

# Liaison

Magazine

Issue 6 : March 2011

**feature:**

Interview with  
Patricia Ashby

**teaching:**

Helping students  
get published

**viewpoint:**

Linguistics in the  
21st century

**students:**

Working as a  
student intern

**have your say:**

Status of HE  
language teachers

**A taste of:**

Inuit



*Liaison* is published 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](http://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. If you would like to respond to an article published in *Liaison*, please contact the editor, Paula Davis ([pd2@soton.ac.uk](mailto:pd2@soton.ac.uk)).

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

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**Printed by:** Indigo Press

# Welcome

Issue 6 : March 2011

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

Regular readers will be aware of the Higher Education Academy's decision to withdraw funding to Subject Centres. At the same time, there are indications that the importance of our subject areas is gaining recognition both in government circles and in the wider society. Mike Kelly's foreword addresses these issues as he outlines his plans for continuing to support the sector in difficult economic times.

This edition of *Liaison* turns the spotlight on linguistics. Our main feature is an interview with internationally-renowned phonetician Patricia Ashby, who has recently been awarded a National Teaching Fellowship. Arran Stibbe then gives his personal viewpoint on the impact of sustainability issues on the linguistics curriculum, and Graeme Trousdale explains how the UK Linguistics Olympiad is enthusing school students. Meanwhile, linguistics graduate, Rachel Tyrrell outlines how her degree has prepared her for a varied career path.

Elsewhere, Mark Turin tells us about The World Oral Literature Project, which is documenting

endangered oral languages before they become extinct; Heather Walker Peterson shares her strategies for helping her undergraduate students get published; John Canning gives us some useful tips on making the best use of the National Student Survey; and Kate Borthwick interviews some of the Community Café project participants.

As usual, the student voice features strongly in the magazine. We publish essay extracts from the runners-up in last year's LLAS student award competition, and Siobhan Mills shares her experience of working as a student intern for LLAS.

Regular features include a news round-up, 'A taste of ...' in which Rhoda Cunningham tempts us to pronounce a 143-letter word in the Inuit language, and finally Annette Blühdorn 'has her say' about the status of HE language teachers.

As always, thank you to all our contributors. At the time of going to press we are unsure what the future holds for *Liaison* but we still very much welcome your comments on any of the articles you have read.

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



Paula Davis, Editor



e-teacher

# Transform your teaching!

**Become an e-teacher with the Learning Object Creator...**

LLAS has developed a workshop which shows you how to transform your teaching for an online environment using a tool that we have developed in-house for creating effective online learning materials: the LOC tool.

#### Why LOC works

- it was designed by teachers for teachers
- it features an in-built pedagogical design for effective online materials
- it is based on a tried-and-tested model used in a range of universities across the UK
- it is very simple to learn how to use
- it creates professional-looking, effective materials in minutes
- no need for technical support of any kind to produce and publish materials

**“The pedagogy behind the LOC helps to ensure best practice in materials design...Using the LOC has...increased my understanding of effective online learning material.”**

**Carole MacDiarmid, University of Glasgow**

Hundreds of teachers all over the UK are using the LOC tool –  
**find out how you can join the LOC community at: [loc.llas.ac.uk](http://loc.llas.ac.uk)**



# Contents

Issue 6 : March 2011

## Foreword

- 4 Is the tide turning  
for our subject areas?

Michael Kelly

## News

- 5 LLAS news

## Features

- 8 For she's a jolly good fellow: an interview  
with Patricia Ashby

Jeanine Treffers-Daller

- 16 Collect, protect, connect: documenting  
the voices of vanishing worlds

Mark Turin

- 18 Going for gold: the United Kingdom  
Linguistics Olympiad

Graeme Trousdale

- 20 Life after linguistics

Rachel Tyrrell

- 22 National Student Survey: a good power  
tool if you know how to use it

John Canning

- 26 Community Café project: tea, teaching  
and technology

Kate Borthwick

- 36 Have your say – From zero to hero: on  
the status of HE language teachers

Annette Blühdorn

- 39 A taste of Inuit

Rhoda Cunningham



16 World Oral Literature Project

## Viewpoint

- 12 Linguistics in the 21st century

Arran Stibbe

## Teaching

- 29 Getting published: entering the dialogue of  
your discipline

Heather Walker Peterson

## Students

- 32 My summer at LLAS: working as a student intern

Siobhan Mills

- 34 Get in, get on, get out

Paula Davis



39 Get a taste  
of Inuit



8 Interview with  
Patricia Ashby



# Is the tide turning for our subject areas?

The importance of languages, linguistics and area studies is gradually making its way up the national agenda. There are strong indications that attitudes are beginning to change, among policy makers as well as within civil society more widely. There are good reasons for this, as the balance of power worldwide is shifting away from the English-speaking world. And the growing international role of English is being seen as a threat as well as an advantage.

This change of attitudes is reflected in the government's approach to schooling, where languages and humanities have been included in the new 'English bac'. It is also reflected in the government's decision to confirm that languages are still strategically important, and that other subjects in the humanities and social sciences may also need strategic support.

A number of recent reports have highlighted the critical importance of languages, including the British Academy's briefing paper, confirming that 'Languages matter more and more'. And a first indication of the government providing tangible support has been the agreement by HEFCE to continue funding the Routes into Languages programme (together with HEFCW) to increase the take up of languages.

Among vice-chancellors and senior managers, there is also a growing awareness of the role that languages and area studies can play in supporting the international profile and aspirations of universities. This is one of the main points of focus in UCML's project 'Shaping the future'. As well as helping to produce 'global graduates' we also add to the future employment prospects of graduates, who will find a career advantage in being able to communicate in languages other than English and being able to operate interculturally.

But the rising tide is not floating all boats. The numbers of undergraduates taking specialist degrees in our area has remained largely static over the last decade, but they

are a smaller proportion of the growing student body. Some individual subjects have grown while others have declined. And growth in student numbers has come at the postgraduate level and in extra-curricular studies rather than in mainstream undergraduate provision.

As a result, our subject areas are experiencing both growth and contraction, exacerbated by the broader tendency for our subjects to be more concentrated in the pre-1992 universities. Some departments are encountering serious difficulties while others thrive.

The role of the Subject Centre has been to support all of our subject areas and enable our academic community to face the many challenges, particularly in learning and teaching, but also in student recruitment and in national and institutional policies. In December 2010, the Higher Education Academy decided to cease funding Subject Centres and to focus its activities on staff employed by its York headquarters, with the result that from the end of this academic year LLAS will cease

**“languages, linguistics and area studies are of vital importance to this country”**

to be funded by the Academy.

LLAS is planning to continue in a refreshed form, with the support of the University of Southampton. We will provide professional development and other services for our subjects on a sustainable basis, leading national projects, like Routes into Languages, and developing our programme of activities on a non-profit, cost recovery basis. We believe that languages, linguistics and area studies are of vital importance to this country and we will continue to do what we can to support them.

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

# news

Lisa Bernasek, Kate Borthwick, John Canning, Erika Corradini, Paula Davis, Angela Gallagher-Brett, Liz Hudswell, Heather McGuinness and Sarah Rule highlight recent news and activities within languages, linguistics and area studies.

## LANQUA Toolkit

The Language Network for Quality Assurance (LanQua), a three-year European Commission funded project co-ordinated by LLAS, ended in September 2010. The 60 network partners worked together to map the current landscape for languages and related studies in higher education and reflect upon how a subject practitioner-led approach to quality assurance can inform QA processes and enhance the quality of the learning experience for students. This collaboration resulted in the main output of the project, *The LanQua Toolkit*, which consists of a Quality Model, Frame of Reference, examples from practice and guidance notices. *The Toolkit* is downloadable from [www.lanqua.eu](http://www.lanqua.eu)



## Madeleine Albright scholarship

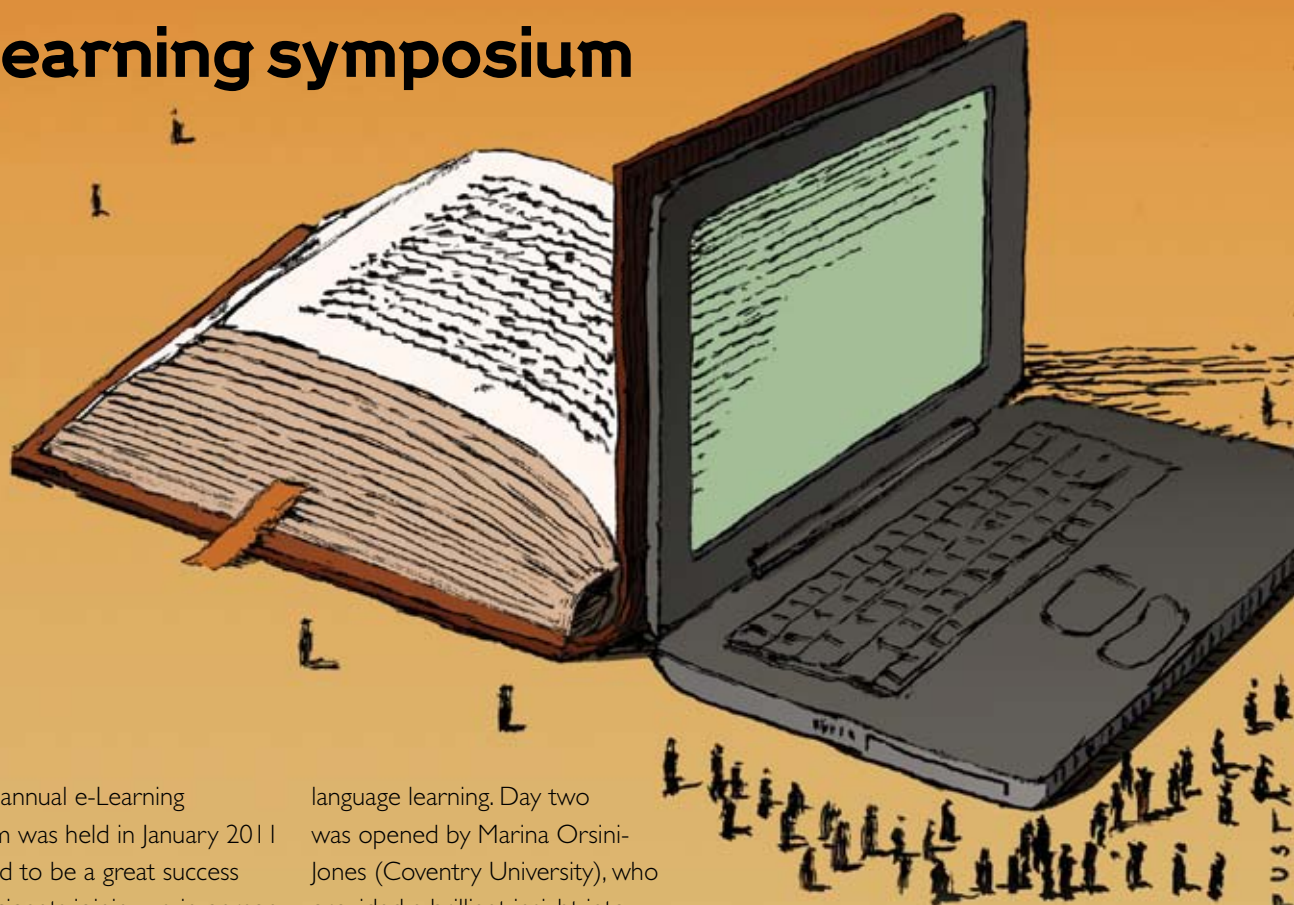
Madeleine Albright, the former US Secretary of State, recently visited the UK to launch a scholarship in Czech and Central European Studies at the University of Glasgow. Secretary Albright, who has Czech origins and lived in Prague before moving to the US in 1948, met postdoctoral and research students in the field of Slavonic Studies. Speaking at the inauguration of the scholarship, Albright said that she felt honoured to be involved in such a programme

and that it was a great pleasure to represent a cultural connection between universities in the UK and the Czech Republic. She also praised the study of Slavonic languages and cultures and the important part these play in academic curricula. Before becoming US Secretary of State, Albright was US Ambassador to the United Nations. She is fluent in four languages.

[www.gla.ac.uk/news/headline\\_172852\\_en.html](http://www.gla.ac.uk/news/headline_172852_en.html)



# e-Learning symposium



Our sixth annual e-Learning symposium was held in January 2011 and proved to be a great success with participants joining us, in person and live online, from all over the world. The symposium was the usual mix of practical guidance, big ideas and lots of socialising! Day one saw workshops on subjects as diverse as using Facebook in language teaching; designing e-Flashcards; and an innovative social networking site for

language learning. Day two was opened by Marina Orsini-Jones (Coventry University), who provided a brilliant insight into how the multimedia multi-literacies of 21st century students are impacting on language teaching. Agnes Kukulska-Hulme (The Open University) gave an informative keynote lecture based upon her research into how students respond to mobile learning, and Jon Beasley-

Murray (University of British Columbia) made a flying visit from Canada to thrill us with his ideas on social media and the 'neoliberal' university. If you missed the event, catch up by watching the videoed sessions on our website:

[www.llas.ac.uk/events/6196](http://www.llas.ac.uk/events/6196)

## New website for promoting Japanese Studies



Peter Matanle, Lecturer in Japanese at the University of Sheffield and a member of the LLAS Area Studies Specialist Advisory Group,

has produced a new website on behalf of the British Association for Japanese Studies (BAJS). *Discover Japanese Studies* is modelled on *Discover American Studies* and aims to promote the study of Japanese language and culture to young people in schools and colleges. Funded by five Japanese organisations working in the UK, the website can be found at [www.discoverjapanesestudies.org](http://www.discoverjapanesestudies.org)

## Residence abroad: reinventing the arguments

We took a fresh look at residence abroad in this seminar held at SOAS in London in November 2010. Issues discussed included the benefits of residence abroad to students of all disciplines, ways in which modern languages and area studies staff might contribute to institutional mobility strategies and the challenges of the new funding environment.



## Routes into Languages

The Routes into Languages programme continues across England and Wales and reflects a wide picture of collaboration and partnership working. As the programme moves into a new phase, there will be greater concentration on activities that are known to be effective. We could not have predicted some of the avenues that our project partners have taken; we are convinced that student ambassadors can be vibrant role models for pupils. Working directly with teachers enabled us to bring to



life their ideas for activities and to work with other subject specialists. Pupils have surprised themselves with their wonderful ability in language learning.  
[www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk](http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk)

## University Council of General and Applied Linguistics (UCGAL) launch event

On 27 January 2011, UCGAL held its official launch event at the British Academy. UCGAL is the body of learned societies formed to promote public understanding of linguistics and to advance the discipline in higher education. The launch focused on the social impact of linguistics. Short presentations were given by three experts in the field: Professor Peter Austin, Dr Terry Lamb and Professor Alison Wray. Each speaker considered a different contribution made by linguistics to our society. The event was well-supported by academics in the field, government organisations, and the educational press. The PowerPoint slides for the presentations can be found on the UCGAL website  
[www.linguistics.ac.uk](http://www.linguistics.ac.uk)

## Islamic Studies



In November 2010 the Higher Education Academy's Islamic Studies Network ([www.heacademy.ac.uk/islamicstudies](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/islamicstudies)) published the first edition of its biannual magazine *Perspectives: teaching Islamic Studies in higher education*. Along with news and highlights of teaching resources for Islamic Studies, the first edition included articles from colleagues in the sector on curriculum development; research-based teaching; teaching and researching Islam in the UK; and interdisciplinarity as a way to bring women's voices and experiences into the teaching of Islam. The next edition will be published in May 2011. To receive a copy or contribute to a future issue, please email [islamicstudies@heacademy.ac.uk](mailto:islamicstudies@heacademy.ac.uk)

## Links into Languages

Links into Languages is publishing a wealth of online resources for language teachers as part of the LinkedUp award scheme. LinkedUp provided funding for groups of teachers to work together to address some of the challenges encountered in the teaching of languages. Visit [www.linksintolanguages.ac.uk](http://www.linksintolanguages.ac.uk) to download free materials. Following the government's decision to give greater autonomy to schools in matters of professional development, the Department for Education has decided not to extend the contract awarded to the Links into Languages programme. However, we are considering proposals for continuing this work independently.



# For she's a jolly good fellow



For the latest in our series of interviews with leading figures from languages, linguistics and area studies, Jeanine Treffers-Daller visited Patricia Ashby, recent recipient of a National Teaching Fellowship award.

**A** Principal Lecturer in the Department of English, Linguistics and Cultural Studies, University of Westminster, Patricia Ashby has an international reputation as a practising phonetician, teacher of phonetics, and researcher in the field of phonetic pedagogy. She graduated from Lancaster University with a BA (Hons) in English in 1971 and obtained an MA in Phonetics from University College London (UCL) in 1975, followed by a PhD in Phonetics in 2002. She has worked at the University of Westminster (formerly Polytechnic

of Central London) since 1975. According to the Higher Education Academy, Patricia's development of student-centred, enquiry-based learning-through-assessment strategies has demonstrably enhanced success. Her fieldwork-based techniques have spread beyond her own courses to other disciplines and countries – from foreign languages to English literature and speech science.

Patricia Ashby's office is clearly the home of a phonetician: who else would keep a plaster cast of their teeth on full view in the workplace? Something that looks like a dental

brace worn by teenagers to correct wonky teeth turns out to be the basis for an artificial palate which, when wired up, records where the tongue touches the roof of the mouth during speech using a technique called electropalatography. Propped behind this phonetician's gadget, we see the reason I have come to interview Patricia: the certificate for the National Teaching Fellowship she received in 2010 for her outstanding qualities as a higher education teacher. My first question therefore is about this prestigious award.



### What is the National Teaching Fellowship?

It's in recognition of contributions made at institutional, national, and international levels to learning and teaching. It comes with a £10,000 reward which I can spend over a two-year period for personal development, for example conference attendance. I may use some of it to fund a trip to Hong Kong for the International Congress of Phonetic Science, perhaps also a new computer and some books.

**You are obviously a very talented teacher and the feedback on your courses is fabulous. One linguistics student writes in 2009: "You are my perfect role model. You have helped to give me a wonderful start in life." I do not think that many HE teachers receive this kind of appreciation for their teaching. What do you do to make your students so enthusiastic?**

There are all sorts of things. I think in terms of my own presence in the classroom, I am less mainstream than some people. I am not suit and tie and sit at the front of the room.

In fact I never sit down when teaching. I move around, make jokes – even take the teeth into the classroom! I have a gadget that allows me to advance my lecture slides remotely, so I can view the slides with the students, while I'm talking. The students like the gadgetry. They like the fact that you can plug in a microphone, talk and see the sound wave on screen. Students who would have freaked out at the sight of a spectrogram or a waveform (which give a visual representation of the speech sounds), suddenly think: "Oh, this is interesting. I can do this as well." They are engaged when they are in the classroom, not just sitting and

listening passively. Students like it when I imitate different accents.

*[Patricia mimics a Geordie burr and the local multicultural London English.]*

Students also discover that they can analyse features of each others' pronunciation, effectively seeing what they sound like using WASP or PRAAT (software programmes which makes the speech sound wave visible); they then see how their own pronunciation differs from that of their friends. That often captures their imagination. Another thing is that I have probably got a weird sense of humour. There is a rapport now that I might not have had when I first started teaching 40 years ago.



**You grow in confidence over the years, don't you?**

Yes, but confidence also comes from teaching an area that you really know about and that you feel comfortable with. That's where the best teaching is going to be found. In the past I have had to teach subjects where I was just one step ahead of the students. That is awful. It is not fair to say: "Anyone can do it – it's all linguistics." You need to be on top of your material.

**What makes you tick when you go into a classroom?**

As any actor will tell you, once you are on stage nothing else matters. And when you teach you get so much back from the students, the ones who want to learn and who are there for the right reasons, and also the few who struggle but really want to succeed. You feel you have done something useful. You've passed something on that you believe in.

## "I am not suit and tie and sit at the front of the room"

The student who was at my door when we arrived is an example of that. She had not even heard of the subject of phonetics before she came here. She is worth her weight in gold. That is what makes it all worthwhile.

**You open up a new horizon for them.**

That's right. There is also this fringe movement that hates the subject of course, but when they apply themselves it suddenly dawns on them that there are all these different facets. For example, they will come and tell me: "I never realised that I had a Liverpool accent." When weaker students pass their first assignment, even with a mark of 40, they are so rapt, they are so fired up to continue. That first pass mark is a little carrot that can help them to move on.

**The current HE context is incredibly challenging because of the increase in fees and the changes that will bring. If you compare what teaching is like now with when you started your career, can you tell me what the main differences are?**

In the past there were fewer students who had the opportunity to go to university. The current government claims that everybody should have the opportunity to go to university, but in fact they make it impossible by increasing the fees. However, speaking personally, I don't think that everyone should go to university. Too often, it becomes the default position. Students who do not know what they want to do simply decide to go to university and this becomes the new time out – gap years – while they think about a career. That is not what I believe going



to university should be about at all. A big difference with the past, then, is that we have got a much bigger spread of ability in the classroom. Previously, you only had the people who had scored the entry points and were motivated to go. And the groups were smaller: in my English speech class this year there were 60 students, last year 87, and there were 120 *ab initio* phonetics students across two modules last year. Years ago, there were only 24 to 36 students. I am trying to deal with four times as many and I am trying to ensure they are not short changed. That is quite a challenge for any teacher.

### **You try to give them a good student learning experience.**

Yes, trying to ensure they have at the very least the transferable phonetic skills they can take into other modules, other areas of learning. Learning to transcribe, for example, is really labour-intensive. The students are offered a programme of nine practice transcriptions. If all 120 students do one practice transcription a week – and my policy is to return practice pieces in a pocket on my door before going home at night – I am here until nine o'clock every evening. This is the best way to learn to transcribe. If you don't get enough practice and prompt feedback, then you don't achieve the standard. Phonetics is on the science side of the arts and humanities spectrum, I suppose. It is so labour-intensive compared with other areas, it should really be funded as a science subject.

### **How did you develop an interest in phonetics?**

The students often ask me this. I think it has something to do with an experience in primary school. I started school speaking with a Yorkshire accent, just like my father. But it was a private school in the south of England, and the teacher said to me: "Unless you are

going to speak properly, it would be better if you said nothing at all." If I hadn't had this short, sharp shock at the age of four, maybe I would never have developed an ability to hear subtle distinctions in accents. I also remember listening to a minister in church when I was about nine years old. He cited from the Bible, "I am the vine and you are the *brrr*-anches", pronouncing the 'r' in branches with a bilabial trill, which I found really funny because I had never heard that before. Recent research also suggests that there may be a structural difference in the auditory cortex of phoneticians which could be behind this propensity for hearing and making sounds. I recently participated as a subject in a study by researchers at UCL who looked into this. It seems that Broca's area (the region of the brain associated with speech production) also develops differently. We don't know of course whether the difference is a result of having an interest in sounds or if it was there beforehand and prompted that interest in the first place.

### **If you were looking at a phonetics classroom in five years time, how would it be different from now?**

There probably won't be one, not as we understand it. Phonetics is being squeezed out. Traditional phonetics is being dropped from syllabuses because it is difficult and expensive to deliver and there are fewer and fewer people able to teach it. Increasingly it looks to me that the way forward is likely to be in distance education. But you need to train the ear as well as learn the theory, so online courses are still a huge challenge. People will think twice now about doing an MA in phonetics because they will ask: "What is the job at the end of it? Can I become an academic?" Maybe if you are very lucky but you will be fighting for limited posts with many other would-be phoneticians. Students can see why

they should do English language or geography, but can they see why they should do phonetics?

### **We haven't talked about your publications yet. You have published quite a bit as well of course.**

The main focus of my research is phonetic pedagogy, especially how to train students to do practical phonetics. I have published a couple of books, for example *Speech Sounds* (Routledge 1995), which seems to be very popular [*it went into a second edition in 2005*], and now I am waiting for the page proofs of *Understanding Phonetics*, to be published by Hodder. For a number of years my children took up much of my attention, so during those years I published less. I still think it is more difficult for women to work in HE, although I have been very lucky – I have a husband (also a phonetician) who believes in equality, both professional and domestic! Without his support, I doubt I would be where I am today.

**At the end of this interview it is not difficult to understand why students give Patricia such positive feedback on her teaching. The nice thing about Patricia is that she remains a very modest person. "I am obviously flattered to get this award, although I am not very good at blowing my own trumpet." But as this interview has shown, she clearly deserves this National Teaching Fellowship: it is recognition for her commitment, enthusiastic teaching and the support she has given to generations of students at Westminster and beyond.**

Jeanine Treffers-Daller is Professor of Linguistics at the University of the West of England and Chair of the LLAS Specialist Advisory Group for Linguistics.

# Linguistics in the 21st century

Arran Stibbe considers the role of linguistics within an unsustainable society.



The Browne Review (2010) suggested that public funding of higher education should focus on what it called 'priority' subjects such as science, technology and medicine for "higher economic growth rates and the improved health of society" (p2). This has sparked a fierce debate about the value of different subjects, one that is framed largely in terms of the contribution that disciplines make to economic growth. What tends to be missing from the debate, however, is the larger picture of the role that higher education plays within a society that is unsustainable, a society that is undermining the

ecological systems that support human life. Ecological destructiveness is not rooted in a lack of science or technology, but in the social and cultural systems which determine

the foundations of the society they are part of, and questioning whether those assumptions provide a suitable base for society in the changing conditions of the 21st century.

**"sustainability is a linguistic issue as much as a scientific or psychological one"**

how and for what ends technology is employed. The importance of subjects such as linguistics is that they equip students with skills in exposing the assumptions that form

Linguistics has a long tradition of not only analysing the role of language in social practices but also attempting to intervene in those social practices to create a more equitable society.



For example, critical discourse analysts have exposed the role of language in racism and other forms of oppression, and anthropological linguists have shown how dominant literacy practices contribute to inequality. In the 21st century the concern for social justice increasingly includes consideration of issues such as peak oil, resource depletion, ecosystem degradation, water scarcity, climate instability, and energy insecurity. These problems are caused by the rich, threaten the long term ability of the Earth to support human life, and have an immediate and disproportionate impact on poorer communities. All of

these issues are caused by social and cultural structures that encourage people to consume more than they need, and governments and corporations to focus narrowly on economic growth and profit rather than on improving people's wellbeing. To the extent that social structures are discursively constructed, sustainability is a linguistic issue as much as a scientific or psychological one.

The term 'ecolinguistics' has been used to describe linguistic analysis that takes into account not only the embedding of language within societies, but also the embedding of societies within the larger ecosystems

they depend on for their continued survival (Forum 2010). An ecolinguistic analysis of advertising, for example, might consider not only the linguistic techniques that advertisements use for constructing consumer identities, but also the consequences of excess consumption on the ecosystems that support life. A study of linguistic imperialism might consider not only the cultural loss that occurs when local languages are displaced, but also the loss of knowledge about how to live sustainably within the local environment that is embedded in those languages. An analysis of language and gender may examine

the ecofeminist theory that the kind of language used to marginalise and oppress women is also used to establish unsustainable and oppressive relationships between humans and the natural world. Research into language and identity might consider how identities are changing in response to the growing awareness of having exceeded environmental limits, and research into language and ethics may look at the way that new terms (e.g. 'binge flying' or 'carbon footprint') reflect new ethical movements. Consideration of the embedding of humans within larger ecological systems is increasingly entering the linguistics curriculum, but it does not need to be considered a separate sub-discipline – 'ecolinguistics' – since it is relevant to so many areas. Instead it could be seen as an integral part of the larger project of linguistics, which is to use the scientific study of language for the benefit of society.

It is not only the content of linguistics curricula that is changing in response to the overarching concerns of the 21st century – there are also changes in pedagogy and the general approach to teaching. Perhaps the most important is the increasingly multidisciplinary, systemic, or holistic approach. The interaction of the linguistic system with other systems (e.g. social, economic, and ecological), and the consequences of this interaction for social justice and the continuation of human life in a world of finite resources is as much a part of linguistics in the 21st century as the detailed internal workings of the language system. Students are encouraged to consider the larger picture from day one, learning about the details of the language system through critical analysis of real-life examples in their full social and ecological contexts rather than in

isolation, and undergoing continual reflection about the conditions of the changing world around them and the role of linguistics in responding to those changes.

If students are revealing, through critical language analysis, dominant ways of writing and speaking that form the foundation of an unsustainable and unjust society, then they also need to gain skills in using language creatively to express different models of the world. Rather than shoehorning students into writing only academic prose suitable for specialist linguistics journals, the shift is towards opening up options for students to gain skills in expressing themselves creatively and persuasively in a wide variety of genres, both written and oral. This includes skills in contributing to online forums, in expressing their vision through speeches, in constructing ethical arguments for general audiences, or in creating innovative multimedia presentations on topical issues. The linguistic aspect of this is detailed self-reflection on how the students' own use of language models the world (in contradistinction to the discourses that underpin an unsustainable society) and the potential consequences of the modelling for contributing to a more sustainable society. Efforts are currently under way to explore ways of rigorously assessing creative and reflective language projects, as a possible alternative/addition to the traditional linguistics dissertation (Rethinking 2010).

This article only had space for the briefest look at how linguistics curricula and pedagogy are changing in response to the challenges of the 21st century. There is much more to say. For now, though, the conclusion is that linguistics has a role to play within society that is far more

important than producing graduates with the technical skills to further industrialise an already unsustainable society in the name of a short-lived spurt of economic growth before ecological collapse. Instead, linguistics offers the chance to produce graduates who question the current unsustainable underpinnings of the society they live in and contribute new discourses, new stories, and new perspectives that are responsive to the changing conditions of the world around them.

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Arran Stibbe is Senior Lecturer in English Language at the Department of Humanities, University of Gloucestershire.





# Discover Japanese Studies

Discover Japanese Studies is a new website aimed at students interested in studying Japanese language and culture at university.

## **Find out:**

Why study Japanese?

Can I really learn Japanese?

What can I do with a degree in Japanese Studies?

What is it like living in Japan?



[www.discoverjapanesestudies.org](http://www.discoverjapanesestudies.org)



# Collect, protect, connect:

## documenting the voices of vanishing worlds

Mark Turin tells us about the World Oral Literature Project, an urgent global initiative to document and make accessible endangered oral literatures before they disappear without record.

### Language death

The *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* released by UNESCO (2009) claims that more than 2,400 of over 6,500 languages spoken around the globe today are in danger of disappearing. Many of these speech forms will cease to be used as communicative vernaculars by the next generation of speakers. As most are oral and have no established written form, these languages risk vanishing without trace.

Linguists around the world are responding to this threat by documenting endangered languages, training a new generation of field linguists and partnering with members of speech communities who are preserving and revitalising their threatened tongues. Even theoretical linguists, such as Noam Chomsky, have become vocal backers of language documentation projects, realising that the wealth of linguistic forms on which their theories rely risk disappearing unrecorded. The urgency of the task has also captured the imagination of a public beyond the academy, with regular media coverage along the lines of “one language lost every week” or “last speaker of X dies”.

### And what about 'culture'?

But the death of a language is not just about words, syntax and grammar, nor does it affect only small, 'traditional' and largely oral cultures. Languages convey unique forms of cultural knowledge and speech forms encode oral traditions. When elders die and livelihoods are disrupted, these creative expressions become threatened. A well-intentioned and important national education programme in Mandarin Chinese or English, for example, may have the side-effect of undermining local traditions and weakening regional languages. And for many communities around the world, the transmission of oral literature and performative traditions from generation to generation lies at the heart of cultural practice. As languages die, established systems of learning and knowledge exchange can break down. And for all of the apparent benefits, globalisation and rapid socio-economic change also exert particularly complex pressures on smaller communities, often eroding expressive diversity and transforming local culture through assimilation to more dominant ways of life.

### The response

What is to be done about language endangerment and its grave cultural effects? Linguists have been galvanised by funding and a renewed sense of urgency, exploring innovative ways to collaborate with people who were previously only referred to as informants or consultants. The anthropological response has been more piecemeal, however, with a handful of regional projects that have not as yet linked up to provide an integrated response to the challenge of time-sensitive and responsible cultural documentation. Yet ethnographers are so often the ones to have the long-term relationships with places and people that add richness and texture to linguistic descriptions.

I set up the World Oral Literature Project to encourage collaborations between local communities, anthropologists and linguists. Established in 2009 at Cambridge, we provide supplemental grants for the field documentation of oral literature, publish and archive heritage collections online and in print, and organise lectures and workshops to bring together fieldworkers, archivists, librarians and indigenous scholars to discuss the best strategies for promoting research on endangered narrative traditions.

### What's 'oral' about 'literature'?

To some ears, the term 'oral literature' is a contradiction in terms. Is literature not by definition written? It is easy to forget that while all natural, human languages are spoken or signed, only some have established written forms. While our European classics are published and taught as literature in schools, oral narratives rarely have that chance since, until relatively recently, few indigenous peoples have had a means to document their cultural knowledge in writing. Songs, poems and legends can be an invaluable part of a community's heritage that may be jettisoned in the



Photo by Marion Wettstein

name of modernity and progress, and not translated when people switch to using a more dominant language.

#### Technology and sustainability

I hope that the World Oral Literature Project will grow into a centre for the documentation and appreciation of endangered oral traditions from around the world. We will only

## “Linguists have been galvanised by funding and a renewed sense of urgency”

succeed, however, if the project is of interest to indigenous communities themselves. While materials can be hosted and maintained in Cambridge, communities will need copies of the output so that future generations can access the cultural knowledge and language of their ancestors. Multi-hosting and web distribution are now so commonplace that many of my students find it hard to imagine an era when collections had only one tangible copy, locked away for posterity and protection in a Western archive. Combining the ease of digital reproduction with the open vision that lies behind organisations like Creative

Commons has led me to envisage our project as providing a platform and conduit for the wider dissemination of cultural content, with the copyright and intellectual property remaining firmly in the hands of the depositor, performer or community.

Generations of anthropologists have had the privilege of working with

indigenous communities and have recorded volumes of oral literature while in the field, but many of our colleagues have not known what to do with these recordings once they finish analysing them. We can now offer a way for the material that has been gathered to be digitised, catalogued, preserved and disseminated in ethically and culturally appropriate ways.

#### Collect, protect, connect

The impressive New Zealand Film Archive has a mission to collect, protect and connect New Zealanders with their moving image heritage. These three verbs also summarise our own aims. *Collection* is the gathering

and documentation of oral literature in the field, not in an extractive or acquisitive manner, but in a way that is responsible, collaborative and predicated on trust. *Protection* is its archiving and curation – doing the best we can to ensure that these unique cultural materials are maintained, migrated and refreshed as new technologies become available. The *connection* is made when collections are returned to source communities and when they reach a wider public.

At present, there is no single place that offers researchers and communities from around the world a pledge that both historical and contemporary collections of oral literature will be responsibly managed, archived and stewarded into the future. With sustained funding, this is what we hope to provide.

[www.oralliterature.org](http://www.oralliterature.org)

Dr Mark Turin is a Research Associate at the University of Cambridge and Director of the World Oral Literature Project.



# Going for gold: the United Kingdom Linguistics Olympiad

The United Kingdom Linguistics Olympiad is a national competition for school students, with the winners going on to represent the UK in the International Linguistics Olympiad. Graeme Trousdale tells us more.

Linguistics olympiads are national competitions for secondary school students, in which they solve linguistic data problems. In 2010 the United Kingdom held its first Linguistics Olympiad. Similar competitions happen in a number of other countries, though it is only recently that they have taken place in English-speaking countries. The United Kingdom Linguistics Olympiad (UKLO) is part of a consortium of English Language Computational Linguistics Olympiads (ELCLO), which developed out of the North American Computational Linguistics Olympiad (NACLO) in 2009. The UKLO also enters a team in the International Linguistics Olympiad. International olympiads for school students exist in a number of other subjects, especially in mathematics and the natural sciences.

The linguistics olympiads have an international history dating from Russia



Olympic gold medalist and Linguistics graduate Christine Ohuruogo is patron of the UKLO

in the 1960s. The Russians recognised that children enjoy grappling with the intricacies of language structure, and developed tests which stretch the brightest of the bright, often based on languages which most of us have never heard of, or on formal patterns involving language, such as codes or computational systems. It is the

**“the olympiad provides an opportunity for boys to engage with language”**

challenge of the crossword puzzle and sudoku rolled into one, often involving the extra rewards of having learned a real bit of a real language, and developing core skills which form the basis of work in the language sciences at higher education level. Recognising commonality across languages, and encouraging students to think about rule-based generalisations, provides them not only with the skills of analysis for general language study, but also with skills which may be particularly applied to work in computational linguistics. In fact, many of the puzzles and tests devised by the ELCLO committee and given to students taking part in the local competitions are essentially puzzles about artificial intelligence and how humans are able to produce and

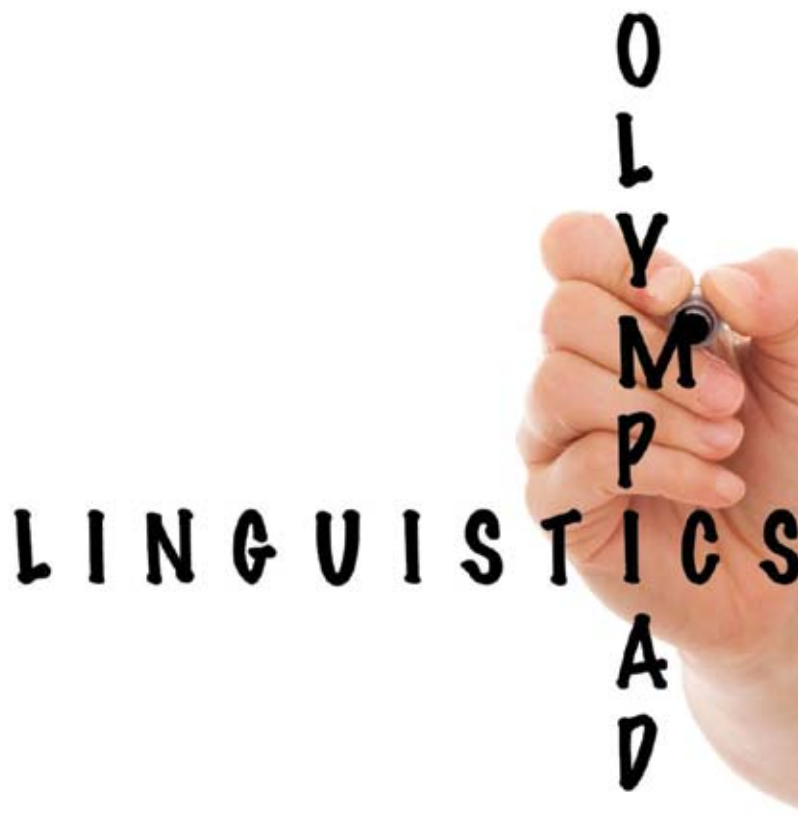
compute natural language.

Linguistics olympiads are spreading. Every year since 2002 there has been an International Linguistics Olympiad (IOL), attracting teams from all over the world. In 2010, the event in Stockholm hosted teams from Australia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, India, Ireland, Latvia, the

Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovenia, South Korea, Sweden, the USA and, for the first time, the UK. The UK teams – two teams of four – were a carefully selected group of school students, aged from 15 to 18, whose capacity for understanding the principles of linguistic analysis, and whose rigorous application of the scientific method to problems in language, greatly impressed all of those involved in the organisation of the competition.

Linguistics olympiads have a special place among the science olympiads because they attract both boys and girls. Even at international level, girls perform much better in linguistics olympiads than they do, for example, in the mathematics olympiads, and in the first UKLO competition, they performed





# LINGUISTICS

## OLYMPIAD

as well as the boys. Equally significantly, the olympiad provides an opportunity for boys to engage with language, which they may otherwise be generally reluctant to do. In short, linguistics olympiads may help to bring girls into science, and boys into languages.

The yearly UKLO competition is held over two rounds. The first round takes place in schools using materials distributed by the UKLO committee. Tests are available at two different levels: foundation (typically for younger pupils), and advanced. The advanced level tests qualify competitors for entry to the second round, which is by invitation to those who had the highest scores in the first round and takes place over a weekend at a university in the UK (Sheffield in 2010, Edinburgh in 2011). This second round involves tuition from academic linguists, prior to the second test. Those who score highest in round two are selected to represent the UK in the international competition.

This selection process for the IOL has effects that go far beyond the selection of the UK team. 2010 was the first year of the UK competition, so the UKLO committee had to

develop a structure to suit our own national circumstances. One oddity is the lack of opportunity at school for children to explore language structure (e.g. unlike other countries, the curricula in UK schools involve the teaching of very little grammar), so we saw the Olympiad as a way to promote this kind of analytical study as a new experience. The response in schools has been most encouraging; here are some representative statements from teachers involved in UKLO 2010:

- "It's really the first time that I've seen students actually get so involved in working out how languages work. It really is brilliant!!"
- "May I say how pleased I am that my old college friend, ..., told me about the competition. My school has never participated in anything like this before and it has been highly challenging and fun. I only managed to complete the first three questions under timed conditions myself, and thoroughly enjoyed the ensuing brain-ache!"
- "The pupils who participated this year are all keen to have another

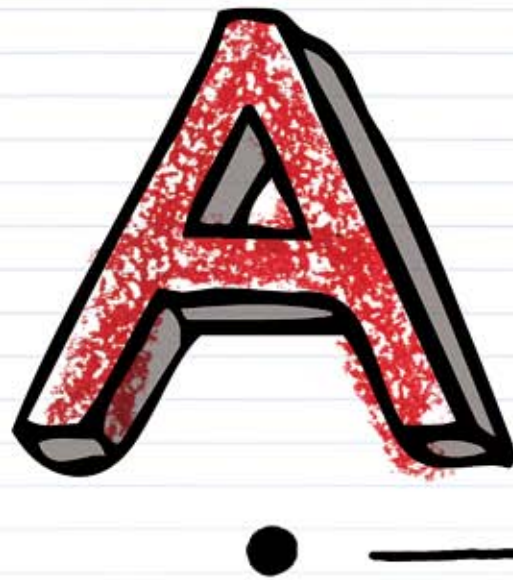
crack next year. You have done a terrific job co-ordinating the whole event and I hope you enjoy round 2 and Sweden."

Even more encouragingly, the competition attracted students as young as 12, and as many boys as girls. We expect even larger numbers in this year's competition, and we are considering hosting the IOL in 2013. As a charitable organisation, we rely solely on funds from sponsors. We have been fortunate to secure some funds in the past from various organisations including academic societies, university departments and schools but we need further funding in order to continue to run the competition and send our best young linguists to represent the UK at the IOL. You can find out more about UKLO by visiting [www.uklo.org](http://www.uklo.org)

Graeme Trousdale, a member of the UKLO committee, is a Senior Lecturer in the Linguistics and English Language Department at the University of Edinburgh.



# Life after linguistics



Linguistics graduate, **Rachel Tyrrell** tells us how her career path has developed since graduating in 2003.

I chose to study linguistics because I had, and still have, an enduring passion for language – why certain forms are used, how it is employed. I love to unpick conversations and discuss word choices and their definitions.

I completed a degree in Linguistics and English at the University of the West of England (UWE) in 2003.

The degree course was broadly based across linguistics, giving an introduction to different areas. I particularly enjoyed studying language and gender, psycholinguistics and child language development. Taking a joint degree award with English literature, a subject I had been strong at in school, felt like a safe option.

After graduating, I worked as an English teacher for a year, at the *British Institutes* in Milan. I taught English to children, students and business people. There was a clear link here with the knowledge and understanding of language structure that I had learned on my degree, and I think that I found teaching grammatical structure easier than colleagues who had studied degrees in other subject areas.

The experience of teaching English sparked my interest in the English as a foreign/second language teaching materials used in the school, such as textbooks and reference books, and

particularly dictionaries. And I missed studying! When I returned to the UK, I completed a Masters in Language and Lexicography at the University of Birmingham. I should admit that it was more for the love of the subject and the opportunity to study it, than a realistic expectation of going on to work directly in that area.

After my Masters degree, I worked for the publishing arm of a learned society, as a publishing administrator on an academic journal within the physical sciences. I supported the editor, overseeing the peer review process, assisting at board meetings and dealing with general enquiries. However, it was clear that I would not be able to get much further, as a degree in the physical sciences was required to progress to an editorial position.

In addition, my lack of experience of line management, project management and strategic planning was apparent. To address this, I started working as an operations manager at a large retail store in Bristol. While the job wasn't at all related to my studies, I enjoyed having my own workload, projects and large team to manage. The work was very challenging and I learned a great deal. In the time I worked there, I rewrote all guidance and customer letter templates to avoid ambiguity,

which improved customer relations somewhat via linguistic means! It was, however, a role definitely lacking in academic interest.

In 2007, I moved to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) where I still work today. My first role was Research Development Manager, which required linguistics knowledge to a Masters level and management experience, so I felt it was a great match for me. The role included primary responsibility for grant applications in linguistics, and leading on linguistics referee selection across all competitions. I made recommendations to panels and boards and provided advice on remit

**“I had, and still have, an enduring passion for language”**

enquiries, discipline reviews, cross-council funding opportunities and other related enquiries, including liaison with learned societies. The cross-disciplinary nature of linguistics, with its links to subjects such as psychology and sociology served me well.



I was promoted in 2009 to Deputy Team Head of the Postgraduate Training and Career Development Team in the Policy and Resources Directorate. My main responsibility relates to the training and skills committee, which oversees ESRC's training and

development schemes for postgraduate, early and mid-career researchers and provides advice and guidance to Council, the Chief Executive and the ESRC directorates on the capacity building needs of the social science research base. I also work on the

Health of Social Science Strategy, a series of targeted initiatives that aim to boost recruitment in a number of shortage disciplines/priority areas, and on researcher development for all stages of the researcher career path.

Without a doubt, my linguistics background certainly helps when writing and editing guidelines, decision letters and reports. I am sure that my knowledge of linguistics has also contributed to my verbal skills when presenting at events and participating on interview panels and to my textual skills in reading reports critically.

Rachel Tyrrell is Deputy Team Head (Postgraduate Training and Career Development) in the Policy and Resources Directorate of the Economic and Social Research Council.



# LANQUA

A QUALITY TOOLKIT FOR LANGUAGES

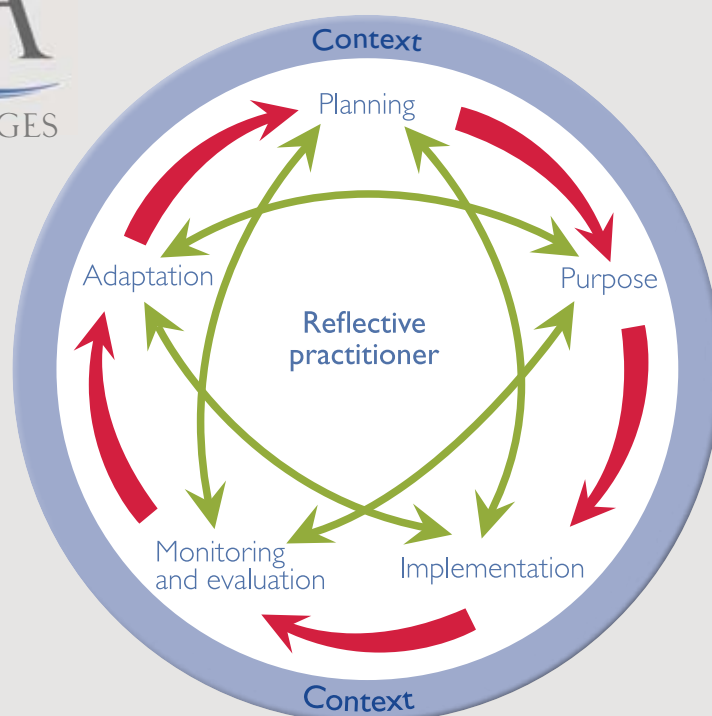
The Language Network for Quality Assurance (LanQua) has developed a toolkit for assuring and enhancing quality in language education. Visit: [www.lanqua.eu](http://www.lanqua.eu)



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.





# National Student Survey:

## a good power tool if you know how to use it

John Canning provides some useful tips on interpreting and responding to the National Student Survey data.

Power tools can save time, money and effort if used properly. But if used incorrectly they can lead to wasted time, money and even a trip to hospital. Similarly, when used well the National Student Survey (NSS) offers a genuinely useful tool for enhancing the student learning experience. Used poorly, it can lead to stress, rash decision making and wasted time and resources.

### About the survey

The NSS consists of 21 statements in six categories:

- the teaching on my course
- assessment and feedback
- academic support
- organisation and management
- learning resources
- personal development

There is also a 22nd statement: "Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course." This final statement is most frequently used in the league tables compiled by national newspapers. The percentages of students agreeing and disagreeing with each statement are published online at [www.unistats.com](http://www.unistats.com)

### How did we do? (Or how did we do compared with everyone else?)

For many academics, the first encounter with the NSS is not a happy one. A message from the Vice-Chancellor demands to know why your French course has a lower percentage of satisfied students than your competitor's course. Why has your score on assessment and feedback gone down this year?

You might not know your NSS scores and how they compare with other departments in your discipline or other departments in your university, but someone in your university does. And if it is not good, they will let you know.

On the other hand you may be celebrating your place as the top department for student satisfaction. Enjoy your triumph, but there is no room for complacency. You may be top of some league table, but you might only be a fraction of a percentage point ahead of second, third, fourth and fifth.

**"The NSS is potentially a very useful tool for enhancing the experience of your students"**



## How to respond

Whether you are celebrating or commiserating it is time to take a deep breath. The NSS is potentially a very useful tool for enhancing the experience of your students, but only if you use it carefully. Here are some suggestions:

# 1

### Don't chase the ratings

With the NSS being used in so many league tables, the temptation to make quick and wholesale changes in response to a low score can be alluring. Too many students may disagree with the statement: "The library resources and services are good enough for my needs" but it does not justify an instant decision to refurbish the Language Resource Centre or to purchase a few more copies of *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Similarly, if you are not satisfied with the response to "I have received detailed comments on my work" an immediate edict to staff to write more comments on student essays may not be appropriate. Sometimes the reason for a lower score may be obvious. Last year's teething problems with the new timetabling software may explain why you don't do so well on: "The timetable works efficiently as far as my activities are concerned." However, when the reason is not glaringly obvious, implementing rapid change based on unsubstantiated assumptions could lead to a lot of wasted time, effort and money if scores do not improve the following year.

# 2

### Don't blame other people

A methodological quirk of the NSS is that joint honours students fill in only one questionnaire. The responses of a student studying French and Spanish will be equally divided between these two subjects. In languages, where most students are doing more than one subject, much of the so-called disciplinary data is 'polluted' by data which actually refers to other subjects. Other departments can become easy targets for blame. Whatever you think privately, it is not advisable to openly criticise other departments. If any department does have severe problems which may be damaging NSS scores, then rest assured your senior management already knows about it.

# 3

### Look at the free text comments

Although the statistics for all institutions are publicly available the open comments added by students are only available to the institution to which they refer. If you have not been given these, ask your planning office or the department that deals with the NSS to give you a copy. These may confirm your suspicions, or they may raise issues of which you were previously unaware.

the  
**National  
Student  
Survey**  
www.thestudentsurvey.com



# 4

## Compare with your institution's own data

Your institution may run its own survey for first and second year students, which may be based on the NSS. You are also likely to have evaluation forms for individual modules. Use all the data you can to get an overall picture of student satisfaction.



# 5

## Talk to your students

What is going through a student's mind when they are asked to comment on the statement: "Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching?" All staff? Does the student immediately think of the naturally enthusiastic tutor or do memories of that exceptionally boring/demoralised lecturer come to mind? Organise some interviews or focus groups with students and find out. The notable problem areas for almost all disciplines are assessment and feedback. When students are asked to comment on "Feedback on my work has been prompt" what do they understand by 'feedback'? Is it written comments on an essay or correction of pronunciation during a language class? Does 'prompt' mean five minutes, one hour, three weeks, two months? The statement "I have received detailed comments on my work" raises questions of 'how detailed?' and 'what is detailed?'



## LLAS project

LLAS is working with ten departments of languages, linguistics and area studies to explore the NSS in further detail. A report on the findings will be published on the LLAS website in July 2011.

### References and further reading

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### Websites

HEFCE's website includes reports on the NSS data [www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/nss/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/nss/)

Ipsos MORI gives results by institution (login needed – ask at your institution's planning office for details) <http://bit.ly/ekFRSG>

The National Student Survey [www.thestudentsurvey.com/](http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/)

Unistats can be used by potential students to compare institutions <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>

John Canning is Senior Academic Coordinator for Area Studies at the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies.







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**Fantastic Beasts: Dragons**

**Description**

Drawings of dragons by the Flanders-born mannerist artist Giovanni Stradanus (1630). The original copy of these images can be found at the Roderic Bowen Library and Archives, University of Wales Lampeter.

**Resource Metadata**

**From Added** Dr Matt Phillpott 25 Sep 2009 11:50

**Keywords/Tags** Ukioer, Oerhist, History, Dragons, Early Modern, Myths, Legends

**Languages** Latin

**Attribution/Acknowledgements** Peter Hopkins, Roderic Bowen Library and Archives, History, University of Wales Lampeter

**Downloads** 11

**Copyright**

**Toolbox**

- Make another Resource based on this one
- Download this Resource as a zip
- Bookmark this Item
- Email the uploader
- Export this Resource as RSS

**This Resource Is In The Following Collections**

**Images of Fantastic Beasts**  
Images of Sea Monsters and Dragons from the 16th and 17th centuries. Provided by Peter Hopkins, Roderic Bowen Library and Archives, History, University of Wales Lampeter

**Added On:** 25 Sep 2009 12:27  
**Added By:** Dr Matt Phillpott  
**Tags:** Ukioer, Oerhist, History, Myths, Legends, Dragons  
**Languages:** English

**Comments & Notes**

**Comments**

Dr Matt Phillpott 22 Jan 2010 14:52

These images could be used for a variety of topics including mythology, dragons, engravings, works of Giovanni Stradanus or Jan Collaert, imagery, etc. The resource could be used as part of a presentation or as a topic of discussion in a seminar class. It could be interesting to give copies of these images to students and ask them to find out about their context - who drew them, why, at what time, etc? The images are high resolution jpeg files.

**Notes**

The files that make up this resource are shown here. This resource contains a series of digital images of 'Beasts'.

When you contribute a resource you attach tags to indicate subject areas and teaching types.

The author of the resource is shown clearly.

A Creative Commons Licence shows what you are allowed to do with the resource.

Groups of resources can be gathered into 'collections'.

The toolbox enables you to bookmark the resource and remix it with your own activities.

The comments window enables a conversation about the use of the resource.

Personal notes about the resource can be added here and are only visible to you.

## Four simple steps...

1. Visit [www.humbox.ac.uk](http://www.humbox.ac.uk) and have a look around.
2. Sign up for a free account and create a profile.
3. Download and/or contribute a resource.
4. Comment on resources by using the tools provided.



# The Community Café project: tea, teaching and technology

In a series of interviews with Kate Borthwick, Community Café participants tell us what the project means to them.

At LLAS, we have a history of supporting community languages<sup>1</sup> and so we were really pleased when, in May 2010, we were funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) to lead the one-year Community Café project. The project is a collaboration between LLAS, Southampton City Council community languages network and Manchester Metropolitan University. The aim of the project is to work together to create an open collection of online language and cultural materials for use by those engaged in the teaching and learning of community languages within the Southampton area and beyond. The project combines informal 'café' style meetings for the sharing of pedagogic knowledge in a social environment, with workshops on various aspects of using technology in teaching. All materials produced



are shared in the Language Box<sup>2</sup> repository to enrich the pool of online resources for community languages teachers generally.

The project focuses on teachers in Hampshire but has also begun to

draw in others from the Manchester area. I recently caught up with three of the teachers involved in the project but first I spoke to **Dr Sarwar Jamil**, Manager of the Community Languages Service at Southampton City Council.

<sup>1</sup> CILT, The National Centre for Languages defines community languages as "languages spoken by members of minority groups or communities within a majority language context". [www.cilt.org.uk/community\\_languages.aspx](http://www.cilt.org.uk/community_languages.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> [www.languagebox.ac.uk](http://www.languagebox.ac.uk)

# community café



## “It will enrich the language teaching content available to all teachers”

### **How big is the community languages network in Hampshire?**

Hampshire is home to a wide range of community languages, including Gujarati, Bengali, Chinese, Afghan Farsi, Hindi, Malay, Malayalam, Persian, Punjabi, Polish and Urdu.

These languages are usually learnt in supplementary schools or in the community, rather than within the mainstream education system.

There are 150 teachers teaching 17 languages to GCSE-level.

### **How much support is there for these teachers?**

Just me. I run training sessions, find books and resources for teachers to use, find suitable premises for classes, and provide help and guidance. They need support as most have no teacher training and some are not particularly confident with English. Most also work full-time in jobs unrelated to teaching and have families so they have little time.

### **Do the teachers in the network currently use technology in their teaching?**

Not really. Most use computers in their daily life but not in their teaching. We are not able to provide enough computers for all the students, and we have a limited budget for training in all areas, not just in the use of technology. Many teachers also do not have access to computers in their teaching environments, even though many wish to use them.

### **How has the Community Café project helped the teachers?**

It has been an extremely good thing. It has provided hands-on experience for everyone in using technology and this is different from previous training – it means Café sessions are exciting to attend. Tutors are usually passive in training sessions, but they participate wholeheartedly in Café meetings. There is lots of interaction across linguistic groups, and skills transfer between teachers, which there has not been before. Teachers are keen to attend meetings because they can clearly see the relevance to their own

teaching. Personally, I have learnt new techniques and ideas, which I am using to create resources for teachers in the network to adapt for their own languages. Taking part in the project has been very gratifying for me because tutors have enjoyed it so much.

### **Are any of the teachers using what they have learnt from the project in their teaching?**

Yes, tutors are already applying some of the things they have learnt in the classroom, and this has made a big difference to teaching quality. Of course, they are also creating resources for the Language Box and using these too. The project has opened a new door for them – we could not have afforded to do this in the past. It is a big challenge for them because of their lack of teacher training and training in using technology in the classroom, but they are always keen to learn and face that challenge.



# community café



Next, I spoke to three of these teachers:

## Hedi Gonda

### What do you teach?

I teach Hungarian on Sundays, to learners aged four-ten years. Some are very keen and some need more pushing. Students come from all over Hampshire, as there are not many Hungarian teachers. I started doing it because no-one else was willing and I wanted to preserve some cultural knowledge for my daughter and other Hungarian children. I have two groups working on different things during each two-hour class and there are not many suitable resources available, so you have to be quite creative in finding and making resources. I enjoy it but it is very time-consuming.

### Do you usually use technology in your teaching?

I don't have much hardware – we used to be in a church hall. I usually use my own CD player to play songs, etc. and I get students to use the computer for homework. I use the internet to help me plan lessons. The children are more willing to do things if they can use computers.

### What has been the best thing about the project for you?

Each teacher has different issues so it is interesting to hear different experiences. I have got some teaching ideas from other colleagues during Café meetings. I have also become familiar with new things: using PowerPoint, podcasts, Hot Potatoes software. I'm looking forward to using them.

## Frances Xu

### What do you teach?

I teach A-level Mandarin Chinese every Saturday.

### Do you use technology in your teaching?

I usually use textbooks with some audio and video, and the whiteboard.

### What new skills have you learnt through taking part in the project?

I have learnt lots of new skills, e.g. how to create online activities, using PowerPoint in teaching, and how to create an audio recording for listening lessons. I will use as many of these skills as I can, to make lessons more fun and the content richer.

### What has been the best thing about the project for you?

It provides a community for language teachers to share teaching ideas and resources. The project leaders work hard to give us hands-on workshops so we can learn new technologies and modernise our teaching methods. It will also enrich the language teaching content available to all teachers.

## Krystyna Jenvey

### What do you teach?

I teach Polish.

### What new skills have you learnt through taking part in the project?

A lot of really useful computer skills, such as how to get resources online and making podcasts. In fact, I got my class to make their own podcasts and use them for correcting others' mistakes.

### What has been the best thing about the project for you?

I have found the Language Box to be very useful as inspiration for my own lesson planning because I can get ideas from other teachers' lesson plans and from their teaching resources. I have been publishing a series of Polish lesson materials for the Language Box, and I hope to make contact with other Polish teachers in the UK by doing this. I also love the carrot cake we have at each project meeting!

Kate Borthwick  
is Academic  
Coordinator for  
e-Learning at the  
Subject Centre  
for Languages,  
Linguistics and Area Studies  
and Project Manager of the  
Community Café project.



# Getting published: entering the dialogue of your discipline

Heather Walker Peterson outlines the steps her undergraduate students are encouraged to follow in order to get their research published.

Compared to more experienced researchers, undergraduates have additional hurdles to leap when seeking to publish. While their graduate mentors and teachers are frequently attending conferences and reading journals, undergraduates have encountered the language and ideas of their field mostly through classroom teaching and the 'oh-so-certain' prose of their textbooks. In the undergraduate linguistics programme that I coordinate, the teaching staff have designed the curriculum to help students navigate not only the process of an individual research project in language but also the steps to publish an article on their project. As teachers, we want our graduates to confidently enter the formal dialogue of their discipline and so we stress practising the discipline's discourse early in the research process.

## Early reading: finding a niche

As students begin working on their projects, they read journal articles on their topic and similar studies they can model. They familiarise

themselves with scholars who have done previous research. They look for their "niche", a term used by Barbara Johnstone in *Qualitative Methods in Sociolinguistics* (Oxford University Press 2000) to explain why an article on their study might be published even though other articles have been published on the same topic. At the undergraduate level, student researchers do not develop a new theory or always create an innovative study, but they can write about something interesting. Their approach or angle to a topic could be new even if the topic or context is not. Examining potential niches may help them to form research

questions early in a project. They adjust their niche as they complete their research and consider their conclusions.

## Early writing: speaking the discipline's language

For their projects, students write a tentative plan about their data collection. Writing a plan requires them to think through and to communicate their process to an audience. For work with human participants, that audience includes an institutional review board (IRB), which examines the ethics of their



research. Such a general audience helps researchers to generate language to explain a complex topic simply. Secondly, students write a literature review of the scholarship they read to prepare for their project. Writing a summarising paragraph on each work and its significance to their project is good practice for applying important terms and concepts. Finally, students keep a research journal. They write their questions, ideas, and even emotional responses to their research as well as comments on additional scholarship they are reading. Returning to this text during analysis and writing may trigger other interpretations or angles.

## “undergraduates have additional hurdles to leap when seeking to publish”

### Analysing a journal for publication

For an assignment, my students select a journal whose editor is likely to accept an article on their topic from an undergraduate. They evaluate one issue of the journal, reporting on its audience, the submission policy, the credentials of authors, and types of topics. Then they select one article and dig deeper: How long is the introduction? How many paragraphs are spent on background literature and theory? How are examples shown? What are the headings of the article? It is these headings that impact on initial drafting, i.e. how to lay out an article. If there is no article similar to theirs, they look at an article from another journal and examine its organisation. For articles about research on human participants, they may find that they can apply a form of the scientific method: research question and background theory, context, methodology and limitations, analysis, discussion, and conclusion. But not all topics fit this neatly.

### Writing the draft

Now that the student author has a sense of length and outline, the actual article writing begins. To prepare, my students read the chapter on writing in Johnstone (2000). I also give them the following tips:

- avoid floweriness. While you want to open with a good ‘hook’ to catch your readers’ attention, your scholarly writing needs to be specific and clear. Flowery writing may mislead your reader in your assumptions about data.
- get to the point quickly. Make sure you explain the niche you are filling (or ‘gap’ as Johnstone also calls it)

on the first page of your article.

Although background information is important, readers in your field will have some familiarity with what you are describing.

- if you explain your methods of analysis, avoid a long narrative of how you analysed, such as how you overcame mistakes
- avoid misleading generalisations. Although you should note patterns, be careful not to generalise them to all speakers of a language. Johnstone recommends the ‘grammar of particularity’. For example, an undergraduate researcher has not shown that all speakers of a particular language use loan words from a minority language, but rather that the specific speakers she interviewed did. Note the ‘did’ instead of ‘do’ – Johnstone suggests past tense to prevent generalising.
- when you give examples, provide at least two. If you have only one, you need to couch your language as a suggestion and call for further research.

- if you are speculating, provide reasons, and note that you are speculating
- raise questions for further study in your conclusion, but end strongly with your study’s contributions to the field
- aid the editors in reception of your article by double-checking the submission guidelines.

### Exposing the draft to others

In my course, I and undergraduate peers provide feedback on drafts. If students have a mentor in the particular theory or research approach, they ask that person to read it as well.

### Submitting the article

Even once submitted, the scholarly dialogue continues. The editor may contact the author and suggest some revisions for a resubmission. For a rejected article, an author can revise it for a different journal, tweaking it for another readership. If published, the article is finished, but the author’s ideas and research, I hope, are not. An author may find that other scholars email with questions and feedback. Congratulations are in order – the undergraduate author has formally entered the discipline’s written discourse.

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Heather Walker Peterson, PhD, is Linguistics Coordinator at Northwestern College in St Paul, Minnesota, USA.



**Editor’s note:** Two linguistics students from Northwestern College have published in *Debut: The Undergraduate Journal of Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies*, which is published online at [www.llas.ac.uk/debut](http://www.llas.ac.uk/debut)



# studying languages at university

New website

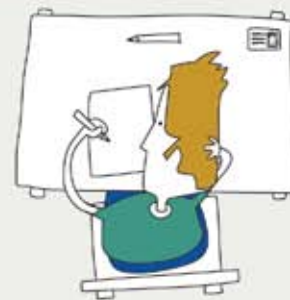
5 reasons to visit: [www.studyinglanguages.ac.uk](http://www.studyinglanguages.ac.uk)



1. The site has been **written by students** for students

Find top tips on language **study skills**

2.



3.

Get advice on your **year abroad** so you're ready to explore the world

Employability **after your degree**, discover the possibilities

4.



win **£300!**

5.

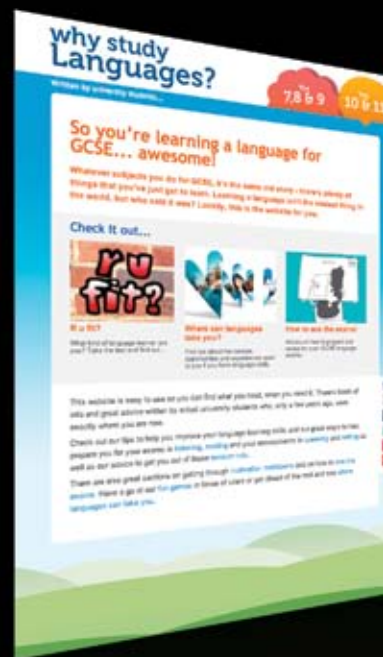
Enter our **competition**

Would you like to win £300 for a 1,000-word essay? The winning essays will be published on our website – great for putting on your CV!

To find out more: [www.studyinglanguages.ac.uk/competition](http://www.studyinglanguages.ac.uk/competition)

# My summer at LLAS: working as a student intern

During the summer of 2010, LLAS employed two student interns to help develop our student web pages. We invited **Siobhan Mills** to reflect on her experience.



While on my year abroad in France, I received an email from the University of Southampton telling me about a new internship programme. I scanned the list of vacancies and one jumped out at me – working at LLAS and writing two new innovative websites. I spent a lot of time filling in the application and was overjoyed when I received an email saying I had been short-listed. I received the time and date for my interview which, as I could not be in Southampton, was conducted over Skype, and the same night I found out I had the job!

Fast forward from April to the beginning of July and I was heading to LLAS for my first day. Everyone was really welcoming and friendly. I introduced myself as Siobhan, the Intern, but I was soon made to feel as much a part of the Subject Centre team as anyone else. I spent the first week being shown where everything was and desperately trying to remember everyone's names – luckily I had an office plan pinned

next to my computer for support! I spent the first week doing a market research task. Then I moved onto the main task for my internship: writing the content for two new websites. The website aimed at school students ([www.whystudylanguages.ac.uk](http://www.whystudylanguages.ac.uk)) already existed but was in need of updating. The focus for this site was to provide information for children in

great revision tips and strategies. In order to make the site appealing for school students who may not want to read long sections of texts, I devised games, quizzes and activities to supplement almost every page. Routes into Languages West Midlands filmed and produced *Speak!* – a *Hollyoaks*-esque drama about studying languages – supported by additional

**“I really enjoyed talking to people about studying languages”**

Years 7-11 about all aspects of language study. For the post-16 age group, there was information about A-level language exams. As it was not (too) long ago that I sat my GCSEs, I was able to draw upon my own experiences and reflect on what I would have found useful when I was taking my GCSEs. There are sections on the website covering the exam format, topics, structure and some

resources for teachers and parents. For the section on A-levels, the content is based on study tips and how to prepare for the exam including how to keep calm.

The second website ([www.studyinglanguages.ac.uk](http://www.studyinglanguages.ac.uk)) is aimed at students considering or already studying languages at university. This website was really great to write because it enabled me to reflect on



my more recent experience of language study, as well as other aspects of university life. It was fantastic contributing to this website as I felt I was helping those who may be concerned about what university is like, what is expected of you and how to cope in general. I would certainly have appreciated something like this when I was making sense of my higher education options. There is also an extensive section on the year abroad as this tends to form a compulsory part of most HE language degree courses, and is often seen as a daunting prospect to future language students. I was really glad to have the chance to tell students what the experience is actually like and about the huge amount of support and help that exists out there, as well as what a fantastic year it is.

A unique area of the second website is 'StudentVoice' which I had great fun putting together. I wrote a series of '700 words on...' articles, each of which covers an area of study

during my degree and aims to give budding language students and other readers an insight into the content modules available as part of a language degree. The other part of this section is a 'Q&A' with language students from universities nationwide asking about their modules and experiences of studying languages. I interviewed the students over Skype, transcribed the interviews and then re-formulated their answers into an article which is fun and informative for the readers.

In addition to writing the content for the websites, I also worked on other projects. I searched for native speakers of the 22 languages that feature in the Routes into Languages *I love languages... do you?* activity pack ([www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/love](http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/love)), in order to create an online quiz using voice recordings. I also helped decide which languages should be featured in the *Why study languages?* calendar ([www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/calendar](http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/calendar)) and then contacted relevant organisations all around the

world for translations. I was delighted to help out on the Routes into Languages stand at the Languages Show in October 2010 and really enjoyed talking to people about studying languages and the work done by LLAS.

Overall, I had a fantastic time working at LLAS and I really felt part of the team. Everyone was so friendly and helpful that I enjoyed and looked forward to going into work each day. The work I did was varied, fun and challenging and it is fantastic looking back on the whole experience and feeling I have made a difference to any budding linguists out there. Even though my internship finished several months ago, I still regularly look back at the websites and calendar with a smile.

Siobhan Mills is a final year French Linguistic Studies student at the University of Southampton.



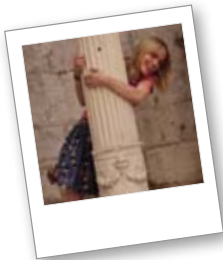
# Get in, get on, get out

Entrants in last year's LLAS student award competition were invited to reflect upon life before, during and after university. Paula Davis selects a few highlights.

For our 2010 student award competition, we invited undergraduates to submit essays on a choice of topics: (a) a promotional article aimed at school pupils; (b) a guide for new students; (c) my future employability. The following extracts are taken from the entries submitted by the runners-up.

## A promotional article

Sarah Louise Badrock, University of Manchester



I can order a meal in a restaurant in Portugal, converse with Portuguese friends in their own language, watch a film without subtitles, read Portuguese literature in the language in which it was written... I even get the opportunity to use my language

skills in Manchester. I have given directions to a Portuguese couple, eavesdropped on Brazilian cleaners in a lift, and even stepped in to help translate at an airport.

It's not only the language but the culture that really brings the language to life. One of my best memories is of being in Porto during the São João festival with some Portuguese

friends... drinking sangria, eating sardines, and setting off home-made paper lanterns with little tea-light candles inside to join the hundreds already floating through the night sky.

Learning a language is unlike studying any other subject. It is exciting and inspiring, and you get to see the world from a whole other perspective. As part of your degree you also get to travel abroad. How many courses give you those kinds of opportunities? Studying a language becomes an integral part of your life. You are learning how to communicate with people from a different culture, how to live in a different way and how to see life from a completely different perspective.

## A guide for new students

India-Chloe Woof, University of Sheffield



In I walk to the second class of the semester, oblivious that everyone has the workbooks we were given last class, and are comparing notes. "The professor didn't set any homework, did he?" I ask the girl next to me. "It's not homework, it's

class preparation," she says. Lecturers expect you to have prepared your work for class. If they call on you during a seminar and you haven't done the work, you won't want to repeat the subsequent feeling.

Later, a professor asked a lecture theatre full of students, "I'm assuming you have all heard about the riots in France?"

The sea of blank faces that stared back at him must have been disappointing. It's the best feeling in the world when you know what the professor is talking about, and the best way to achieve that is to read the news in your target language.

I find myself faced with what should be a language student's dream – a native speaker. Instead of talking to them, however, I find myself making my excuses. My error: not having confidence in my own language abilities and being terrified of making mistakes. A year on, and I'm living in Paris, and I'm so glad that I turned around and returned to the conversation speaking French. There is no substitute for native speaker exposure.

# My future employability

Ciaran Roe, University of Edinburgh



“Give me an example of how you've dealt well under pressure.”

“Actually, there was an instance during my year abroad at the University of Bologna ...”

“So you're that rarest of things in Britain: a candidate who can

speak a foreign language? That sets you somewhat apart. Please continue.”

“There was an occasion when I was unlocking my bike and I was approached by two men who asked me where I'd bought it. I told them that I'd bought it from a second-hand bike store. They grabbed my bike and attempted to wrench

it from my grasp. A policeman appeared on the next road, and the suspicious characters and I went over to discuss the situation. By this point, they'd realised I wasn't Italian, and were shouting, ‘Thief! Thief!’ I remained calm, coolly explaining to the policeman that ‘if I were to have stolen this bicycle, then why would I have returned to the scene of the crime?’ The policeman looked impressed with my ability to use the pluperfect subjunctive. My line of reasoning obviously appealed to his logic as much as my grammar did to his ear. He dismissed the claims of the shady duo.”

“It sounds as if you had a life-changing year! Would you be prepared to work abroad?”

“Absolutely.”

Rosie Shimmin, Cardiff University



“What are your plans for next year?”

With a year in foreign climes under our belts, we are pretty much set to face the world of work. The experience of living abroad makes the idea of living and working

anywhere into something more than a dream. Being able to communicate in another language feels like a super power and being able to understand day-to-day conversations on public transport feels like being an undercover cop.

So, with the idea that we can conquer the world putting a confident swagger in our step, what jobs are actually available to language graduates? Of course, there are the

generic options. “Are you going to be a teacher?” Or the possibility of being a translator looms.

But options for language graduates don't just stop there. The words: “I can also speak a second language” are like gold dust in any interview. Living, breathing and loving a different country shows that you are adaptable, responsible and ambitious.

The skills we learn through studying a language also mean that we have a greater understanding of our mother tongue. Many jobs look for applicants who are good communicators, a skill that comes with the title of second-language speakers. Being able to express yourself is important in the workplace and advantageous in the field of journalism or the civil service.

**“The words ‘I can also speak a second language’ are like gold dust in any interview”**

The winners of this year's student award competition were being decided as *Liaison* went to press. To see what they have to say about how languages, linguistics or area studies degrees equip you for life as a global citizen and to read full versions of previous winning essays, visit [www.llas.ac.uk](http://www.llas.ac.uk)

Paula Davis is Manager of the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies and editor of *Liaison* magazine.





## From zero to hero: on the status of HE language teachers

A keynote speaker at last year's *Languages in higher education* conference inspired Annette Blühndorn to have her say.

Researching for a paper on the current situation of German and German Studies in schools and at HE-level in England, I dug out numerous reports and reviews that have recently been written about the status of modern foreign languages in the UK. Skimming through the *Nuffield Languages Report* (2000), *Research Review in Modern Languages* (Kelly 2006), *Languages Review* (Dearing 2007), *Language matters* (Rand 2009), and *Review of Modern Foreign Languages provision in higher education in England* (Worton 2009), it struck me how these reports had not just highlighted the challenges to the subject, but also offered detailed suggestions on how to improve the

situation. However, have they actually changed anything? Are modern foreign languages in the UK any better now than they would have been without these extensive reports? Has anyone actually read all this material?

The answer to these questions came sooner than expected at the LLAS conference, *Languages in higher education: Raising the standard for languages* (London, July 2010). Professor Régis Ritz, in his keynote speech<sup>1</sup>, made the point that most of the reports and campaigning projects hardly had any effect. The reason for this was that those addressed by the reports, namely language teachers, would simply not read them. This

statement struck me. While I had realised that the various language reports had not managed to really change the situation of modern foreign languages in the UK, it had not occurred to me that this could be at least partly due to my own failure to read them. I had always assumed that they were addressed to someone higher up the university hierarchy.

"Whose fault is it?" Ritz asked. He did not provide an explicit answer to this question but continued his paper explaining that the situation of language teachers at HE-level was very gloomy. It was common for language teachers to work on an hourly-paid basis or as so-called visiting lecturers (c.f. Worton 2009, paragraphs 93 and 177). And the salaries even of those with a permanent contract were rather modest. Furthermore, there were hardly any career opportunities; on the contrary, language teachers often found themselves under significant pressure to justify their

<sup>1</sup>A recording of this keynote speech *European universities in need of HELP* (Higher Education Language Policy) is downloadable from [www.llas.ac.uk/video/6229#](http://www.llas.ac.uk/video/6229#)



existence. In addition, the financial constraints of universities had made it necessary to move away from small-group teaching, which had a serious and mostly negative impact on language teaching and the situation of language teachers (c.f. Worton 2009, paragraphs 30 and 119).

Again, I was stunned. How true this was! It was uplifting to hear Professor Ritz, someone so remote from me in terms of hierarchy, expressing my situation so clearly. From my own experience and from what my language-teaching colleagues at other British universities tell me, it is true that there is often no recognition at all of what

### “those addressed by the reports, namely language teachers, would simply not read them”

we are doing. Many language teachers are native speakers of the language they teach, and many academic colleagues who do not teach languages believe that our job consists of walking into the classroom and doing what comes naturally: speaking our mother-tongue. What a gross misperception of the high level of linguistic expertise, pedagogical skills, and professional knowledge which specialised languages teachers command. But there is no other explanation for the poor reputation we have amongst non-linguists. As a consequence, language teachers and 'research-active' staff are often disconnected, which is a problem when the latter tend to be the decision makers.

Travelling home from the conference, all this was buzzing around my head. Maybe it was no coincidence that Ritz's question, “Whose fault is it that nobody seems to read our reports?” was directly followed by his portrayal of the situation of language teachers. For me,

these two issues are clearly linked. Can language teachers – who are constantly given to understand that they are at the bottom of the departmental pecking order and whose work is constantly misjudged and undervalued – really be expected to study reports that come from the opposite end of the hierarchy? Personally I could not believe that they were written for me. As a language teacher what motivation is there to present academic papers, and hence to read language reports, in an environment that offers so little recognition for these activities?

I am not saying that language teachers are devoid of blame. Maybe we should fight for more recognition, insist on being involved in decision-making processes, and make colleagues aware of our achievements. After all, we are not only producing linguists who are highly sought after in the employment market, but we are also generating excellent student feedback for the National Student Survey. Another keynote speaker in London suggested that we should talk to our Heads of Department, the Dean or even the Vice-Chancellor about the situation of modern foreign languages and language teachers. Yes, we probably should. But given our current status, only a few heroes amongst us will perhaps have the confidence and connections to do so.

It is more difficult to stretch up from the bottom than to reach down from the top. At the moment, language teachers are at the bottom, and it would therefore be good if those at the top could occasionally reach down. I am sure this would result in major benefits not only for our students and the future of our discipline, but also for the international profile of HE language providers.

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Have you been inspired by something you've read in *Liaison*?

Do you have a burning question or a strong viewpoint?

Then don't keep it to yourself. Get in touch with the editor, Paula Davis [pd2@soton.ac.uk](mailto:pd2@soton.ac.uk) / 023 80593970

[www.teachernet.gov.uk/\\_doc/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/)

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Dr Annette Blühdorn is a Teaching Fellow in German at the Department of European Studies and Modern Languages, University of Bath.

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# A taste of Inuit

Rhoda Cunningham gives us a taste of the language of the arctic regions of Canada.

## The language and people

*Inuit* means 'people' in the Inuit language. Inuit are a group of culturally similar and true indigenous peoples inhabiting the arctic regions of Canada (Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut, Northwest Territories), Denmark (Greenland), Russia (Siberia) and the United States (Alaska). The Inuit language is grouped under Eskimo-Aleut languages across these borders. *Inuktitut* (ee-nook-tee-toot) and *Inuinnaqtun* (ee-noo-in-nack-toon) are two main dialects of the Inuit language that are spoken and written in the Territory of Nunavut, Canada.

Nunavut, meaning 'our land', is the least populous land mass in the world. Nunavut is a diverse territory spanning three time zones and covering 20% of Canada's land mass (equivalent to the size of western Europe). There are approximately 30,000 people living in 25 communities located in three regions. Of that population, 85% are Inuit and 75% speak *Inuktitut* or *Inuinnaqtun* as their first language.

## Dual writing system

The Inuit language has a dual writing system comprised of *Qaniujaaqpait* and *Qaliujaaqpait*.

*Qaniujaaqpait* means likeness of the mouth. *Qaniujaaqpait* are a set of syllabics where each symbol is positioned in three different ways to represent consonants and a particular vowel. Superscript symbols represent consonants only. There are 45 symbols in total.

You can construct a sentence in syllabics as one long word as long as it makes sense. During annual Inuit language celebrations each February, there is usually a competition to create the longest word. During the 2009 event, the winner, announced by the Languages Commissioner's Office, totalled 143 letters. It's challenging to read, to say the least. Give it a try [hint: 'sounds like 'sla'].

**“aangajaarnaqtuluuqtuqaqattalilauqsimanngittiam  
marirulungniqpallilainnaujaqataunasu#annaagtum  
marialuualilauqsima#apikkaluarmijungalittauruq.”**

Basically it says: “(at a younger age) it is said that I had also been saying that I wished drugs were never made!”

*Qaliujaaqpait* are roman orthography letters like the English alphabet. *Qaliujaaqpait* represents some sounds that are non-existent in the English language, categorised into three sets called voiceless, voiced, and nasal consonants. The *Inuinnaqtun* dialect uses a modified form of *Qaliujaaqpait*.

## A brief history of syllabics

Syllabics were introduced to Inuit by Edmund Peck early in the 1900's. Peck was an Anglican missionary who first introduced this system to Inuit of south Baffin Island. This original version consisted of four positional characters of each vowel, completing 60 characters. This syllabarium was subsequently embraced and its use spread rapidly. In 1976 the Inuit Cultural Institute (ICI) introduced a standardised dual writing system which removed some of Peck's original syllabic characters for ease of reading and proper pronunciation. The ICI standardised writing system is now widely used throughout Nunavut.

## Bridging the gap

The *Qaliujaaqpait* (roman orthography) system that was standardised by ICI, is now common among Inuit and used to effectively communicate globally in the Inuit language although standardisation of dialects has to be mainstreamed in the *Qaliujaaqpait* writing. This change has met with some resistance from the *Qaniujaaqpait* (syllabic) users and those who have connected the symbols to their identity. This reaction is similar to that experienced when ICI writing standards were first introduced in 1976.

The recent establishment of the new language authority *Taiguusiliuqtiit* will eventually start to address the issue of language standardisation. Dialects and their unique differences will be considered. There are examples of other Inuit dialects like the *Kalaallisut* in Greenland that are using a common writing standard system but retaining each of their own spoken dialects.

Transliteration – to represent letters or words written in one alphabet using the corresponding letters of another – is now a more convenient way to communicate electronically by reading or writing according to your particular preference.





### Sharing linguistic knowledge

There have been conferences on various language topics which have led to unity of Inuit from all the circumpolar regions. These language conferences provide a venue to share progress about what has already been accomplished, what is currently being done and plans for the future.

These gatherings provide an amazing opportunity to share ideas and promote cultural and linguistic revivals. Delegates come away rejuvenated and anxious to promote new ideas. The last exciting conference *Uqausivut Atausiujjutivut*, meaning 'our language brings us together' was a Nunavut language summit organised by Nunavut's Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth.

Performing arts are an integral part of these events. Art is a powerful means of expression which brings culture and language to life. It is captivating to watch traditional youth dancers dance and sing to the rhythm of a traditional Inuit drum. The dance and song communicates a story, building suspense with an abrupt ending and leaving the audience wanting more.

### Technology and tools

Inuit around the world have utilised new technology to express themselves linguistically and culturally, as well as demonstrating their traditional forms of expression.

Traditional storytelling is often done by an elder in a relaxed physical setting or can be aided with song and dance, throatsinging, string games, and ancient imagery as in petroglyphs, carvings or tools. More modern storytelling

can now be done through movies, dolls, puppets, cartoons, books, radio, video and performing arts. With these tools we hope that our traditional stories, complete with Inuit values, can be passed on to future generations.

There are many ways to share the stories including the internet where there are even some websites that can be viewed in the Inuit language. In fact the Government of Nunavut website is required to be available in English, *Inuktitut*, *Inuinnaqtun* and French. Young people are captivated by new technology and our goal is to engage them in using the Inuit language through its use on the internet.

While text messaging is as popular in Nunavut as the rest of Canada, current technology has the ability to text message using *Qaliujaaqpait* but not *Qaniujaaqpait* – but who knows what the future will hold.

What we do know is that with hard work and perseverance the future of Nunavut includes the Inuit language.

### References

Inuktitut Writing Systems: The Current Situation. *Inuktitut Magazine* (no 53 September 1983). Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada

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# Events calendar

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

## The future of language teaching at university

Date: 4 April 2011

Location: University of Dundee

This event will examine the future of language teaching at university by focusing on the following themes:

- current policy initiatives and concerns
- relationships between universities and schools/colleges
- curriculum and method: what issues do we need to address in teaching?
- university and community networks

There will also be practical workshop sessions on developing materials in lesser taught languages.

## Employability and enterprise in linguistics and English language degrees

Date: 11 April 2011

Location: University of the West of England, Bristol

Understanding graduate employability is a key issue for higher education, particularly in the current economic climate. Many universities have responded to the challenge and developed good practice in preparing students for the world of work. This workshop focuses on how to support linguistics and English language students in the development of employability skills that will enhance their careers. It will be of interest to academics and careers staff in universities who are interested in embedding placements or skills training into their degrees and would like to hear how this is done in a variety of institutions across the UK.

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

Date: 15 April 2011

Location: Jesus College Oxford

Aimed at new teaching staff (less than two years experience) in languages, linguistics and area studies, this workshop aims to complement 'generic' Postgraduate Certificate courses offered by institutions. The workshop will also be useful for experienced staff who are new to the UK and finishing and recent PhD students seeking academic employment.

## Workshop on teaching Islamic Studies in the north of England

Date: 26 May 2011

Location: University of Leeds

The Islamic Studies Network is organising a cross-disciplinary regional workshop for those working in Islamic Studies and related disciplines at HEIs in the north of England. The event aims to bring together teachers of Islamic Studies from a wide range of disciplines and is open to both specialists and non-specialists who teach on modules related to Islam. The event will be an opportunity for practitioners to network, gain a sense of the different ways in which Islamic Studies is taught in a regional context, share practice, and discuss region-specific issues in the teaching of Islamic Studies.

Please register at: [www.heacademy.ac.uk/islamicstudies](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/islamicstudies)

## How to teach the linguistics of modern foreign languages

Date: 3 June 2011

Place: Aston University

LLAS is planning an event on the interface between the teaching of linguistics and modern foreign languages (MFL). This issue is important because many linguistics departments in the UK are merging or have merged with English departments, and this leads to linguistics becoming more limited in scope, and less clearly linked with MFL. The workshop aims to share good practice in the teaching of French, German and Spanish linguistics in the UK, but contributions about the teaching of linguistic aspects of other modern foreign languages that are taught in the UK are welcome too.





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