Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies Subject Centre

LLAS Occasional Papers

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This publication contains papers generously donated by colleagues who have participated in Subject Centre seminars. In this issue the papers are from seminars held in May 2003 on Linguistics and Key Skills and in December 2001 on Teaching Linguistics to Students of Languages. The authors are:

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How can key skills "sell" Linguistics to students and employers?

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Abstract

I argue that an undergraduate course in Linguistics is an exceptionally good source of important life skills, given the right input from both the student and the teacher. I distinguish three kinds of learning experience: application of a given system of categories (e.g. the IPA), understanding of how language works, and self-reflection; and for each of these general categories I comment on the educational benefits and illustrate a range of more specific sub-categories. I also list some specific life skills that these educational experiences should develop, e.g. respect for evidence, tolerance, and self-understanding. I conclude with a few preliminary remarks on how these benefits can be "sold" to students and employers.

I spend half my working life teaching Linguistics, and I feel this is time well spent even though I know that very few of our students will become linguists (in any sense of the word). This is because I believe the students have the chance to develop a lot of important "life skills"[2] as a by-product of my teaching, so even if they can't remember the three tests for adjectives or the exact definition of diglossia, they may well have become better at coping with life. In short I think Linguistics is a particularly good curriculum subject from this point of view, and most of this paper is an attempt to lay out my reasons for thinking this. However I shall start with some rather obvious warnings to the effect that it's quite possible to spend three years studying Linguistics without learning anything worthwhile at all.

1. Some obvious reservations about life skills in Linguistics

a. A Linguistics BA doesn't **guarantee** any skill, whether subject specific or transferable. As we all know, there are students who fail to learn anything useful but scrape together just enough marks for a BA.

b. Successful teaching of any skill depends on **emotion** as much as cognition. Students need to be both interested and confident. A bored or anxious student may, reluctantly, learn a list of facts, but they're unlikely to learn life skills without some commitment and confidence. Again we all know this and can illustrate it from our experience of students' different reactions to our teaching.

c. Some life skills - e.g. ability to work in groups - depend heavily on teaching **methods** rather than on the subject content. Linguistics, per se, is no more likely to develop such skills than any other subject, and taking the example of group-work, I know from my own experience that teaching group-work requires special teaching skills which not every linguist has simply by virtue of being a linguist.

d. I believe that any skill is more likely to develop at all if it is conscious, and skills are more likely to be transferable if the learner is aware of them. This is as true of life skills as it is of more familiar subject skills, such as spelling or speaking a foreign language. I know that this belief is controversial, but if it is correct it is important. It is supported by the following quotation from the website of the Centre for Developing and Evaluating Lifelong Learning at Nottingham[3]:

> One widely accepted pre-requisite of the transferability of a set of skills is the individual's awareness of them. For instance, an **awareness** of how a report is presented in one field can help in successfully presenting a report in another field. An awareness of the dynamics of small groups, brought about following the review of one small group experience, can help in other group sessions. Embedding the skill in an activity without explicitly recognising it can minimise its transfer. And key skills can be transferred between different activities within a course, too. The critical feature appears to be the degree to which the students (and tutor) are **conscious** of the skill, can **reflect** on it and refer to it **explicitly**.

In other words, if we think life skills are important we should **teach** them explicitly rather than leave students simply to absorb them from experience; and that means, of course, that we too must be aware of them and able to talk about them. This may be easier for linguists than for many other specialists because our whole working life is about making implicit knowledge explicit; but we also know how hard it is to make tacit linguistic knowledge and skills available for scrutiny, so we should be prepared to put the same intellectual effort into the life skills that underlie our teaching.

Bearing all these warnings in mind, here are my reasons for thinking that Linguistics is good for the mind; in fact, I shall even claim that it is good for the "spirit", if we can use that vague term for the emotional and ethical bits of the human mind.

2. Some elements of Linguistics teaching and related life skills

I shall distinguish three kinds of learning experience that are a normal part of any undergraduate study of Linguistics:

- **Application** of some given system of categories - most obviously doing phonetic, phonemic, morphological or syntactic analysis in terms of a given vocabulary of categories such as the IPA, phonemes (and allophones or whatever), morphemes (etc.) or some grammatical framework;

- **Understanding** of 'how language works' at various levels of generality, from some small corner (e.g. the inflectional system of English verbs) to the whole picture (e.g. how communication works or how language changes);

- **Self-reflection** on 'how we work', in the light of what we learn about language - how we learn, store and use language, how our thinking may be influenced by our language, and so on (more examples below).

2.1 Application

Linguistics has a surprisingly wide variety of 'systems' that we teach students to apply. Learning to apply one of these systems is basically a sophisticated exercise in classification, comparable with the classificatory systems that underpin any of the hard sciences. As in, say, chemistry, there is usually a single right answer (or at least a small number of right answers), so it is possible for us to mark student work either right or wrong and in doing so we transmit to students our reverence for The Truth (even if we relativise it to truth-within-a-system). Here are some systems that we teach:

a. Rigorous and rich **'complete' analytical systems**, which give (more or less) exhaustive coverage of some area of experience. For example, the IPA gives a symbol for virtually every consonant or vowel, so a student who knows the IPA should be able to transcribe any speech sounds. Similarly, there are systems for grammatical analysis which cover almost every construction in any sentence. Indeed, the alphabetic writing system that we learned at school was an initiation to this kind of analysis. These complete systems cover 'everything' - no mean achievement for any discipline, and hard to match outside the sciences.

b. Other **rigorous classifications** of 'special' aspects of human behaviour which students apply by spotting examples in their own experience. For example, a common exercise in connection with speech production has students collecting examples of speech errors; in pragmatics they may find examples of miscommunication or metaphor; and in sociolinguistics they hunt for greetings or for gender-specific variables. Once again the classification is rigorous in the sense of not being merely a matter of taste. Borderline cases exist, of course, but they don't undermine the point - they just show the complexity of the issues.

c. **Theoretical frameworks**, by which I mean systems of general categories such as we teach in phonology (phoneme, allophone, feature, etc.), morphology (morpheme, inflection, paradigm, etc.) and syntax (word class, phrase, grammatical function, etc.). These are frameworks for describing the system of language, so students typically learn to apply them in 'data-problem' exercises; for example, we provide a list of words from some language and invite them to work out the underlying rules and forms.

d. **Research methods** - methods for planning projects, finding new data, analysing it and drawing conclusions. In most BA programmes in Linguistics the final-year project is the culmination of the programme, in which the student starts to operate as an independent research linguist by bringing together a range of these skills and applying them to data of their own choosing. Many students, and by no

means only the high-fliers, find this a time of real intellectual excitement - possibly the first such experience in their lives. If one could measure the growth of life skills, I feel sure that one would find a peak during this period.

How, then, does this range of intellectual activities relate to **specific life skills**? With all the obvious warnings about the skills being potential rather than guaranteed, here is a tentative list of skills that are likely to grow in a student who is learning to apply given systems as described above:

- **Respect** for **accuracy**. Students can be wrong, but the converse of this is the possibility of being totally right - a very satisfying experience for any student, but one that only comes to those who care about detail as well as about the broad picture.

- **Confidence** in **learning** new systems. If you can learn a complex system such as any of the competing theories of syntax, you can probably learn any other system in later life, from the house-rules of a firm to the law of property conveyancing.

- Ability to **investigate human behaviour**. Language (including speech) is a kind of human behaviour, so Linguistics is the study of one part of human behaviour. If you can stand back from language and treat it as an object of study - reflect on it - then maybe you can do the same for other areas of human behaviour - a really important life skill. The reflective office manager or army commander builds teams and gets results; the reflective commuter copes with the stresses of daily life; the reflective parent builds a reflective and happy family.

- **Attention** to **form**. This is a specifically linguistic skill, but important in life to the extent that linguistic form matters - in short, very important. Maybe linguists have a pathological concern for form - for 'interesting' pronunciations, grammatical structures or whatever - but much of the population has an equally pathological disregard for it, at least at a conscious level. This disregard is pathological because most professional careers involve the production of written documents, and most written documents benefit from the attention to form that we associate with professional editors and proofreaders. (This is especially true in the area of IT, where we are all aware that computers are unforgiving communicators; attention to form is de rigueur on the keyboard.) Our students should be in a happy position somewhere between the two pathological extremes, able to pay attention to linguistic form when relevant, and not at other times.

- **Metalanguage** for language and **communication**. This too is subject-specific, but it's also an important life skill. Everyone needs to be able to talk about communication, just as they need to be able to talk about - say - family medicine, for the simple reason that the system can fail. As long as normal efficiency prevails we can - and probably should - leave it alone; but as soon as it goes wrong, someone needs to do something about it. Questions about who, what and how require thought and discussion, and discussion needs metalanguage - in fact, arguably we need metalanguage even to think about some such things. Communication often fails at work and at home, and in such cases a little metalanguage comes in

handy - for spotting and explaining ambiguities, for example. There are even careers whose aim is to improve the communication skills of others, which necessarily presupposes some metalanguage; this is most obviously the case with teachers of language (first or second) and with speech and language therapists.

- **General communication skills**. It would be comforting to think that Linguistics makes a student better at communicating, and given what I said about attention to form and the benefits of metalanguage, this is probably the case. The trouble is that we know better than most that these two skills are only a small part of a complex package, where strength in one corner may easily be offset by a weakness in another. If studying Linguistics per se made one a better communicator, then linguists should all be superb communicators; but none of us would seriously claim that this was so - we spend too much time reading opaque articles and listening to appalling conference presentations where the silly conventions of academic life offset the supposed insights of Linguistics. Still, I think it might be fair to claim that linguists are quite good at communicating and that a good degree in Linguistics is something of a guarantee of good communication skills.

2.2 Understanding

Any of the grand systems that I described above rests on an intricate web of relations which hold all the individual categories together. We all spent years assimilating these interconnections and for most of us the experience was deeply and emotionally rewarding, so this is basically why we chose Linguistics as a career. This fundamental understanding of the system gave 'meaning' (in many different senses) to all the details, and it is this meaning that we try to share with our students. Many students are fired with enthusiasm when they discover this new intellectual world waiting to be explored, and this is the same enthusiasm that still drives us as researchers and teachers.

Here I should like to distinguish two kinds of understanding that we can offer students:

a. Understanding of **complex analytical systems**, in which students gradually understand how this particular complex of ideas fits together and relates to the reality that it models. The same intellectual process is at work whether the system is the place-manner-voice framework for phonetic analysis or the much more elaborate architecture of a theory of syntax. In both cases we try to explain each new category or idea as we introduce it, and students have to work at building the new system of ideas into their minds. The best students integrate the new system more or less totally with their existing knowledge, giving really deep understanding, while less good students compartmentalise more and understand at a more shallow level. Similarly, the best students understand implicitly as well as explicitly, whereas for weaker students the understanding isn't much more than a pattern of words - i.e. explicit but not implicit. As for lecturers, the best student evaluations go to those who explain clearly - students clearly value understanding above all else (including fun).

b. Understanding of the **basic logical relations** that are the basis for any of these complex systems. The most important set of relations involve classification, where students learn to distinguish sub-classification from sub-classification and to handle feature structures in both phonology and syntax; but they also handle part-whole hierarchies (in phrase structure, morphology and phonotactics) and various other kinds of relations (most obviously grammatical functions such as subject and object). Perhaps the most important aspect of our teaching in this area is our use of diagrams for displaying these relations - phrase-structure trees, attribute-value matrices, system networks or whatever. Each such diagramming system forces a clear decision about how to display each relationship and inevitably inculcates a deeper understanding of the relation-types. In contrast, the 'mind-maps' favoured in so much of the humanities crudely lump all relations together and discourage clear thought.

How does this understanding pay off in terms of **specific life skills**? The list of skills is surprisingly long, though it overlaps somewhat with the earlier list:

- **Hard thinking** about difficult issues. Deep understanding is difficult, and we all know how it feels to be struggling with an idea that is basically a little too difficult for us. It really makes our heads hurt, and success isn't guaranteed; but when 'the penny drops' the joy is enormous. Maybe this is the point when our brains have succeeded in building a new coherent set of connections, and it is clearly a signal of successful learning. As with some medical treatment, if it ain't hurting, it ain't working; students who coast easily through the course, absorbing everything effortlessly, may well have learned less (in terms of mind-changing) than those who struggle with every new idea. In the process, the struggling student will have developed strategies which may pay off in future learning situations - a life skill worth having.

- **Confidence** in trying to **understand** new systems. This is a corollary of the first skill - if you can cope with Chomsky's latest theory (or whatever), then you can cope with anything the world can throw at you. This is the best possible preparation for 'lifelong learning', about which we hear so much. The biggest deterrent to lifelong learning is fear of failure, so anything that boosts confidence is a plus. Anyone who leaves university with the confidence and determination to tackle difficult new ideas really has acquired an important life skill.

- **Respect** for **evidence**. This skill was in the first list as well, so it gets double input from Linguistics. Not only do we respect the evidence when applying a given analytical system, but we also respect it in building the system in the first place. This is what 'understanding' means - it means appreciating why the system is as it is, why the starting assumptions plus the facts lead (more or less) inevitably to this system rather than some other. Even if we teach just a single system, ignoring all the alternatives, we would all present some evidence for it, even if only because this is how systems (i.e. theories) develop in Linguistics research. Unlike many humanities subjects, Linguistics is deeply empirical so any theory has to be justified in relation to the relevant facts; moreover postmodern relativism is very foreign to most of us, so we take the alternatives really seriously as matters of truth. It makes little difference from this point of view whether we teach a theory as a believer or as a sceptic;

in either case students see our overriding concern for evidence - another important life skill, and one that many of us feel is in short supply in places that matter (such as government policy).

- Ability to **evaluate** explanations critically. This is an extension of the previous skill, respect for evidence. If evidence counts, then it is worth evaluating, and evaluating properly. New students sometimes think that evaluation is as easy as an argument in the bar, where "It stands to reason..." is a knockdown argument. We professionals know differently, and many of us have learned that there's no such thing as an easy debate or a knockdown argument. Evidence does exist, but all too often it is anything but obvious and may involve a long chain of argument. A student who can construct a chain of evidence with more than two links has acquired another important life skill.

- **Respect** for **alternative** systems. In some areas of Linguistics students find themselves surprisingly soon[4] at the frontiers of research, and in the battles that rage there. In all areas there is some theoretical debate, so unlike some of the hard sciences there is no uncontroversial introductory course which lays absolutely solid foundations for later work. Sooner or later students become aware of the theoretical debates and, given good teaching, they learn that these debates are real - neither side can be dismissed simply as the work of fools or naves. Even if the teacher is 'committed' (whatever that may mean) to one theory, they can present the alternatives as interesting and worth consideration. The parallel with political parties and religious creeds is obvious, but life is full of competing alternatives - alternative views on how to raise children, on how to save the world, on how to be happy. Few subjects have the potential of Linguistics to prepare students for making these choices sensibly.

- Ability to **build** complex systems. What students learn about the complex systems of Linguistics is that they are the product of human minds - not God-given. This is certainly in sharp contrast with traditional grammar, but also with much of what they have experienced at school, so for most students it is a new experience. It is a first-rate preparation for situations in later life where they may themselves be called on to develop complex systems of their own. Although few will have the chance to develop an abstract intellectual system such as a linguistic theory, many will need to think creatively about more concrete systems such as the structure of an organisation or of an IT system. Much of a degree in Linguistics is relevant here - not least the diagramming conventions for showing logical relations which I mentioned above, and which have the same kind of general relevance for systems as flow-charts do for processes.

- Ability to **speculate**. A certain amount of Linguistics is frankly speculative - most obviously the current debate about the origins of language, but also most causal theories (theories about what causes what). Why do languages change? Why do universals exist? Why do

women speak differently from men? Why do different languages divide the world so differently? Most of these questions are really interesting and important, and debating them is real fun because it touches bits of our brain that other discussions don't reach. But unlike other issues we're uncomfortably short of any evidence, let alone conclusive evidence - just like many of the most important issues in life, in fact. The benefit of a good training in Linguistics is the ability to distinguish clearly between speculation and debates based on strong evidence - between mysteries and problems, as Chomsky put it. Speculation is an important component of life for those who want to fill the gaps in their understanding of the world; so we cannot simply dismiss it as idle fantasy. But it's important to distinguish speculation clearly from the beliefs for which we believe we have good evidence. This is another life skill for which Linguistics is an excellent preparation.

2.3. Self-reflection

One of the great attractions of Linguistics as a degree subject is that it's ultimately the study of ourselves - self-reflection. In this respect it's closer to the humanities subjects than to the hard sciences, and (like the humanities) it throws light on many different aspects of our 'selves' - our whole self, including our feelings and values. It is true that Linguistics is part of cognitive psychology, but it is also part of social psychology and sociology and anthropology. This is simply a factual statement about the kinds of issues that Linguistics students can find themselves confronting. In the following I shall distinguish five 'selves':

- The cognitive self
- The social self
- The emotional self
- The ethical self[5]
- The aesthetic self.

If these terms aren't already self-explanatory I hope they will become clearer in the discussion. The point is, then, that a Linguistics course may give a student opportunities to reflect on each of these selves (and of course, in the process, to distinguish them from each other).

a. The **cognitive** self. One of the core tenets of mainstream Linguistics is that language is a 'window on the mind', meaning that we can learn something of how our minds are organised by studying the organisation of language - i.e. its general architecture. This is pure cognitive psychology - a study of how we categorise and relate within language. Unfortunately this is of relatively little immediate interest to most Linguistics students because they have few prior ideas about cognitive architecture, and in any case many linguists claim that language is unique, which means that it has no relevance to anything else. What does excite students, however, is the study of word meanings, and in particular the idea of linguistic relativity. For instance, even the least engaged student succumbs to curiosity on hearing of languages that have no word for our left-right contrast but use compass points instead. In the process one hopes that they learn to reflect on their own conceptual system and to take it less for granted. Unlike postmodernism, this is a relativity that many linguists value because it relativises our folk beliefs rather than scientific truth.

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[4] In my department this happens in the first term of the first year, but this is probably too soon.
[5] The ethical and aesthetic selves were not part of my presentation at the workshop, but on later reflection they do seem to be worth including here.

b. The **social** self. Sociolinguistics is about social structures - social class, ethnicity, gender, and so on - so a course in sociolinguistics touches on these things too. Students have to reflect on their own internalised model of society and on where they themselves fit in this model. Even more importantly, sociolinguistics considers social interaction and social relations between individuals, and in my experience (as a teacher of sociolinguistics) students take easily and enthusiastically to notions such as power, solidarity and face. These elementary ideas from sociology give students, mostly for the first time, an objective framework for thinking about their social relations and about how society works.

c. The **emotional** self. Some of the topics that we discuss in Linguistics are emotionally charged; for example, a tutorial on Standard English and prescriptivism can be a highly charged event because of the challenge that it presents to deep-seated and highly valued prejudices. Swear words impinge on the emotional self in a different way by raising interesting questions about our strategies for coping with strong feelings - for example, why do we use these words, and why do we think they're naughty? The answers may be pure speculation, but the simple fact of reflecting on our emotions is an important part of education.

d. The **ethical** self. Modern Linguistics raises a surprising number of ethical questions that students often enjoy engaging with. We know that languages tend to be biased, at least in their vocabulary, against underprivileged social groups, and gender bias is a favourite topic for undergraduate dissertations. Equally we know, and teach, that some communities are severely disadvantaged by their language resources, or rather by the lack of some more 'powerful' language. For example, how unfair it is that speakers of non-standard varieties of English have to learn Standard English at school, whereas native speakers of standard don't have to learn non-standard varieties. More recently we have thought a lot about the ethical issues of endangered languages. It is even arguable that language shows how important co-operation and willingness to conform is - an important example of self-interest coinciding with the interest of the whole group. We can help students to understand the specific issues more deeply, to appreciate their complexity and even to change their minds in the face of evidence; and this exercise in ethics is probably more important than whatever positions they adopt on the specific issues. Reflection on the ethical self must be a healthy preparation for the many complex ethical issues of everyday life.

e. The **aesthetic** self. This kind of reflection is probably less common in Linguistics courses than the other kinds, but it does have a place. Most obviously it's an ingredient of literary Linguistics, where the aim is to understand what makes a text 'beautiful' - what linguistic features distinguish a well-crafted piece of writing from the commonplace? Similar questions arise in pragmatics (how does metaphor work? how does humour work?) and even in psycholinguistics (why are some sentences easier to process than others?). Maybe the only reason for ignoring the aesthetic side of language has been our collective ignorance, but at least we can ask some of the relevant questions even if we can't give many satisfying answers. And ultimately I think we would all see our research as a matter of aesthetics, in which we strive for 'beautiful' explanations for linguistic phenomena.

Once again we can ask how these exercises in self-reflection relate to practical **life skills**. I shall distinguish two kinds of skill: self-awareness and attitudes.

*   **Self-awareness**. Presumably we cope with life more successfully if we are aware of how our minds work than if we simply go on 'automatic pilot', as it were. It is true that too much introspection can be debilitating, but our minds are basically too complex and contradictory to be left to their own devices. For instance, if our emotions conflict with our intellect (as they often do), then at least we should be aware of it; and the same is true in the everyday experience of dealing with conflicting emotions. More specifically, we can distinguish the following kinds of self-awareness:

    *   Self-**understanding**: we should all know what makes us tick, however uncomfortable that knowledge may be; but the peculiarity of learning about ourselves through the study of language is that language is communal, so we learn to see the similarities between ourselves and other people. To take a simple example, we can understand why we make speech errors, but at the same time we see that the problem lies in the human brain, not in our own individual brain.

    *   Self-**criticism**: we should all be able to recognise faults in our own minds, whether these are species-wide (as with speech errors), cultural (as with learned prejudices) or individual (as with gaps in our knowledge - spellings, words, grammatical constructions, conventions of use). Language is an excellent focus of self-criticism precisely because weaknesses can be ascribed to any of these three sources so we have to learn to discriminate in the diagnosis before deciding on remedial action.

    *   Self-**appreciation**: this is the counter-balance to self-criticism. We probably all enjoy pointing out to students how complex language is, and consequently how 'clever' they must be to be able to cope with it so well. More seriously, perhaps, we can help them to undo the effects of negative attitudes to their native language by getting them to study it seriously. Learning that their non-standard English (or their low-status language) has rules is a good antidote to the poison they absorbed in earlier life. Maybe if our students learned to really appreciate the richness of their knowledge of language, more of them would be motivated to share it with others as language teachers.

*   **Attitudes**. The attitudes on which I should like to focus are important in life and can, at least in principle, be profoundly affected by a course in Linguistics:

*   **Tolerance**: students should become more tolerant of others. They should learn to understand rather than blame when faced with communication failure, with alternative ways of speaking or with alternative classifications of the world. For someone who understands language, most such experiences are interesting rather than irritating or threatening.

• **Openness**: as well as tolerating alternatives, students should become open to adopting them in their own behaviour - what sociolinguists call accommodation. This is one way of fixing the personal or cultural weaknesses exposed in self-criticism, and perhaps the most obvious manifestation should be in the area of language learning: our students ought to be above average in their ability to learn new languages - an important life skill indeed.

• **Interest**: students who apply for places on our courses all claim to be interested in language, but some find it hard at first to translate this general interest into an interest for the nitty-gritty details of the IPA, sentence structure and so on. However most of them eventually find some area that really turns them on - often an area that relates easily to their ethical or emotional self, as described above. Most of the population have some kind of interest in language, but few have an informed interest, which is much more of an asset in life.

3. Conclusion

How, then, can life skills "sell" Linguistics to students and employers? I have no doubt **that** life skills are a really important selling point for Linguistics, as must surely have emerged from what I have said above; but we are left with the question "how?" I haven't tried to answer this question, and I can't offer a proper answer at this point either. Instead I should like to finish with a collection of comments which I hope will be relevant and helpful.

• I said that studying Linguistics can be painful - if it ain't hurting, it ain't working. As Doug Arnold pointed out in discussion, this is hardly a strong selling point for potential students, but I believe it's almost certainly attractive for potential employers. My conclusion is that it may be

important to present different benefits to different audiences; for example, employers can hear how intellectually challenging the course is, while potential students hear how interesting it is.

• As I pointed out in section 1, a course in Linguistics does not, per se, guarantee any of these life skills. These skills are highly dependent on teaching methods, so for example, attitudes are much more likely to change in a small-group tutorial discussion than in a large lecture theatre. To the extent that we have choices in matters of teaching methods, these should be informed by the goal of developing life skills rather than, say, by the goal of 'covering the syllabus'.

• Many of the benefits of studying Linguistics at university should also come from the study of language at school level. Many of them have been offered as arguments for 'language awareness' work in schools, and some of the benefits should accrue from the current focus on the explicit study of language in the National Literacy Strategy, the literacy strand at KS3, and the Modern Foreign Languages curriculum.

• Speaking personally, this presentation has been the first occasion on which I have ever had to think hard about life skills in Linguistics (though I thought a bit about them when writing my short Invitation to Linguistics, Blackwell 1984). I'm not aware of any other attempts to review all the relevant life skills systematically[6], though (to judge by Google) many of our colleagues have found ways of linking their courses to specific skills. Maybe it is time for the profession at large to set its collective mind to the question, as it is clearly an important one at least in terms of student recruitment. If this paper contributes to that process, so much the better.

[6] *Several departmental web sites present useful lists of key skills which students are likely to develop during a Linguistics degree - for example at the University of Manchester (http://ling.man.ac.uk/Students/UGHandbook/Handbook0203.html) and at my own department at UCL (http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/toc/set_info.htm - follow "information for current students" - "Degree programme home sites" - "Teaching aims for undergraduate programmes"). However these lists tend to adhere to the 'official' public lists of skills, ticking off the ones that relate to Linguistics. As we heard in the first talk at the CILT workshop, these official lists are well known for varying rather arbitrarily. What I have tried to do is to work the other way round, starting from Linguistics and finding relevant life skills.*

Key Skills and Higher Education - A Personal View

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Introduction

From the standpoint of somebody working in Higher Education at the present time it is possible to review the current emphasis on key skills from a number of perspectives, as for example:

• The 'what's all the fuss about' perspective. 'We already deliver key skills even if we don't call them that and have been doing it for years'.
• The government policy perspective. This is driven largely, although not exclusively, by considerations of employability and improving personal competencies in order to enhance national competitiveness in an increasingly difficult world economic climate. It tends to be associated with specifications, levels, targets and external assessment.
• The Lifelong Learning perspective. This is also, of course, a strand of government policy, which not only emphasises skills directly related to employment, but also skills, without

which, individuals will remain unfulfilled, de-motivated and dissatisfied. It places great emphasis upon self-management and upon such issues as motivation and ownership, with more concern for usage than for definition.

Over the past twenty years endless lists of skills (key, generic, transferable, core and the like) have been produced worldwide. Associated with these lists has been an increased stress upon the outcomes of education and training rather than the inputs, such as:

• A demand for greater specificity;
• A need to collect and evaluate a much wider range of evidence about individual performance;
• A much more prominent role for the individual in the learning/teaching process.

In practice, the realisation and delivery of these skills poses significant questions for progression, teaching and learning and assessment, which are far from easy to answer.

The skills proposed tend to vary more in terms of the way they are described than in their substance. Key skills have come increasingly to be centred around 'Communication'. This is broadly defined to encompass visual, technological and numerical communication as well as reading, writing, speaking and listening in one (or more) languages. In addition, they include a range of personal and interpersonal skills, which enable individuals to work efficiently and harmoniously with others, solve problems and manage themselves to maximum advantage. Specific areas of study or work may add to this list, but close analysis suggests that more often than not these additional skills fall within, or are dependent upon, the above general list. Underpinning the acquisition of such skills is the promotion of personal autonomy - not in itself a skill but its development is dependent on the acquisition and usage of other skills.

Implications for Higher Education -
Recent Developments in Higher Education -
The Impact of the Dearing Review upon Key Skills

None of the foregoing is, of course, new or unique to HE. It comes at a time when HE is under ever-growing pressure from central government to extend access and increase numbers (often without adequate resources) and in a situation where new areas of studies such as the Health Sciences now form part of degree provision. As a consequence, significant questions are being raised as to the links, including skill requirements, between degree acquisition and a licence to practice (between university curricula and professional regulation).

In recent years the delivery of key skills in higher education has been given a sharper edge by the recommendations of the 1997 report of the National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education (the Dearing Review). These have been implemented through the work of the Quality Assurance Agency and the creation of the Learning and Teaching Support Network's twenty-four Subject Centres. Of particular importance here have been Recommendations 20 (Progress File, Transcripts and Personal Development Planning), 21 (Programme Specifications/Entry Profiles) and 25 (Subject Benchmarking). Other significant issues have been the modularisation of course provision and the need to quality assure personal tutoring. One important feature of the Dearing Recommendations was that they applied to higher education as a whole unlike earlier Employment Department initiatives, such as Enterprise in Higher Education and Work Based Learning, which involved specific, usually volunteer, institutions.

Recommendations 21 and 25 require the setting down, in the public domain, detail about the standards required for the award of qualifications at a given level. This includes the articulation of the attitudes, skills and capabilities that those passing such qualifications should possess as well as detail about the intended outcomes of specific programmes in terms of skills, knowledge and understanding. However 'laissez faire' the approach to meeting these requirements may have been at the outset, the reality is that in future programmes will have to deliver and assess what is set down, including key skills.

Between them programme specifications and subject benchmarks also provide the vehicle for collegial debate about the subject areas or disciplines involved as well as their delivery and assessment. This is an area in which the work of the LTSN Subject Centres has been so important.

Personal Development Planning (PDP)

For key skills in higher education, however, Recommendation 20 is more significant. The work it has generated in relation to PDP is likely to become increasingly significant in the future. Recommendation 20 is a potential mess as worded, in that it combines two elements, the Transcript and the PDP. These come under the umbrella of a third element, the Progress File whose orientations, definitions and aims are not entirely compatible with the first two elements. The Progress File Implementation Group (PFIG) consists of representatives from Universities UK (UUK), the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP), as well as QAA and the LTSN Generic Centre. It has, however, confirmed that the Transcript (to be introduced in the UK in 2004 and later in Europe and worldwide), should provide:

- A comprehensive, verifiable record of the learning and achievement of an individual learner;
- A record of learning for students during their period of study;
- A formative statement to help students remember and reflect upon progress and plan further academic development.

In so doing it has attempted to integrate the institutional, departmental and personal agendas for PDP and hence key skills. One challenge, perhaps *the* challenge, is whether the formative statement and the development of the relevant skills to exploit it, is best facilitated for the individual through the department (subject), the institution or a mix of both. This in a context in which the provision outlined in the first two bullet points has to be delivered both institutionally and across institutions. There are instances of subject-based PDPs (e.g. History at University College Worcester). But there are powerful reasons for suggesting that ultimately the challenges posed by the key skills agenda, and the benefits that can accrue from them, will be best accommodated through institutional policies based on areas of student support such as personal tutoring. Examples of this are the PADSHE/PARs schemes (Personal and Academic Development for Students in Higher Education/Personal and Academic Records) at the University of Nottingham.

Some Critical Questions

Work of the kind underway at Nottingham in respect to PDP offers some interesting insights into the development and delivery of key skills as well as raising some searching questions, for example:

- Can one provide positive answers to the question 'what is in it for me', for all parties involved in the enterprise, from individual students, through departmental lecturers, through degree programmes to institutions?

- How does one shift personal tutoring from a reactive to a proactive stance and what skills does this require for those involved?

- What are the practical implications for teaching and learning of greater learner autonomy?

- What is the role of evidence, outcomes, observation and feedback in relation to assessment, not only as instruments for improving the quality of the assessment process but also as instruments for improving and equalising communication between teacher and learner (Sadler 1998[1])?

- How can 'reflection' best be promoted? This is increasingly seen as 'a' if not 'the' essential element in equipping individuals to take charge of their own learning (Moon 2000[2]).

- What is the role of technology in PDP? This has two aspects. First, the introduction and use of web-based personal development planners such as LUSID (Liverpool University Student Interactive Database) with its four main areas of activity: recording and reflection; auditing skills; action planning; and reporting. Second, the nature and extent of the access that should/can be provided for individual students within universities' managed learning environments and institutional databases which are intended to underpin transcripts and student services (e.g. career guidance and personal tutoring).

- How to achieve the necessary time and resources to deliver most of what this paper has been talking about?

Conclusion

Readers of this paper were probably expecting less on PDP and more on key skills, particularly when PDP is a relatively unproven initiative. We do not, as yet, possess rigorously supported answers to questions such as 'in the context of PDP what evidence is there that the processes which connect reflection, recording and action planning actually improve student learning? Even if we do know what these processes and the relevant skills are. Work is currently underway to provide this evidence, but much still needs to be done (Gough et al EPPI-Centre 2003[3]). My response to such doubts and concerns is that whether you use PDP or not, you will in the end have to face the same challenges and answer the same questions when implementing key skills. Such skills, moreover, need engines for their furtherance, be these portfolios, reflective logs, records of achievement or personal development planners. At the moment PDP, as it is currently developing, looks the most robust and reliable of the models in current use. PDP is, moreover, starting to encourage the development of a number of very interesting ICT support mechanisms. It is also raising searching questions about programme delivery, implementation and assessment which have universal application in the context of the current expansion of HE and the enhancement of the quality of its provision.

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Starting from Scratch: French Linguistics Courses at Kent

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One of the aims of this one-day seminar was to define the role of Linguistics within a modern language degree programme. Are undergraduate French Linguistics courses, for example, no more than 'Linguistics by the back door' - an excuse for linguists to peddle their specialist interests - or is Linguistics merely instrumental to the goal of a deeper and fuller understanding of the target language? I would argue that Linguistics fits rather more comfortably into the modern languages curriculum than either of these extreme positions suggests. While for most undergraduates, the likely attraction of these courses is their capacity to enhance the language learning experience, much of their real interest lies in the extent to which they transcend the description of a single language to address wider linguistic issues. Just as a serious literature course must normally look beyond the work of an individual author (i.e. it must, to some extent, be about 'Literature'), a successful descriptive Linguistics course requires a sound theoretical underpinning to lend it coherence and interest.

This case study started from the (fairly common) position of the 'lone linguist' trying to set up language-specific Linguistics courses in a traditional language and literature department. I start also from the premise that, in an RAE-driven world, it is essential that linguists have the opportunity to teach their specialism. In Liaison Issue 3 (July 2001), Richard Towell alluded to the all too familiar experience of the individual linguist being identified as 'the language person', responsible for setting up and teaching low-level language courses, with all the consequences of additional preparation, marking and general professional dislocation from one's subject area that that implies. This cosy misperception of the linguist's role may indeed be so deep-rooted that the very idea of introducing Linguistics modules may meet with suspicion, or outright hostility, from colleagues who question either the potential interest in such courses among students, or even their academic value ('Won't they learn all this anyway in a language class?' Er, no.).

The former objection evaporates when students enrol in large numbers as soon as these modules are offered, while the second, borne of a lingering ignorance that Linguistics is in fact a serious subject, takes a little longer to dispel, but falls away when the linguist starts producing examination papers that colleagues can't actually do and, as his/her expertise develops, contributes research articles to learned journals. My own experience at the University of Kent suggests that one's strongest allies here are the students themselves, and if modules are designed sympathetically, there are good reasons to expect healthy recruitment. Firstly, for students whose exposure to literature at 'A'-Level is increasingly limited, the choice of a modern languages degree programme is more likely to stem from interest in the mechanics of language than from a passion for Goethe or Baudelaire. A sensitive Head of Department will recognize this, and see Linguistics modules not as a threat, but as offering welcome diversity within the programme, which can be helpful in overcoming objections of the 'What-They-Want-To-Do-Is-Literature' kind. Linguists should certainly not be shy in promoting the advantages of a lively, modern and varied programme in the context of admissions. Remember too that, when it comes to inspiring potential sixth-form applicants on Open Day, a linguist talking

about language has a rather more straightforward task than a colleague who specializes on an author unknown to most of the audience. A second advantage, particularly if opportunities for oral work are limited, is the fact that such courses by their very nature tend to focus largely on the spoken language. My most responsive students are often finalists, now aware of the gap between standard French learned at university, and the spoken French encountered daily during their year abroad.

Once the courses were established at Kent, however, a new set of problems emerged. They quickly oversubscribed, putting pressure on library resources. Availability of books, of course, is already likely to be a problem where there is no existing tradition of Linguistics on which to build. Where standard works in my own field are out of print, I have had to settle for sometimes inferior substitutes, and compromises have had to be made in tailoring modules to available resources, even after a sizeable new input to the University Library. An obvious but imperfect expedient (which does at least suit students' pockets) is to anchor a course upon a single set textbook, recommended for purchase: Lodge's sociolinguistic history *French: from Dialect to Standard* provides an excellent foundation for my *History of French* course. The 'ideal' text is not, however, always available, and ultimately the book that best suits the lecturer's requirements may well be the one that he/she writes him/herself. The research benefits of teaching one's subject are again self-evident.

Given that most modern language students are new to Linguistics when they enrol, there was the further difficulty of providing the requisite theoretical background and analytical tools within a descriptive French course. This was compounded at Kent by the introduction of a one-unit modular structure. The first Kent Part II French Linguistics course, *History and Structure of French*, had allowed the necessary conceptual framework to be introduced gradually over the course of a year, but the new structure required short (1 semester) courses which left little scope for sketching the background. The challenge here, for practical as well as pedagogical reasons, was to design a number of distinct and highly focussed courses under the general umbrella of French Linguistics, while avoiding overlap and linking each to a single broader linguistic or sociolinguistic theme. In *Description of French*, for example, students are invited to 'forget' the assumptions they are used to making about written French, and start considering the spoken language from the perspective of the native speaker or learner. Given the differences in French between the two codes, this can at first be a disorientating experience, but students' confidence in challenging their own and others' preconceptions increases during the course as they acquire the tools for the linguistic description of spoken language. *History of French* is presented as a case study in standardization, which works outwards from Haugen's (1966) model and presents a sociolinguistic history of the language, while *Sociolinguistics of French* takes advantage of a high number of potential francophone student informants at Kent, by offering an introduction to sociolinguistic methodology and the chance to undertake practical variationist fieldwork, while critically examining existing sociolinguistic research within the francophone world. *The Other Languages of France* looks beyond the description of the dialects and regional languages

to consider minority language issues more generally, which are all too often viewed in simplistic terms. Drawing on the French experience, the course asks, for example, whether their demise is inevitable, and whether nation-states or supranational institutions have a duty to protect them: if so, how? And which varieties should be protected? An exciting and imaginative short course of a similar kind at Southampton is Rodney Ball's *Language Debates in Contemporary France*, which examines the French state's attitudes to language, and explores the questions of linguistic prescriptivism which they raise. Maintaining a separate focus for a number of modules can be difficult, particularly given the prescriptions of a language department which, not unreasonably, will wish to ensure that its students are offered recognizably 'French', 'German' etc. options rather than courses in Linguistics. There must be room for 'give and take' here, but I freely admit (to the enlightened readers of this newsletter, anyway) that I've had to 'cheat' on occasions. No treatment of urban sociolinguistics, for example, seems complete without a session or two on the work of Labov and Trudgill in New York and Norwich, two cities not known for a preponderance of francophones. Whatever the initial motivations of the students who enrol, they do show an encouraging readiness to engage with the wider issues. In *Other Languages*, for example, students soon draw parallels with UK experience (e.g. Welsh, Cornish, or Irish), on which they offer their own experience and perspectives. In *Description*, students quickly move from asking: 'Yes, but which form is *correct*?' to thinking critically about the nature and value of prescriptive linguistic judgements.

Part II French Linguistics courses are now well-established at Kent. The next challenge is to provide options in Part I, allowing some of the groundwork to be done in advance. It is hoped that the first of these, *The Sounds of French*, will 'kill two birds with one stone' by offering a basic introduction to phonetics, while helping students to grasp basic phonemic oppositions of the standard language which are not always mastered at 'A'-Level; for example /u/-/y/ (vous/vu), or /œ/ - /ø/ (jeune/jeûne).

Courses in descriptive Linguistics make considerable demands on both lecturers and students: for the former in terms of set-up and initial preparation time, and for the latter as they grapple with a completely new way of thinking about language. But while the effort required may be considerable, the rewards for both parties more than justify the investment.

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Variation in teaching: two perspectives on teaching Linguistics

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Introduction

This paper sketches different approaches to the teaching of Linguistics. The aim of the paper is to outline why and how the teaching of Linguistics to students of Modern Languages is different from the teaching Linguistics to students who major in Linguistics, or are enrolled on a Joint Honours Programme in which at least half of the modules are Linguistics modules. Most of what I say here reflects current practice at UWE, Bristol. At UWE we set up a new Linguistics undergraduate degree (as part of a Joint Honours Scheme) four years ago and the first batch of undergraduates graduated in 2001 (17 students in total). Apart from that, we also significantly changed the content of the Linguistics modules on offer to Languages students. In my role as Linguistics Field leader at UWE, I have had an opportunity to think about the structure and the content of Linguistics degrees for different student cohorts and to implement those ideas at UWE. The current seminar was therefore of particular interest to me and offered me a new opportunity to explain why and how we redefined Linguistics at UWE.

The present paper focuses on two different cohorts of students: students of Linguistics on a Joint Honours Scheme and students of Languages who take a number of obligatory Linguistics modules on a (Single Honours) Languages degree. For the sake of simplicity, I will call these two cohorts the Linguistics students and the Languages students. As most Linguistics degrees in the UK are part of a Joint Honours

scheme rather than Single Honours degrees (cf. Benchmarking Statement Linguistics)[1], I believe the differences between the two cohorts as set out in this paper apply to a wide range of settings in which Linguistics is taught in the UK.

When choosing relevant areas of Linguistics for different student cohorts it is important to be aware of the context in which the Linguistics modules are being taught. This involves analysing to what extent the Linguistics modules on offer are part of the core of an award or not, whether they are obligatory or not, how they fit in with other Linguistics modules or modules of other related areas, and whether or not students on that award are going on a year abroad. In addition, I believe it is important to look into the characteristics of the target groups in terms of their own language background and their knowledge of modern languages. Most importantly however, one needs to be aware of the aims of the programme of study of each group in order to define the content of Linguistics for each cohort.

In this paper the focus is first of all on the aims of Linguistics as offered on different awards (section 1). After that, the differences between Languages and Linguistics awards and the student cohorts on these awards are discussed (section 2). Thirdly, I will go into the content of Linguistics as offered to students of Languages, in comparison to students of Linguistics (section 3).

1. Focus and aims of programmes

It is almost trivial to say it, but students who have chosen to major in Linguistics (or who are on a Joint Honours Scheme on which half of the modules are Linguistics) are much more focused on Linguistics than students who take it as an obligatory component in a degree which focuses on Languages. Perhaps it is fair to say that Languages students study Linguistics in order to better understand Spanish/French or German whereas Linguistics students study English/Spanish/French/German in order to understand more of the nature of language in general and more of theories that explain language competence or performance. In his contribution to this workshop Roger Wright puts it as follows: "In all the Spanish Linguistics lectures at Liverpool University, the focus is on using Linguistics to understand Spanish, and not the other way round." I think that in a Joint Honours Linguistics degree (and possibly to a much greater extent in a Single Honours Linguistics degree) the focus is indeed the other way around: facts about a particular language or facts about language use in a particular society are used to inform theories of different kinds. This is not to say that Languages students shouldn't be made aware of the existence of theories (on the contrary) but the description and understanding of foreign languages and cultures is an aim in itself much more than on a Linguistics degree.

2. Differences between awards and student cohorts

In order to clarify the differences between contexts in which Linguistics modules are being offered and to highlight differences between student cohorts on these awards, I have compiled a table which gives the main differences between the situation of Languages students and Linguistics students. I believe that the characteristics of the two awards are clearly distinct, as are the student populations on these awards.

a) Core-non core

The core modules of an award are those which cannot be replaced with another module in case of failure. Failing these modules means failing the award. In the case of Languages awards, the core modules are obviously the Foreign Languages modules, but in the case of the Linguistics degree, these are obviously a number of Linguistics modules. If the above definition of core modules is correct, Linguistics modules do *not* form part of the core of a Languages award. Linguistics modules have a *supporting role* to play on a Languages award. Linguistics is there not for the sake of Linguistics, but for the sake of the Languages. This has important implications for the content of Linguistics for each type of award, as we shall see later.

b) Obligatory - non obligatory

On all awards some modules are obligatory and others optional. The obligatory modules tend to be basic modules, whereas specialist options are non-obligatory. It is possible and, I believe common, for basic Linguistics modules on Languages awards to be obligatory, even though they are not part of the core. I would like to argue that it is desirable for Linguistics to be obligatory on Languages awards under the proviso that the content of Linguistics is adapted to the needs of the Languages

students.

c) Vocational - non-vocational

Vocational education can be defined as "any form of education that prepares a student to acquire skills and qualifications related to a specific occupation; it may include elements of general education"[2]. Languages degrees can certainly be considered to be vocational in the definition given here in that they enable students to acquire skills and qualifications that make them more employable. According to the Final Report of the Nuffield Enquiry (May 2000) companies increasingly need personnel with technical or professional skills plus another language. Languages degrees which are vocationally oriented can offer precisely that.

Linguistics degrees, on the other hand, tend to be less vocationally oriented, just like many other subjects that belong to the Humanities, as there is no clear profession (apart from an academic career) linked to the discipline of Linguistics. It would be interesting to investigate whether more vocationally oriented Linguistics degrees can be developed, which focus, for example, on Health Care or Education as potential fields of employment for Linguistics students, but that is beyond the scope of this paper. In any case, the vocational nature of many Languages degrees calls for a special kind of Linguistics that fits the vocational profile of Languages degrees.

d) Most common additional subjects studied as part of study programme

Many Languages degrees, especially those that are more vocationally oriented, contain components that focus on knowledge of business administration, IT skills, marketing, economics or politics. These can be part of the programme as obligatory components or as options, but I think it is fairly common to offer these as options alongside foreign languages (or Languages are being offered alongside those fields - depending on where you stand) in Languages degrees. Linguistics students often study Linguistics in combination with Psychology, Sociology or English Literature, and combinations with the subjects such as marketing, economics or business seem to be less popular. This means that the *contexts* in which Linguistics appears on a Languages degree and a Linguistics degree differ considerably. And this is an additional reason for providing a different Linguistics curriculum for each cohort.

e) Year abroad

It is very common for Languages awards to have an obligatory or optional year abroad as a component in the study programme, but this is not the case in most Linguistics awards. It is clear that Linguistics can play an important role in the preparation of the year abroad and I believe that the Linguistics programme on Languages degrees should aim at supporting this highly important part of a Languages degree. I will make concrete proposals for that a little later.

f) Competence in foreign languages

Students on Languages programmes differ markedly from students on Linguistics courses in that the former develop a high competence in at least one foreign language, whereas the

latter are often - at least in the UK - monolingual. The difference in knowledge of foreign languages has important implications for the choice of an appropriate curriculum for each cohort.

3. The Linguistics curriculum

In section 1, I have sketched some differences between the characteristics of Languages awards and Linguistics awards, and some differences between the student populations on the two awards. On the basis of these differences I would like to argue that the content of the Linguistics curriculum for students of Modern Languages and for Joint Honours students needs to be different. Although it may be possible to teach the basics to both cohorts simultaneously, at least part of the curriculum necessarily has a different focus. I would like to argue that students of Modern Languages benefit most from Linguistics modules which focus on two aspects of Linguistics in particular:

a) **Second Language Acquisition** (applied or theoretical). An understanding of processes of language learning can help students reflect on their own language learning.

At UWE we have developed a module entitled "Language Learning Skills and Strategies" which offers a basic grounding in applied SLA. We think that it is important for students of foreign languages to become acquainted with theories of second language learning, to discover the differences between first and second language acquisition, and the differences between naturalistic SLA and classroom-based SLA. We also include some lectures on how languages are best taught, as we hope that some of our students will choose a career in teaching foreign languages, and some students teach English while on their year abroad.

b) **Sociolinguistics**: in particular language variation, bilingualism and intercultural communication. These areas are particularly relevant for students of Modern Languages who go on a year abroad. An understanding of these areas will enhance their *sociolinguistic competence*, i.e. "the knowledge which underlies people's ability to use language appropriately" (Holmes 2001). This goes far beyond the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences, and refers to using the appropriate register/style etc. in different contexts. While this can already be difficult in one's mother tongue, it is much more difficult in a foreign language. It seems an impossible task to teach these things in a classroom setting, but it is possible to raise awareness about styles, registers etc. in a Linguistics class.

Although I cannot go into the content of Linguistics programmes for Linguistics in any detail here, I would like to argue that students of Linguistics (whether on a Joint Honours or on a Single Honours degree) should be taught more of the core of Linguistics and be offered a wider range of options, corresponding to modules they take in e.g. Psychology, Sociology and English Literature. In addition to Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics and Textlinguistics seem to be highly relevant for these students.

4. Conclusion

For Languages students, Linguistics fulfils a supporting role: Linguistics is relevant for these students in as far as it supports the language learning process, and in as far as it supports the vocational character of the award. Therefore I take the view that we should teach Languages students those areas of Linguistics which help them to reflect upon the process of language learning itself. Second Language Acquisition therefore seems to be particularly relevant for this cohort. In addition, Linguistics modules which focus on Sociolinguistics and Intercultural Communication can support the vocational nature of Languages awards by preparing students for the year abroad.

For Linguistics students, Linguistics is obviously the core of their award, and therefore a greater emphasis on "core Linguistics" seems entirely justified (although institutions will obviously vary in the interpretation of the notion "core"). Linguistics students on a Joint Honours scheme (i.e. the large majority of Linguistics students) generally study Linguistics in combination with Psychology, Sociology or Literature. Therefore, Psycholinguistics, Sociolinguistics and Textlinguistics, which are closely linked to those disciplines, are probably most relevant for these students.

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