

TNP LANGUAGES

[January 2003]

National Report on Curriculum Innovation

United Kingdom

1. *Introduction*

Suggestions for improvement of this report are welcome (contact I.Wallace@bath.ac.uk).

1.1 **The system of higher education**

1.1.1 *Recent changes in the system of higher education*

A number of highly important changes to the system of higher education have taken place over the last decade.

In 1992 the so-called ‘binary system’ which distinguished between universities and other kinds of higher education institutions (HEIs) was abolished. As a result the polytechnics which had been set up in the 1960s with a largely vocational mission were redesignated as universities within a sector which had thereby grown to over 100 institutions. It should be noted that only one of these universities - the University of Buckingham - is a privately funded institution; all the others remain largely reliant on funding by central government despite significant attempts in recent years to tap alternative sources.

The ‘efficiency savings’ (budget cuts) which government had been imposing on the system as a whole for two decades took on a new dimension with the decision at the end of the 1990s to phase out universal student grants and to replace them progressively with a system of student loans. Given the rapid expansion in student numbers in recent years (currently about 33% of eighteen-year-olds are in some form of higher education, and the government’s ambition is to raise the figure to 50%), this decision has rapidly led to relatively high levels of student debt. This has contributed significantly to an increased drop-out rate, and there are indications that the prospect of debt is deterring potential students from less privileged backgrounds from undertaking tertiary study. Since - because of the compulsory year spent abroad - undergraduate language courses generally require four years of study (five in Scotland) rather than the usual three (four in Scotland), there is the additional danger that students may increasingly be inclined to opt for disciplines with shorter courses. This may or may not be part of the explanation for a marked drop in the number of students opting to study languages in recent years.

The important structural changes to the system mentioned above were accompanied by further refinement of government attempts to monitor the activities of universities in order to ensure that state funding was being put to effective and efficient use. This drive for greater accountability, which has been underway for at least twenty years, embraces for example the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), which attempts every five years or so to measure, by means of peer review, the quality of each university's research output in each of the disciplines in which it is research-active. The outcome of this assessment determines the level of government funding which each university will enjoy until the next review takes place. More recently, a similar review of teaching standards - known as Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) - has been introduced, although this has no funding implications, at least for the present. Like the RAE, the TQA is based on peer review, with small teams of experienced colleagues visiting academic departments for about a week in order to carry out their reviews. Departments of modern languages were reviewed in the mid-1990s.

Some changes which have occurred are of major significance for the study of languages. At national level, the setting up of the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) provided languages specialists, along with others working in the arts and humanities, with a possible source of funding for their research projects. After years of vain efforts to persuade government of the need to establish a research council for the arts and humanities along the lines of the research councils which already existed, for instance, for science, engineering, economics and social science, the establishment of the AHRB represented a major breakthrough. The same can be said of the Universities Council on Modern Languages (UCML), which allows the previously fragmented constituency of language specialists to speak with one voice and thereby enhance its impact in the national debate on education. A major outcome of that debate was the decision of the funding councils to establish the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (see www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk). As one of 24 subject centres which between them cover all academic subjects in a national Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN), the centre has as one of its principal strategic goals the promotion of innovation in the learning and teaching of languages.

1.1.2 The impact of the Bologna Declaration

Building on the Sorbonne Declaration of May 1998, the Bologna Declaration of June 1999 commits 29 European countries to a process of so reforming their higher education systems as to bring about greater convergence (including more transparency in qualification structures) while also improving the international competitiveness of the European HE system. The intention is to create by 2010 'the European space for higher education' on the basis of an agreed action programme.

The signatory countries met again in Prague in May 2001 to review progress and agree on new steps to be taken. It is too early to comment on the impact of the Declaration in Britain but its proposals are certainly under active consideration at government level.

1.2 Identification of relevant changes in the social, political, cultural, professional and economic environments

Potentially the most important change impinging on the the social, political, cultural, professional and economic environment of languages in higher education in the UK is represented by the publication of the final report of the Nuffield Languages Inquiry (2000). The report takes stock of the current situation and offers an opportunity to rethink national policy on languages with the country's future needs firmly in mind. It does not mince its words, identifying a system in crisis which is plainly failing to prepare students for the demands of the twenty-first century. It points to a wide gulf between business language needs and education supply which has serious implications for the UK's competitiveness and for the employability of individuals in a rapidly changing marketplace. The range of languages taught and learned is too narrow to match the UK's pattern of trade, and national language capabilities are by and large at 'low levels of competence'. The report also points to a serious shortage of qualified language teachers and to a noticeable decline in the number of graduates coming forward for training. In the face of this bleak diagnosis, it urgently recommends the formulation of a coherent national strategy for languages which would include a national standards framework based on the Council of Europe model. In addition, it calls for the appointment of a languages supremo who would raise the profile of languages in society generally and also have direct access to the Prime Minister, and for a thoroughgoing reform of the organisation and funding of languages in higher education.

In the interests of balance, a number of notable recent innovations should be given due weight. Modern foreign languages are now designated as a foundation subject in schools (but not as a core subject, unlike Mathematics, Science, English and Religious Education). This means that all pupils aged between 11 and 16 are now required to study a language (usually French). A number of Language Colleges (currently 99 but set to rise to 120) have been set up which promote languages usually by offering a wider range and more frequent language learning opportunities than usual. Some schools have introduced bilingual sections (the very successful Welsh medium schools are a prime example) but these are not common by comparison with the situation in Austria, Germany or France. The government has supported initiatives at the level of primary school, and at a substantial number of such schools in South Wales the cross-curricular teaching and learning of 'minority' languages such as Czech, Greek, Portuguese, and Danish have been part of

successful cooperation with linked schools across Europe. At HE level, the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) promoted very useful research in areas such as the effective use of the year abroad (see www.hum.port.ac.uk/slas/rapport and lara.fdtl.ac.uk/lara/index.htm), assessment, independent learning, peer observation, transferable skills for non-specialist learners (see www.uclan.ac.uk/facs/class/languages/translang/tlweb.htm), and intercultural dysfunction. Nevertheless, the overall picture as painted by the Nuffield Report remains worrying and requires vigorous action. Unfortunately, the policy decision taken in 2002 to allow school pupils to drop the study of modern foreign languages at the age of fourteen hardly suggests that such action is likely to be taken in the near future. The declared intention to promote the learning of modern foreign languages in primary schools is unlikely to have any great impact on this unsatisfactory situation in the short- to medium-term.

Language Degree Programmes

2. Innovations in language degree programmes offered by universities

2.1 Traditional language programmes

2.1.1 Content, objectives and structure of programmes

Undergraduate (i.e. level one) degree courses usually last four years (five in Scotland, where students may enter university a year younger than elsewhere), with one year being spent abroad in a country/countries where the language/languages being studied is/are spoken. In most cases the year abroad occurs in the third year of study and may take one of three forms: 1. study at a partner university in an appropriate country; 2. a placement in a school as a Foreign Language Assistant; 3. approved employment within industry, business etc. Successful completion of the course leads to the award of a B.A. (Hons.) degree; in Scotland the five years of study are recognised with the award of M.A. (Hons.), although a so-called Ordinary degree may be awarded, usually after three years. In order to reflect the student's level of achievement, an Honours degree is generally 'classified' using the following categories: First Class, Upper Second Class, Lower Second Class, Third Class, and Pass. In many universities students who demonstrate a high degree of competence in the spoken language may also be awarded a Distinction in Spoken French/Russian/Chinese etc.

Traditional language programmes are mainly associated with the older universities in the UK - St Andrews, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Cambridge and Oxford are all pre-Renaissance foundations, while Birmingham, Bristol, Durham, Leeds, London, and Manchester are examples of well-established civic universities of later origin. The 'traditional' language programmes associated with these and similar institutions combine the study of a national literature with that of the

appropriate language, with particular but not exclusive emphasis given to the written word. For example, the German Department at University College London - the oldest such department in Britain - continues to have “its centre of gravity in the intense and critical study of German language and literature from the earliest times to the present.” (University College London Undergraduate prospectus 1999-2000). However, without compromising their original aims, such programmes have adapted to contemporary demands for proficiency in the spoken language, for the introduction of non-literary elements into the curriculum, and for ‘combined’ degrees with other disciplines. Cambridge, for example, allows students to “choose virtually without restriction from the many different options available” and in this way take a course which, if the student wishes, may be but is “not necessarily a predominantly literary one” (University of Cambridge Undergraduate Prospectus 1999-2000).

The traditional ‘Single Honours’ degree involves the study of one language/literature. For a variety of reasons this option has in recent years proved less attractive to potential students, who now tend to prefer ‘Double Honours’ programmes (the study of two languages, of which one may be taken *ab initio*) and, increasingly, degree courses which combine the study of a language (or sometimes more than one language) with a specialisation in another - often vocational - discipline such as Law, Business Studies, Banking, Accounting, or Engineering (see 2.2.1).

2.1.2 *Careers prospects for graduates*

In general, it is true to say that career prospects for well-qualified students of languages are at present good. Of 7392 UK-domiciled students who graduated in languages in 1999 and whose first destinations were registered (a response rate of 85.9%), 51.6% were in UK employment and 11.3% in overseas employment six months after graduation, 24.7% were undertaking further study or training, 7% were not available for employment, 0.9% were seeking employment, and only 4.5% were defined as unemployed. It is worth stressing that there have been “significant increases in salaries for languages and linguistics graduates in jobs as advertised in *Prospects Today*”. Those with jobs work across a wide spectrum of employment. Of 27 Standard Occupational/Industrial Classifications, significant numbers of language graduates were recorded under 17 in 1999. (Source: *What do Graduates do?*, 2001. See www.prospects.ac.uk).

2.1.3 *Recent changes in content, objectives and/or structure of programmes*

See 2.1.1.

2.1.4 *Example of good practice*

The Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages, University of Cambridge allows students to choose virtually without restriction from the many different options available, and in this way take a course which, if the student wishes, may be but is not necessarily a predominantly literary one. www.mml.cam.ac.uk/

The School of Modern Languages, University of Southampton offers a series of pathways through the main areas of language related study.

www.lang.soton.ac.uk/students/undergrad.htm

The School of Modern Languages, University of Nottingham offers a variety of pathways, including a course in modern language studies which provides students with the opportunity to develop expertise in three modern languages while also acquiring specialist knowledge of various aspects of the cultures studied..

www.nottingham.ac.uk/modern-languages

2.1.5 Reasons underlying these changes

See 2.1.1

2.1.6 Identification of needs

The most important needs of traditional departments (as of all language departments) have been identified in the Nuffield Report (see 1.2).

2.1.7 Measures to be taken at institutional, national, and European level to meet the needs identified

2.1.7.1 At level one

At national level, the recommendations of the Nuffield Inquiry should be acted on immediately and with vigour. At European level, efforts to push forward the plans for increased convergence should be intensified. At institutional level, the primary need is to ensure that provision for language learning by students of all disciplines is guaranteed.

2.1.7.1 At postgraduate level (i.e. level two)

A primary aim for all must be to cooperate in producing opportunities for language study at level two which increase European convergence within the framework provided by the Council of Europe.

2.2 ‘Alternative’ programmes (Applied Language Studies, Cultural Studies etc.)

2.2.1 Content, objectives and structure of programmes

The first paragraph of 2.1.1 also applies to the ‘alternative’ programmes under consideration here. The major feature of these programmes is that they make a radical break from the ‘traditional’ language-and-literature combination and offer degree courses which are either interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary in nature. They also enable the student to combine the study of a language (or sometimes more than

one language) with a specialisation in another - often vocational - discipline such as Law, Business Studies, Banking, Accounting, or Engineering. It should be noted that the study of literature is by no means excluded but necessarily takes place on a reduced scale. In many cases such courses are also taught wholly or in large part in the particular language/s being studied. This is true of the many courses in European Studies which have been developed since Britain signed up to the European project. The more than 50 staff in the School of European Studies at the University of Cardiff, for example, specialise in 'the different histories, political systems, languages and cultural identities of Europe' (Cardiff University Undergraduate Prospectus 2001). Cardiff's degree course in European Union Studies is typical of those which combine the study of languages with a range of other disciplines to produce an integrated analysis of the European Union and its member states. Mention should be made of the Open University's innovative language courses. As the UK's largest modern foreign language learning provider with a current enrolment of about 8000 students, all studying at home by means of distance learning techniques supplemented by about 20 hours a year of face-to-face tutorials, the OU has enhanced its reputation for innovation and accessibility and shown others a way forward.

As the impact has been felt both of globalisation and, particularly following the election in 1997 of a new government determined to pursue a more positive approach to membership of the EU, of the need to 'Europeanise', universities have recognised the value and attractiveness of a 'languages for all' policy. Institution-wide language programmes (IWLPs) have therefore been introduced or expanded across the whole system. The take-up by students of all disciplines has been considerable, even though such language programmes are frequently not an integral part of a degree course.

2.2.2 Careers prospects for graduates

As for language graduates in general (see 2.1.2), the prospects for well-qualified graduates from 'alternative' courses are generally favourable. For example, 83% of students graduating in 1999 from the course in International Management and Modern Languages at the University of Bath had found employment within 6 months, 9% were unavailable for work, 12% were unaccounted for, and only 2% were unemployed. (Source: University of Bath Careers Service. See www.bath.ac.uk/Admin/Careers/where.htm).

2.2.3 Recent changes in content, objectives, and/or structure of programmes

See 2.2.1

2.2.4 Example of good practice

European Studies at the University of Cardiff. The 50+ staff here specialise in the different histories, political systems, languages and cultural identities of Europe. The degree course in European Studies at Cardiff is typical of those that combine the study of languages with a range of other disciplines to produce an integrated analysis of the European Union and its member states. www.cf.ac.uk/uwc/euros/
Department of European Studies and Modern Languages, University of Bath. Students combine the study of two foreign languages with cultural and socio-political studies. www.bath.ac.uk/esml/

2.2.5 Reasons underlying these changes

See 2.2.1

2.2.6 Identification of needs

The most important needs of ‘alternative’ departments (as of all language departments) have been identified in the Nuffield Report (see 1.2). Additionally, there is a clear need to develop new modes of delivery which take advantage of modern technological developments (e.g. the kind of distance learning developed above all by the Open University).

2.2.7 Measures to be taken at institutional, regional, national and European level to meet the needs identified

2.2.7.1 At level one

See 2.1.7.1

2.2.7.2 At level two

See 2.1.7.2

3. *Innovations in the training of language teachers*

3.1 Language teaching and learning in primary and secondary school education

3.2 Initial teacher training

3.2.1 Institutions responsible for training

Traditionally, initial teacher training has been the responsibility of various universities, colleges of higher education, and colleges of education spread across the entire UK. However, in recent years the role of secondary schools in teacher training has increased in importance (see 3.2.2). There are currently few courses for the training of language teachers at the primary level, but an initiative by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) may prove a helpful prelude to substantial improvement in this area (see 3.2.2).

3.2.2 Content, objectives, and structures of programmes

Typically, a graduate in languages who wishes to teach at the secondary level will spend one postgraduate year at a university or college of higher education in order to acquire the appropriate qualification - the PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate of Education). This often involves 12 weeks of instruction at university and a further period of 12 weeks in each of two schools as a trainee teacher, but variations on this pattern of provision are also found. In the 1990s, thanks to the introduction of Graduate Teacher Programmes (GTP), there has been a perceptible shift in responsibility for secondary teacher training towards the schools themselves, with experienced teachers in some (as yet relatively rare) cases even devising and sanctioning the syllabus and universities being used essentially as consultants.

Those wishing to teach at primary level usually take an undergraduate course lasting three or four years and are awarded the B.Ed. degree, but currently very few include a foreign language among the wide range of subjects studied as part of their training. The trainee teacher at primary level spends a substantial proportion of his/her time on supervised placement in partner schools.

The current strong interest in developing the teaching of languages at primary level is supported by the Nuffield Inquiry. However, it occurs against the background of a failed experiment in the 1960s and early 1970s, although similar initiatives in Scotland from 1989 on have met with considerably more success and are backed by a commitment to provide 27 days of in-service training in French, German, Italian or Spanish for one teacher in every primary school in the country. In England too (e.g. Kent, West Sussex and Richmond on Thames) there are clear signs of a resurgence of interest in early language learning. These developments have been supported by the establishment of the National Advisory Centre for Early Language Learning (NACELL: www.nacell.org.uk) at the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT: www.cilt.org.uk), as one strand of an ELL initiative managed on behalf of the DfEE by the Centre, and by the TTA's decision to allocate up to 100 extra places on primary postgraduate courses with French as a specialist subject. The outstanding success in Wales of a programme to establish the Welsh language as a medium through which much primary and secondary education takes place demonstrates what can be achieved by a carefully planned, sustained and imaginative policy.

3.2.3 Career prospects for graduates

Career prospects are very good in the sense that there is a severe national shortage of qualified language teachers. The government are currently offering attractive financial inducements to language graduates contemplating a career in teaching, and there is every reason to believe that the ambitious and capable young teacher could rapidly climb the career ladder. However, after years of criticism from government for their allegedly inadequate performance and having lost ground over the years in the rat race for salary improvements, the teaching profession now enjoys relatively low status among young graduates. For many language graduates a career in teaching is made even less attractive by the prospect of a long struggle to counter what Stables and Wikeley (1997) call "the continuing decline in the popularity of modern foreign languages" among British pupils over the past thirty years. It is hardly

surprising that recruitment of trainee language teachers has consistently failed to meet targets in recent times.

3.2.4 Recent changes in content, objectives, and/or structure of programmes

DfEE Circular 04/98, entitled *Requirements for Courses of Initial Teaching Training*, sets out the standards which are required of teaching training programmes.

3.2.5 Examples of good practice

Examples of good practice are:

University of London offers one year's post-level 1 training to those who wish to teach French/German or French/Spanish at secondary school level. Some trainees have the opportunity to undertake part of their teaching practice in a school in France, Spain, Germany or Austria. <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/kis/schools/education/Courses/INSET/index.html>

Moray House Institute of Education – for the training of language teachers for the primary level. <http://www.education.ed.ac.uk>

CILT publishes an informative and stimulating twice-yearly bulletin, *Links*, which is designed for all involved in the training of language teachers. www.cilt.org.uk

3.2.6 Reasons underlying these changes

A fundamental reason for change has undoubtedly been the greater degree of accountability to outside inspection which has been introduced over the past decade. Inspections now normally take place every four years, the expectation being that weaknesses noted in one inspectors' report will have been dealt with by the time the next one is written. As a result, it is fair to say that a greater degree of consistency is being achieved regarding the standards set and met by training courses. The increasingly prominent role taken by schools in the training of new recruits to the profession derives in large measure from the wish to take a less theoretical, more hands-on approach. This has some clear advantages, but there is also the danger that training will be too much concerned with developing 'on the job' skills and too little with the research-based, innovatory approach encouraged by higher education institutions with their strong links to international practice.

3.2.7 Identification of needs

3.2.7.1 Seen in relation to the development of language studies

The crisis in language teaching and learning in Britain is real and enduring. Changes to the National Curriculum appear to have done little or nothing to alleviate it. Nor has a marked shift in recent years towards curricula and teaching methods which emphasise the development of spoken skills in 'real-life' situations succeeded in arresting the continuing decline. Indeed, it could be argued that this approach has failed not only to make languages seem interesting and relevant to pupils as a whole but also to provide a firm grounding for those who do wish to study the subject at tertiary level. There is on this basis clearly an urgent need for a fundamental rethink of the UK's approach to language teaching and learning. A recent

decision by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to revise the National Curriculum so that 25% of marks in the GCSE examination taken by 16-year olds will now be given for grammatical accuracy represents an acknowledgement that the study of grammar has in the recent past not been given appropriate weight. There would now seem to be a need to ensure that Advanced Level examinations for 18-year olds (where numbers have dropped significantly in recent years) are similarly modified. This means, however, that trainee teachers and those already in post will need appropriate (re)training or at least a ‘refresher’ course to bring their grammar skills to the highest possible level. There should also be an intensification of the current efforts to ensure that standards of training are kept as high as possible (see 3.2.6) and that practice in the classroom takes full advantage of the new opportunities offered by, for example, ICT and European initiatives, including Lingua and Comenius. More needs to be done to develop fresh approaches to language teaching, for example by building on the limited provision which currently exists in teacher education programmes for the ethnographic and intercultural approaches (see M. Byram and M. Fleming, eds., *Language Learning in an Intercultural Perspective: Approaches through Drama and Ethnography*, Cambridge, 1998). At primary level there is a clear need to consider carefully - for example - how a foreign language can be best included in an already crowded timetable, how specialist and experienced teachers can share their expertise with others, how foreign language assistants can be trained as classroom helpers at the primary level, and how pupils can be prepared for the all-too-often difficult transition to secondary level.

3.2.7.2 Seen in relation to non-academic requirements

There are strong reasons for arguing that languages will always be the poor relation in the British classroom until there is a greater appreciation in society at large of their importance both to a fully rounded education and to the pupils’ future employment prospects in a rapidly changing work environment. Cross-curricular experiments using modern foreign languages for instruction in, say, ICT or business studies are helpful in this respect. However, the overriding need is clearly to devise ways of communicating this to parents and children *outside* of school so that the attitude to learning languages *inside* school becomes much more positive. Government, industry, and the professions as well as the European Union have much to do in this respect. Such a revolution in attitudes would enhance inestimably the work of the classroom teacher and the status of languages in the teaching profession as a whole.

3.2.8 Measures to be taken at institutional, regional, national, and European level to meet the needs identified

3.2.8.1 At level one

See 3.2.7.1

3.2.8.2 At level two

See 3.2.7.1

3.3 Continuing teacher education (in service)

3.3.1 *Institutions responsible for training*

The main responsibility for the in-service training of teachers was once carried by the Advisers in Modern Languages appointed by local education authorities, but government funding for training has now been devolved directly to schools. This has empowered schools to pay for training from their own budgets as they see fit. On the one hand, this has led to a reduction in the number of LEA Advisers over the past decade, with those Advisers still in post typically being experienced and well-qualified teachers of languages who are expected to offer leadership and professional support to the team of languages teachers employed by a particular authority. In many cases Advisers work from a Centre (a building or set of rooms) which can act as a meeting point for teachers who wish to receive further training or to attend meetings on topics of professional interest. On the other hand, alternative ways of delivering training have been developed. Currently, much in-service training for teachers of modern foreign languages is delivered by Comenius Centres, by national organisations such as CILT, and by independent, i.e. self-employed consultants (some of them former Advisers). In addition, many schools are increasingly relying on using their own staff to share expertise and experience rather than seeking to satisfy their training needs by using resources available outside the school. This is true, for example, of the Language Colleges, which have a duty to spread good practice. The Association for Language Learning also offers training courses through its local branches. Finally, universities offer training to teachers of modern foreign languages in the form of modules in M.Ed. courses. This allows teachers to become better qualified, but the problem of financing such training and of providing cover for teachers absent on training awaits a satisfactory solution.

3.3.2 *Contents, objectives, and structures of programmes*

Programmes are designed to consolidate and improve the skills of the classroom teachers. Frequently they offer an opportunity to extend teachers' knowledge into areas which have been introduced into the curriculum because of the requirements of the national examination boards. Consultants (for example, from university staff) are sometimes invited to bring teachers up to date on latest research findings in particular areas (e.g. classroom management; CALL; current affairs in particular countries; contemporary literature).

3.3.3 *Recent changes in content, objectives, and/or structure of programmes*

Programmes are modified in the light of changing needs and to reflect recent developments in the field. Currently, there is much interest in discussing the findings and implications of the Nuffield Report, for example, and in considering whether and how more emphasis should in future be given to providing pupils with a sounder training in grammar.

3.3.4 *Examples of good practice*

There are a number of postgraduate courses (full-time and part-time) in the UK which seek to exploit ICT in the teaching of modern foreign languages. See the list provided by a leading consultant, Graham Davies:

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/GrahamDavies1/courses.htm>.

For information on the EU-funded TALLENT project, which - for example - enables UK-based teachers of German to follow an ICT training course in Germany, see:

<http://www.solki.jyu.fi/tallent>.

See also the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT) which offers a particularly wide variety of opportunities for continuing professional development to teachers of modern languages at all levels. www.cilt.org.uk

Reasons underlying these changes

See 3.3.3

3.3.6 Identification of needs

3.3.6.1 Seen in relation to the development of language studies

There is a clear need for more in-service training to take place on line, not least for financial reasons. The EU-funded ICT4LT project already provides subject-specific ICT training in the area of modern foreign languages (<http://www.ict4lt.org>). In addition to web-based materials it has produced three printed books and a CD-ROM. CILT has appointed a specialist working in this area, and there seems little doubt that, with teachers becoming increasingly computer-literate, significant investment in this area at regional, national and European level could bring major benefits at the local level.

3.3.6.2 Seen in relation to non-academic requirements

Given that teachers are dealing with younger generations which are increasingly computer-literate, it is vitally important that they are not left behind in the ICT revolution.

3.3.7 Measures to be taken at institutional, regional, national, and European level to meet the needs identified

There is much scope at all levels to develop a carefully coordinated plan for the more effective delivery of in-service training using the rapid advances in computer technology.

4. Innovations in the training of translators and interpreters

4.1 Description and analysis of the current spectrum of professional activities

Some professional translators and interpreters find full-time employment working for international organisations such as the European Union, the United Nations, the World Health Organisation and NATO. Others work, often on a freelance consultancy basis, for major companies in industry, commerce and business or within the higher education sector.

4.2 Institutions responsible for training

Training takes place at a relatively limited number of universities. Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh is unique in offering a course at level one leading to the award of M.A. in Languages (Interpreting and Translating). Some other HEI courses at level one offer the option of using interpreting as a teaching tool in language learning, while all courses include translation as an essential exercise. It is fair to say that, as a rule, only the very best students on the Heriot Watt course are ready to start work as professional translators and interpreters when they complete level one. In general, the expectation is that at least one year of study at level two is required of anyone wishing to become a professional interpreter and/or translator. Provision for this is by no means uniform. For example, Westminster University offers a course in interpreting, while the courses at the Universities at Bath, Bradford, Heriot-Watt and Salford combine interpreting and translation. A number of other universities have opted for specialist niches in translation: for example, Kent in technical/specialised translation, Imperial College London in scientific/medical, Sheffield in literary, and Swansea in aspects of computing. The courses also differ in the variety and number of languages on offer: for instance, Bath offers French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Japanese, Salford specialises in French, German and Spanish, while Westminster's demand-led course offers almost any language for which there is sufficient interest.

4.3 Content, objectives, and structures of programmes

HEIs in the UK are free to devise their own courses. In other words, professional organisations set standards which must be met by their own members but they do not set standards to be met by the HEIs (although the latter are of course well aware of and may take some account of the views of professional organisations).

4.3.1 *At level one*

As noted above (4.2), Heriot-Watt University is the only university in the UK currently offering a programme in interpreting and translation at level one. This aims to provide students with a very high standard of language skills, combined with a thorough knowledge of the EU and international current affairs. Students specialise in two languages chosen from French, German, Spanish and Russian (the latter can be taken *ab initio*) and may follow an elective class in a third language. The third of the course's four years is spent at partner institutions abroad. A second degree programme - the M.A. in Applied Languages and Translating - is similar in structure but allows students to specialise in translating.

4.3.2 *At level two*

As noted above (4.2), courses at level two tend to occupy 'niche' positions which distinguish them from the other courses on offer. Typically, however, courses will include an emphasis on attaining professional standards and gaining experience in a professional environment, often by means of a few weeks' placement in an international organisation (such as the EU Commission, UNO, or NATO), in business or in industry.

4.3.3 At the level of continuing education

Provision in this area is essentially demand-led. Typically, HEI's will mount a short course of flexible length tailored to meet the perceived needs of a particular customer. Such a course might concentrate on, for example, the in-service training of translators who wish to develop expertise in the translating of legal, medical, or other technical documents.

4.4 Careers prospects for graduates

Given that there are limited numbers of institutions providing training and that there is therefore currently no over-provision of graduates in this area, career prospects are quite good for the well-qualified.

4.5 Recent changes in content, objectives, and/or structure of programmes

4.5.1 At level one

Heriot-Watt's unique course continues to evolve to reflect changes in the political, economic and social environment, but no need has been seen to change the fundamental structure of the course.

4.5.2 At level two

With the decision of the European Commission in the mid-'nineties to drop its own training programme and instead to offer assistance to selected university courses offering high-quality training, these courses have benefited from bursaries, equipment grants, and visits by experienced Commission staff. This has helped not only to keep numbers of students on such courses buoyant but also to update interpreting laboratories etc. and to strengthen the professional dimension.

4.5.3 At the level of continuing education

Continuing education provision continues to react flexibly to external demand.

4.6 Examples of good practice

Heriot-Watt University is the only UK university offering a programme in interpreting and translation at level 1. The programme aims to provide students with a very high level of language skills, combined with a thorough knowledge of the EU and international current affairs. The third year of the four-year course is spent at a partner institution abroad.

www.hw.ac.uk/langWWW/

The University of Bath's diploma/MA in interpreting and translating at level two includes the possibility of a short-term placement in an EU/international institution.

www.bath.ac.uk/Departments/ModLang/madiploma.html

4.7 Reasons underlying these changes

As noted above (4.5.2), the decision by the European Commission to drop its own training programme has given a boost to providers in the UK. There has been a marked increase in the number of courses at level two in translating, including at the new universities (Luton, North London, Middlesex, Portsmouth) from literary translation through linguistics to specialised subject areas. This reflects a higher level of demand from students. Despite a reduction in the overall number of bursaries available in the UK, students have shown a distinct willingness to finance their studies themselves, thus confirming a marked cultural shift in the UK education sector generally. The substantial increase in the number of students over the past decade means that a qualification at level two has now become virtually essential for any new professional, with a Masters degree rapidly becoming the norm rather than the ‘vocational’ diploma which was once usual.

4.8 Identification of needs

The worrying decline in the number of students opting for languages at school and university may soon lead to a shortage of suitable people seeking training as interpreters and translators. Equally problematic is the persistent difficulty of recruiting and retaining well-qualified staff to teach university courses in this area. This problem is especially acute ‘in-house’, with students who pay relatively high fees expecting to be taught by experienced specialists who are not simply ‘consultants’ making brief visits to the course.

More thought will need to be given to ways of meeting the demand for less common languages, which are currently somewhat neglected.

Imaginative exploitation of the opportunities for partnerships and shared courses with universities overseas is required (e.g. with China).

Measures are required to ensure that in-service training for experienced professionals is provided on a more planned basis.

4.8.1 At level one

See 4.8

4.8.2 At level two

See 4.8

4.8.3 At the level of continuing education

Ways should be identified of establishing more in-service courses on a permanent footing, instead of relying too much on ad hoc arrangements as at present.

4.9 Measures to be taken at institutional, regional, national, and European level to meet the needs identified

4.9.1 There appears to be no unmet demand for further provision at level one.

4.9.2 Consideration should be given at all levels to solving the problems outlined in section 4.8 above. Cooperation between HEIs in identifying and sharing out ‘niche’ areas would avoid any danger of overlap and therefore inefficiency in the system.

4.9.3 There is a need to provide in-service training for experienced professionals on a more planned basis.

5. Innovations in language provision for students of other disciplines

5.1 Language studies integrated into non-language programmes

5.1.1 Content, objectives, and structures of programmes

The most important innovation in provision over the past decade has been the striking growth in the number and quality of IWLPs (Institution-wide Language Programmes) across the UK, the first examples of which are to be found in the early 1980s. As a result of this development, virtually all students at UK higher education institutions are now in a position to include the study of at least one foreign language in their programme of work, often as an integral part of their degree course. It is thus now quite common to find degree courses in Engineering with German, Law with French, and so on. Typically, the main objective in studying a language is to attain a high level of proficiency in spoken and written skills as well as to gain an insight into the culture(s) of which the language is a part. In many cases, the courses are specifically designed to meet the particular professional needs of, for example, engineers, lawyers, or managers.

Despite these welcome developments, however, it is not the case (unlike in some other European countries) that all students (or all students of a particular discipline) are *required* to include a foreign language in their degree programme.

5.1.2 Recent changes in content, objectives, and/or structure of programmes

See 5.1.1

5.1.3 Examples of good practice

The University of Sheffield offers an Institution-Wide Programme in French, German, Italian and Spanish. The Modern Languages Teaching Centre's Language Programme is accredited as part of the University's modularised degree (level one).

www.shef.ac.uk/mltc/courses/courses.html

At the University of Plymouth there are currently 93 undergraduate awards that include a reference to language study in their title (most of them combining a language or languages with a non-language subject) and approximately 700 students taking at least one language module. www.plymouth.ac.uk & www.pbs.plym.ac.uk

5.1.4 Reasons underlying these changes

The main reason behind the explosion in the provision of language teaching has undoubtedly been the increasing realisation that, in a competitive jobs market across Europe, students who are monolingual are at a distinct disadvantage.

5.1.5 Identification of needs

Probably the most important measure to promote the kind of developments outlined in this section of the report would be a programme to facilitate even further the mobility of students and staff across the whole of Europe.

5.1.5.1 Seen in relation to the development of language studies

See 5.1.5

5.1.5.2 Seen in relation to non-academic requirements

See 5.1.5

5.1.6 Measures to be taken at institutional, regional, national, and European level to meet the needs identified

Current arrangements to facilitate student and staff mobility have enjoyed a fair degree of success in certain areas but a true Europeanisation of educational and training provision remains an ambition to be fulfilled. The EU must take an even stronger lead than hitherto in this respect by enhancing current programmes and devising new initiatives which encourage institutions at regional and national level always to think of their role in a European context.

5.1.6.1 At level one

There is much more scope for students of other disciplines to be offered opportunities for study and training in at least one other European country. In particular, there is a clear need for the development of structured programmes of study devised and delivered by a partnership of universities from more than one European country and leading to an award by that group of universities.

5.1.6.2 At level two

See 5.1.6.1

5.2 General and subject-oriented language courses accompanying non-language programmes

5.2.1 Content, objectives, and structures of programmes

See 5.1.1 above. It is now quite common to find courses which permit students to study a foreign language or languages alongside, but not (or not necessarily) as an integral part of, the work which they are required to do within the prescribed framework of their degree course. This has generally been made possible by the growth of IWLPs and usually allows the students to take free-standing courses for no extra fee.

5.2.2 Recent changes in content, objectives, and/or structure of programmes

Prior to the establishment of IWLPs the provision of language-learning opportunities for students of other disciplines was very patchy and often non-existent. The IWLPs which have been set up therefore do not essentially represent changes to any provision which existed before but are new and innovative departures from previous (non-)practice.

5.2.3 Examples of good practice

The IWLP at the University of Portsmouth was set up in 1992 to help put into effect the University's policy that all of its students should have the opportunity to study a modern foreign language as part of their course. It delivers foreign language tuition at a variety of levels to over 1,000 undergraduate students, including languages such as Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese. <http://www.hum.port.ac.uk/slas/iwlp.htm>

The University of Salford's University-wide Language Programme offers instruction at various levels in French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Mandarin Chinese and Japanese. The Languages for All programme provides lunch-time and evening courses which are open to all students as well as to staff and members of the public. <http://www.languages.salford.ac.uk/efl/6-main.html>

5.2.4 Reasons underlying these changes

The main reason behind the explosion in the provision of language teaching has undoubtedly been the increasing realisation that, in a competitive jobs market across Europe, students who are monolingual are at a distinct disadvantage.

5.2.5 Identification of needs

As noted above, many courses offered under IWLP arrangements take the form of optional add-ons to existing degree schemes. In practice, this means that students may regard these courses as less important than the work which is an integral part of their degree programme and for which they are awarded marks which count towards the class of degree they ultimately are awarded. What is now needed is a reform of degree programmes which will ensure that language learning is fully integrated and therefore treated as having equal importance with all other elements in the degree.

Probably the most important measure to promote the kind of developments outlined in this section of the report would be a programme to facilitate even further the mobility of students and staff across the whole of Europe.

5.2.5.1 Seen in relation to the development of language studies

See 5.2.5

5.2.5.2 Seen in relation to non-academic requirements

See 5.2.5

5.2.6 Measures to be taken at institutional, regional, national, and European level to meet the needs identified

Current arrangements to facilitate student and staff mobility have enjoyed a fair degree of success in certain areas but a true Europeanisation of educational and training provision remains an ambition to be fulfilled. The EU must take an even stronger lead than hitherto in this respect by enhancing current programmes and devising new initiatives which encourage institutions at regional and national level always to think of their role in a European context.

In the UK, no national overview of IWLP provision currently exists. There is a lack of adequate data on the evident increase in the number of students enrolling for IWLP classes. Given the contrasting drop in the number of those enrolled on language degree programmes, there is an urgent need for data on enrolment patterns generally in order to gain a clearer picture of emerging trends.

5.2.6.1 At level one

There is much more scope for students of other disciplines to be offered opportunities for study and training in at least one other European country. In particular, there is a clear need for the development of structured programmes of study devised and delivered by a partnership of universities from more than one European country and leading to an award by that group of universities.

5.2.6.2 At level two

See 5.2.6.1 above.

5.3 Language provision and support for mobile students

5.3.1 For incoming students

In general, incoming students are offered the possibility of improving their English by taking courses offered by the university (e.g. by its English Language Centre or a similar department). Where such courses lead to a qualification (e.g. Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency) a fee may be involved.

5.3.2 For outgoing students

See 5.1.1 above. During the year preceding a period spent abroad students at many universities take courses which are specifically designed to prepare them for their stay in a foreign country.

5.4 Non-language programmes or parts of programmes taught through one or several other languages

5.4.1 Disciplines involved

As noted in 5.1.1 above, some non-language degree programmes do exist in which much of the instruction is given in a foreign language, but this is still relatively rare in the UK. The disciplines involved include Chemical Engineering, Law, and Management or Business Studies.

5.4.2 Levels at which (parts of) programmes are taught

The (parts of) programme concerned are typically taught at all levels of the undergraduate curriculum.

5.4.3 Languages used

Among the languages most commonly used are French, German, and Spanish.

5.4.4 *Target groups*

No distinction is made between home students and others, i.e. the programmes are intended for any student who applies to and is accepted for the programme in question.

5.4.5 *Policies and objectives underlying the practice described*

Underlying this practice is, on the one hand, a general awareness that students who are not equipped with foreign language skills and even some experience of living and working in a foreign country are seriously handicapped when attempting to enter an increasingly competitive, Europeanised employment market, and, on the other hand, strong demand from the students themselves because of that awareness. The overall objective is increased mobility and mutual understanding within Europe.

5.4.6 *New measures proposed*

A Council of Europe initiative led in 2001 to the launch of the European Language Portfolio. This is already in use at some HEIs (e.g. University of Westminster) and can be expected to spread to others in the near future. Using a scale which can be understood throughout Europe, it sets out a student's level of competence and experience in a language or languages (see <http://culture.coe.fr/lang>). Established in 1991, the European Association of Quality Language Services (EAQUALS) is the Pan-European inspecting body which aims to promote and safeguard quality in institutions teaching foreign languages in Europe (www.eaquals.org). Against this background, there is a clear need (a) to implement measures which will ensure the success of the European Language Portfolio, and (b) to develop the role of EAQUALS in this process.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

6. Innovations in language studies in continuing education (excluding languages specialists)

6.1 *Target groups*

The main target group in Continuing Education is traditionally the 'general interest' market (i.e. people who in their free time choose to learn or improve their knowledge of a language), but in recent years there has been a clear tendency for undergraduates and even postgraduates to take language courses offered by the continuing education route. Such courses are usually taught in the evening after the normal working day is over. Such courses are usually taught in the evening after the normal working day is over - one example being provided by the University of Central Lancashire. www.lancs.ac.uk/staff/exaajs/cs_language_levels.htm

6.2 *Content, objectives and structures of programmes and courses*

The main aim of Continuing Education courses is to teach languages at all levels, from ab initio to advanced, so as to impart skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

6.3 Recent developments

Courses in established Continuing Education centres (e.g. Cambridge) have been credit-bearing since 1993 because the funding body, HEFCE, required this. In 1994 HEFCE also introduced funding for Liberal Adult Education in Continuing Education. Initially this was on a non-credit basis but since then there has been a change to a credit-bearing arrangement.

6.4 Identification of new needs

A need has been identified to integrate Continuing Education provision at various institutions serving a particular region so as to avoid both atomisation and the danger of wasteful overlap. This also seems a promising way of ensuring in a planned way that minority languages are covered adequately.

6.5 Measures proposed to meet the needs identified

Increasingly, Continuing Education courses are taken for credit, and it would be advantageous if this practice could be made universal and could conform to recognised European standards of achievement (cf. the European Language Portfolio).

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