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Contents

Employer Demand for Languages Graduates in Scotland: a Case Study in the Financial Services Sector (Mary Fischer).....	3
Continually Expanding Horizons (Nicola Malcolm).....	13
Language Use at the United Nations: Interdisciplinary Project of the Scottish Baccalaureate in Languages (Dean Cooper Cunningham)	17
Investigating the Views of Children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties about their Experience of Learning French (Claire van Wengen)	21
Creativity in Action in MLPS (Gwen McCrossan)	29
List of Downloadable Articles	35
Recent Publications – Abstracts.....	36
Selected events April 2013 – August 2014	39



Employer Demand for Languages Graduates in Scotland: a Case Study in the Financial Services Sector

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Abstract: In the context of recent surveys of business and employer attitudes to the economy's need for language skills, this study aims to contribute to the debate by investigating the attitudes to foreign language skills in the Scottish Financial Sector. Interviews were conducted with representatives of recruitment agencies and with four managers in investment management companies headquartered in Scotland. The results show, paradoxically, that although language skills are considered essential in this sector, companies tend not to acknowledge this explicitly and do not recruit on this basis. The latent need for skilled linguists is largely met by recruiting foreign nationals who offer both language skills and a global mind-set. It is suggested that these practices will have longer term consequences for the competitiveness of British graduates in the global economy

Keywords: language skills, financial sector, year abroad, language policies

Introduction

In recent years there have been a large number of surveys in both Scotland and the UK as a whole focussing on the need for learning languages. The findings are somewhat contradictory. They are summarised in the latest such report, *Talking the Talk so that Scotland can Walk the Walk* (Glover, 2012), a survey of business attitudes and an overview of reports by interested parties over the last ten years, which was commissioned by the Scottish Government as part of its 1+2 Policy for Language Learning in Scotland. Many of the findings reported here suggest that the lack of language skills is having a direct and negative impact on Scotland's ability to compete in the global market. James Foreman-Peck (2007, cited in Glover: 3) puts the financial loss to the Scottish economy at a minimum of £0.5 bn. The Scottish Funding Council reports that 'two thirds of businesses cite foreign languages as a barrier and eight out of ten feel challenged by differences in culture and etiquette' (Scottish Funding Council, 2008, cited in Glover: 3). Similarly the Confederation of British Industries (CBI) surveys consistently report a lack of language skills as a matter for concern: '76% of employers are not satisfied with young people's language skills' (CBI, 2011, cited in Glover: 2).

These findings contrast with other views and statistics considered in the report: Glover (2012: 1) reports that: 'there [...] remains complacency amongst businesses and the population at large that 'English is enough' because of its perceived strength as the international language of business.' A 2011 survey for the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) reports that only 3% of members thought that a lack of language skills affected their business (FSB, 2011, cited in Glover: 3). A Scottish Funding Council (SFC)

report on the employment of language graduates established that fewer than 10% of them used languages frequently in their jobs. It also established that the employment rate of language graduates was lower than the average for all graduates and that there was no wage premium for language skills (SFC, 2008, cited in Glover: 5). Uncertainty about the usefulness of foreign languages also has an impact on uptake of languages in secondary schools. The most recent survey by SCILT (2012) suggests that the number of school pupils learning a foreign language is either static or declining. It seems therefore, that on the one hand businesses acknowledge the fact that language skills are useful, while on the other hand failing to exploit or reward those who have these skills.

Most of the current academic and business surveys conducted in the UK to date focus on exporters, since this is perceived to be the sector where the greatest scope for economic benefits are to be found. However the financial sector is a major employer in the Scottish economy which is already a global player. This article aims to shed further light on the paradox which emerges from the evidence cited in the Talking the Talk report by presenting the results of a small scale case study in this sector. The main aim of this pilot survey, conducted in 2011-12, was to establish firstly how financial companies headquartered in Scotland dealt with the requirement to conduct business in a foreign language, and secondly to find out to what extent language skills, international orientation and the attributes of language graduates, for example the year of study or work abroad, were seen as valuable qualifications by these employers.

Findings

A preliminary scoping survey was carried out of recruitment agencies which recruited for the financial sector. Of the twenty contacted, one, the only one which dealt exclusively with language skills, had gone out of business, and fourteen declined to respond, indicating the topic was not relevant to their business. The results from the five which did respond were uniformly negative. Key themes which emerged were that employers only ask for language skills where they are directly relevant to the position, for example in call centres. The agencies reported little demand for language graduates in Scotland. One company reported that languages were more in demand in London:

It'd be different in London, but Edinburgh is just sadly behind with the languages.

Two companies reported that where there is demand it is for Far Eastern languages and pointed to a lack of skills in these languages. Another company identified as a further factor a perceived lack of fluency of British language graduates, and said that foreign nationals were more desirable for bilingual roles:

The split is usually 75% roles to native speakers and 25% to non-native.

There were more positive comments on the role of the year abroad as a factor in evaluating candidates. One company reported:

In general a year abroad does improve chances of gaining a relevant role, as it shows the candidate can adapt to change and they have the drive to do something different.

Another was equally positive, but with a proviso:

I quite like seeing the year abroad. I think it shows a wider perspective [...] in that individual, but it's not asked for by the employer, [...] it doesn't come as a prerequisite for any job description.

The clear findings from the agencies, therefore, were that languages were barely relevant to the financial services sector. However, a large part of financial services' work involves managing clients, investments, joint venture partners and funds in markets where English is not the first language. In this context, the main part of the study aimed to look at investment management companies to understand how they managed the interface between English and local languages.

Investment management companies were chosen because part of their remit is to manage investment portfolios globally, including in the Far East and in the emerging markets, where English is not the first language. A preliminary review of the company websites revealed an emphasis on their global perspective counterpointed by detailed local research around the world. Their graduate recruitment websites emphasised the need for individuals with an open, inquisitive, global mind-set and three out of the four claimed to recruit from all disciplines. Semi structured interviews were conducted with four managers in four different investment management companies. The first, respondent A, was a fund manager who spoke some conversational French. Respondent B was a languages graduate with an MBA who spoke a total of eight languages. Respondent C was a marketing manager who spoke fluent Japanese, whilst respondent D was a native Hungarian working in the UK who was fluent in four languages. The respondents were asked to what extent languages were required in their work and in which circumstances and whether or not their company had any views on the recruitment of language graduates.

In response to the first question: the extent to which they were required to use their foreign language skills, all respondents made the point that English is the language of international finance, and that therefore most business is conducted in English. They pointed to the dominance of the New York and London stock markets and the fact that international regulatory bodies operate in English. Respondent C added that most countries now have regulatory rules about disclosure: for example documentation in Japan is required to be in English and Japanese. This means there is 'no information edge in terms of information flow or timing.'

However, with further probing it quickly became evident that foreign languages were in fact key to the effective performance of their jobs. Respondent A, whose company had the least international exposure of the four, nonetheless used his conversational French 'for preliminary chit-chat,' as a means of establishing rapport and relationships and then the bulk of the meeting would be held in English. Other respondents confirmed the importance of language skills in relationship building. Respondent B, for example, reported that:

I conduct all meetings in Portugal in Portuguese. I can hand over a given sector, say banks, to a colleague, make the introductions and the relationships are his. He doesn't speak Portuguese, but the relationships had already been made. That's typical.

This respondent also highlighted the fact that speaking a foreign language was viewed positively by many of his business counterparts in other countries:

You get a disproportionately positive reception by speaking relatively little Russian and Mandarin. This enhances the relationship, because people are a lot less guarded when they're able to speak.

Respondent D was also clear that language skills were essential for relationship building:

Especially in France, you absolutely have to speak French to have good contacts with clients. That doesn't mean that in conferences and with clients you don't have English as a common language, but in day to day relationships you would want someone who speaks French.

This respondent also pointed out that language skills were extremely helpful in researching the markets he dealt with:

[...] one of my languages is Russian, and I cover the East European market, including Poland and Russia. I could do it with English only, but you can have better insights if you use the local language. You're able to extract more information than using a third, common language.

Respondent C also used his Japanese skills to manage a joint venture in Japan, acting as an intermediary between Japanese colleagues and non-Japanese-speaking employees in the United Kingdom.

Further to the requirements of liaising and building relationships with business partners, there were also occasions where foreign language skills were not just desirable, but essential for successful communication. Both A and B reported that while head office of a given company might speak English, due diligence often required them to investigate in more detail, and that the further down the company they went, and the further 'off

the beaten track', the less likely it was that English would be spoken. According to respondent A, this was particularly the case in Japan and China, but he also reported the need for French and German speakers to deal with smaller companies in Europe.

Finally, in response to a question about whether they had noted any sign that the dominance of English was not as complete as English speakers might like to assume, both B and D offered interesting insights. D reported that:

In the Central Bank of the Ukraine or Russia we might meet people who can't or are unwilling to speak English [author's emphasis].

While reaffirming the current dominance of English, respondent B was nonetheless even more explicit about some incipient unwillingness to speak English:

I have over the last seventeen years detected increasing national pride, even bordering on chauvinism, in some countries, especially China and Russia. In China, for example, some of the big state controlled companies are now saying we're going to have our conference calls in Chinese. And we'll have an English one later. We will publish our quarterly reports in Chinese only, and if you really want to know what's going on you'll have to find a way to read them.

In view of the role that all the respondents saw for foreign language skills in a range of contexts in their business, it might be expected that language skills were valued and formed an explicit part of the recruitment process, but this was not reflected in the responses to questions on graduate recruitment. The companies' approach to this varied widely. None explicitly regarded language skills as part of the skill set they looked for in recruits. Only one company (C) said that language skills were 'a component that was valued highly'. This company recruits 'good people from any area' who have to be 'curious and intellectually inquisitive.' Respondent D was not aware of the recruitment policy of his company, but did not think language had been a factor in securing his own job. His company website highlights 'good analytical minds' and 'good communication skills' but also requires graduate recruits to have good numeracy skills, something not necessarily traditionally associated with language graduates. This respondent also stated, somewhat contradicting his earlier statements about the usefulness of his languages, that:

You can make the assumption that for everyone who speaks English quite well, there is no need to learn another language, because you can make yourself understood anywhere.

Company C explicitly excluded language graduates from its recruitment:

Putting it crudely, most language graduates would not have the numerical skills to do the day job.

Graduates in this company are screened on the basis of first class degrees in a maths, economics or related subjects. There is 'no room for taking someone who's not exactly in line.' It is somewhat ironic that the two most gifted linguists of the four, who spoke most eloquently of the need to communicate in the local language, were also the most dismissive of these skills in the recruitment process. This apparent paradox will be discussed in more detail below.

Given that the need for language skills is not explicitly addressed in the recruitment process, the question arises of how the companies ensure they have the appropriate range of skills. The company websites highlight the possibility of professional development, and the respondents were asked whether language training formed any part of that. Company B was open to supporting individuals who wanted to go to language classes, provided that they showed sufficient commitment. It was up to individuals to find classes and was viewed as part of their personal and professional development. It would not be provided in-house. Whether or not the extra qualifications merited extra payment varied from company to company:

Because the company takes the view that, actually, you can do your job as it is, and what you're doing is trying to improve yourself, it is maybe laudable, maybe we'll give you a little bonus for it, if you pass your exams, or whatever, but it doesn't necessarily. It's not one size fits all.

The respondent in company C had given Japanese classes to colleagues in his lunch hour, and reported that other colleagues were learning other languages, but that again, it was not formally organised by the company. None of the companies appeared to know of any structured attempts to improve the language skills of its employees and it was apparent that this is not a route generally used in the sector to increase its language capabilities.

This being the case, the question remains as to how companies ensure they have the correct mix of skills for their business. Part of the answer became apparent in company A's response to the question of recruitment. In this company, he reported:

Graduate recruitment is quite international, so even on a random basis, if we take five a year the chances are three would speak another language.

A typical recent recruit was an Estonian who had lived and been educated in both the UK and in Estonia. Other recent recruits came from Poland and Scandinavia. These recruits supply both the global mind-set the company is looking for and, incidentally, the language skills they need:

It's quite an interesting group of people who have language skills. It would be wrong to say we recruit them because of that [...] but they tend to be very interesting and rounded and [...] they've seen quite a lot. These sorts of people interview well, they're quite tough to beat.

This trend to employing foreign nationals is reflected in the staffing profile of all the companies. Employees in company A include a French and German speaking Dutch national and a Japanese national who deals with Japanese partners. Company B employs native speakers of local languages in the Indian sub-continent and of Chinese. Company C hosts Japanese nationals in their UK office to deal with Japanese customers, but, tellingly, there is no tradition of sending British employees to Japan. Respondent D is himself a Hungarian national working in the UK. He reported a mix of native speakers and British nationals with language skills in his team of twelve. This reflects the findings from the recruitment agencies, which put the ratio of foreign nationals to British national at 3 to 1 in posts where language skills were required.

On being asked whether British graduate were at a disadvantage in the employment market when competing against these 'global' individuals, respondent A was adamant that they were:

Yes. [...] I think they absolutely are. [...] I think the UK graduates we interview are very, very good and there are some very smart people, some very rounded people. [But] to have spent more than just your summer holidays abroad, not in your comfort zone, not in a language perhaps that is not your own language and having to fend for yourself for a bit, it makes quite a difference to an interview.

By contrast, British students' experiences on their gap year or on a year abroad were not seen as being as valuable:

It tends to be mucking round the world with your mates speaking English and [...] it's not quite the same as some of the individuals we've brought here.

He makes the point that for foreign nationals the motivation to learn a language well is greater than in the UK:

From a language perspective these graduates we've brought in always have perfect English, but maybe that's just the reality, that if you're sitting in Estonia or Vienna or Berlin you know your English has got to be perfect.

He contrasts this mind-set with that of British graduates as a whole:

I suppose our graduates know that they can operate globally without doing that and they might be lazy.

He did concede that there were some graduates with language skills working in his company, but said that on the whole, apparently unlike the foreign nationals, they did not have the opportunity to use these skills:

My experience again is that they never have the chance; they don't use it enough, so their skills tend to deteriorate.

This appears to be yet another example of British ambivalence to language skills. Speaking English language well is an essential attribute in a foreign national and the life experience gained in acquiring these skills to the required level also evidenced drive and the ability to live and thrive in any setting. The same skills in an English speaker seem to be perceived as less highly developed and are less highly valued by the employer. This also reflects the findings from the agencies, whose perceptions were that the language levels of UK graduates were not high enough.

An ambivalence towards language skills as a useful part of a UK professional's attributes was marked throughout the interviews. As noted above, respondent D, although he was fluent in four languages and consistently gave examples of how these were essential in his work, also claimed that knowledge of English was sufficient and English speakers had no need to learn another language. Respondent B spoke eight languages, most of them learned in response to the demands of his work, but insisted that language graduates could not do his job. He relativized the importance of language skills by stating that technical skills were an equally valid currency of communication:

It is possible to impress by the level of due diligence shown, and asking informed, sensible questions, so the lack of language skills is not necessarily a disadvantage.

Respondent C conceded that his knowledge of Japanese had been part of the reason for being recruited to his current post, but went on to add that his technical skills had been the main factor. A sense emerged that language skills were not something that serious professionals needed to aspire to, unless they were foreign, and the language in question was English. They were seen as soft skills, not relevant in themselves to the world of international finance.

Concluding Remarks

In summary, this short project both confirms and calls into question some of the findings of the surveys and reports discussed above. In contrast to the consensus from the CBI and others, that the lack of language skills is holding back UK business, these companies from the financial sector do not attribute any particular importance to language skills. This is in spite of the fact that during the interviews the respondents consistently said, and gave examples to the effect, that these skills are fundamental to their business. They are able to maintain this position because of the international nature of recruitment to the financial services industry, which allows them to hand-pick recruits from around the globe, knowing that they will speak English and can act as intermediaries as required in their home markets. British graduates by comparison are seen as less globally-oriented, and the impression was given that neither they nor their employers valued their language skills. This impression was heightened by the fact that

even those managers among the respondents who did speak foreign languages tended to minimise the importance of this skill. It did not appear to be central to their sense of themselves as professionals. In addition, there appears to be a lack of confidence, both among the employers and recruiters and the graduates themselves, about British graduates' language skills and their application.

These findings raise important issues for those teaching and promoting languages within the UK. It confirms that foreign language skills are essential in this sector, but suggests that this requirement is not explicitly acknowledged and is being filled by foreign nationals. The benefits of the year abroad undertaken by language students do not appear to be widely recognised or acknowledged. Finally, many of the professionals appeared to be uncomfortable being identified as linguists, preferring to foreground their other qualifications. In order for language skills to be accepted as an intrinsic part of a professional's profile in the business world, as well as the world of teaching and letters, there may be an argument that languages need to be taught as a matter of course across the curriculum. If the engineers, computer scientists, investment managers and business leaders of the future are going to be able to compete on an equal basis with their peers from around the world, even within their own country, and not be crowded out by articulate, mobile and skilled non-native speakers, they will need to acquire, in addition to their professional skills, the language skills which enable them to work around the globe.

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Continually Expanding Horizons

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Abstract: Having written an article for the Scottish Languages Review before beginning my higher education degree back in 2007, I reflect on my experiences of studying French and German at university level, both in Scotland and abroad. I have found that the skills learned at Advanced Higher have helped me get a head start in learning languages and that living abroad has been invaluable to me, both as an individual and as a linguist. Despite the fact that the job market is tough, and that few jobs seem to be specifically designed for those with languages at a highly specialised level, I have found that being one of relatively few Scottish linguists has indeed taken me down an interesting and exciting path.

Keywords: Advanced Higher, ERASMUS, languages at university, specialised language services

Introduction

Five years ago I was tasked with thinking about my language learning for an article for the Scottish Languages Review (Malcolm, 2007)¹. At the time I had just finished my Advanced Highers and was beginning university, full of enthusiasm for what might be considered an unpopular career path. Now, after having survived an intense four years at university and started off in the business world, it is time to reflect again – and to see whether my choice to become one of relatively few Scottish linguists was the right one.

University

Shortly after writing my first article, back in 2007, I started an Interpreting & Translation course at Heriot-Watt University. I had been anxious in terms of where my level might lie, as I had heard from various people what a tough course it was and knew that there would be students there who had lived abroad or been brought up bilingually. Yet to my surprise, I needn't have worried. The required entrance qualifications were only Highers, but I found that the extra knowledge and experience of producing my own written and spoken language gained at Advanced Higher put me and other students on par with those from more multilingual backgrounds.

The learning at university, even in first year, was more intense than I had ever experienced. We had considerably more to do than students in other departments, and sometimes it felt like too much. As I highlighted in my last article, the fact that learning a language is a never-ending process can be slightly overwhelming. However with hindsight, I feel that getting to grips with such a vast and tricky area of study has

¹ SLR Issue 16: <http://tiny.cc/SLR16>

prepared me for pretty much anything! Outside of university, I became involved in some of the planning for the new Scottish Languages Baccalaureate, and found myself desperate to emphasise how important it is that we find a more in-depth way to teach languages if we are to keep up with other nations.

Third Year Abroad

By third year it was time for the much-anticipated year abroad. Simultaneously one of the toughest and best times of my life, the ERASMUS experience is something I would recommend to every student, not just those studying languages. Not only did it provide a year of variety and excitement (something my friends spending the full 4 years at their home universities deeply envied), it also allowed me to mature and become highly independent as well as experiencing culture in an entirely new way.

My first placement was in Grenoble, France. When I arrived my accommodation was – to put it mildly – not of the standard I was used to. I had to go to the university to get registered and there was so much paperwork and organisation I thought “what am I doing here?!” Yet those six months living in my ramshackle student halls and trying to keep up with the home students in an entirely new environment were the most entertaining and educational of my life. I took a number of very interesting classes, including some translation classes for exchange students and more in-depth mainstream classes such as linguistics, lexicology and specialist translation. However, I found that most of my learning was done outside of the lecture hall, simply interacting with other people. One flaw that some people notice in the ERASMUS experience is that the foreign students tend to stick together, which is entirely due to human tendencies to cling on to people in the same boat. However, for me this actually turned out not to be a disadvantage at all. I was living with a whole mix of people, primarily from Italy but also from Poland, Spain, Lithuania, Germany... Luckily everyone was keen to learn French, so that was our common language. Most of my friends were medical students who came with no experience of learning French at all and left being fully conversational. This was when I realised that everyone can and should learn a new language. I began speaking French all day every day, and because I had already studied correct French I simply needed an opportunity to increase my fluency, meaning that it didn't matter that I was conversing with non-native speakers. I bumped into a friend in the street while my family were visiting and they were astonished at how I was able to switch to French and start chatting away so nonchalantly! I love exchanging stories with friends about the first time we dreamt in French or the first time we spoke to an unsuspecting English-speaking family member in French without even realising. We took turns at making dinner and giving each other a taste of our favourite national cuisine, sat eating until midnight, went on weekend trips together, and I even learnt some Italian too. I would say that this was the first time I have ever felt “European”, as I realised how much I had in common with all of my new friends, despite our cultural differences, which we spent hours discussing.

I enjoyed it so much I was loath to go to my next placement. But it was part of the deal, so in March 2010 I turned up in Saarbrücken, Germany with a fear of trying to speak German after all that time speaking mostly French. It took a few weeks but I soon got into it. This placement was slightly different. I, like most others from my university, found it more difficult to integrate in the second semester as most other students do just one whole-year placement. Nevertheless, I still managed to fit in plenty of travelling and used this placement to immerse myself more in the classes I was taking. Despite not having to take a large timetable full of courses due to having a project to write, I decided to take the opportunity to take some of the specialised classes that German universities are well known for. I took classes in technical, legal and financial translation, and they have proven to be completely invaluable in my career so far.

The Final Year – and Beyond

So when I arrived back in Edinburgh I was raring to go into my fourth and final year. Yet we were all in for a shock. We were all now at ease with using our additional languages, able to understand and be understood without putting in too much thought. However, we now had to force our brains to reverse back a couple of steps. That is to say, in order to translate or interpret, I had to force myself back to thinking about the meaning of what was being said or written in English, rather than just switching to the French or German part of my brain and going on auto-pilot. There was so much to learn in terms of the in-depth issues and topics on which we would base our practice, and then there was the pressure and stress of conference interpreting. As mentioned before, I believe that the intensity – despite being a heavy load at the time – has prepared me for most things life could throw at me.

Trying to find a job after graduating was not easy, as was the case for everyone. I was lucky to have studied German (almost all of the people I know that found a job relatively quickly studied German as one of their languages) and managed to get an internship with a translation agency in Leipzig starting immediately after graduation. This very full-on experience allowed me to learn the ropes of the industry at the same time as further improving my German. When I left university I still felt that French was my stronger language, but now, having dealt with a variety of both every-day and extraordinary requests on a daily basis for a year and a half, I feel totally at ease with German and wonder what all the fuss was about! After six months in Leipzig I returned to Edinburgh to work for the same company, before leaving in July this year and standing on my own two feet as a freelancer².

If I am honest, I had initially hoped to find a job where foreign language communication featured heavily but was not the main task, as I would like to explore other things that I might be good at. However, employers are looking for people who specialise in a specific field – business management, law, or marketing – as their main area of expertise and who also happen to speak two or three languages. It's almost as if they

² <http://www.nevislanguageservices.co.uk>

have realised how important languages are for their success, yet there are no candidates to fill the posts. In the UK languages are still an almost niche field, not an essential component – like IT or interpersonal skills – for success in one’s career, meaning that people that combine one of the skills above with one or more languages at a very high level are not as common as in other countries.

At one point, I thought that if I could go back in time, I would study a language plus another more “mainstream” subject. However, I have come to realise that I possess a very specialist skill that not many have, and that for now the gap in language skills can work in my favour as a provider of language services. I now have a business name and a steadily growing base of clients in various locations. As well as translation and proofreading, I have also decided to branch into my other passion of teaching and tutoring. After all, what kind of person would I be if I didn’t pass on my knowledge and help boost our essential language skills as a nation? So to go back to my original question at the beginning – yes I do feel I have made the right career choice in becoming a professional linguist. Being in full control of what I do, taking on tasks that I enjoy and providing my very best quality every time – how many people can claim to be in such an exciting position as I now find myself in?

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Language Use at the United Nations: Interdisciplinary Project of the Scottish Baccalaureate in Languages

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Abstract: The Scottish Baccalaureate may be an extraordinarily challenging award to complete but it also has numerous rewards. This article will provide an insight into my experience of the Interdisciplinary Project which is the distinguishing element of the Scottish Baccalaureate. My research for the project was focused on languages within the United Nations, investigating whether languages play an essential role in upholding the fundamental aims of the United Nations.

Keywords: Scottish Baccalaureate, United Nations, European Union, Interpreting, Translation

Introduction

The Scottish Baccalaureate is a qualification involving the study of two languages alongside the completion of an Interdisciplinary Project (IP). The latter, essentially the distinguishing feature of the Scottish Baccalaureate, essentially requires pupils to undertake an independent investigation on a topic of their choice. Many find this aspect particularly challenging, particularly in the early stages. However, for me this was the most interesting part of the overall award. I found that it allowed a lot of flexibility and freedom for creativity and innovation; it increased my independence as a learner and widened my range of skills. The report itself is too long to attach as an appendix. I have, therefore, created it as a blog³. Below I give some details about my project journey.

Starting Out

Initially I aimed to research the use of languages within the marketing industry. However, in the end I felt that this area was of little real interest to me, partly because the subject matter was too broad to fully research within the timescale of the Baccalaureate. My contingency plan was a melange of numerous ideas and its fruition stemmed from my application to study International Relations at university. This was by far the defining moment of my project - one could say you take a leap of faith when you decide on your proposal and then have to outline the next six months of academic investigation. However, I can assure you that in many ways, this becomes one of the most exciting parts of the project: it is converted into something you continually think of (and the one thing that could quickly become the bane of your life if you haven't chosen

³ Cf. <http://unitednationsandlanguages.blogspot.co.uk>

a subject you are truly passionate about). My project was directly focused on the United Nations, though my contingency was to focus on the European Union - the EU is far more accessible and I had already established links within the first month of my project; yet this was not my desired research area.

Moving On – and Getting Stuck

Progressing from my initial decisions, the project began to take shape. Initially my focus was on gaining contacts within the field I was researching: the natural partnership was with Heriot Watt University, which offers studies in Translation and Interpreting. Through Heriot Watt I was able to gain a vast amount of knowledge and hone my research questions. I focused on: who uses languages and how important are they in emergency situations, for instance the Haiti earthquake.

In order to fulfil the key criteria of the Baccalaureate I utilised my language skills through: creating questionnaires and conducting surveys, researching non-English internet websites and conducting interviews in my target languages (French and Spanish). As a whole experience, this encouraged me to employ languages in daily life which is a rather large task when you feel as if you are still in the infancy of language learning, relatively speaking. With hindsight, I can see that skill development is a huge part of the Baccalaureate and I feel that the IP truly underpins the key skills necessary for university life. Having now almost completed my first year of university and completed a module in Academic Skills, I feel qualified to say that the IP has been the key to me passing this module in particular. In other words, I believe that I have an enriched learning environment at university as a direct result of not having to develop the skills needed at university because I had some experience in the area of self-study through undertaking the IP. Research skills form the biggest part of the IP and a lack in these becomes evident in the final report; interpersonal skills are a necessity and as a confident, outgoing individual I found that the Baccalaureate has only furthered my skills in this field - comfort zones are, by all intents and purposes, extinct during the investigation. Thoughtful and careful planning is an absolute must, without it I dare say any project is likely to fail. It can therefore feel at some point that you are being taken to the very edge of the cliff before being nudged off - forcing you to find a parachute on the way down. The IP really does encourage students to work without the guidance of a teacher - you really do not have a safety parachute in the form of a teacher to do the work for you. And it is for this very reason that the Baccalaureate is an experience worth having before university because in the world of lectures and tutorials you are on an island with no one but yourself to help you.

The completion of my IP rested upon a contact at the United Nations and I was very much in the danger-zone until this materialised. The interview I conducted with this person (Christian Landrein, see below) led to the clarification of my research and the consolidation of my argument that languages play an essential role in maintaining the fluidity within the bureaucratic agency; something which can be transferred into many other International Organisations such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), World

Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). I had a lot of research from secondary sources but nothing from the mouth of a senior interpreter at the United Nations until the very last hour. This was a massive risk – although one I was prepared to take. At the initial stage, I was asked if I was prepared to be wrong and in all honesty, no I was not. I was not prepared to be wrong, and with hindsight I feel this was one of my biggest weaknesses. You must be prepared to be wrong, and it certainly is not a sign of failure. In fact, being wrong could actually be encouraged in many ways. Although my hypothesis was correct - languages are key in the United Nations - yet had I been wrong my skills and personal development had come to such a degree that admitting my assumption had been wrong would not have amounted to an admission of failure, because I would simply have had an answer to my question that was different to the one I had expected. In academia, being wrong isn't necessarily bad - negating theories is a prime part of university.

Do languages play an essential role in upholding the fundamental aims of the United Nations?

The simple answer to such a complex question turned out to be 'yes'. Languages are, in the words of Christian Landrein, senior interpreter at the United Nations, '...the lifeblood of virtually all gatherings at the UN.' Translators render in excess of 200 documents daily, into six languages. Every state is entitled to its part in the functioning of the United Nations. Thus, it becomes a strict necessity that language is no barrier. The Security Council is, from a quasi-liberal/realist perspective, the hierarchical hegemonic power in global relations and hence language really ought not to be a barrier in international affairs. It duly becomes necessary that the Heads of International Law and Global Peace and Security are able to extend their authority and power throughout the global community effectively. Certainly following my research and through the continuation of my studies in global organisations such as: NATO, UN, EU and GATT etc. I am still convinced that languages diminish the barriers that are so frequent in international relations between states. Certainly, functioning of the United Nations rests upon an ability to communicate freely amongst one another. Of course, languages will never have the ability to remove the bureaucratic tape that tends to permeate large organisations, where it seems to take an uncanny amount of time to complete even the simplest of tasks such as sending a fax.

Translating and interpreting are essential to the UN for several reasons: they facilitate communication and democratise the UN process; an equilibrium between states is struck in this regard through the use of six official languages. All are able to communicate on a global forum, in a global manner where languages are not a barrier. Far more could be used, of course, however the system would become cumbersome yet any less than the six used and the system would not be accessible, according to Landrein. More than six would increase the decision-making time and hence, lead to critical-decision windows being lost.

In emergency situations languages become particularly to the fore as they allow for the equal contribution of all parties and allow all members of the UN to participate in worldly debates. For instance, languages (Arabic and French) were employed throughout the Iraq war, the Libyan civil war and during the Haiti earthquake - interpreters were essential in decreasing the communication deadlock and allowing organisations to carry on with their work. This highlights that interpreting and translation operate in all corners of the globe and allow for communicational deadlocks to be broken.

As a result of my research I have concluded that languages facilitate greater participation in general debating, allow better handling of emergency situations and I have come to believe that the translation and interpreting facilities within the UN are by far two of the biggest assets the UN has.

Perhaps the UN could be restructured to function without translators and interpreters. However, the member states would then have to agree on a common language, and this would be very difficult politically. Also, all those attending meetings would have to be proficient in the chosen language, which is easier said than done for some countries that have great difficulties finding suitably qualified experts for some meetings without adding a linguistic dimension to their difficulties. In my survey one respondent added the following comment:

[...] mid-level security meetings are often attended by national police representatives. How many police in China speak enough English to make their contribution? If the UN language was not English and was Spanish, how many police at Scotland Yard would be able to participate at these meetings in the future? If we had to pick a Spanish-speaking representative, would they be the best candidate in terms of qualifications and experience, or just linguistically?

As far as I'm concerned, this admirably highlights the purpose and position languages play in a modern society. Languages to me are magnificent things and through languages a lot can be achieved.

Concluding Remarks

I have since started a university course in International Relations with French and Spanish. I have found the knowledge gained as part of my research hugely beneficial. International Relations depend upon an ability to actively correspond on issues. But on another level, university life is entirely different from school life - there may be help when you look for it but there is no silver spoon and no hand-holding. So to close I would like to extend my encouragement to further candidates of the Scottish Baccalaureate in Languages: take risks, embrace the feeling that you have been thrown off a cliff and find your parachute!

Think critically. Be prepared to be wrong. Enjoy the experience whilst you can.



Investigating the Views of Children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties about their Experience of Learning French

Claire van Wengen

Edinburgh University (Lead Dutch Tutor)

Abstract: This article reports on a research project carried out at a small residential school for children (Primary 4-Secondary 2) with severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in Scotland. Research was undertaken in order to investigate the children's feelings about learning French. Semi-structured interviews and other qualitative methods were used. Just over 55% of the total pupil cohort (36) participated. The findings suggest that children with severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties can benefit from language learning in various ways, including raised self-esteem. A number of recommendations are put forward for consideration.

Keywords: inclusion, modern language learning, primary school, pupil perspectives

Setting the Context

Between August 2009 and December 2012, I worked at a grant-aided residential school in Scotland (total cohort of 36 pupils) for children with severe Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) which introduced French into its curriculum. The school caters for children from local authorities from all over Scotland aged between eight and thirteen. The school is divided into six classes and each group has its own class teacher and learning assistant. Children are allocated to classes based both on age and educational progress. All classes are taught separately. I worked at the school for the duration of the programme, having been hired specifically to teach French to all groups.

There appears to be no real agreement as to what counts as a social, emotional or behavioural difficulty (Marsh, 2005; Cooper, 2006; McColl et al., 2002; McLeod, 2006) and there are many different ways in which children can manifest SEBD. At the school where the research was carried out many of the children have experienced neglect and physical or sexual abuse and some bite, scratch, kick and spit when upset or angry. However, most of those same children are also generous, caring and engaging.

When I had gone for the interview and spent an hour with one of the classes I realised how very much I wanted to teach these children. I had been warned that the children's behaviour could be extremely violent and disruptive. So it was interesting to find that, although this violent and disruptive behaviour did occur, there were many instances of a real sense of enjoyment and excitement at learning a new modern language. I found the dichotomy between the potentially violent and disruptive behaviour and the pleasure the majority of the children showed in language learning intriguing.

In carrying out this investigation, I sought to discover in what ways learning another modern language adds value to the education of children with SEBD.

Methodology

As the children at my school have little experience of being invited to contribute their views or participating in research, it was a priority to make it as clear as possible to all of them what the research would involve and that it was entirely their decision whether to take part or not. In total 20 children (17 boys and 3 girls) out of 36 (33 boys and 3 girls) aged 8-13 at the school agreed to participate. Some children had just started learning French and others had been learning French for over a year. The research was carried out in the first two weeks of July 2012.

I decided to use the semi-structured interview format as it has the advantage of flexibility. The semi-structured interview also makes it easier to discover patterns and facilitates comparing and contrasting the data obtained. I combined the semi-structured interview with the use of a drawing (one of a boy with a blank face to be drawn in and one of a girl: see Appendix A for picture of the boy) in order to initiate the conversation and put the children at ease. I also felt that this method was an effective way to empower the children by validating their feelings. Although many studies have been carried out involving children in mainstream schools giving them a voice, there have been very few projects specifically involving pupils with SEBD either as subjects of research or participants (Clough *et al*, 2005). Hunter-Carsch *et al* (2006) point to a number of challenges in listening to young people which include, being prepared to be surprised and being prepared to take action on the basis of what we hear. I used a combination of observations and notes from the interviews, the expressions drawn on the faces and the writing in the thought clouds to form my data.

Observations and Notes

Immediately after the interviews I made notes on what I had observed in terms of the child's reactions and behaviour. I had decided not to record the interviews as I felt it would be intrusive and potentially intimidating. The majority of the children displayed a sense of responsibility and pleasure at being asked to give their opinions.

Drawing in of Expressions

Asking the children to draw an expression on the blank face reflecting how they felt about learning French, provided a focus for the interview. It gave the children an opportunity to connect with their emotions first and then to provide a more intellectual response in the thought clouds.

Writing in the Thought Clouds

This data was collected in order to discover what the pupils felt about learning French. I also wanted to find out whether the pupils were gaining something from the French classes which was intrinsic to learning a modern language as opposed to related activities which took place in the lessons.

Two extreme cases

Most of the pupils came in, listened to what was expected of them, drew in an expression on the blank face, answered the question with great seriousness and careful consideration and left. I will refer to two interviews which represent a child who behaved in an exemplary manner and a child who reacted in a way that, I suspect, most people at the school would have expected most of the children to react to the experience of being interviewed.

The first interview I want to refer to was with a boy called Danny⁴ (aged 9). It was one of the first interviews and it left me slightly perplexed. When I had explained what we were going to do, Danny drew a devil's face and horns on the blank face. I asked him whether that reflected how he felt about learning French and he said he really liked French but that he hated Simon (aged 8) with whom he had just had an argument. It was virtually impossible to get him to focus on the interview as he wandered around the room picking things up and examining them. Eventually he sat down and we returned to the thought clouds. It was clear that he was keen to contribute but deeply preoccupied with something that had just happened.

Based on my experiences in the school, I had expected that far more interviews would have followed a similar pattern but in fact, out of 20 interviews, only three were marked by distraction and a lack of focus. Two of the boys who became very distracted and had trouble focusing had both been upset by something which had happened prior to the interviews. I was surprised that the third boy had volunteered at all as he was generally disruptive and found it extremely difficult to stay focused on a task.

At the other end of the spectrum was the interview with Duncan (aged 10), who was still residential but accessing mainstream primary school full-time. I went and interviewed him in his cottage as he was already on holiday. Duncan was keen to help. He showed me into the playroom and set up the table and chairs. He had greatly enjoyed learning French at the special school and was proud of the fact that he had practised counting to 100 over the holidays. He told me that he had been ahead of his fellow pupils in French when he had started at the local mainstream primary school and that the teacher had been pleased and impressed with him. In one of the thought clouds on his drawing he wrote that learning French had made him more confident at school. (See also Lumsden, 2009: 19).

Data Analysis

The brief notes taken straight after the interviews correspond well with both the answers the children gave in their thought clouds and their demeanour in the interviews. Those children (17/20) who took their responsibility as participants very seriously and displayed a sense of pride and pleasure in being asked their opinion

⁴ All pupil names in this article have changed to preserve individuals' anonymity.

tended to provide the most detailed drawings and well-considered answers in the thought clouds.

The faces drawn in by the children who had taken the task of expressing their emotions at learning French seriously, give a strong message of enjoyment and closely match the data obtained through the thought clouds. Out of 20 faces, 16 contained smiles which ranged from modest little smiles to enormous smiles. One child who enjoyed French had drawn a straight line for a mouth and a moustache to reflect what he would look like when he was grown-up. There was no smile but there were expressions of enjoyment in the thought clouds.

For the analysis of the thought clouds I divided the statements (119), into seven categories. My aim was to separate those elements of the French classes which added value because of experiences unrelated to learning a language from those elements which were specifically related to learning a modern language. Table 1 provides an overview of the categories and a sample of answers for each one.

Table 1: Overview of categories and sample answers

France and French Culture	It's my favourite country.	I like the Eiffel Tower.	I like the things you learn about France.	France is a good place.	I like the whole culture of it.
Practical considerations	It is good because you could go to another country and ask for things.	Useful for if you go to France.	A language you can speak in lots of places.	It made me more confident at mainstream school.	It is very good to have another language.
A challenge	It is fun but it is sometimes hard.	I like getting my tongue around the French words.	It can be hard learning a different language.	I like a hard challenge.	Learning the language because I've never done it before.
Aspirations	I would like to travel the world.	I would like to go to France.	I would like to learn more French.	I would like to learn more languages.	I would like to learn more numbers.
Liking the teacher / classroom ethos	I like the French teacher.	I like working as a class in French.	I liked getting the class certificate.	You don't get into trouble when you get it wrong.	It is easier because we talk about it. We don't just do it in the books.
Enjoyment of related activities	Fun with the activities we do	Games.	Playing French boules.	Art /Acting / Copying out French stories.	Toy animals.
Enjoyment of learning a different language	My favourite language.	I want to learn French words/writing/ Different words.	I like enjoying myself in French. Learning French makes me happy.	I like /enjoy French/learning French/being able to talk French.	I like learning a different language.

Discussion of Findings

In answer to my research question: 'In what ways does learning a modern language add value to the education of children with SEBD?' we see many of the children keen to rise to a challenge and expressing raised aspirations. The pupils show an awareness of the practical benefits of being able to speak a modern language and of the bridge it can

provide to mainstream schooling. The children express an awareness of a wider world where people live differently and think differently. It is widening their horizons to extend beyond a small residential school to a country where they have never been but which they can try to imagine. The above findings echo observations at SEBD schools in Sunderland (Marsh, 2005: 77) and Kent (Marsh, 2005: 21) where the teaching of French produced overwhelmingly positive effects including:

- Boost to Self-Esteem
- Raised Aspirations
- Enjoyment
- New Experiences
- Success spilling into other Curricular Areas
- Re-integration into Mainstream Schools

Portal House School in Kent also found a strong link between learning a modern language and a positive effect on pupils' social skills and sensitivity to others. These are all important elements which add value to the education of children with SEBD.

Arguably then, learning a modern language demonstrably provides children with SEBD with the same benefits as those experienced by children in mainstream education. These benefits are well-documented: linguistic skills, cognitive abilities, cultural awareness, political awareness and career opportunities as well as building self-confidence and self-esteem. (Marsh, 2005; McColl, 2002; Buckley, 1976)

There are, however, a number of ways in which learning a modern language appears to provide even greater benefits for children with SEBD than those in mainstream education. The children interviewed showed a real awareness that the vast majority of their peers in mainstream education are learning a modern language. Not providing children with SEBD with access to modern language learning appears to return them to a time when it was assumed that those with Additional Support Needs (ASN) could not do what 'normal' children did (Head, 2007). If, by teaching children with SEBD a modern language it is possible to assure them that they are not 'cut off' but receiving the same opportunities as their peers, it will enable them to develop a more positive self-image. The data from this small, limited study suggest that learning French has had a positive impact on the children's views of themselves as successful learners and confident individuals. (See also Lumsden, 2009).

Through the literature and through the data obtained in this study we also find that learning a modern language can play a role in facilitating integration or re-integration into mainstream education. Two of the boys interviewed (still residential but in mainstream education) found that learning French at their special school had made them more confident about fitting in at their mainstream school. If one of the government's aims is to educate as many children as possible in mainstream schools, this is an important consideration to bear in mind.

Concluding Remarks

If what children with SEBD need is a widening of horizons (Maxwell, 2010), a boost to their self-esteem (Marsh, 2005; McColl et al., 2002), a sense of enjoyment in learning (*ibid*) and an inclusive education (Riddell, 2009), giving them the opportunity to learn a modern language seems to be a positive way forward and a way of ensuring that this already marginalised group of learners does not become completely disconnected from the curriculum provided in mainstream schools and from society in general.

Based on the existing literature and the data collected, I feel confirmed in my belief that, although enjoyment of learning and an increase in self-esteem can significantly improve the educational experience of children with SEBD, the issues of social justice and inclusion are also at stake. I would also argue that the benefits of learning a modern language may well be even greater for children with SEBD than children in mainstream education.

Hunter-Carsch et al. (2006) point to a number of challenges in listening to young people, which include being prepared to be surprised and to undertake action on the basis of what we hear. The children at this school have said that they want to learn more French, go to France and travel the world. They have provided powerful reasons why they should learn French but they need people to listen and to act on their behalf. They should not be marginalised or ignored but be given the opportunities that all Scotland's young people deserve.

The school stopped the modern languages programme at the end of 2012 because of insufficient funding. With the positive reactions received from the children themselves it feels like a real loss that the school is no longer able to provide French classes for its pupils, especially in light of the Scottish Government's recent announcement of its 1+2 languages policy (Scottish Government, 2012).

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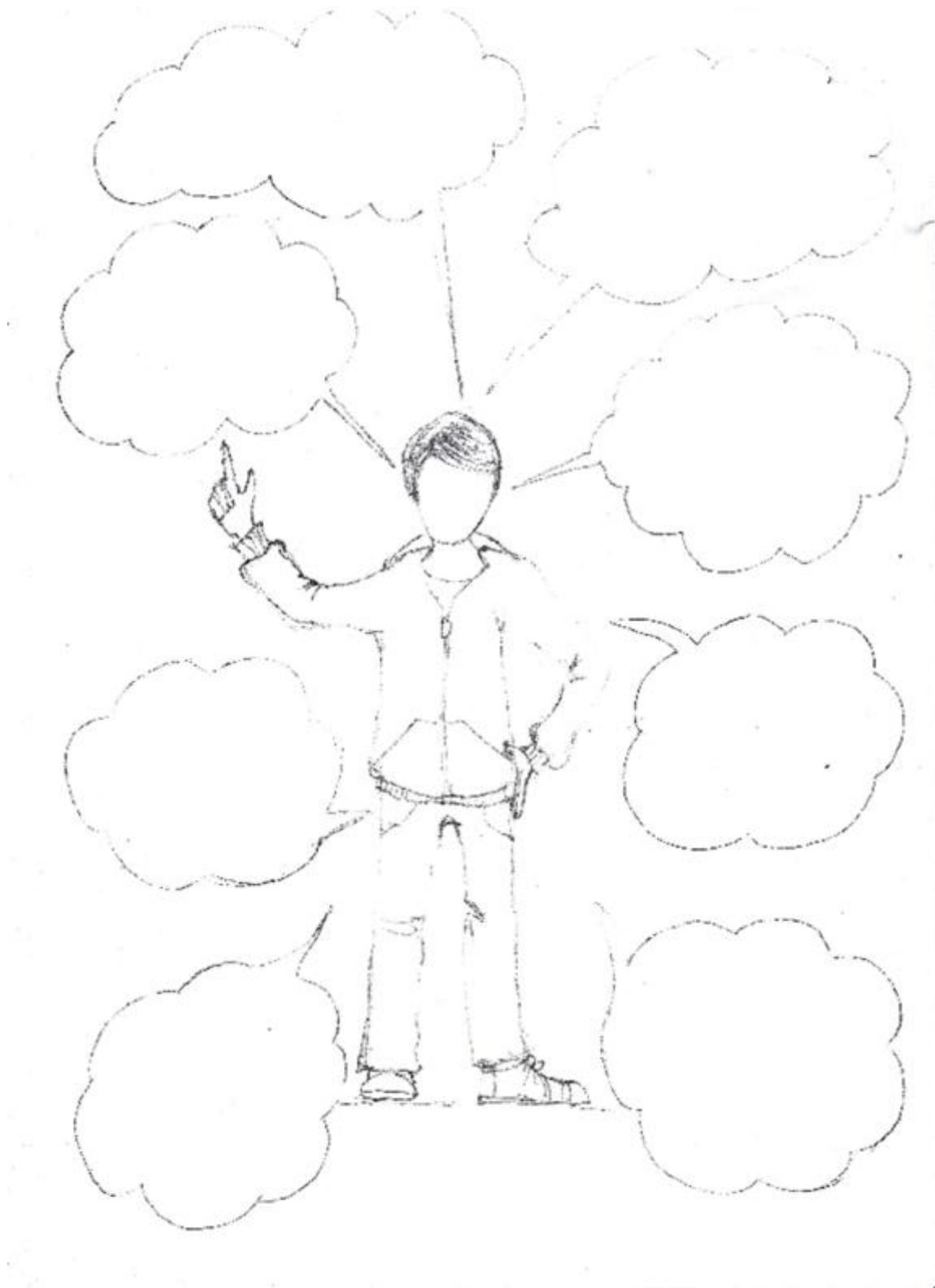
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Appendix A: Thought Clouds





Creativity in Action in MLPS

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Abstract: This article provides a description of the learning and teaching approaches adopted by a primary teacher to develop creative practice in teaching French in primary schools. Examples of cross-curricular projects and the use of IT are given and their value discussed in terms of helping children to engage with learning a new language. The motivational value of contextualising learning by embedding a language within the curriculum and using CLIL is evaluated. The development of this pedagogy led to this practitioner receiving professional recognition in creativity from the GTCS in January of 2013. The aim of this article is to inspire practitioners to look for creative ways of integrating a modern language into their classrooms.

Keywords: Professional Recognition, Creativity, MLPS, French

How it began

I was recently awarded Professional Recognition in Creativity because of the creative approach I have taken in teaching MLPS. I was very flattered when the GTC approached me and encouraged me to apply for this award but I was also surprised as I had previously considered my area of expertise to be the teaching of French but I hadn't fully considered that what made this special was creativity. In this article I will describe the actions I took which led to this recognition and show the potential for creativity within modern languages.

My background has led to a passion for teaching languages. This has become stronger over time from studying French at University, teaching English abroad, being married to a Frenchman and having bilingual children. Languages have become an integral part of my life experience. My other desire was to become a primary school teacher.

Naturally, when this came about I was keen to make a modern language an integral part of my classroom so that the children could be involved in experiential learning of the language. Fortunately, the opportunity to fully develop this aspiration was given to me by my forward-thinking head teacher. She was very encouraging and supportive of the idea of teaching French across the curriculum and to the whole school. The school where I work is a small rural school. It comprises two composite classes which makes it simpler to teach the whole school, although differentiation issues are more complex.

It was decided that I would plan cross-curricular topics with as much French language content as possible and include French in our daily routines in class. Since then I have been constantly researching and developing projects to teach French in new ways.

Combining Modern Languages, Literacy and IT

I feel it is imperative that language learning constantly involves making new and meaningful connections. Therefore, I always intertwine French with other curricular areas. At first, I began to develop topics which were based around picture books to create a focus on literacy. I began with familiar stories which are simple and repetitive. As the children already knew the stories they could easily follow them and this helped to improve their confidence. Repetition in the stories helped children look for patterns and notice differences and similarities between languages. Reading stories helped the learners think about how their own language works. Through open questioning I was able to get them to think about how sentences are structured and how all the parts of language fit together. Although the books were simple they were also versatile and could be used on many levels. Therefore, through questioning I was able to differentiate the learning. Games and songs were then used to reinforce the language of the text as these give plenty of opportunities to use the target language simply.

One example of this was our 'Traditional Tales' Topic. I used a storyline approach and the puppet 'Annette la Chouette' was the main facilitator. 'She' would send us letters in French with instructions for challenges we needed to accomplish. Through this we were able to explore many familiar stories in a creative way. In this topic we progressed towards the final outcome of a drama production for parents.

I have also focused on using ICT creatively through language learning. An example of this was our French-speaking avatar project. I wanted the learners to be able to talk about themselves in French. Our starting point was using a classical approach of completing a little booklet 'All about me'. This booklet provided key vocabulary for the children to be able to write simple sentences about themselves. I then wanted the learners to take the knowledge they had gained and use it in a new and exciting context. I introduced them to the website 'Voki' where you can design your own speaking avatar. This ignited their imagination and they were completely motivated to produce French text in order to make their avatar speak. This allowed them to experiment with basic sentence structures in order to create new sentences with different information about their character. They also learned about the importance of using accents in French, punctuation and accurate spelling because if they did not their avatar could not pronounce the words correctly.

Another example of combining French, literacy and ICT was our French 'Storybird' project. We looked at simple story structures in examples such as 'Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see?' by Eric Carle. These stories use repetition, simple colour adjectives and verb structures. The learners were able to explore and identify similarities between the texts and then develop their own French stories using the 'Storybird' website. This site allows the user to choose artwork from many artists to illustrate their story. Again this was highly motivating for the children and gave real purpose to their French writing. They were able to produce their own beautiful French story books.

Content and Language Integrated Teaching

The other approach which I have developed in my language teaching is CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Teaching). This method entails teaching a subject through the medium of a foreign language. In the primary sector I have found this approach to be very effective. As the content of lessons often involves simple concepts and instructions, it is very compatible with this approach. I have found that if the learning is active I can adopt this method. For example, much of our language learning is done through drama, dance, songs and games. Therefore, the children can be addressed in the target language as long as they are actively being shown what to do. There are many examples where I have employed CLIL, e.g. making crepes for Mardi Gras or les Galettes des Rois for the Epiphany. We have also had many art and craft lessons in French where the children have followed instructions in French because they have been accompanied by physical actions. This experiential learning in the target language has been crucial to bringing the language alive and making it real and purposeful.

I have also developed the teaching of mathematics through French. With infants this is through French immersion because many of the First Level numeracy outcomes are compatible with this. The children are happy to develop their numeracy skills in French because it doesn't matter to them what the numbers are called as it is the mathematical concepts which they are trying to grasp. Again this makes the new language real if they can learn maths using it. When working towards Second level maths outcomes I have tended to work on topics where I teach the mathematical concepts in English but include as much French Language content as possible. To see examples of this type of planning you can look at the Education Scotland website 'Passeport pour la Francophonie': <http://bit.ly/passeportfrancophone>. Each of the five countries has a mathematics section that contains my work.

A New Dimension for Recurrent Topics

In the autumn term of 2012 I implemented a cross-curricular Halloween and Christmas topic in French. I feel that these familiar school topics can be revisited in a new dimension in French. For example, the upper school created magic potions recipes in French and then helped the infants to follow these and create their own edible magic potions at the Halloween party.

Animation Project

I have experimented a great deal with digital literacy and learning a language and I am presently using technology to create animations. We began by studying animation techniques in the context of French animation films. We looked at how techniques have changed through history by doing comparative studies of several animations. We are now transforming this into a full scale project of learning about simple animation techniques and then building on these to create our own French language animations. We are using the films 'Princes et Princesses' and 'Contes de la Nuit' by French animator Michel Ocelot as a focus for this project. These are beautiful films using the silhouette

cut out animation technique developed by the animator Lotte Reiniger in the 1920s. The stories are short fantastical fables, and the children are now developing their own versions of these. The infants are focusing on creating plasticine characters to create animations of classic French comptines e.g. 'Une souris verte' This project is involving a great deal of problem-based learning as making animations is technically challenging!

Assessing Impact

Developing cross-curricular French has had a massive impact not only on the pupils but also on my professional practice because I have become a far more creative and reflective practitioner. I am now fully aware that creativity thrives when the learner can explore, experiment, and play with ideas. I also understand that creativity can be promoted through questioning. Questions which help create new connections by representing ideas in different ways e.g. visually, physically and verbally. I am now always on a mission to find new and exciting approaches of teaching French.

My pupils have benefited greatly from having language learning embedded in the curriculum. This has given them the opportunity to develop a broader linguistic and cultural perspective. As French has been an integral part of their learning it is very real and useful to them. For example, in the infant class I have observed children counting out loud in French while doing their maths in English.

The children have been given many opportunities thanks to this development. For example, my pupils and I were invited to facilitate a workshop at the **Creativity Conference** at the Glasgow Science Centre in May 2012. This allowed us to showcase a project we had recently worked on in class. The children were able to share their learning experiences of cross-curricular French by talking about their French data-handling project on Madagascan animals. I had a parent helper with me who commented on how confident the children were in this situation. They also performed their musical interpretation of 'Le Petit Chaperon Rouge' for the delegates and after, one of my pupils said to me that he never needed to be afraid again. Thus I feel that my pupils have gained confidence and self-esteem through learning French creatively.

When we received a visit from Fhiona Fisher, former Education Scotland development officer for languages, and Laura Stewart, professional development officer from SCILT, the children had the opportunity to be filmed⁵. During this visit, when one of the pupils was being interviewed, she was asked if she enjoyed French and she said yes, because it was like "playing but learning in French at the same time, so it kind of gets memorised in your head". This demonstrates how motivating it can be to learn through play and experimentation.

⁵ The product was then posted on the Education Scotland blog 'The Chalkface' (<http://bit.ly/1285xna>) and the SCILT website (<http://bit.ly/13XLdHn>).

Colleagues and the wider community have also benefited from the positive school inspection we received in April of 2012. The inspection report highlighted that one of the school's key strengths was teaching French across the curriculum.

I have also shared my knowledge and experience with others. For example, I presented at the SALT conference at Strathclyde University in November 2011 and ran a workshop entitled 'practical and creative ideas in MLPS'. This was a wonderful opportunity to share my knowledge and experience with others.

Fhiona Fisher contacted me after her visit to my Primary School to ask if I would be interested in being part of a team of writers who were creating a new website for teaching French in the primary school. I was given the remit of creating mathematical challenges which were part of cross-curricular topics. This Education Scotland website is the aforementioned '*Passeport pour la Francophonie*' which was launched at the 2012 Scottish Learning Festival. It is a fantastic resource and I am very proud to have been involved in its creation.

I have also developed a close relationship with the Languages department of the local secondary school. In collaboration with the Principal Teacher of Modern Languages I was able to run a CPD session for primary practitioners in the local cluster to provide guidance and support. This event allowed for collaborative work and discussion. We are currently working towards an interdisciplinary transition project.

Recently I made contact with the Educational Support Officer for Languages in Argyll and Bute and expressed my interest in developing MLPS at a local authority level. We are now working towards developing French in the Early Years. The first stage of this development has been to implement a pilot study in several pre-5 and P1 classes. The study is currently underway and I am receiving very positive feedback from the staff involved.

Concluding Remarks

The learning I have gained has impacted on my professional practice in many ways. I have constantly researched to find creative teaching strategies to enhance the children's learning of the language and to help them make meaningful connections between the language and their overall learning and experience. I feel I have given my pupils a key to unlock the door of learning a language and that key is called creativity. However, the same applies to me. I have unlocked a door in my teaching practice and the key I have used is creativity. For me, creativity is about making the possibilities endless. It's about asking: where can I go with this? Let's see! I say to my pupils: Let's go as far as we can and delve into as many areas as we can and that is now where I am when I think about my learning and professional practice. I want to go as far as I can with finding new ways of engaging pupils with language learning.



List of Downloadable Articles

NB: The Language Learning Journal has made some of its most popular articles available for downloading without a journal subscription (look for the green 'full access' button)⁶:

Most read articles (<http://tiny.cc/LLJmostreadarticles>):

- Language acquisition **N Dwyer (2011)**
- Language learner strategy research and MFL teaching & learning **M Grenfell (2007)**
- The languages classroom: place of comfort or obstacle course? **M. Nicolson and H. Adams (2010)**
- Optimizing visually-assisted listening comprehension **Ahmad S Kashania et al (2010)**
- Score in French: motivating boys with football in Key Stage 3 **Ian McCall (2010)**
- The beliefs of two expert EFL learners **Sarah Mercer (2010)**
- Language learner strategies **Michael Grenfell & Lynn Erler (2007)**
- Motivation of UK school pupils towards foreign languages: a large-scale survey at Key Stage 3 **James A. Coleman, Árpád Galaczi & Lluïsa Astruc (2007)**

Most cited articles (<http://tiny.cc/LLJmostcitedarticles>):

- The year abroad and its effects **Paul Meara (2007)**
- Strategic classrooms: Learning communities which nurture the development of learner strategies **Do Coyle (2007)**
- Learner strategies and self-efficacy: Making the connection **Suzanne Graham (2007)**
- Teaching in the target language: Problems and prospects **Carole E. M. Franklin (2007)**
- Teaching in the target language: a problem in the current orthodoxy **David Atkinson (2010)**

Some or all articles in the following journal editions can be downloaded without subscription¹:

Language Learning Journal Vol. 39, Issues 1-3 (2011)

http://tiny.cc/LLJ2011_Vol39_1

http://tiny.cc/LLJ2011_Vol39_2

http://tiny.cc/LLJ2011_Vol39_3

Foreign Language Annals, Vol. 45, Issue s1 (Summer 2012)

<http://tiny.cc/FLAnnalsSummer2012>

⁶ Last checked: May 2013

Recent Publications – Abstracts

British Academy and Cumberland Lodge (2013) Multilingual Britain

<http://tiny.cc/MultilingualBritain2013>

Key Points:

- The UK's multilingualism is an asset and a resource, but is not fully valued
- More data is needed to understand fully the nature and extent of multilingualism in the UK
- Businesses and public service providers would benefit if community languages were harnessed in a systematic and constructive way
- Multilingualism has direct implications for social cohesion
- Accreditation plays a central role in the value attributed to languages by society
- Education policy is central to the future direction of multilingualism in the UK
- New media forms and internationalisation offer opportunities for language learning

British Council (2013) Broadening Horizons: Overcoming Barriers to Overseas Study

<http://tiny.cc/BC2013BroadHorizons>

The vast majority of UK students are still not considering studying overseas, and over three quarters of them feel there is not enough information to make an informed decision, according to new research by the British Council. [...] The difficulty in accessing information has meant that the most significant perceived barriers to studying abroad for UK students are lack of language skills and concerns about the cost. However, more than 80 per cent of those considering study abroad say they feel confident using a foreign language, and of the top ten most popular countries, seven are non-English speaking.

British Council and Education Scotland (2012) Sustainable International School Partnerships: Make the Difference

<http://tiny.cc/SustainIntlPships>

The publication, developed in partnership between British Council and Education Scotland, draws on the experience of Scottish teachers who have been closely involved in developing international school partnerships. It highlights the challenges and opportunities experienced in sustaining successful international partnerships. Effective practices, challenges, opportunities and a framework for reflection combine to illustrate how the development of sustainable international school partnerships can 'make the difference' within Curriculum for Excellence. This new publication draws on the experience of practitioners who have been closely involved in developing international school partnerships.

Doughty, H. *et al* (2012) Evaluation of the FLA Project Initiative 2011-2012

http://tiny.cc/FLA_ProjectEvaluation2011

Since November 2010 the British Council Scotland and SCILT, Scotland's National Centre for Languages have worked collaboratively to improve the experience of Foreign Language Assistants (FLAs) based in Scotland. The initial focus was on the organisation of the national FLA training day, with additional support from other bodies such as Education Scotland, the cultural organisations and local authorities. However, despite the evident satisfaction with the support being given by all parties concerned we were faced with dwindling numbers of FLAs. We therefore decided to pull our joint expertise in marketing and promotion in order to raise the profile of FLAs and highlight the value they provide. At the FLA induction meetings in late August and early September 2011 we invited FLAs to consider doing a project. A separate FLA projects booklet provides further details of the successful projects by the FLAs themselves.

European Commission, (2012) Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe

<http://tiny.cc/KeyDataMLEurope2012>

Linguistic and cultural diversity of the European Union is one of its major assets, but also one of its main challenges. Throughout the last decade, European multilingualism policy has been guided by the objective set by the Barcelona Council of March 2002, which called for the improvement of mastery of basic skills, in particular, by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age. It has also been shaped by the Commission Communication 'Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment' (2008) and by the Council Resolution on a European strategy for multilingualism (2008). These strategic documents established language policy as a cross-cutting topic contributing to all other EU policies.

EUNoM (2012) Globalisation, Modernity and Language: New Perspectives on Language in Education

http://tiny.cc/EUNoM_Final2012

This is the final report of the EUNoM project, co-funded by the European Union under the Lifelong Learning Programme from November 2009 to October 2012. The **European Universities' Network on Multilingualism**, which has over 25 members from all over Europe, first met in Barcelona in 2007, to discuss how the process of globalization makes changes in the way universities, and indeed society as a whole, approach multilingualism, both as a challenge and, above all, as an opportunity.

Gillespie, J. H. *et al.* (2012) Languages for the Future: Northern Ireland Languages Strategy, DENI

http://tiny.cc/NI_LangStrat2012

The Languages Strategy for Northern Ireland was created against a background of profound change. Globalisation, the continuing development of the European Union, the growth of low cost air travel and demographic change are factors that are already affecting Northern Ireland's society and its economy and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The Strategy team focused on three areas: education (Languages for Life), business (Languages for Prosperity) and social life (Languages for Understanding). It was developed over a number of years by an extensive process of consultation with the public, key interest groups, language experts and stakeholders both on-line and at a series of targeted events held throughout the Northern Ireland.

HE Academy (2012) Languages and Entrepreneurship: A Guide for Students

http://tiny.cc/ML_entrepreneurship

The time spent studying, working or volunteering abroad during a degree programme is an excellent opportunity to identify and start up a new business. However, too few students are aware of entrepreneurship before or during their international placement. This report shows that students who speak foreign languages, travel and understand other cultures have a unique entrepreneurial opportunity. It encourages students to look at placements abroad in a more critical and innovative way, to be aware of business opportunities and to make use of the start-up support, networks and services available when starting a business.

Scottish Government (2012) Response to the Languages Working Group Report and Recommendations - Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach

<http://tiny.cc/ResponseLWGR2012>

Scottish Ministers have welcomed the Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach report and its 35 recommendations, either in full or in part, while recognising that taking these forward will require discussion, collaboration and partnership with local authorities, schools, parents and other key stakeholders.

Scottish Government (2012) Working with China: A Five Year Strategy for Engagement between Scotland and the People's Republic of China

<http://tiny.cc/SG2012EngageChina>

This high level strategy sets out the Scottish Government's ambitions in developing Scotland's relationship with China over the next five years. The strategy is intended for all Scotland and has been developed after extensive engagement with key stakeholders. It provides a framework for any Scottish organisation that wishes to work with China. The strategy will be subject to an internal Scottish Government review and updated annually (where appropriate) to ensure the targets remain relevant.

Tinsley, T. and T. Comfort (2012) Lessons from Abroad: International Review of Primary Languages

[http://tiny.cc/Lessons from abroad](http://tiny.cc/Lessons_from_abroad)

Lessons from abroad: International review of primary languages provides an evidence base on language learning within various primary curricula across the world. The report's findings challenge the assumption that English-speakers do not need to learn other languages, not only on economic grounds but also on educational ones. Evidence discussed within the report, gathered from various education systems around the world, highlights that English-speaking education generally provides less resource and encouragement for language learning than other high-performing education systems. Part 1 of the report reviews international research and development in early language learning, presenting evidence on the benefits of starting foreign language learning in primary school or earlier. It also looks at current international developments in policies and approaches to language learning. Part 2 focuses on the issues and challenges common to all education systems that need to be addressed if primary language teaching is to be a success.

Tinsley, T. (2013) Languages: The State of the Nation, British Academy

http://tiny.cc/ML_StateOfNation2013

Languages: The State of the Nation presents both a longitudinal perspective on the UK's supply of graduates with high language competencies into the labour market and future-scoping of emerging strategic needs. It highlights a 'vicious cycle of monolingualism', which in turn is causing market failure in the demand and supply of skilled linguists across all sectors of the UK economy. The report calls for concerted and joined-up efforts across government, education providers, employers, language learners and the wider community to ensure that language policies respond to new economic realities. It spells out the strategic need to further diversify, rather than replace, existing language provision and stresses the requirement for more applied and inclusive language courses at all levels. Demand within employers must be stimulated and support should be provided in the management of multilingualism. These actions will support the UK's aspirations for growth and global influence.

UCML-AULC survey of Institution-Wide Language Provision in Universities in the UK (2012-2013)

http://tiny.cc/IWLP_Report2012

The survey aimed to obtain a picture of the current availability and demand for Institution-wide Language Provision (IWLP) across the higher education sector in the UK. Also sometimes referred to as 'Languages for All', IWLP typically comprises elective language course units taken for academic credit and language courses studied in addition to and alongside a student's degree programme. Students taking these courses have been referred to as 'non-specialist language learners' since the courses they study are not a compulsory component of the degree programme for which they are registered.



Selected events April 2013 – August 2014ⁱ

2013	
Date	Details
11-12 April	Residence Abroad, Social Networks and Second Language Learning. LLAS: University of Southampton. http://www.llas.ac.uk/events/6636
31 May	Spelling Bee (Scotland). Final held at Scottish Parliament http://tiny.cc/SpellingBeeSco2013
03-05 June	Conference on Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Language Learning. Jyväskylä, Finland http://tiny.cc/Jyvaskyla2013
05-08 June	Applied Linguistics Perspectives on Content and Language Integrated Learning. La Cristalera (Miraflores de la Sierra, Madrid), Spain. http://uam-clil.com/alp-clilconference
11 June	Rencontres Théâtrales - drama competition for schools. Whitehill Secondary School, Glasgow. http://www.ifecosse.org.uk/Drama-competition-for-schools-2013.html
28 June	Creative Approaches to Language Teaching, Nottingham Trent University. http://www.yell2-project.eu/events_en.html
28 June	Innovative Language Teaching and Learning at University: Enhancing the Learning Experience through Student Engagement. University of Manchester. http://www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/ourresearch/events/conferences/innovative-language-conference/
02 July	Linking Research and Practice in MFL teaching and learning in schools. (As part of 50 years of Education at York: Academic Conference) University of York. http://www.york.ac.uk/education/news-events/events/50/academic-conference/
06-07 July	History of Modern Foreign Language Education in the UK and Europe: Research Workshop 2. University of Warwick. http://historyofmfl.weebly.com/workshops.html
10-13 July	4 th World-CALL Conference 'Sustainability and CALL'. SECC, Glasgow. http://www.eurocall-languages.org/news/items/worldcall2013cfp.html
02-03 September	Eliciting data in second language research: Challenge and innovation. University of York. http://www.iris-database.org/iris/app/home/iris-conference
04-06 September	BAAL Annual Conference 2013. Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh. Website has details of BAAL 2012 and previous BAAL conferences: http://www.baal.org.uk/baal_conf.html
05-06 September	Did anyone say power?": Rethinking domination and hegemony in translation. University of Bangor. http://www.bangor.ac.uk/ml/full-event.php.en?nid=9727&tnid=0

06 September	The SCEN Lecture 2013. Leith Academy, Edinburgh http://www.scen.info/
20 September	Open Educational Resources in Modern Languages. University of Bristol. http://www.bris.ac.uk/sml/events/conferences/oers-modern-languages/
02-05 October	International Conference - Sharing to Inspire Language Education across Europe, Birmingham. http://www.yell2-project.eu/conference_en.html
03-05 October	5 th Biennial International Conference on Task-Based Language Learning. Banff, Alberta, Canada. http://www.educ.ualberta.ca/tblt2013/
04-06 October	The 1st Conference on China-Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) Cross-Cultural Dialogue, Education & Learning. University of Ljubljana, Slovenia http://www.ef.uni-lj.si/ChinaCEEconference2013
02 November	SALT Annual Conference, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. http://www.saltlangs.org.uk/
2014	
23 January	e-learning symposium 2014. University of Southampton. https://www.llas.ac.uk/events/6747
10-14 August	World Congress of the International Association of Applied Linguistics Brisbane, Queensland. https://www.llas.ac.uk//events/6589

ⁱ Also check our Events pages: http://tiny.cc/SCILT_Events. If you come across an important language-education related event we have missed please inform us by emailing scilt@strath.ac.uk.