLAS?

I really like the people here and there is no one I don't get on with – we are quite a big team now, so that is a real bonus. It is a really happy working environment which is the reason I am still working here after ten years!

And is there anything you dislike?

It can be annoying when people want to have things done at the last minute. Sometimes people will want to get around the systems that are in place for doing finance and that sort of thing, but I have no choice about that so I can't let them do it! I don't go to many events so I don't always know how well a meeting or a workshop that I helped to organise actually went. It's a shame that there are people I email and talk to on the phone who I never get to meet. It is nice to put a face to a name - and when I do go to events and meet people, they always know who I am!

What do you think people at LLAS enjoy about the work you do?

Hopefully, working with me, knowing that they can rely on me and that my work is well organised.

What's the first thing you do when you walk into the office in the morning?

Turn on my computer, make a cup of tea (while waiting for the computer to boot up!), check electronic diaries and start looking at emails - that's how my day starts!

What's your working motto?

"Don't panic!"

Can you describe yourself in one word?

Conscientious.

What's the funniest request you've received?

Once a man from the US emailed to ask if we could make him a cilt. We think he confused kilts with CILT, the National Centre for Languages!

Finally, how do you manage to juggle work and family life?

Well, I have found this harder as my children have got older. I have three children and my husband works away all week. I keep a notebook in my bag for home and of course I have a notebook for work. I find that I am not able to attend work events and meetings away from Southampton very often as sometimes the pressure of trying to organise things at home is too complicated.

Sue Nash talked to John Canning.

Photo credit: Risager, Flickr

Using the LOC tool: an immersive learning experience for the user

Julien Hamilton-Hart recounts his first experience of using the Learning Object Creator tool, provides an example of how he uses it in his teaching and considers the implications of the LOC approach.

The Learning Object Creator (LOC) tool is a simple authoring tool which enables teachers to create their own e-learning materials without the need for technical support or training. It was developed by LLAS in collaboration with the University of Southampton's eLanguages group.

The first time I used the LOC tool was at a workshop in London, at the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Languages of the Wider World. The content of the exercise was as follows: a Danish advertisement about beer with Danes prancing around on a beach. I had to tick off words that I heard in the advert, yet I knew no Danish.

I viewed the video a few times because it was funny, and I guessed the meaning of the word *øl* (beer) and ticked the appropriate box, as requested in the task. Then I followed through a series of equally entertaining exercises. I immediately felt that I was somehow already learning a language I did not know, not just because the content appealed to me, was funny and light, but because I was not being graded.

The exercise was open-ended and there was a feedback box containing the answers. One of the items in this box was a link to a beer advertisement in Danish that clearly showcased and contextualised the word *øl*. The overriding feeling was that I was having fun, looking at clips in Danish, being gently immersed in the language, and not feeling the pressure of having to be "right" and score points.

This is very subtle, you may say, but the LOC tool initiated a huge pedagogical leap forward for me: I was much closer to the language I was trying to learn from scratch.

Why is this? Surely anyone would be mature enough, even in a graded exercise, to see beyond the points gained. On the other hand, we are so used to traditional power/knowledge relations within education that it needs an uncompromising change to subvert our thinking that we are only doing well if we answer questions correctly.

With languages, as with most subjects, we aim for immersion - the feeling that we are becoming one with the subject we are learning. If you are learning a language in a foreign country, native speakers do not give you a score out of ten for your brave attempts to speak! You get used to forms of verbs and figures of speech in a natural way, through repetition and contextualisation.

The idea of grading an online exercise distances the learner one step further away from having a true, immersive experience by making him concentrate on his progress in terms of points rather than cultural and linguistic intake. To gain a point you need to focus on grammatical or lexical minutiae, and run a greater risk of removing the language from its cultural context. The LOC tool has an innovative approach to learning: not points scored, but the promotion of intuition and genuine curiosity for language and culture. Who cares about the points!

I'll give you an example of an exercise form that I use most of the time with the LOC tool which illustrates some of the features available:

- insert a French wine advertisement (e.g. **http://bit.ly/9OW3ZP**)
- first part: create a list of words heard in the video that can be checked off: *incroyable*, *genial*, *extraordinaire*, *technologie*, *révolutionaire*, etc. Include some words that are not in the advertisement. The user ticks only those words that actually appear.
- second part: create drop-down menus with choices of meaning for the words heard/seen in the advertisement
- include relevant information in the feedback form such as links to videos or information about the product advertised.

The first part is aural comprehension. It is undemanding and fun because

students watch the entertaining clip several times and just tick the words they think they have heard.

In the second part of the exercise students have to decide the correct meaning of each word. All the information they need is provided within the context and actions of the video. It is very intuitive.

The idea with the LOC tool is also to remember and understand how an answer was *not* correct, since your initial choice is not erased when you try again. To avoid the repetition of mistakes and start to create a mental network of relations around the rule governing the answer, it is more convenient to have your wrong answers in front of you. By consulting a feedback form containing a correct answer, a student can see the evolution he went through to get from an incorrect answer to one that is correct, without feeling that he has failed. In this way the LOC tool encourages students to produce a correct answer rather than battling against the fear of failure.

In researching the implications of such an approach I came across a story in Alison Pryer's doctoral thesis *Meditations on/in non/dualistic pedagogy*[1] that clearly illustrates the dangers of mainstream power/knowledge pedagogy. She was not adept in mathematics, yet the teacher kept picking on her to multiply large series of numbers and she was unable to keep up: "Of course, after receiving the lashes from the strap, I was still unable to do Mrs Lawrence's math homework. I told myself 'I can't do math, I can't do math' thereby rendering myself virtually unteachable. This personal mantra - 'I can't do math' - stuck with me all through high school."

An extreme but fine example of how detrimental the quest for "right" answers can be, and how the feeling of failure can cause long-term despondency. Even if the quest for points only blinds the student slightly to the true pursuit of knowledge and culture, it is important for teachers to have their eyes opened to this eventuality.

Because the LOC tool is true to a non-dualistic approach in its structure, it draws out pedagogically sound and creative exercises from the instructor. I am looking forward to seeing new features to enhance the functionality of an already very successful tool.

"The LOC tool has an innovative approach to learning"

[1]Pryer A. (2002) Meditations on/in non/dualistic pedagogy. The University of British Columbia [online] p.82. Available from: **https://circle.ubc.ca/bitstream/handle/2429/14883/ubc_2003-792463.pdf?**

Julien Hamilton-Hart is a French Lector in the Department of Modern Languages, Translation and Digital Communication at Swansea University.

English as a *lingua franca*: creating and sharing an online introductory tutorial

Rachel Wicaksono describes the aims, creation and sharing of an online introduction to English as a *lingua franca*.

English as a *lingua franca* (ELF)

English is a *lingua franca* when at least one person in a conversation is multilingual and the chosen language of communication is English. You are a potential ELF user if you speak English as an additional language or if you speak English, in any of its social, regional and national varieties, as your main language with other speakers of English as an additional language.

Research into ELF has focused on a comparison of the grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation of ELF with other varieties of English ("systems" approach) and on how multilingual speakers monitor each other's talk and accommodate their grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, rate of speaking, volume, gestures, eye contact and so on ("strategies" approach). You might assume that if you have grown up speaking English, ELF should be easy. In fact, monolingual native speakers of English have often had less practice at accommodating speakers of other languages than speakers who live in multilingual communities, or who have put a lot of effort into learning an additional language (Graddol 2006, Smith 1983).

Many universities, including York St John, have an internationalisation strategy whereby students are encouraged to work in mixed-nationality (and therefore often, though not exclusively, multilingual) groups. In a previous study (Wicaksono 2008), I noticed how students cited communication problems as a drawback of mixed-language groups. I started to think about how to internationalise group talk, without offering advice to students about how best to communicate. The achievement of understanding is not context-free, and ways of communicating effectively depend on the task, the people talking and the situation. Instead, I determined to try and raise my students' awareness of how they actually talk to each other and the effects these ways of talking have on the group and their achievement of a task. Instead of giving tips for effective communication, I encouraged my students to notice how ELF arises in specific contexts by sensitising them to the role played by their own communication strategies, attitudes and linguistic identities.

> "students will start to see the part played by language in the creation of roles, attitudes and linguistic identities"

Creating the tutorial

I worked with four of my students to create an awareness-raising activity, which we decided to call an "introductory tutorial". Ilias and Stavros were pre-undergraduate Foundation Programme students, Ollie was a third year English Language and Linguistics student and Jialing was an MA TESOL student. All four students recorded mixed-language, classroom activities, transcribed short extracts from their recordings and spent many hours discussing their transcripts with each other. The students' work was subsidised by a York St John University Enquiry-based Learning fund and my time was funded by an action research grant sponsored by the Subject Centre for LLAS.

Working together over about six months, we designed the activity which forms the basis of the tutorial. The activity is designed for students from any discipline and is done in mixed-language groups, either in class or as an independent group-study activity. The activity takes about four hours to complete and is made up of five stages:

- form a group
- choose a recording device
- make a recording of a discussion
- transcribe part of the discussion
- compare and discuss the transcriptions.

We decided to include audio extracts and video clips from the classroom talk to make the tutorial more engaging and we made it publicly accessible online. We also used readily available technological devices such as Audacity to edit our sound files, Windows Movie Maker to edit our videos (recorded on a Flip video camera) and Wimba Create to transform our materials into HTML (and create flashcards, internal and external links etc.).

Sharing our work

The resulting web pages, *Introducing English as a Lingua Franca: an online tutorial* are hosted by the York St John digital repository and are available in three formats (online, customisable Word pages and HTML for uploading as a learning module into a virtual learning environment). All formats are licensed under a Creative Commons licence. This means that anyone may use the tutorial or any of its components in their own projects as long as they credit the source, their work is not for profit, and they share the outputs under the same licence. We submitted the tutorial to JorumOpen, a JISC-funded, digital repository of educational resources. At the Association of Learning Technologies annual conference in 2009, we were awarded a Jorum Learning and Teaching prize for the creation of an effective resource using only small amounts of funding and readily available technology. Subsequent presentations of our work (including at the Subject Centre's annual e-Learning symposium) have resulted in ideas for an improved version of the tutorial, which we hope to release later this year.

Lessons learned

The development of the online tutorial and its dissemination at conferences was a motivating learning experience. We anticipate that it will support students to become applied linguists and will enable them to generate context-specific findings relevant to the use of English within groups of mixed nationality (a detailed account of this "bottom-up" approach to applied linguistics is forthcoming in Hall, Smith and Wicaksono). Finally, we hope that by working through the tutorial, students will start to see the part played by language in the creation of roles, attitudes and linguistic identities, and the crucial role that an understanding of ELF plays in the internationalisation of UK universities.

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One very big adventure

The winner of this year's LLAS student award competition is Daniel Finch-Race. Daniel's winning entry is a promotional article aimed at encouraging school pupils to study languages, linguistics or area studies at university.

A lot of people decide to give up learning languages because they're never going to be useful; who *really* needs to know how to ask for a pizza in another language when you can just point to what you want, look at the total and pay? Who *really* needs to know how to ask for directions when you can just loudly say the name of the place that you're looking for until someone shows you? Who *really* needs to speak another language when everyone you meet on holiday speaks English anyway? In the end, it comes down to this: "I don't need languages, so why don't I study something that's going to take me places, like Medicine or Business?"

Let me ask you this, then: when was the last time that you went on an adventure? A *real* adventure? What if somebody offered you the chance to go anywhere you wanted, to do whatever you wanted, for as long as you wanted? There'd have to be a catch, wouldn't there? What if there wasn't? Welcome to studying languages; welcome to your global future.

Studying languages doesn't seem like a very attractive option these days: it's a lot of work, the lessons are long and boring, and it's all completely pointless because everybody speaks English, right? Stop and think for a second, though: is the world that full of English speakers? There's North America, the UK, New Zealand, Australia, most major European cities and some of south-east Asia's tourist centres (if we're lucky), but what about everybody else? What if you want to go off the beaten track? It's going to be tough tracking down somebody who speaks English if you're looking to get away from the crowds!

What about languages being pointless for your future, then? Okay, consider this: what if your boss could look at your CV and see that you had languages to your name? Wouldn't you be the first choice to go somewhere exotic for meetings? Even if you never leave the country, knowing another language definitely puts you ahead: a doctor who speaks Spanish or a technician who speaks Arabic can work with a whole lot more people and in many more places than somebody who only speaks one language. You could, of course, try teaching or translating, but leaving university with languages can lead to loads of different careers, from financial work to social services, and there isn't a shortage of companies looking for people with such "international" talent!

So, let's get down to the nitty-gritty of why people avoid languages: they're tough. Sure, starting out with a foreign language, it's easy to feel lost; everything is hidden in darkness. You want someone else to understand you so that you can reach your destination, but the time it takes to order your thoughts stops you enjoying communicating. Unfamiliarity slows you down; you become particularly aware of the space between words and ideas. You need a certain "lingo" and way of seeing things, a connection. Why not download a few songs? Or watch a film? Or chat to people online? After all, why does learning languages have to be about being cooped up in a classroom learning page after page of grammar or vocabulary? You've got potential, so why not get out into the world and use it?

Why not try exploring a little? Why not peek out from behind the curtain of what you already know and step onto the international stage? Arriving on the scene from that angle, you'll find yourself in a place that's vaguely

unsettling, but at the same time intriguing, perhaps even exciting: did you know that spaghetti, that Italian icon, comes from China? By exploring, you'll understand the world better; you'll be able to retrace your steps; come up with a plan; give directions to others. You'll realise that there's so much out there for you to see, so many mysteries to chase. Eventually, you'll forget your worries; in fact, you'll begin to feel almost at home. Nobody's expecting you to be perfect, but anybody you meet will appreciate you trying to understand their culture and language. They'll go that extra mile to help, showing you the road less travelled, sharing their culture with you, and opening up the horizon.

With enough exploring, you'll find that what used to seem slow will become quicker; the effort to say what you want will lessen and you'll even begin to think in another language. Okay, that moment's not going to come overnight, but it'll come, in the same way that a city like Paris seems to get smaller, depending on how often you've visited it and where you've wandered. You'll get a certain expertise: you'll slip into conversations and open up their possibility into a huge space of communication in which you can navigate without worrying, with so many possibilities that you can barely think of them all at once; a menu of choices, all of which you can understand. There are still going to be things hidden in dark corners, but it's in these very shadows, waiting to reveal their secrets to the light, that you'll find the most fascinating, beautiful things. Knowing a modern language is the backstage pass to the biggest gig in the world, with a view down the wings to the past, present and future.

So, where are languages going to take you? All it takes is a flash – the scent of fresh croissants; a snapshot of a man flinging a red cape in front of a bull; a stadium singing a national anthem – and you're off down the rabbit hole into a wonderful world of people wildly waving their hands, the music of a different "lingo" and an atmosphere that's full of possibility, with a different road waiting for every adventurer.

What's keeping you?

"Knowing a modern language is the backstage pass to the biggest gig in the world"

Daniel Finch-Race is a third-year Modern European Languages student at the University of Edinburgh.

From finals to Fiji ...via Ghana

In last year's LLAS student award competition winning entry, Laura Gent dreamed of returning to the Andes after graduation. Laura updates us on an eventful past 12 months.

It was the day of my last final, "Spanish Writing" and I was extremely excited. Not just because I was about to complete my Modern Languages degree at Newcastle University, but also because in two days, I was due to fly out to Ghana to work for three months as an Assistant Country Manager for the company I did voluntary work for during my year abroad in Peru. I had never been to Africa and I was consumed with apprehension and anticipation! I was adamant not to let it affect my studies, though, and I continued to work as hard as possible despite the various vaccinations and preparations I had to make.

After the exam, I said a sad farewell to Newcastle but was comforted by the fact that I knew I would be back for graduation. One of the conditions of accepting the role in Ghana was that I was allowed three days back in Newcastle to receive my parchment!

All set for a completely different culture and climate, I took my flight out to Accra, which was to be my home for the next three months. What a home it was! I soon became accustomed to the Ghanaian culture and fell in love with the way of life in this wonderful African country. I visited schools, hospitals and orphanages and provided pastoral care for the volunteers who had come from around the world to help in the communities. My languages definitely came in handy with the French volunteers!

I was extremely busy, working very long days and spending a lot of my time on *tro-tros*, small minibuses which circulate around the city and to different regions. Time whizzed by and before I knew it, I was packing my bag to head home for a brief stay in England for my graduation. I was really looking forward to seeing all my fellow language crew and being back in Newcastle again. After arriving back in England, I began to feel nauseous but put it down to jet lag and tiredness. A day later and I was diagnosed with malaria and was too ill to attend my graduation as well as being unable to fly back to Ghana until I was better. I was extremely disappointed but my main priority was to get well again. I was also reassured that I could attend another graduation ceremony the following year.

I was able to fly back to Accra a week

later after I had recovered and I was actually extremely glad to land back on Ghanaian soil. I had really missed my friends and colleagues out there and I had serious Ghanaian pineapple withdrawal symptoms! I also missed the friendly "Hello how are you?" from the children as I walked through the streets. I spent a fantastic two months with my new friends and colleagues taking each day as it came and embracing the famous "Ghana time". One weekend, I visited the neighbouring French-speaking country of Togo. Delighted at the sight of baguettes and real butter, I enjoyed putting my language skills to use and bartering with the locals.

One day, while helping out at a summer school in a rural village, I received a call offering me a similar position working in Fiji after I had finished my time in Ghana. The experience I had gained already in Africa was invaluable, but I simply couldn't turn down four months in paradise! A month later, and I hopped on a plane headed for the South Pacific. Greeted by a loud "*Bula*!" on arrival at Nadi Airport and I knew that, yet again, I would be living in another fantastic country with a rich culture to explore. It was interesting to find many similarities between the Ghanaian and Fijian people, their generosity, friendliness and love of the root vegetable cassava, among many other endearing qualities. Living with a wonderful local Fijian family, I soon became so close to my eight-year-old "Prince" that I started treating him like a little brother. My host family became my adoptive family and I dread the thought of ever having to say goodbye. As in Ghana, I had a great deal of contact with the volunteers out in Fiji and was their main point of contact for any queries. A friendship with a lovely French volunteer meant that my French was not neglected either! In Fiji, two tsunami warnings and a cyclone later, and I am still smiling, beaming in fact, and relishing yet another new culture.

"two tsunami warnings and a cyclone later I am still smiling and relishing yet another new culture"

The opportunities and experiences I have had since leaving Newcastle have been absolutely overwhelming. I would never have been given the chance to live in those incredible places if I hadn't gone to Peru on my year abroad. This really is down to the fact that the Modern Languages School at Newcastle gave me the freedom and the opportunity to volunteer in The Sacred Valley, a placement which provided me not only with language skills but with vital life skills too. After embracing the Peruvian way of life, my enthusiasm for different cultures led me on to further roles in Ghana and Fiji, where I continued to have the time of my life. Although I haven't had the chance to return to Peru yet, there is still plenty of time and I am desperate to go back to see how my host family is, especially after the recent flooding in The Sacred Valley. Many of the people I met during my travels will remain close friends forever, and I am looking forward to visiting them again soon.

I'd like to thank the Department of Modern Languages at Newcastle University for allowing my life-changing trip to Peru which then led to such exciting experiences. In the languages from Peru, Ghana and Fiji, *Gracias*, *Medaase* and *Vinaka* Newcastle!

Laura Gent is Assistant Country Manager for Projects Abroad, Fiji.

Languages for research: the student perspective

LLAS recently ran an event with the Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies at the University of Glasgow, entitled *New directions: how languages promote research and internationalisation in higher education*. The programme included presentations from postgraduate Humanities and Social Sciences research students, who were invited to give their perspective on the value of languages in their particular area of study. We reproduce two of the papers here.

How languages promote research and internationalisation in higher education

Rachel Clements explains how learning Polish is benefiting her research with Polish migrants.

I am a converted philistine when it comes to languages for research. Three and a half years ago it was politely suggested to me by my current supervisor, that if I hoped to engage with the Polish community then I might start trying to "talk their language". Very sceptically and fairly reluctantly I turned up for my first Polish class at the University of Glasgow, jealous of all these young Scots who already had the rolling "r"s needed for Polish. I had no previous language background or ability beyond the status of "very hopeless at GCSE French". I proceeded to learn Polish to diploma level. I struggled, it was hard, at times it was awful, but sometimes it was great too!

Today my attitude towards languages for research is very different, and thankfully better informed. I am currently a year into my doctoral studies on Polish migrant parents in the city of Newcastle. I use the research methods of in-depth interviews and visual anthropology, whereby I walk the streets of Newcastle looking for the presence and residence of Polish identity. Admittedly, I don't always need good Polish language skills to spot an expression of Polish identity, for instance last week I came across a *Polska* football sticker in the back of a car in the suburb of Heaton. Quite frankly it was hard to miss, even without any knowledge of the language. However, having a grasp of what Polish looks and sounds like really helps me to notice its presence, when someone else might not notice.

For example, I recognised the "foreign advertising" in Newgate Mall in Newcastle city centre to be Polish, and paused at the graffiti outside Tesco in Gateshead to realise it was also Polish. Learning Polish has taken the tantalising guesswork out of my

Photo credits: Magic Madzik, Noodlepie, Ulleskelf, Flickr

"learning Polish has helped me to engage with the community on an everyday level"

research, I can confidently identify expressions of Polish, and for the geographer interested in defining place and space this is paramount.

Learning Polish has given me insight into Polish culture, history, literature, art and media. It's this wider cultural enthusiasm for Poland that has come from learning the Polish language that Poles seem particularly surprised and delighted by when I approach them for interviews. We have something to talk about, it makes our relationship more personable, and I think it makes me as a researcher more approachable. Likewise I've also found that some Polish migrants associate learning their language with a commitment to their community.

Some Polish migrants seem to pity me for trying to learn their difficult and troublesome language. My first interviewee, a Polish bus driver, came forward in response to the blog I write in English and very poor Polish: "I think you try hard to learn my language" he wrote "so I want to help you. I like to read *your* Polish. You try very hard." While on one hand it can be argued that some Polish proofreading might enhance my professionalism and credibility, on the other hand, I think that these public errors and attempts at writing Polish invite a very human response to my research, and earn me some degree of sympathy, respect, and amusement in the Polish community. A British woman trying to learn their language is a novelty and it makes my research, in what is becoming a dense research environment (in the North East at least) stand out.

In a similar vein, learning Polish has given me an opportunity to make myself known and has helped me to engage with the community on an everyday level. As a result of learning Polish, I volunteered as a writer for *2B*, the magazine for Poles in the North East. I began writing the English summary of the magazine in October 2008, and today my role has expanded, as I have become something of an English proofreader/copy editor now that the publication is fully bilingual. I also have a complimentary *2B membership card*, which gives me access to Polish places in the city, discount in the Polish shops and at the Polish restaurant, and most importantly, writing for the magazine has helped me win familiarity and even trust with my readership. Last week I felt honoured when asked to write the English press release informing the general public in the North East that a book of condolences has been opened in response to the 10 April air crash disaster. Learning Polish has made me useful to the Polish community.

Learning Polish has had an impact on the dynamics of the interviews, which I conduct as part of my research. I find myself in a situation where both researcher and migrant are learning a language, so we end up helping and encouraging each other to find meaning and understanding in our words. Sometimes I find that positioning myself as a learner is a good way to bypass any cultural and socioeconomic differences between me and my interviewees, as they are immediately at ease when they realise that their English is far better than my Polish. Although my attempt to speak Polish is no more than a mere "token gesture" often met by a response in English, it is a gesture that nonetheless awards me access, engagement, involvement and trust.

Rachel Clements is a doctoral student at Newcastle University.

The importance of languages in the historical study of racism

Brendan McGeever highlights the importance of languages in the study of the history of racism.

Before I begin, I ought to tell you a bit about my own personal experiences, or lack of experiences, with foreign languages. To be quite honest, until very recently, I showed little interest in languages. At school, languages seemed boring and uninteresting. Indeed, I remember leaving my last French exam feeling delighted that I'd never have to go through such a stress again. Ten years later, I'm glad to say that things have completely turned around: I am thoroughly enjoying my journey with the Russian language.

more generally.

I remember when I set out to start developing my research questions. I trolled through sociology journal websites, looking for studies on the history of the idea of "race" in Eastern Europe. However, nothing came back. To a young student with a linguistically Anglo-centric worldview who thought that sociology had all the answers, this came as quite a shock.

A brief glance at some of the key literature on the sociology of racism illustrates this point. In these

"knowledge of languages profoundly shapes ability to undertake scholarly research in an international context"

As we know, this hostility to learning foreign languages is a rather widespread problem in these parts of the world. I suggest that this lack of knowledge of foreign languages has actually shaped my discipline: the sociology of racism in the English language.

For instance, from the experience that I have had of studying the sociology of racism here at the University of Glasgow, I'm struck by the fact that in the literature, there is very little, if any, empirical analysis of the history of racism in Russia or indeed Central and Eastern Europe

texts there are no empirical studies of racism in Russia. Instead, in the literature, the case studies are usually drawn from the UK, USA, South Africa, Australia, Germany and France. I think this is where the centrality of language comes in: it's quite evident that one's knowledge of languages profoundly shapes ability to undertake scholarly research in an international context.

I should say though that there are reasons other than linguistic ones which can explain the volume of research focused on the USA, UK, South Africa and Germany. There are evidently long histories of racism in these regions which justify the amount of scholarly attention they have received. So the neglect of Russia and Central and Eastern Europe in the sociology of racism in the English language does not stem purely from the language barriers that researchers face. However, the centrality of language is something that I have come to realise, albeit belatedly.

Actually, I would argue that the sociology of racism has been profoundly transformed by the contributions of scholars whose native language was not English. A key research interest of mine, the study of anti-Semitism, has unquestionably been enhanced in this way. However, it seems to me that this has often not been reciprocated in the literature by scholars whose first language is English.

In conclusion, languages are very important to the study of social sciences and humanities and I would argue that they can potentially help to unhinge those parts of ethnocentrism which stem from a linguistic Anglo-centric worldview. Beyond this, knowledge of languages can facilitate interdisciplinary work and the sharing of histories across linguistic and geographical divides.

Brendan McGeever is a PhD student at the University of Glasgow.

Début

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Getting ahead as an international student

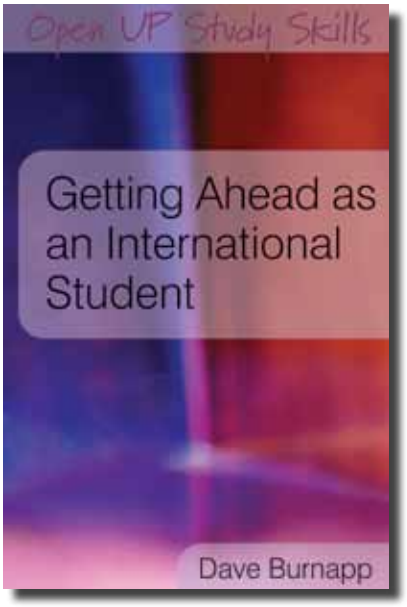
Review by Mary Page

How refreshing to read a book for international students aiming at higher education in an English-speaking country which doesn't focus on meeting language entry requirements or describe student life. Instead *Getting ahead as an international student* by Dave Burnapp assumes that language hurdles have been surmounted and that what the student needs is acculturisation, not in a superficial sense, but a deep understanding of what academic study at university in the English-speaking world means, and, most importantly, why.

Thus the first chapter, *What are English-speaking universities* like? is more than a simple description of accommodation, support services and the like. Instead Burnapp devotes a chapter to introducing Maslow's hierarchy of needs and applies it to the international student's situation in order to highlight the changes in lifestyle he or she may have to make. Activities and tasks encourage the reader to reflect on the underpinning theory and further reading is suggested.

The book is thoughtfully laid out, with a clear map at the beginning and a comprehensive glossary at the end. Each chapter is divided into chunks with diagrams, bullet points, tips, examples, quotes and comments from students, activities, questionnaires and tasks which serve to make the content accessible and interactive. The subject matter is no surprise, ranging from *A day in the life…* through study skills to *Producing assignments*, but what was noticeable was that the "p" word – plagiarism – was not mentioned that often, the author perhaps acknowledging the complexity of the issue not just for international students but for home students too.

The question "Who will use this book?" remains to be considered. The student is encouraged to keep copies of the completed tasks in a portfolio to be presented to prospective employers. Here I have my doubts as to whether or not a student working on their own would really go this far. I feel it is a book that students will dip into rather than work through systematically from cover to cover. I somehow can't imagine many students having the time or discipline to devote to such a lengthy undertaking, however worthwhile it may be, unless they are already strong independent learners. What I can envisage, however, is tutors on pre-sessional courses, or similar, finding sections to use with their classes and I would recommend pre-sessional course directors to buy class sets of this book and encourage tutors to use it with their classes. It has a place on EAP (English for Academic Purposes) training courses and will help teachers new to this field to see things from the point of view of the students and what they need. Some sections may also form a basis for discussion among both academic and non-academic staff in universities where the aim is "internationalisation", as a reminder of the enormity of the undertaking when an international student decides to study at an English-speaking university.



Dave Burnapp
(2009)
Open University Press
ISBN: 9780335234530

As more and more countries, especially in Europe, are choosing to deliver courses through the medium of English one can imagine the need for a future companion volume on *Getting ahead in a multicultural and multilingual university* which would address the needs of students.

Mary Page is Senior Language Teaching Fellow and Director of Pre-sessional Course A at the University of Southampton.

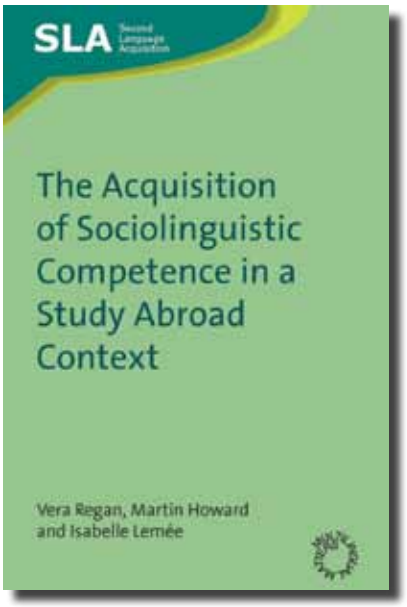
The acquisition of sociolinguistic competence in a study abroad context

Review by Jean-Marc Dewaele

Second Language Acquisition (L2) researchers have known for a while that a period abroad allows L2 learners/users to pick up the variable patterns of native speech relatively easily while prolonged classroom input has much less effect. The present book investigates this intriguing effect of study abroad on the development of French interlanguage. Although the title mentions only the acquisition of sociolinguistic markers in the second language, the authors also refer to the development of the lexicon, fluency and grammar. The focus is, unsurprisingly, on the authors' own quantitative variationist work on the advanced French interlanguage of 20 Irish-English students before and after a period of study abroad in France (chapters four–nine). The authors adopt an etic-quantitative perspective, i.e. a clinical look at the data, not including the voice and opinions of their participants. They use VARBRUL, a program used by many sociolinguists to perform logistic regression, in order to identify the independent variables that best predict the use of four sociolinguistic markers as they appeared during interviews between a researcher and participants.

The overall conclusion is that immersion in a French-speaking environment is linked to a significant development of learners' and users' sociolinguistic competence in French. Especially sociolinguistic variants that are less frequent in formal classroom contexts start cropping up as a result of the immersion into French (more omission of *ne*, more /l/ deletion, higher proportions of use of the pronoun *on* versus *nous*, and, surprisingly, more inflected future forms than the more informal periphrastic future forms). The final chapter focuses on the effect of gender on the four dependent variables.

I generally enjoyed this book, which is an excellent resource for those interested in the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence and the benefits of study abroad. Inevitably, there are some gaps. There is no mention of the choice of pronoun of address (*vous* versus *tu*), which is notoriously hard to acquire for native speakers of English. I would argue that the ability to use the appropriate pronoun of address in interactions with native and non-native speakers is far more important than the understanding that the pronoun *nous* is more formal than *on*. The pronouns of address in French merited at least a paragraph in the literature overview. Although I respect the authors' decision to focus on quantitative variationist work in the L2, I feel that the alternative approaches, namely emic-oriented qualitative approaches deserved to be more comprehensively referenced. Indeed, it seems to me that once L2 users are able to make a choice between sociolinguistic variants, it is worth investigating the reasons underlying their choices, and linking their perceptions of the variants



Vera Regan, Martin Howard and Isabelle Lemée
(2009)
ISBN: 9781847691576
Available from **www.mmtextbooks.com**

at their disposal to their actual use. More information about the amount and type of actual interactions of the study abroad participants would also have been useful. Qualitative research based on diary studies and mid-term interviews shows that some students use every opportunity to engage in conversations with native speakers of the target language while others remain safely with their own little linguistic community and limit their target language use to service encounters. This difference in social behaviour has been linked to the wide inter-individual variation in linguistic progress after the period abroad (Kinginger 2008, 2009). The etic (vs emic) perspective tends to underestimate the concept of volition, i.e. the L2 users' free will (MacIntyre 2007). Indeed, L2 users are not just puppets on strings whose actions are rooted in their linguistic and sociobiographical profile.

My final query concerns the authors' decision to adopt a very strict interpretation of sociolinguistic competence. Although they include a general section on sociopragmatic competence, there are only scant references to that field of research despite the fact that it often includes independent and dependent variables that the authors included in their own research design (such as gender and identity choices).

Despite these minor limitations, I would highly recommend this book to all students, teachers and researchers with an interest in the development of sociolinguistic competence in a second language.

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Jean-Marc Dewaele is Professor in Applied Linguistics and Multilingualism at Birkbeck College, University of London.

Language Learning Journal

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- New technologies in language teaching
- Independent language learning
- Action research in language learning and teaching

The issue will be guest edited by the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (LLAS) at the University of Southampton. Enquiries should be sent to **llas@soton.ac.uk**. All submissions should be received no later than 30th November 2010.

Contributors are advised to read the Language Learning Journal's submission guidelines for information concerning length, organisation and layout of articles. These can be found at www.tandf.co.uk/journals/rllj

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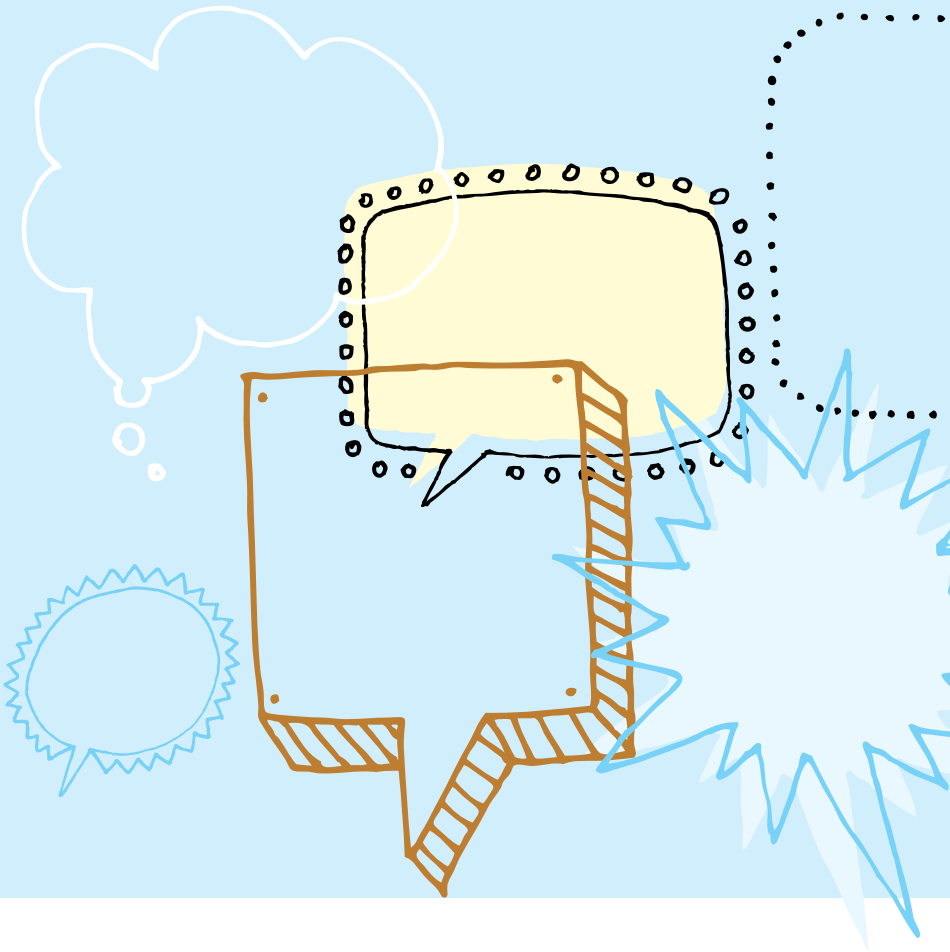

Even languages are a "frill" for some low-cost airlines

A recent incident on a budget airline flight sparked Irene Macías to have her say.

On a recent trip from Madrid to a major UK airport, I witnessed an incident that brought home the beleaguered state in which modern languages find themselves in this country more than any depressing statistics about trends in languages at GCSE-level could ever do. When the refreshments trolley came down the aisle, a senior female passenger sitting one row in front of mine asked for *"Un café"*. The flight attendant looked distinctly put out. All she could muster for an answer was a bewildered "Mmm?" The lady went on to repeat *"Un café"*. Still, no response. Fortunately, one passenger travelling next to the lady in question came to the rescue and interpreted "Coffee please". The flight attendant obliged.

It didn't finish there, though. Having apparently run out of sugar, she had to pay a second visit to our female passenger who, upon being handed it, was presented with a formulaic "If you need anything else, let us know" for good measure. The passenger, predictably, didn't reply.

A few things spring to mind. Firstly, given that refreshment trolleys have a limited number of wares and that cabin crew must serve teas and coffees hundreds of times in a normal day's work, the situation described above must have been wholly predictable for anybody whose job is to serve refreshments on a plane. How could it be that the member of staff could not work out that "*café*" *might,* just might be related to coffee? I mean, they are not that far apart phonetically. I would have thought that this would be a big giveaway for most people, especially for those who work with an international clientele, and who happen to be mid-air carrying, you can bet on it, Spanish- and English-speaking passengers. How impermeable must you be to other languages to be thrown so visibly by something as simple as this? And we are not talking long sentences or numbers, heaven forbid! Was this a case of utter linguistic inability or an attitude problem? It's a hard call. The point is that a service provider that, by the very nature of its business, should be a champion of language skills and intercultural communication, clearly neglects these fundamental aspects and provides a standardised service where one size - English - fits all. Which takes me to the tag "If you need anything else, let us know." If the passenger had not been able to place her simple order in English before, how on earth could she understand something as idiomatic as this? The

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flight attendant might as well have saved her breath.

It is not the first time I've observed that staff working for some of the most popular commercial airlines shamefully lack in language skills. My musings are the more poignant because they happen at a time when the study of languages in the UK at KS4 and, consequently, A-level and tertiary education feels under threat. The sector has just finished its last bout of self-reflection[1] - we seem to do this periodically - and it's trying to find ways to convey the importance of languages for any society that wants to remain economically competitive and engage meaningfully with others in a multicultural world. In the case under scrutiny here, to have such a nice chunk of the air travel market within Europe and to overlook basic skills staff will need on a daily basis to operate efficiently, without making recruitment contingent upon having them or being willing to acquire them, is either false economy, bad management, linguistic imperialism or all three together. The equivalent in any other country is impossible to imagine. I know for a fact that English, the foreign language *par excellence* in most European countries, is not only taught through compulsory schooling from primary school in many cases these days, but that it is also a highly sought-after asset that increases employability by a very high factor. Interestingly, according to a growing number of surveys, it's the same here in the UK: employers seek graduates with language skills, language graduates get bigger salaries, and so the argument goes. But the proof is in the pudding. On the continent, to think that you could work for an airline and not speak some English would just be absurd. UK based companies, however, think nothing of playing you a recorded message in whatever the foreign language happens to be before take-off and that's that.

> **"On the continent, to think that you could work for an airline and not speak some English would just be absurd"**

If the popularity this kind of air carrier currently enjoys is anything to go by, a sizeable proportion of travellers might still be willing to compromise comfort in return for cheap travel. But who knows if we are about to witness a sea change. Who would have predicted only two or three years ago that the expression "carbon footprint" would enter common parlance? Just as we are all becoming more mindful of our fragile environment, we might witness the birth of a discerning traveller who also expects a service respectful of cultural diversity and one of its most immediate manifestations: languages.

Dr Irene Macías is a Teaching Fellow in Spanish in the Department of European Studies and Modern Languages, University of Bath.

[1]Worton, M. (2009) *Review of Modern Foreign Languages provision in Higher Education in England* [online]. Available from: **www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09_41**

A taste of French Creole

Marie-Annick Gournet tells us about the languages of the Caribbean.

Languages in the Caribbean are a direct legacy of the colonial experiences on the islands in the region. The formation of Creole languages can be summarised as the result of a mixture of essentially two linguistic layers defined by linguists as "superstrate" and "substrate". The superstrate corresponds to the import of European vocabulary, whereby the majority of terms in Caribbean languages come from the colonising country. French is the dominant language in Creole on the islands of Martinique, St Lucia, Dominica, Haiti and Guadeloupe. The substrate refers to the grammar of the indigenous languages - mostly the African languages from the Niger-Congo family - with which the colonisers had come into contact. The status of the linguistic layers defining the Creole languages is apparent in the prefixes: "super" is associated with the dominant, western-European language; and "sub" refers to the African-derived component of the Caribbean Creoles. The interaction of superstrate and substrate languages gives us a fairly clear idea of the very complex situation in which speakers of Caribbean Creoles operate.

Creoles: the origins of variety

Creoles vary from island to island and depend largely on the language of the colonising country, e.g. the language spoken in the French-colonised islands of Martinique, Guadeloupe, St Lucia, Dominica and Haiti differs quite substantially from that spoken in the English-colonised, and thus predominantly Anglophone, Caribbean islands. This variation can be explained by a number of historical and social factors. Beside the obvious differences between the respective dominant languages, French and English, the origin of the slaves shipped to work on the islands since the mid-17th century also played a crucial role. Although there was a conscious effort to mix slaves from different areas there are, on different islands, African words - mostly used in folk-tales or to describe food, personality and feelings – which have similar semantic roots but differ in sound and structure. The use of these words across different islands suggests the dominance of some language groups over others.

Sounds different, but it's the same

Cultural diversity and the interaction of radically different languages have provided fertile ground for the birth of a truly unique linguistic experience, which is reflected in the wide variety of forms and sounds a single word can take from one island to another. For example, the word *quenette* - a fruit similar to lychees - in Guadeloupe, becomes *chennette* in Martinique, *kenip* in Dominica and *guinep* in Jamaica. The same fruit is also known as *ackee* in Barbados; this word, however, refers to a completely different fruit of West African origin in Jamaica, where it is commonly eaten with salt fish in a popular national dish. The word *gombo* – okra, also known as ladyfingers - a shortened version of the African Bantu Angolan word *kingombo* came into Caribbean Spanish as *guimgambo* and started to be used in the Francophone Caribbean islands in the variant form *gumbo*. Interestingly, gumbo is also the name given to a popular soup on the Gulf coast of the United States which has okra as the key ingredient!

Dominant or dominated: the challenge of Creole

There is a gradual change in the way in which languages are used in the Caribbean. This attitude is partly dependent on levels of education: the more educated people are, the more they move away from the use of hard-core Creole. One can envisage a scale with hard-core Creole on one side and a standard European language - French in this case - on the other. The chart below illustrates the so-called process of decreolisation in Guadeloupe, whereby Creole increasingly uses Standard French as a base of reference for both grammar and vocabulary (Decamp 1971).

Hard-core Creole	Decreolization	Standard Caribbean French
Dapré-mwen i mach	*Dapré mwen i pati*	*A mon avis il est parti* (I think he's left)
Dapré-mwen i mawon	*Dapré mwen i disparèt*	*A mon avis il a disparu* (I think he's disappeared)

A box full of words

The *Bwetamo Kreyol Matnik (Dictionary of Martinican Creole)*, literally "a box of words" from Martinican Creole, captures the essence of the ever-expanding and vibrant Creole vocabulary, as the following examples show:

abeille:	*mouchanmyèl*	bee
boite:	*bwèt*	box
cigarette:	*sigarèt*	cigarette
dangereux:	*danjéré*	dangerous
élection:	*élèksyon*	election
force:	*lafôs, fôs*	strength
gaieté:	*djété*	happiness
hiver:	*live*	winter
instituteur:	*enstititè*	teacher
jeunesse:	*jénès*	youth

While standard Caribbean French shows many similarities with European French, it differs radically from the African-derived, hard-core Creole, which has hardly any of the linguistic elements of the standard Caribbean French.

The process of decreolisation has brought hard-core Creole closer to standard Caribbean French. The examples given above show that elements of hard-core Creole and Caribbean French coalesce into a dialect – the so-called "mesolect" or "mid-level dialect" – which provides a "two-way" Creole-Caribbean French and Caribbean French-Creole translation. This has resulted in most Caribbean language speakers possessing an innate ability to switch from hard-core Creole through the "mesolect" to Caribbean French, and not staying confined in one language compartment.

The linguistic variety found in the Caribbean is not restricted to sentence structure and vocabulary, as the previous examples have shown, but is also manifest in the pronunciation, tone, rhythm and occasional deviation from the modern French language. An example of creolised French deviating from modern French is the typical, 17th-century use of the word *vitement* in phrases such as "*donne-moi ça vitement*". This conversational use of *vitement* is also present in the works of the Creolité Movement. This group has introduced new words to the Caribbean lexicon by creating neologisms and by reclaiming outdated French words. Notably, *vitement* has not been used in European French since Molière's time but is used today in the Caribbean.

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Dr Marie-Annick Gournet is Director of Widening Participation and Principal Lecturer in Intercultural Communication and Area Studies at the University of the West of England.

Events calendar

More information: **www.llas.ac.uk/events**

Languages for the 21st century: training, impact and influence

Date: 1-2 September 2010

Location: University of Sheffield

This conference will showcase new training provision, techniques, technologies, methodologies and research in language teaching, with an emphasis on the advanced or research-focused learner. Particular emphasis will be on the Languages of the Wider World: Africa, East and South Asia, Russia, Central Europe, and the Arab World. LLAS is jointly organising the event with the five UK Centres of Excellence in Language-based Area Studies, and the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Languages of the Wider World.

Stories with impact

Date: 17 September 2010

Location: Woburn House, London

In September 2009 we held a one-day workshop for Heads of Department and Deans on 'Thriving in difficult times'. Since then, times have continued to get more difficult. This year our workshop will develop strategies for convincing senior managers, policy-makers and other stakeholders of the value of what we do. 'Stories with impact' aims to build up our toolkit for presenting our activities more assertively.

Learning Object Creator (LOC) workshop

Date: 13 October 2010

Location: University of Glamorgan

This blended-delivery workshop will be of interest to teachers with an interest in, but little experience of, online materials development. The workshop will introduce the Learning Object Creator (LOC), an authoring tool for the creation of online learning material which is designed to be easy to use and includes in-built pedagogical guidance for the creation of effective materials. Participants will be asked to complete some pre- and post-workshop tasks, and after the workshop they will have unlimited access to the tool and the opportunity to join our online community of developers.

e-Learning symposium

Date: 27-28 January 2011

Location: University of Southampton

The LLAS e-learning symposium is now in its sixth year. This popular event combines practical activities and guidance with inspiring ideas to fuel the imagination. Pre-conference workshops offer opportunities for discussion, together with tips on teaching and learning with technology, while the main symposium highlights the latest research and practice in technology-enhanced learning.

Introduction to methods for pedagogical research (stages 1 and 2)

Date: 3-4 March 2011

Location: Woburn House, London

This workshop is designed for those who are new to pedagogical research and who have no previous experience of social science research methods. Stage 1 (3 March) will cover topics such as questionnaire design, in-depth interviewing, classroom observation and ethics in research. Stage 2 (4 March) will focus on issues in quantitative and qualitative analysis of pedagogical research.

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