

# **SIGMA Scientific Committee on Languages**

## **LANGUAGE STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The UK system of education varies according to the different administrative areas of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and is highly devolved. The substantial autonomy of the institutions, combined with the many developments and changes in the field of education in recent years, makes for a complex pattern which, in the limited space and time available for the preparation of this report, is difficult to represent accurately. A further complication derives from the fact that the various Education Departments responsible for collating data on higher education in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, use different criteria for their statistics so that reasonable comparisons are not possible. The Department for Education has recently set up the Higher Education Statistics Agency (to replace the USR) to coordinate statistics for the whole sector. It is to start operation in 1995.

Although based on a substantial body of information received from institutions and educational organisations, this report is, nevertheless, only a general overview. It does not pretend to be either full or comprehensive.

*Educational System: background and geographical coverage:*

United Kingdom: includes England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. (Details for the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands are not included). The four Home Government Departments responsible for education are:

1. *Department for Education* (known as Department of Education and Science prior to 6 July 1992): all sectors of education in England
2. *Welsh Office, Education Department*: responsible for schools, further and higher education in Wales. Since 1 April 1993 also for universities.
3. *The Scottish Office Education Department*: schools, further and higher education in Scotland.
4. *Department of Education, Northern Ireland*: schools, institutes of further education, teacher training colleges and universities in Northern Ireland.

In April 1993 both the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnic and Colleges Funding Council were replaced by separate Higher Education Funding Councils for England, Scotland and Wales. There are 48 "old" and 32 "new" universities, plus the colleges and institutes of higher education.

Also in April 1993 Further Education and sixth form colleges became the responsibility of the Further Education Funding Councils for England and Wales. There are 660 institutions between those of higher education, further education colleges and adult education centres.

Further education colleges in Scotland are the responsibility of the Scottish Office Education Department. Further and higher education establishments in Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Education Department. The individual Funding Councils develop their own policies and funding methodologies, but they also include representatives of the other funding councils .

There are five stages of education: *nursery, primary, secondary, further and higher education*.

Primary and secondary education is compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 16 years. The transition is normally at age 11. Some local education authorities in England, however, operate a system of middle schools which cater for pupils on either side of this age. Post-compulsory secondary education usually lasts for two years.

The non-compulsory fourth stage covers non-advanced education which can be taken at both further (including tertiary), higher education colleges and increasingly in secondary schools. It can include courses usually taken in secondary education.

The fifth stage is higher education which covers advanced level study including initial teacher training.

## **1.1. The national linguistic situation**

### **1.1.1. National Languages**

The official language in the UK is English, but Welsh is spoken in Wales and in parts of north-west England, Gaelic in part of Scotland, Irish in limited areas of Northern Ireland and several "community" languages (see 1.1.2).

### **1.1.2. Language policy**

The main language of instruction in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland is English, but Welsh, Gaelic and Irish are also used in the geographical areas where these languages are spoken. There are also other language groups spoken by people of different origins who have settled in Britain (see Plate 2 for the Inner London Education Authority). For these groups, according to article 3 of the DES directives (July 1981) mother tongue teaching is to be encouraged, but is not compulsory. The Swann Report (1985) reiterated the need to move towards multicultural education and to foster bilingualism, but the responsibility for language maintenance has remained firmly based on the voluntary sector and within the ethnic communities themselves (Marylin Martin Jones: 24).

A foreign language is not normally taught at primary level. Languages offered at secondary level in decreasing order are: French, German, Spanish. Italian and Russian are mainly taught in private schools and rarely as a core subject.

## **1.2. The system of higher education**

### **1.2.1. Universities and Colleges**

Higher education in the UK is provided by four main types of state-funded institutions: i) universities, ii) the Open University and the Open College (which operates by means of radio / television /correspondence/ vacation courses/ part-time tutors /study counsellors), iii) colleges and institutes of higher education, iv) colleges of art and music. There is also the private University of Buckingham, opened in 1976, which offers only a limited number of disciplines.

The colleges and institutes of higher education offer advanced courses leading to a wide range of technical and vocational qualifications. Many have strong teacher-training departments. Their degrees are validated either by the Open University or by a nearby university. The teacher training colleges are specialised institutions preparing students not only for teaching but for allied professions such as social work.

Art and music colleges prepare students for diplomas of different levels including the equivalent of the bachelor's degree. As of 1989, post-secondary colleges came under the control of the Funding Council.

Higher education is also available through the external system, often limited to certain degrees and particularly suitable for mature students who have commitments which prevent them from attending regular course programmes.

Other non-traditional forms of education are the "sandwich courses" in which an undergraduate course is incorporated with periods of industrial training.

A large number of vocational courses, and courses leading to a professional qualification, are offered at non-university level by post-secondary technical colleges, colleges of further and higher education, and accredited independent colleges.

The Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) offers many vocational courses leading, for instance, to the BTEC first diploma (one year full-time) or the BTEC national diploma (two to three years full-time).

As regards professional education, some thirty major professional bodies exist which have laid down their own professional qualifications, and have established rigorous legal conditions of entry together with high professional standards.

Admission to higher education is normally dependent on a minimum of thirteen years of primary and secondary education.

Application for entry to an undergraduate course must be made through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). A precondition of entry is passing a certain number of subjects in the general certificate of education (GCE) or the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) examinations or other examination passes at an equivalent level. Generally the requirement is for either a minimum of: i) five passes in GCSE and GCE of which at least two must be at A Level, or ii) four passes of which at least three at A Level. These minimum conditions are necessary, but not complete, qualification for admission to universities, which may also impose their own rules including interviews of applicants. Rules vary from department to department and are based on the level of the examinations taken by the applicants and the specific course requirements of the discipline applied for.

Higher education institutions are subject to quality assurance procedures of the Higher Education Funding Councils and the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC).

Matters of common concern to all universities are considered by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (which includes the Scottish universities and the universities of Northern Ireland).

### **1.2.2. Structure of programmes**

The university system is divided into undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Undergraduate studies lead to a Bachelor of Arts degree (BA) for Arts subjects, Humanities, Business, and Law. In degrees including a language, it usually takes 3 or 4

years with one compulsory year spent abroad (exceptionally 5 years). In Scotland an undergraduate course takes normally four years (five if a year abroad is included) and leads to an MA.

This first degree may be of two kinds: an *ordinary* or pass degree and an *honours* degree, in which the subjects are more specialised. There is also *double* or *joint honours* degree (when two subjects are carried to the same level), but the *modular* degree, which allows for greater flexibility in the choice of subjects, is becoming increasingly the accepted pattern.

After the bachelor's degree students can progress to a Master's degree (MA) and/or Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), (see section 2.3.2)

### **1.3. The impact of secondary education on language studies in higher education**

The Education Reform Act 1988 introduced the National Curriculum in England and Wales. This requires the core subjects of English, Mathematics and Science (Welsh in Wales) and seven (eight in Wales) other foundation subjects one of which is a modern foreign language. The foreign language is, however, introduced only in year 7 of the educational system (11-12 years of age). A second language can be introduced after year 9 of education, but in competition with other subjects. The effect of this policy is that very often languages are learnt *ab initio* only in tertiary and higher education. This is the case not only of the traditional "lesser taught languages" (Danish, Greek, Portuguese, Swedish), but also of Italian, Spanish, and Russian.

Already in the 1992 CNAA *Survey of European languages in the UK* it was revealed that in the sample of students who had accessed higher education nearly a third had decided to take up a new foreign language *ab initio* (G.Thomas: 18). In the same survey the breakdown for foreign languages learnt shows that French came first with 43% of the total student number, German was second with 25%, Spanish third with 19%, followed by Italian and Russian with 8%. Other languages such as Danish, Dutch, Greek, Japanese, Portuguese and Swedish are taught sporadically. Information on numbers of students studying languages (especially where language is not the major component of the degree) is not easy. The 1993 University Statistical Record, which covers only the "old" universities, gave 39,462 full-time undergraduate students in the UK in Languages and Related Studies (American Studies, Classics, English, Linguistics,). (For a comparison between "old" universities and polytechnics, see Plate 3)

## **2. LANGUAGE DEGREE PROGRAMMES OFFERED BY UNIVERSITIES**

### **2.1 Traditional language and literature programmes**

Courses can be offered within:

1. a single *Language Department* teaching a language to specialist linguists, with or without a separate Language Centre alongside;
2. a *School of Modern Languages* teaching languages to specialist linguists, with or without a separate Language Centre alongside;
3. a *Language Centre* (with or without separate specialist departments or schools alongside);
4. a *School of Modern Languages* responsible for all the foreign language teaching of the institution, specialist and non-specialist.

#### **2.1.1. Content and objectives: Undergraduate programmes**

All universities are autonomous institutions, particularly in matters relating to courses and programmes. As a result the pattern of aims and objectives offered is very varied. In

the new universities the fields of study are often related to more practical application or to industry and commerce, but this has become a concern also of the old universities so that the distinction between the traditional and the new universities is gradually disappearing. Generally speaking, Modern Languages degree programmes combine the acquisition of proficiency in reading, writing and speaking the foreign language(s) chosen with the study of the literary tradition, culture and society of the relevant countries. Courses focus on different periods with strong emphasis on the nineteenth and twentieth century, but also on Medieval, Renaissance, seventeenth and eighteenth century studies. They can also include wider geographical areas such as Canada, Africa and the Caribbean for Francophone and Spanish studies, Switzerland and Australia for Italian studies, Latin America for Spanish and Portuguese studies, East Germany, Austria and Switzerland for German studies. They may cover a wide area of interests including art, film, history, linguistics, literature, media, politics, sociolinguistics, and popular culture.

For the EU languages studied, see 1.3 above. Other non EU languages frequently studied include: Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Irish, Japanese, Russian and African languages.

### **2.1.2. Structure of programmes**

There are many different routes and combinations of languages. The degree courses are diverse and generalisation is difficult, but possible combinations might be:

1. one foreign language as *single honours/major* and one *minor/ ancillary/ complementary* subject (which can be another foreign language)
2. two foreign languages as *combined honours/double honours*
3. one foreign language as *combined honours* with another non-language subject
4. one foreign language as part of a *modular* degree
5. two foreign languages as part of a *modular* degree

Courses normally follow a credit system. A normal requirement is 120 credits per year.

The language of instruction in many cases remains English, but the enhanced value placed on vocationally useful language skills, and student's desire to be able to use the target language much as they use their mother tongue has led to many courses using the target language as a medium of instruction.

Assessment can be by :

1. a written examination and/or assessed work at the end of each module
2. a written examination and/or assessed work at the end of each year
3. written examinations of all the subjects and/or assessed work at the end of the final year
4. divided into a PART I examination (after the second or third year) and a PART II examination (after the final year).

All modern language degrees include one or more oral examinations. (There are also sessional examinations, normally at the end of the first year for non-modular degree courses, but these examinations do not count towards the final degree). All examinations are moderated by an external examiner.

### **2.1.3. Impact of Community programmes to date**

The year abroad, which is a fundamental component of the Modern Languages degrees, is increasingly spent attending courses at a foreign institution of higher education under ERASMUS or LINGUA programmes (see plate. 4 and 5) This has meant that in general UK university administrations have become more aware of the complexities of other European administrative systems and have designated academic/administrative

personnel to cater for students coming from EU countries. There is, however, a great deal that still needs to be done in this respect.

Academically, increased presence of foreign students has promoted bilingual classroom interaction, has widened understanding and reinforced the capacity for critical analysis associated with different cultural values. It has also helped the development of new technologies for taught courses (including distant learning for home students not included in the exchange programmes), has contributed to the inclusion in the syllabus of wider issues and of different forms of assessment, has in some cases offered students the opportunity to obtain qualifications from different countries and has given students the chance of possible future involvement with other countries.

A common perception is that incoming ERASMUS students have helped in facilitating language knowledge of a more critical kind, have offered a better balance between spoken and written activities and have increased awareness of the social origins and social significance of the language studied.

Although some course programmes have been specially designed for students from overseas, most overseas students attend the same courses as United Kingdom students.

## **2.2. Alternative programmes**

### **2.2.1. Content and objectives: Undergraduate programmes**

Modern Languages have traditionally been studied in combination with certain disciplines such as Economics, History, Law, Linguistics, Politics, and Social Science. In recent years the study of Modern Languages has been combined with these areas either as an integral part of new programmes in European Study, or as an element of the Modular Degrees programmes.

The degree programmes in European Study typically last four year with a year (usually the third) spent abroad. There are many such programmes involving Computer Science, Engineering and Psychology apart from the disciplines already mentioned.

The objective of the Modular Degree is to establish a mode of study which gives students as much flexibility as possible. The study of Modern Languages has found a place in many modular degrees which are now common even in older universities with more traditional Single or Combined Honours. degrees programmes.

The objective of a degree in Linguistics is the theoretical study of language. Applied Linguistics can incorporate the study of one or more languages.

### **2.2.2. Structure of programmes.**

In many degree programmes in European Study students normally study a foreign language in the first and/or in the second year (depending on whether the language is *ab initio* or not). The intention is to provide the students with the necessary background to enable them to spend the following year attending courses at a foreign university. Course assessment is usually by coursework and/or written examination and includes an oral examination.

The structure of Modular degree programmes is based on a selection of courses totalling an agreed number of credits per year (normally 120). Assessment can be by examination (normally at the end of each course), continuous assessment, assessment essays and a dissertation. When the study of a foreign language is involved in the programme, it

usually includes a combination of written and oral examinations. The length is normally 3 years (4 if in association with a foreign language).

### **2.2.3. Impact of EU Community programmes to date**

Most of the new degree programmes in European Study have been designed with the specific pattern of the ERASMUS exchange in mind. Though the programmes are relatively new, the results seem positive and destined to last.

## **2.3. Post-Graduate programmes**

### **2.3.1. Content and objectives**

Post-graduate programmes are normally for students who have obtained a high mark in their first degree. Admission to a post-graduate degree programme is also dependent on the ability to demonstrate good research capabilities. Access to MPhil or PhD is usually dependent on the completions of an MA by coursework and dissertation. Programmes are varied. They are related to the specialisations of the staff in different institutions and normally cover aspects of the language, literature, culture and society of the relevant countries from the early Middle Ages to the present.

The main strength of post-graduate work lies in the depth and flexibility of approaches (theoretical/practical, historical/ textual, diachronic/synchronic etc.) and above all in the creative interaction applied to a wide range of specialist areas such as language, linguistics, literary and cultural studies.

Aims of post-graduate study can be summarised as follows: to develop an awareness of the nature of language and language learning; to stimulate ability to analyse problems; to explore the role of languages as a means of communication in society, the production and transmission of speech, and how languages change and interact with one another.

### **2.3.2. Structure of programmes**

A Master's degree (MA) is by taught courses (often including a language paper and possibly an oral examination), plus a dissertation on a specific topic. Duration is 1-2 years. Assessment is normally by examinations for the taught courses or a portfolio of essays based on each of the courses followed. The dissertation can be written either in English or in the target language (with or without a *viva voce* examination). A Master of Philosophy degree (MPhil) is of 2 -3 year's duration and is generally awarded for research presented in a supervised thesis. A Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD), usually an alternative to MPhil, takes a further 3-4 years after the MA and is by a substantial thesis based on original research, supervised by one or more members of staff and examined by an examination committee which includes one or two external examiners. Usually there is also a *viva voce* discussion.

### **2.3.3. Impact of Community programmes to date**

The impact of the Community Programmes had been less significant than for the undergraduate courses. Nevertheless, increased opportunity to research abroad has facilitated access to primary sources, contact with different methodologies has sharpened critical awareness of both staff and students and links with other countries has resulted in joint research projects and joint examination boards. Technology used includes: audio, video and information technology, language analysis on computer, electronic mailboxes to communicate with institutions in other countries.

## **2.4. Career prospects for graduates of language programmes**

In the UK language studies function not only and not necessarily in preparation for teaching, but as a broad education and in many cases as a skill in sophisticated linguistic communication. The vocational interests and opportunities are broad. They include: working in industry, public relations, civil service, communications and media; writing computer software, documentary, historical and cultural research. At present about 2% of UK graduates work abroad.

### **3. INITIAL AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS**

#### **3.1. Initial training**

##### **3.1.1. Institutions responsible for training**

Responsible for teacher training lies with units in universities and colleges of further and higher education.

There are two main routes to achieving qualified teacher status (QTS) in England and Wales: by successful completion of either an undergraduate course of initial teacher training or of a course leading to the postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE). Both types of courses are run by higher education establishments, but PGCE courses can also be offered by schools. Distance learning PGCE courses are run by the Open University and the South Bank University (started in the 1993-94 academic year).

Qualified teacher status can also be achieved via the Licensed Teacher or Overseas Trained Teacher routes. Local Education Authorities and most schools governing bodies can, as employers, offer a position as a Licensed or Overseas Trained Teacher to a suitably qualified applicant who will receive tailor-made, on-the-job training. On these routes, it is possible to obtain Qualified Teacher Status after 2 years or less, depending on qualifications and previous experience.

The main characteristics of teacher-education are: i) all former colleges of education have merged or have been subsumed into universities; ii) all primary and secondary training courses have been extended to include a fourth year, thus making for an all-graduate profession (although present pressure is towards a three-year degree course); iii) the postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) is now compulsory for all intending graduate teachers.

##### **3.1.2. Content of training programmes**

*Primary education:* the courses offered focus on both learning and teaching the subjects in the National Curriculum for primary schools. The recent tendency is to move away from the previous freedom given to institutions to develop their own curricular studies and to place a firm emphasis on English, Mathematics and Science, which are part of the statutory requirements. Other subjects included, however, can be Humanities (with specialisation in History, Geography and Religious Education), Physical Education and Expressive Arts (Music, Drama, etc.). There is also a strong element of teaching practice (including where possible in multi-ethnic primary schools) and school-based integrated studies. Heavy requirement for time to be spent in UK schools by trainee teachers (minimum of 32 weeks) and the inflexibility of programmes, combined with the recent pressure to reduce the degree time back to three years, makes the introduction of study of a foreign language unlikely.

*Secondary education:* educational studies are closely related to the school curriculum and school practice. Each student specialises in a particular subject area, but Physical Education, which was included in previous curricular studies, has almost entirely disappeared from the programmes.

OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) and TTA (Teacher Training Agency) are the two bodies in England responsible for evaluating the content, quality and funding of the training programmes. Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland do not have the exact equivalent, but similar work is done by the HMI in Northern Ireland and Wales (here also in cooperation with TTA); by the General Teaching Council in Scotland

### **3.1.3. Structure of programmes**

Undergraduates normally complete a four year course leading to the Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree with honours, or a BA or BSc (QTS) course. These courses usually have the same basic entry requirements as other higher education courses, but they also require Mathematics and English Language at the equivalent of Grade C GCSE. In addition to the four-year BEd courses there are some two-year BEd courses (mostly in certain secondary shortage subjects) for non-graduate mature entrants who already have some relevant experience and who have completed at least one year of HE in the appropriate subject.

The PGCE is for students who hold a first degree or equivalent qualification. The content of the qualification must be appropriate to the Primary or Secondary school curriculum. These courses also require Mathematics and English Language at the equivalent of grade C GCSE.

Length is normally for one year, full-time study, but in some subjects there are a few 2 year part-time PGCE courses, and some 2 year "conversion" PGCE courses in certain shortage subjects. These latter courses are designed to equip students with a specialism by extending the subject study of their initial degree.

The PGCE is now a partnership between the teacher training institutions (i.e. universities and colleges of HE) and schools. Students spend the majority of their time based in schools under the guidance of a "Subject Mentor" and overall control of a "Professional Mentor" (both trained by the teacher training institutions). Schools are paid for their service, but have the flexibility to buy back some service from the training institutions (i.e. staff to teach their own classes and staff development methodology courses on their own ground). This type of partnership is seen by some as an improvement on teacher education, but others are finding that their commitment is extremely demanding. Some tutors in the training institutions also regret the shift in emphasis to school-based work.

The pattern of teacher training and the regulations governing the employment of teachers in primary and secondary schools in Northern Ireland are broadly comparable to those in England and Wales. In Scotland, courses lead to the award of a Teaching Qualification (Primary Education) or a Teaching Qualification (Secondary Education). To gain a primary qualification a graduate is required to complete a one-year training course. A non-graduate may undertake a four-year degree course leading to the award of BEd.

### **3.1.4. Impact of EU Community programmes to date**

Because of the inflexibility of curricular study and the necessity to engage in teaching practice, exchange programmes are not common and have little or no impact on training programmes for primary school teachers. There has been little opportunity to take part in exchanges under ERASMUS and/or LINGUA programmes. Indirectly, though, teachers can find help in a number of initiatives which have taken place with EU financial support and are intended to help raise the level of understanding and communication in a foreign language, In many cases they have involved the cooperation of several institutions and have focused on the preparation of teaching material for the lesser spoken languages.

## **3.2. In-service training**

### **3.2.1. Institutions responsible for training**

In-service training for all teachers is in the hands of a large number of Agencies, school, and institutions of higher education. The length and intensity of the programmes vary from one or two days to several weeks. The funding for in-service training is the responsibility of schools. and, in some cases, LEAs. It forms part of the school budget and is at the discretion of individual schools.

### **3.2.2. Content of training programmes**

Courses offered are generally designed to improve the knowledge of any relevant subject taught at school; to promote the use of new technologies in teaching; to assist teachers in the implementation of the new syllabus and of new examinations.

### **3.2.3. Structure of programmes**

(See section 6)

## **3.3. Training of teachers of 2nd language**

### **3.3.1. Institutions responsible for training**

In-service training for language teachers is offered by Agencies, such as the Central Bureau for Educational Visits & Exchanges; Associations, such as ALL (Association for Language Learning); the Embassies of the relevant countries and the institutions of higher education. Some colleges of higher education specialise in language input for teacher training. The languages offered, apart from English as a Foreign Language, are normally French, German. Spanish and Italian (see also 3.1.1 and 3.2.1).

### **3.3.2. Content of training programmes**

Courses offered are generally designed to improve language skill and cultural knowledge of a country; they also assist teachers in the use of new technologies and (as for 3.2.2) in the implementation of the new syllabus and of new examinations. More specifically, the training often includes the experience of being taught a new language (normally a one-day session) in order to understand afresh the learning process and as an introduction to the teaching methodology. There are also language specific training sessions for sensitisation in target language, classroom management and discipline control. The courses offered are generally designed to improve language skill and cultural knowledge of a country, but at present there are only three courses in the UK where it is possible to study a foreign language (French) (but, see also 6). The reference to a European Dimension is included in the National Curriculum, but scope for its effective implementation is limited.

There are many training courses available to teachers of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). They include graduate programmes as well as Master degrees in English Language Teaching, and courses of a varied length provided by private institutions, the British Council and by a number of organisations throughout the UK.

### **3.3.3. Structure of programmes**

(For undergraduate and postgraduate training programmes, see 3.1.3)

The Preliminary Certificate in TEFL is based normally on one-year, full-time programmes aimed at students with little or no experience in TEFL. It can also be offered through intensive, short courses, or one year part-time courses. The aim is to introduce the basic teaching techniques and class management.

The Graduate Diploma and MEd in TEFL is a one-year, full-time programme, which can be combined with a taught courses in Linguistics and normally include knowledge of a language.

Many programmes are divided into a number of areas of language learning and are designed to balance the more traditional approach to language with the so-called "functional" approach. Assessment is usually by examination and coursework which includes classroom practice.

#### **3.3.4. Impact of EU Community programmes to date**

Impact is limited. Some initiatives for secondary school teachers have, however, taken place with the help of EU funding such as training courses for teachers, organised abroad by CILT and the Central Bureau. There are also courses leading to a Certificate in Advanced Study in Education (CASE) with 2 week's placement in secondary/tertiary education which have attracted funding from the European Social Fund, Some indirect positive results have derived from the introduction of the European Teacher Placement scheme. Since 1992 (following the Single European Act) this has provided an open internal market for a number of foreign teachers entering the UK and has resulted in a greater availability of teachers able to offer an improved variety of modern languages.

### **4. LANGUAGE PROVISION IN UNIVERSITIES FOR STUDENTS OF OTHER DISCIPLINES**

#### **4.1. Language studies integrated into non-language programmes and language options offered in combination with non-language programmes**

##### **4.1.1. Content and objectives**

Most universities have programmes combining an element of Modern Languages with other disciplines. French is the main language studied, followed by German and Spanish, but other languages are also technically available. Language courses are often tailored to the need of the learners, e.g. they contain an element of LSP (Language for Special Purposes), especially if they are within degrees in Law or Economics. Among the course objectives most frequently mentioned are not only the ability to understand, respond and use the language effectively for practical communication (receptive and productive), but also to gain an insight into the social culture of the countries where the language is spoken.

##### **4.1.2. Structure of courses**

The structure of courses varies. In some programmes, they are very tightly structured and students have to reach specified level of language(s) for a specified number of years, which may vary from one to three (or four if a year abroad is included). On average language learning represents between 10% and 25% of contact hours. The language(s) can be taught either within the non-language departments and/or within a Department of Modern Languages. Some Language Centres (but not all) also offer specialised courses. In others students simply follow the "traditional" language course.

##### **4.1.3. Impact of EU Community programmes to date**

There has been a substantial development in the courses with European Study requiring a year spent abroad and an exchange with students from other countries. The presence of foreign students is seen as activating communication as an integral part of the learning process. Ability to use a foreign language is perceived as enhancing social mobility.

## **4.2. General and subject-oriented language courses accompanying non-language programmes (service courses)**

### **4.2.1. Content and objectives**

Competence in a modern language is increasingly seen as an important adjunct to professional skill in a wide range of occupations. This trend has had several immediate consequences for the position of Modern Languages within the curricular studies, but content and objectives vary greatly between institutions. In some cases, where the language is an integral part of the course (for example International Law or Economics degree) students have to be able to express themselves in the foreign language. In other cases (i.e. History) students have to be able to understand written documents in the foreign language. Syllabus definition is by a combination of forms, functions, skills and tasks, but generally includes a socio-cultural dimension.

Courses in *English for academic purposes*, specifically designed for foreign students who intend to enrol in UK universities, are also available.

### **4.2.2. Structure of courses**

The structure is very varied. It depends on the policy of the departments, the number of extra credits available, the individual need and the previous language knowledge of the student. Generally speaking, however, the study of a language can be introduced either as an optional integrated element of the non-language degree (in this case, the teaching usually takes place within the non-language departments and/or within a Department of Modern Languages.), or as a free-standing option with or without accreditation (in this case the teaching usually takes place within a Language Centre). If the language is not an integral part of the degree, the students can often choose the dosage.

Assessment is normally at the end of the course either by a combination of course-work and examinations, or by examination only. External examiners are not always involved in the assessment, but when chosen they are sometimes selected for their particular expertise in the field of LSP.

Courses in *English for academic purposes* are usually intensive courses of 20-25 hours p/w over 4 weeks or more, and include training in listening and note-taking, reading academic books and articles, seminar skill, academic writing skills, use of word processors and presenting papers.

### **4.2.3. Impact of EU Community programmes to date**

Employer's attitudes towards knowledge of languages is changing rapidly. With the expansion of increasingly competitive foreign markets, they are beginning to recognise the key place of language skills. Having lived abroad and being able to communicate in languages other than English has often become a determining factor in securing employment. Also, an interesting force at work has been the pressure put upon employers by employees with some attainment of foreign language skills and who do not wish to see them decline (Anne Stevens: 20).

New courses targeted at staff from industry (both from UK and abroad) have been started with the help of funding from EC programmes. (Examples of courses are: French for export of copper tubing, German for the maritime freight industry, Spanish for wholesale fruit dealers, Italian for producers of motor spare parts, Portuguese for the shoe production industry, Greek for managers in telecommunication, etc.).

## **5. THE TRAINING OF TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS**

### **5.1. Institutions responsible for training**

The centres specialising in training specifically for translators and interpreters are few. Courses can be offered by universities as part of ordinary BA (often final-year option) in Modern Languages and/or BA in European Studies. Specialised courses are generally offered at post-graduate level by Universities. Students are normally selected on the basis of their knowledge of at least two languages apart from English. Until this year the Department for Further Education provided bursaries for students. This has now stopped and some courses are likely to close as a result.

### **5.2. Content of training programmes**

Programmes typically include: documentary translation, on-sight and extempore translation, conference interpreting, conference precise writing, international law, international economics, aspects of science and technology.

### **5.3. Structure of programmes**

Length at post-graduate level is normally one-year, full-time. Assessments by written papers in translation at the end of the course, plus assessment of course work. The assessment for interpreting often involves the participation of representatives from international organisations.

### **5.4. Impact of EU Community programmes to date**

In many cases shared experience with students of the targeted language has resulted in training more closely related to the real situations. ERASMUS generally has played a vital role in giving students the opportunity to test their own ability to work under conditions closely related to their possible future career.

### **5.5. Career prospect outside the areas of translating and interpreting**

Since the training for translators and interpreters is offered at post graduate level or within the framework described under 2, the broad education and the skill in linguistic communication described under that section apply here as well. As a consequence the career prospects outside the areas of translating and interpreting are similar and include working in industry, public relations, civil service, communications and media.

## **6. LANGUAGE STUDIES IN NON-UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **6.1. Language programmes**

There have been many developments in the field of vocationally oriented language courses which have resulted in a bewildering proliferation of qualifications which are difficult to compare. The form of accreditation and type of qualifications also differ. Generally, however, the programmes offered are not exclusively language programmes (see 6.2).

### **6.2. Language studies integrated into non-language programmes and language options offered in combination with non-language programmes**

Courses are provided by colleges of technology, colleges of further education and the Open University.

#### **6.2.1. Content and objectives**

Colleges (of technology) prepare for various BTEC awards, including the *Higher National Certificate* and the *Higher National Diploma*. The colleges of further education provide language teaching for 16-20 years old for the following:

1. re-taking GCSE failed at school (mainly French and German)
2. new GCSE while studying other A Level subjects (mainly German and Spanish, but occasionally Italian, Russian, Bengali, Hindi, Greek, Urdu, depending on the demand of the community and/or the target market)
3. A Level courses: usually French, German and Spanish (if there is sufficient demand, also Italian, Russian and other languages)
4. enhancement courses for students enrolled on different types of courses such as vocational training. The certificate awarded can include the RSA- CBLC (Certificate in Business Language Competence)
5. intermediate and advanced language (French, German Spanish, Italian) modules for GNVQ and BTEC courses (especially Business Studies, Leisure and Tourism)
6. intensive beginners' courses in French, German, Spanish, Italian, leading to O Level or Institute of Linguists Certificate.

Most of the courses described are also offered as evening classes.

The Open University offers higher education opportunities to those who did not, or could not, take advantage of the usual institutions of education. Instruction is offered for part-time study for degrees and other courses by means of correspondence supplemented by closely linked radio and television broadcasts, residential summer schools, counselling and tutorial service which operates through local study centres. There are no formal requirements for admission to undergraduate courses at the Open University.

New initiatives by a number of institutions (including universities) such as the *TELL Consortium* and *Italia 2000*, have also started recently. The aim is to provide language learning material for non-specialist language learners in French, German, Italian, and Hispanic languages.

### **6.2.2. Structure of programmes**

The length of the BTEC *Higher National Certificate* is a minimum of three years of part-time study; the length of the *Higher National Diploma* is of three or more years of full-time study.

The Centre for Modern Languages of the Open University has recently introduced *Ouverture: a fresh start in French*, started in 1995. The course is in three parts and so far includes:

1. a fully integrated multi-media package including specially prepared material filmed and recorded on location
2. tutor support with some 18 hours of tuition through tutorials, day schools and telephone support
3. one-week residential school in the UK and in France for intensive study.

The Open University course will count towards the undergraduate BA or BSc degree of the University. In addition the Centre is also offering a Diploma in French to students who complete three parts in the language. The French programme will be followed by a similar programme in German and Spanish. It is hoped that in future it might be eligible for accreditation by the national awarding body of the country concerned (Diplome d'Etude en Langue Francaise [DEFL] for France).

### **6.2.3. Impact of EU Community programmes to date**

Because of the nature of the courses offered, the direct impact here is difficult to assess. Generally speaking, the presence of an ERASMUS exchange has helped awareness of the need to develop modern language study particularly at the level of distant learning. Other positive results have been: the possibility to develop language education in the context of linguistic diversity; to establish new patterns of participant-related activities and allow the exploration of themes such as racism or sexism in language.

## **7. NEW NEEDS IN THE AREA OF LANGUAGE STUDIES**

### **7.1. In undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered by universities**

#### **7.1.1. Seen in relation to the development of language studies**

The most striking characteristics in recent years has been the rapid growth in student numbers - perhaps as much as 26% in a single year. Although this has now halted, one particularly unfortunate consequence of this situation has been the casualisation of the language-teaching workforce. Low-level language teaching is often passed to part-timers, some of whom are first-rate and deserve secure terms of employment, others are untrained and poorly qualified.

Language teaching is especially labour-intensive compared with teaching in neighbouring humanities departments, where much ground can be covered in large lecture groups. It is almost all of the small group kind, and involves a very heavy marking load. The location of Modern Languages as an academic subject category in Humanities, thereby attracting the lowest unit of funding, is particularly inappropriate for courses offering two foreign languages, one of them often *ab initio*. And yet dual linguists have distinct advantages over single honours graduates when applying for a variety of posts.

There is a need for proper staffing, funding for relevant technology, and proper technical assistance. There has been investment in computer based language study, but it is generally felt that there is further scope for the development of new methodologies (assessment and communicative teaching style) to cope with the increased numbers of students

#### **7.1.2. Seen in relation to professional requirements**

There is a need for a nationally defined system of levels of achievement against which all qualifications can be measured.

#### **7.1.3. Seen in relation to the creation of Europe**

The "year abroad" is seen in the UK as a fundamental component of the Modern Language degree, but should attract credit rating more widely than at present. There is also a strong feeling that not enough recognition is given to the work done by the academic staff involved in European exchange programmes. With the emphasis placed by government on research selectivity as a form of funding for institutions, there is a serious danger that staff in future might be unwilling to devote much of their time to activities that are not officially recognised.

### **7.2. In initial and in-service teacher training**

#### **7.2.1. Seen in relation to the development of language studies**

The complexity of producing appropriate materials for different levels of learners is not always appreciated or recognised sufficiently as a serious activity. Publishers are cautious

of producing materials for adult learners in anything other than French, because of the relatively small market involved.

### **7.2.2. Seen in relation to professional requirements**

A number of projects funded under the Higher Education Funding Council's Teaching and Learning Technology Programmes have been (and are being) developed. The primary focus of these programmes is to provide material for specialist and non specialist language learners, for people with special need and professional updaters. Within this policy the programmes aim to integrate the use of technology into current teaching and learning. The quality of the new material produced is monitored, tested and evaluated before being distributed. Such initiatives should be matched by an appropriate technical staff support, which is currently insufficient.

### **7.2.3. Seen in relation to the creation of Europe**

Modern Languages should be learned more systematically and should involve both learning and teaching practice abroad.

## **7.3. In language provision in universities for students of other disciplines**

### **7.3.1. Seen in relation to the development of language studies**

There is a need for a fundamental reappraisal of the nature of foreign languages and foreign language learning. The development of interdisciplinary courses puts extra demands on staff especially in small departments. Modularisation and the increasing demand for combined degree courses are edging numerous language units towards a service-teaching role. Non-language departments are often not sufficiently aware of the effort needed to acquire a working knowledge of a foreign language and do not allocate sufficient time for language work. Particularly damaging is misleading advertising which suggests that a language can be learnt in as little as 3 or 4 weeks.

### **7.3.2. Seen in relation to professional requirements**

There is need for a national definition of foreign language competencies related to vocational contexts. A proper definition of a "working knowledge" of a language and "of what makes it work" is also essential.

For many languages there is still a dearth of good teaching materials for LSP. What is available does not always focus sufficiently on the need of students who are not linguists.

Contrary to popular belief there is evidence that for many companies in Europe, English is not the primary foreign language required (see S. Hagen, CILT 1993). FL needs are determined by the type of firms and the region where they are located.

### **7.3.3. Seen in relation to the creation of Europe**

There is still not enough awareness among teaching staff in other disciplines of the needs of students going abroad, and of the importance for young people of contacts with other EU countries.

## **7.4. In the training of translators and interpreters**

### **7.4.1. Seen in relation to the development of language studies**

The recent decision to abolish funding to translators and interpreters trainees poses a serious threat to the continuation of such programmes

#### **7.4.2. Seen in relation to professional requirements**

There is not sufficient awareness of the distinctive expertise required by professional translators and interpreters.

#### **7.4.3. Seen in relation to the creation of Europe**

Generally it is felt that closer collaboration with European partners in the same field is helpful and needs to be encouraged.

### **7.5. In language studies in non-university institutions of higher education**

#### **7.5.1. In language programmes**

##### **7.5.1. Seen in relation to the development of language studies**

Language studies must be supported more systematically than at present.

There is not always sufficient appreciation of the needs of non-specialist students.

##### **7.5.2. Seen in relation to professional requirements**

There is urgent need for a re-examination of the assumptions about Modern Languages which are often regarded as an elitist, academic discipline but not seen as a highly practical subject.

There is also a need for a nationally defined system of levels of achievement against which all qualifications can be measured and compared.

There is a need for double degrees and/or qualifications from different countries to allow for a freer circulation of graduates and facilitate work opportunities.

##### **7.5.3. Seen in relation to the creation of Europe**

When subjects and professions are taught and carried out very differently in different European countries, awareness of the cultural diversities on the part of both students and teachers becomes essential and needs to be encouraged. What happens is often the opposite, particularly in relation to work placement. "One of the paradoxes of the current funding arrangement is that study-placements attract a full fee, while work placement a 50% fee for the unit that expends effort in this way" (G. Thomas: 77).

## **8. MEASURES TO BE TAKEN TO SATISFY THE NEEDS IDENTIFIED**

### **8.1. Measures to be taken in the areas of initial and in-service language teacher training**

#### **8.1.1. Measures within the responsibility of the institutions**

The development of new methodologies to cope with increased numbers of students should be properly funded.

#### **8.1.2. Measures within the responsibility of the regional and national authorities**

Practice in schools abroad should be recognised as part of teacher training programmes. Modern Languages should be introduced into the national curriculum at an earlier age.

### **8.1.3. Measures within the responsibility of the European Union**

There should be more flexibility in the minimum length of time to be spent abroad on programmes involving teachers.

## **8.2. Measures to be taken in universities (outside the area of teacher training)**

### **8.2.1 Measures within the responsibility of the institutions**

Whatever the funding pattern within the institutions, given the sustained effort and research required by language teaching, it is to be hoped that the term "servicing" be replaced with a term that recognises professional expertise.

In pedagogical and cultural terms an even balance of student flow is important. More UK students should be encouraged to take advantage of European exchanges but, it is also necessary to establish sound structures for academic cooperation. It is equally important: i) to develop a multi-disciplinary forms of learning; ii) to encourage staff mobility as an integrated contribution to the host institution's programme of study; iii) to facilitate progressive and "sequential" programmes leading to a national or institutional qualification in addition to the home degree.

### **8.2.2. Measures within the responsibility of the regional and national authorities**

Modern Languages should be in a different subject category and should attract a different level of funding.

Research into language teaching should be encouraged, properly funded and recognised as having validity in its own right.

The preparation of appropriate learning material, relevant technology, sufficient staffing, and technical assistance are the main areas requiring support.

### **8.2.3. Measures within the responsibility of the European Union**

The EU should assist in fostering European links for: i) the preparation of common curricular studies; ii) postgraduate cooperation; iii) curriculum development criteria which can assist networks and institutions to establish or consolidate joint qualifications.

## **8.3. Measures to be taken in non-university institutions of higher education (outside the area of teacher training)**

### **8.3.1. Measures within the responsibility of the institutions**

The production of new material to address the needs of the self-access learner is urgently required, particularly in the lesser taught languages.

Language learning must be recognised as a demanding experience and should be properly structured into curricular studies.

### **8.3.2. Measures within the responsibility of the regional and national authorities**

National authorities should encourage the application of a standardised certification and standardised assessment criteria.

### **8.3.3. Measures within the responsibility of the European Union**

EU should give support for: i) standardised assessment criteria and certification throughout Europe; ii) joint cooperation between the EU, senior academic specialists, employers and executive staff of multinational companies to strengthen common initiatives; iii) the commercial production of high quality teaching and distance learning material.

#### **Abbreviations used**

AL Advanced level  
OL Ordinary level  
BA Bachelor of Art  
BSC Bachelor of Science  
BEd Bachelor of Education  
GCE General Certificate of Education  
GCSE General Certificate of Secondary Education  
CNAA Council for National Academic Awards  
HEFCE Higher Education Funding Council for England  
HEQC Higher Education Quality Council  
QTS Qualified Teacher Status  
LEA Local Education Authorities  
MA Master of Art  
MPhil Master of Philosophy  
PhD Doctor of Philosophy  
PG Postgraduate  
PGCE Post Graduate Certificate in Education  
TTA Teacher Training Agencies  
TTA Teacher Training Agencies  
UG Undergraduate  
USR Universities Statistical Record

#### **Information was received from:**

Scottish Higher Education Funding Council.  
Department for Education (DFE).  
Wales Polytechnic and Colleges - Welsh Office.  
General Teaching Council (Scotland)  
Open University Data - Open University.  
University Data Universities' Statistical Record (excluding the Open University).  
UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admission Scheme) Official Entrance Guide.  
University Council of Modern Languages (Reports from representatives of languages and areas).

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