

Innovation
in Methodology
and Practice
in Language Learning

Innovation in Methodology and Practice in Language Learning:

*Experiences and Proposals
for University Language Centres*

Edited by

Christopher Williams

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FOREWORD

CARMEN ARGONDIZZO

PRESIDENT OF AICLU

AICLU conferences are occasions for scholars who wish to share ideas about language learning and teaching with the aim of creating new reflective pathways in the fields of research and didactics. Over the years, these AICLU events have gradually become one of the main activities of the Association since they naturally pave the way for the involvement of professionals who wish to talk to each other, exchange ideas and reinforce their own activities on the basis of this communal input.

The AICLU Conference, which was held at the University of Foggia from 30 May to 1st June 2013, confirmed these feelings and this vision. It also had an added value since a large number of participants had come from outside Italy, not only from a variety of European countries but also from Algeria, Israel and Tunisia. This generated the opportunity for a three-day collaborative debate which involved the many members of the Italian Association and scholars who, because of their varied working and geographical backgrounds, enriched the conference discussion. This once again highlights AICLU's willingness to embrace other perspectives in order to promote in-depth reflection on issues related to the well-being and robust development of University Language Centres.

This volume is the natural follow-up to the three pleasant days spent in Foggia. Indeed, based on the widespread interest in the field of language learning, *Innovation in Methodology and Practice in Language Learning: Experiences and Proposals for University Language Centres* offers readers insights into fields such as teaching languages for specific purposes, Content and Language Integrated Learning, and the use of technologies in language learning. These broad study areas, which naturally open up to many other interrelated sub-issues, are central not only because they have favoured important changes in Language Centres but also because they have promoted a meaningful discussion about how languages interweave with other academic disciplines and how innovative technologies can facilitate learning objectives. Moreover, the volume offers reflection on University Language Centres considered from a

European perspective and beyond, thus providing readers with insights which reinforce the concept of being part of a community of practice that crosses all geographical boundaries.

The various contributions, attentively collected by Christopher Williams who has unobtrusively edited them with his personal touch, provide examples of the complexity and flexibility of University Language Centres which, over time, have shown they are subject to a continuous development within the academic world. Moreover, by including papers in different languages, the multilingual aspect of the volume strongly highlights the wide scenario of cultures and communication styles we experience in real life. The volume, which offers reflective reading for students of languages and linguistics as well as professionals who wish to explore new perspectives, is the natural outcome of the activities of a national Association that is willing to approach learning and teaching issues with dynamicity, solid scientific research and a wide-angled perspective which strongly encourages multilingual and multicultural integration in an ongoing process.

PREMESSA

CARMEN ARGONDIZZO

PRESIDENTE DELL' AICLU

I convegni dell' AICLU costituiscono opportunità per studiosi che desiderano condividere le loro idee circa l' apprendimento e l' insegnamento delle lingue con lo scopo di creare nuovi percorsi di riflessione nella ricerca e nella didattica. Nel tempo, questi eventi AICLU sono diventati una delle attività principali dell' Associazione poiché rappresentano un cammino naturale verso un maggiore coinvolgimento di esperti che desiderano dialogare, scambiare idee ed esperienze e migliorare le proprie attività e competenze grazie a questo input collettivo.

L' VIII Convegno Nazionale AICLU, organizzato presso l' Università di Foggia dal 30 maggio al 1° giugno del 2013, ha confermato queste sensazioni e questa visione. Il convegno ha avuto anche un valore aggiunto poiché molti partecipanti provenivano da paesi oltre Italia, non solo europei ma anche da paesi come l' Algeria, Israele e Tunisia. Tutto ciò ha generato, per tre giorni consecutivi, opportunità di dibattito che ha coinvolto i numerosi soci dell' AICLU ed esperti che, in virtù delle loro diverse provenienze accademiche e geografiche, hanno arricchito la discussione scaturita durante il convegno. Questo evidenzia, ancora una volta, la volontà dell' AICLU di volere accogliere altre prospettive con l' obiettivo di promuovere un' approfondita riflessione su temi legati al benessere e allo sviluppo intenso dei Centri Linguistici Universitari.

Il volume è una conseguenza naturale di queste tre piacevoli giornate trascorse a Foggia. In realtà, basandosi sull' interesse diffuso nel campo dell' apprendimento delle lingue, *Innovation in Methodology and Practice in Language Learning: Experiences and Proposals for University Language Centres* offre al lettore una serie di approfondimenti su temi come l' insegnamento delle lingue per scopi specialistici, il CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), e l' uso delle tecnologie nell' apprendimento linguistico. Queste grandi aree tematiche, che si aprono spontaneamente a molti altri argomenti collegati tra di loro, sono centrali non soltanto perché hanno favorito cambiamenti notevoli nei Centri Linguistici, ma anche perché hanno stimolato un dibattito significativo su come l' insegnamento

delle lingue possa integrarsi ad altre sfere accademiche, e su come le innovazioni tecnologiche possano facilitare gli obiettivi didattici. Inoltre, il volume pone lo sguardo sui Centri Linguistici Universitari considerati attraverso una prospettiva europea ed internazionale, con l'obiettivo di offrire al lettore spunti di riflessione che rafforzino l'idea di essere parte di una comunità che supera qualsiasi confine geografico.

I vari contributi, raccolti con cura da Christopher Williams che ha svolto il lavoro di curatore con discrezione e tocco personale, costituiscono testimonianza della complessità e della flessibilità dei Centri Linguistici Universitari i quali, con il trascorrere del tempo, hanno dimostrato di essere oggetto di evoluzione continua all'interno del mondo accademico. Inoltre, con l'inclusione di articoli in diverse lingue, l'aspetto plurilingue del volume evidenzia fortemente l'ampio scenario di culture e di stili comunicativi che si incontrano nella vita reale. Il volume, che invita alla riflessione studenti di lingue moderne e studiosi che desiderano esplorare nuove prospettive nella didattica e nella ricerca, è il risultato naturale di un'Associazione nazionale che vuole affrontare tematiche di apprendimento e di insegnamento con dinamicità, con un approccio scientifico consolidato e con una prospettiva ad ampio raggio che privilegia l'integrazione plurilingue e multiculturale in un processo sempre in evoluzione.

INTRODUCTION

CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS

The 24 papers making up this volume were originally presented in the form of talks at the VIII National Conference of the Associazione Italiana dei Centri Linguistici Universitari (AICLU) held at the University of Foggia, Italy, between 30 May and 1st June 2013.

The conference was attended by over 100 participants, about a third of whom came from abroad. Speakers were allowed to present their papers in any of the five major European languages, namely, English, French, German, Italian and Spanish.

The papers included here represent a selection of the original contributions presented at the conference with a division into five sections as follows:

- 1 three papers from the conference's plenary speakers whose talks provided the keynotes for discussion about the various themes explored during the conference;
- 2 three papers outlining some of the innovative challenges for language centres;
- 3 six papers discussing the new developments in teaching language for specific purposes;
- 4 seven papers offering proposals and case studies in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL);
- 5 five papers illustrating the use of new technologies in language learning.

Naturally, there are a number of papers which deal with more than one of the four main theme areas outlined here (sections 2 to 5) but which, for the sake of convenience, have been allotted to just one section. With the exception of the three plenary papers coming from invited speakers, all the other papers were subjected to a double blind refereeing process, with 21 papers being deemed worthy of publication and therefore making it through to the final selection. 18 of the 24 papers in this volume are written in English, four in Italian, one in French and one in German. The

fact that three-quarters of the papers have been written in English – in many cases by non-native speakers of English – is a reflection of how English has become the lingua franca even in the case of a national (rather than international) conference held in Italy. It therefore seemed logical to write this introduction in English and to provide bio details about the contributors in English in order to reach the widest possible readership. But in keeping with the ethos not only of a national conference held in Italy on language matters relating to university language centres but also of CercleS (Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur, the pan-European organisation to which AICLU belongs), which is strongly committed to promoting plurilingualism, it seemed equally crucial to ensure that contributions to this volume would also be accepted in other languages.

The conference was privileged to host three distinguished plenary speakers, each an expert in his or her respective field, whose talks constituted an overview of some of the themes explored during the three days of discussion and debate. As Chair (until May 2014) of the Association of University Language Centres for the UK and Ireland, Peter Howarth outlines in his paper some of the recent developments in the rapidly changing role of language centres in the United Kingdom. A renowned expert in the sphere of CLIL, Gisella Langé provides us with an invaluable résumé of the chronology concerning the ongoing implementation of CLIL in Italy's secondary schools seen from an institutional perspective. And as President of CercleS, the European umbrella association for national university language centres, Gillian Mansfield enlightens us as regards language centre activities across Europe from not just a local but also from a 'glocal' perspective.

Each of the topics in the second group of papers in this volume examines a very different language teaching situation, but all three represent thought-provoking challenges for language centres in today's world. Claudia D'Este and Geraldine Ludbrook analyse ways in which university students with certified specific learning disabilities (SpLD) such as dyslexia can improve their foreign language skills, outlining the procedures followed in drawing up an in-house protocol for teaching and assessing English language proficiency at the Venice University Language Centre. In her paper Margherita Pelleriti describes a different type of challenge, but one which is increasingly impinging on the successful running of language courses, namely how university language centres can adapt to providing services on an ever-tighter budget, in this specific case English language assessment in a Master's degree course at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. The last paper in this section, by Selene

Rescio, is concerned with the evaluation of a selection of English language course-books for primary school children in Italy from the perspective of how suitable they might be for children who have the learning disability known as development dyslexia.

The next group of papers all focus on teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at university level. Robin Anderson adopts an essentially theoretical approach to his topic by providing a wide-ranging and nuanced historical overview of the development of English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP). Michela Giordano examines ways of using a corpus of US student case briefs in teaching English for Legal Purposes to students as an aid to acquiring “a metacognitive awareness that learners can carry with them into their target professional community”. Luisella Leonzini also employs a corpus-based approach in her discussion of the pedagogical implications of using corpora in language classes in order to improve persuasion-based writing skills by focusing on modality in articles from *The Economist*. Elena Manca analyses the role of phraseology in language teaching with specific reference to a corpora of texts relating to the world of tourism. She concludes that “University language courses for tourism should also consider the influence that culture has on language and on the way concepts are expressed.” In her corpus-driven study, Denise Milizia focuses on strategies for involving Political Science students in the compilation of corpora of authentic political speeches in English and Italian, with specific reference to the way that passive voice is used across the two languages. Anila R. Scott-Monkhouse looks at how language skills are assessed in a university course on English for Law and International Transactions (EFLIT) with a view to developing learners’ competence in legal English in ways that will prove to be genuinely useful to practitioners in their professional lives.

CLIL continues to be a major source of interest, also because it constitutes a relatively new phenomenon impacting on the activities of numerous language centres. In their paper Teresina Barbero, Adriana Teresa Damascelli and Marie-Berthe Vittoz describe the ways in which the so-called ‘CLIL methodological courses’ in Piedmont and Liguria have been organised for secondary school teachers of non-language subjects who wish to become CLIL teachers themselves. The next three papers all refer to CLIL experiments that have taken place at the University of Salento, Italy. Rita Bennett illustrates a case study, including the results of questionnaires, where curriculum courses in English are provided for computer engineering and economics students. She concludes that a more systematic use of English by subject teachers, rather than frequently resorting to Italian, would undoubtedly have beneficial results for the

students. Julia Boyd analyses the design and implementation of a CLIL course for European Business Law students as well as giving a succinct overview of the aims and philosophy behind CLIL as an innovative learning project. In his paper Thomas Christiansen shows “how it is possible to distinguish between linguistic performance and knowledge of content in simple L2 multiple choice tests.” However, he affirms that “CLIL by its dual focus presents many challenges not only to teachers but also to testers.” Lois Clegg describes the language work carried out on a degree course in International Business and Development (IBD) delivered in English at the University of Parma. Her conclusion is that “increased collaboration between subject and language experts is important” in order to ensure the successful implementation of CLIL. Annikki Koskensalo, Emerita professor from the University of Turku, offers insights into the ways CLIL has been taught in Finland, contextualising her study by looking at some of the problems related to how CLIL should itself be defined. The final offering in this section is from Anna Loiacono with Cristina Arizzi, Deirdre Kantz, Rosalba Rizzo and Maryellen Toffle who investigate into Medical CLIL within a self-assessment framework. Their findings are the result of a workshop held at the conference in Foggia devoted entirely to Medical CLIL, and their contribution is hence much longer than any of the others in this volume, being the equivalent of three papers rolled into one. One of the *leitmotifs* running through this chapter is the importance of imparting intercultural medical competence in this globalised world.

The final section is devoted to the use of new technologies in language learning. In their paper Maria Caria, Lis Conde, Michael Cronin and Stefania Firetto describe the way they have set up a summary writing course for language students in an open source online personal learning environment (PerLE) at the University of Calabria demonstrating “the efficacy of a dynamic assembly approach in the creation of e-courses using reusable learning objects.” Isabelle Dotan, from Israel’s Bar-Ilan University, focuses on how so-called TICE (*Technologies de l’Information et de la Communication dans l’Enseignement*) can be successfully employed in foreign language teaching, both *intra-muros* and *extra-muros*. In her paper Giuliana Fiorentino discusses a project called SIMOLA (Simulated Mobile Language Learning) undertaken at the University of Molise in Italy which aims at exploiting ways of using mobile phones as a means of learning a foreign language. The next paper, by Sandra Petroni, continues with the theme of *m-learning*, but this time with the focus on a comparative evaluation of the various apps available for mobile phones in the field of second language learning. She concludes that a reassessment is

needed as to “how courses and learning objects are designed for mobile devices in order to exploit their full potential.” The final paper in this volume, by Anna Toscano, is about a hypermedia project carried out at Ca’ Foscari University in Venice for learners of Italian as L2 where language learning processes are developed through the use of new technology, in this case multimedia resources exploring the city of Venice from a plurality of perspectives.

This brief overview of the 24 chapters comprising the volume clearly illustrates the variety of approaches and perspectives relating to how university language centres operate in and adapt to this rapidly changing world. As editor of this volume I have tried to allow the author(s) of each chapter to express their individuality, also in terms of spelling conventions. Hence minor differences in spelling may be discernible (e.g. *organization / organisation*) in a few of the chapters. However, taken as a whole, the volume constitutes a coherent body of contributions, each focusing in its own way on the theme of innovation in methodology and practice in language learning from the perspective of university language centres. It is hoped that readers will enjoy this selection of papers and that the volume will be of genuine interest to all the stakeholders in university language education.

I would like to thank both Maurizio Gotti, President of AICLU up to the time of the conference in Foggia, and Carmen Argondizzo, the current President of AICLU, together with the other members of the Direttivo, for their support and encouragement in putting this volume together. Finally, I wish to thank a number of colleagues for their invaluable help in the preparatory stages of this volume which ensured that the contents were of the highest possible standards: Geneviève Abet, Carmen Argondizzo, Fiona Dalziel, Daniela Forapani, Christoph Nickenig, Claudio Vinti, Michel Van Der Yeught, and Elisabeth Wielander.

Foggia, June 2015

PART ONE:
THREE KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

CHAPTER ONE

LANGUAGE CENTRES IN A TIME OF REFORM: THE UK EXPERIENCE

PETER HOWARTH
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Introduction

It is common for foreign language learning in the UK to be painted in a rather negative light. The stereotype of a predominantly monolingual population persists and in some respects is being reinforced, both as a result of the precarious position of modern foreign language (MFL) learning at school level and also the decline in take-up of foreign languages at degree level. Without going into the complexities of this state of affairs (and not all of the impressions are accurate), I would like to describe the role that university language centres play in promoting foreign language learning, in the face of apparently considerable odds. I would like to suggest that this role might be of general relevance, in particular in the relationships between language centres and academic departments of languages in universities.

I will report on some major projects in the UK in response to the perceived struggle in promoting foreign language learning, and will focus on the position of language centres in these initiatives. A recent survey of institutions (UCML/AULC 2012) gives some useful quantitative data and reports some significant opinions of language centre managers. I would like to suggest ways in which language centres, in the UK at least, might position themselves more strongly to cope with present and future pressures.

Context

To begin with some background, I will describe the specific context in which language centres work locally in the UK and how they are organised and supported nationally. Where most relevant, examples will be taken from the University of Leeds.

Language centres in the UK are very diverse in their structure, size and location, providing a range of taught courses and services. They may be free-standing operations, (perhaps described as a central service, 'Languages for All' or Institution-Wide Language Programme (IWLP)). Alternatively, they may be situated within a School of Modern Languages, Lifelong Learning, Communication Studies, a Business school, European Studies or Area Studies. In Leeds it is a department within the School of Modern Languages and Cultures, which is recognised as the largest such school in the UK. It consists of 11 subject areas, ranging from the academic study of all major European languages, Arabic and East Asian studies, Linguistics and Phonetics, Translation and Interpreting and World Cinemas. While fully integrated into the School, the Language Centre is the only non-academic unit in that it does not offer its own degree programmes. This status is not unusual.

Language centres are often somewhat hybrid operations: part teaching, part service unit. In common with several of the largest centres in the UK, the Leeds centre is organised in three sections, each with a separate source of funding. Firstly, and in Leeds the largest in size, is the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which is chiefly funded from fees paid by international students, the level of which is determined by the Language Centre. This section has the largest number of students and staff and requires the greatest resources, in terms of administrative support, space etc. Secondly, the teaching of foreign languages (about 10-12 in Leeds) on credit-bearing 'elective modules' is largely provided by part-time staff and funded by a percentage of the students' University tuition fees. These students are mostly UK/EU undergraduates (though international students also enrol), and could be studying degree programmes in any of the University's faculties. Thirdly, the Centre provides language learning facilities for independent study for all students and staff, a language learning advice service, a language exchange scheme and technological infrastructure (including multilingual TV, language laboratories and other classroom equipment). All of this is funded by a central grant from the University.

National support

The Association of University Language Centres (AULC) was set up in 1999 to represent language centres or similar institutions in the UK and Republic of Ireland. It currently has a membership of 76: England 58, Scotland 4, Wales 2, Northern Ireland 2, Republic of Ireland 8 and two others: West Indies and the Foreign Office Language Centre. This total number is fairly stable, though it is a somewhat shifting population, with a few members leaving (or disappearing) each year, others returning under new management or being created. As with other national associations its main function is the support of members. A significant characteristic is that its active membership covers all professional interests: those of language teachers, managers and technical and resources staff. As these institutions range from the largest (Manchester, Leeds, London universities such as the London School of Economics, University College and King's College, etc.) to the smallest resource centres, mutual assistance is very beneficial, especially for those setting up from scratch or being re-established, or those under threat from university managements who struggle to see the value of language learning. In these cases the Association is able to lobby in support of a member, though not always with success. Support is provided through an active email discussion list, especially for technology and resources, and an annual conference, which attempts a good balance in serving the interests of its wide range of members.

The languages professions in the UK benefit nationally from the leadership of two bodies. The first is UCML (University Council of Modern Languages), the umbrella organisation for all learned societies and subject associations in the languages field in the UK. This works hard in lobbying for languages and in promoting collaboration through projects. The other, the Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (LLAS), is also able to raise the profile of languages nationally.

AULC is a constituent member of the European confederation, CercleS, which brings together 12 national associations, totalling over 300 individual centres, with associate members in a further 14 countries. CercleS provides support to its members through conferences and workshops, through focus groups on specific topics such as translation or events management. It also promotes quality in learning and teaching through such mechanisms as the European Language Portfolio. The twice-yearly journal (CercleS/de Gruyter), *Language Learning in Higher Education*, is free to members. Through CercleS, an annual meeting of language centre directors has been held in eastern Germany (Wulkow) for

the last five years, producing memoranda on quality assurance and other key issues.

Threats to language studies

This is the framework within which language centres work, and, in spite of the extensive support and promotional networks, languages in the UK are perceived to be under threat. They have had official government designation as a 'Strategically Important and Vulnerable' subject, which has attracted special support, but language studies in higher education are still influenced by the following factors.

Funding

The introduction in 2012 of yet higher levels of tuition fees, advertised and debated well in advance, provoked a strong reaction. By the time the details were known and explained (i.e. no up-front payment) all headlines concentrated on the large debts that students would have accumulated on graduation. As a result, applications, especially in the arts and humanities, were predicted to fall, but the main effect has possibly been to increase doubt over future student behaviour and to make planning much more difficult and time-consuming (staffing, types of course to offer, resources etc.). Other factors affecting language programmes particularly include the status of languages in the primary and secondary curriculum and funding for residence abroad. There are conflicting pressures on universities such as the requirement to improve access for students from less privileged backgrounds, while school-level language learning is increasingly concentrated in independent, fee-paying schools, and at degree level in fewer research-intensive, 'elite' universities.

International recruitment

A further very damaging factor making management (of whole institutions but language centres involved in EAP in particular) more difficult has been the policy of the government towards visa applications from international students. While, on the one hand, universities are encouraged to expand their income from international students, the impression is given that the country is unwelcoming to foreign students, stated explicitly by a government minister, and the constant changes in regulations cause an enormous and almost unmanageable administrative workload for admissions staff. Language centres are in the frontline in this

process, admitting students in advance of their entry into the normal university procedures.

Privatisation

Privatisation of EAP has also been seen as a threat to some language centres, indicative of university managements' attitude to international student recruitment and the government's policy of privatising public services. There are those who believe that academic departments should become more responsive to market forces, but the full implications of such changes are often not appreciated. There is great concern (led by trades unions) over 'commodification' and 'marketisation' of higher education, and EAP has been at the forefront of these developments.

Lobbying power

A further concern is over the relative weakness of languages, and other humanities subjects in influencing government policy. BIS (the government's Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, which has responsibility for higher education) have experience of engineers, scientists and medical schools demanding investment (essential for the UK economy). The arts and humanities appear not to take that kind of direct approach.

Responses

In the last few years (especially since 2009) there have been attempts to break out of this cycle. A major impetus was provided by Professor Michael Worton (vice-provost of University College, London) in 2009, who was asked to conduct a 'Review of Modern Foreign Languages provision in higher education in England' (Worton 2009). It was restricted to England because the commission came from the government HE funding council for England (HEFCE). Rather than just lamenting and detailing the dire state of languages, Worton identified some of the root causes of weakness within university language departments themselves and made some criticisms, some of which were hard-hitting. The main point of the report is that until such departments could define what they are, promote themselves as a coherent body of teaching and research of value to society (as other disciplines do) and work together, they should not expect further special government consideration. There has been a

tendency of parochial interest in narrow areas of research, which has not made enough reference to the wider discipline.

Language Centres and academic departments of languages

This review proved an excellent opportunity for language centres to explain what they do and what is distinctive about their activities. The report was one of the first to give language centres equal status with academic departments in universities, which have had most attention in past analyses of languages in HE. Worton described the relationship between the two types of operation in the following ways:

the relationship between Language Centres/IWLPs and the Modern Language Departments is often an uneasy one, with the Language Centres often being perceived by the MFL Departments as mere service providers of 'everyday' language learning. (Worton 2009: 26)

there was some anxiety amongst a group of respondents about the profile of Language Centres and the extent to which they represented a threat to the status of the academic Departments ... (who define themselves as teaching language through content and culture). (Worton 2009: 29)

(A more detailed examination of this relationship between academic departments of modern languages and language centres can be found in Howarth 2010). In the wake of the Worton report there was considerable activity with a variety of fora (for example, The Worton Forum), meetings at the British Academy, HEFCE and BIS. Among the most tangible results of this activity have been two funded projects.

'Shaping the Future of Languages in HE'

This is the most significant development among the post-Worton activities. Described as a 'Toolkit', this public website is a repository for documents of various kinds, available for the language profession to use chiefly for their own internal lobbying purposes, to inform and persuade their own universities' senior managements of the value of their disciplines. The resources currently consist of over 40 documents in the form of case studies, reports, spreadsheets and presentations and are organised under three headings:

1. identity: “Towards a shared sense of purpose within a diverse and changing field”
2. internationalisation: “Ideas and examples of ways in which languages can actively engage with the institution’s internationalisation agenda”
3. employability: “Research data and practical tools for supporting the development of employability skills for language graduates.”

Collectively, they make a strong case to the non-specialist decision-maker in our institutions that we should be valued. While the second and third themes have a clear motivation and fit with most universities’ strategic visions, the first was included because of the perceived lack of coherence within the profession. While the public knows what the core content of most disciplines is, it was felt that language-related studies are too diverse to be easily understood by outsiders.

Example 1: shared identity

The following is a list of titles of typical research publications in academic departments of languages:

The Algerian demonstrations of 1961 and their repression
The History of the French Language in Russia
The G8 and G20’s position in global governance and the role of Japan
Cultural Literacy in Contemporary Europe: A European-wide project
Maintaining a regional language in the 21st century: the example of Low German
Learning French from ages 5, 7 and 11: An investigation into starting ages, rates and routes of learning amongst early foreign language learners
Dante and Theology
Documenting varieties of the Romani language
German Autobiographical Writing in the Twentieth Century
Russian Media, Culture, and Conceptual Blending
Queer Cinema from Spain and France: the translation of desire and the formation of transnational queer identities
 (UCML 2011a)

How can this collection of subject areas be recognised as a single discipline, rather than as individual, disparate, pieces of research? Unless we can define what we do, we cannot expect others to appreciate it. The

argument on the other hand points out that this is what academics are employed to study, teach and write about (and they are encouraged to be cross-disciplinary and serendipitous in finding research partners and funding), and one should not pretend it is something different. The conflict between the protection of academic freedom and pressures towards standardisation can appear quite stark.

Example 2: internationalisation

Many university managements in the UK have created internationalisation strategies, and the benefits of this approach to the curriculum have been identified as follows:

- Students display an ability to think globally and consider issues from a variety of perspectives;
- They demonstrate an awareness of their own culture and its perspectives and other cultures and their perspectives;
- They appreciate the relation between their field of study locally and professional traditions elsewhere;
- They recognise intercultural issues relevant to their professional practice;
- They appreciate the importance of multicultural diversity to professional practice and citizenship;
- They appreciate the complex and interacting factors that contribute to notions of culture and cultural relationships;
- They value diversity of language and culture;
- They appreciate and demonstrate the capacity to apply international standards and practices within the discipline or professional area;
- They demonstrate awareness of the implications of local decisions and actions for international communities and of international decisions and actions for local communities. (UCML 2011b)

Example 3: employability

Another example, which AULC contributed to the Employability section, is titled “Working collaboratively with non-language departments.” Whereas most collaboration engaged in by academic departments of languages is with other humanities disciplines (French with History, for example), language centres find it easier to form partnerships with non-humanities departments. This example gives some case studies of work

with Engineering (French for the Aerospace Industry) and Medicine (French, Italian, German, Spanish, Punjabi for medical students). This highlights the large amount of collaborative activity between languages and STEM(M) subjects. These are the officially designated disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (with Medicine sometimes added) which receive protected government funding. They make attractive partners, as they are sharply focused on their students' future careers and have a strong interest in applied languages. (UCML: 2011c)

‘Speak to the Future’

This five-year campaign (<http://www.speaktothefuture.org/>) was launched in 2011 with objectives for five levels of UK language use:

1. Every language valued as an asset
2. A coherent experience of languages for all children in primary school
3. A basic working knowledge of at least two languages including English for every child leaving secondary school
4. Every graduate qualified in a second language
5. An increase in the number of highly qualified linguists.

The objectives of most interest to language centres are 4 and 5. Language centres have mounted a number of Festivals of Languages on Mardi Gras to promote languages in schools, the public, the press and on their own campuses. Objective 4 has more chance of being realised in the medium term, as there are mechanisms for promoting language learning in HE that do not depend on what pupils have done at school or on recruitment into departments of modern languages. Language centres are well placed to fulfil demand for *ab initio* language learning and to respond to their institutions' language policies.

The British Academy (the government-funded body that supports the humanities and social sciences) is a major champion of languages in HE. One of its main concerns, detailed in a number of recent reports (*Language Matters*, *Language Matters More and More* and *Languages: The State of the Nation*), is the low level of language skills possessed by British researchers in the humanities, putting them at a disadvantage in comparison with their international competitors. Funding has been offered to help repair this deficit, through short-term specialist training, such as developing reading skills in foreign languages. A problem with many

reports is that they identify the need for language skills (e.g. in business), and the fact that employers lament this deficiency, but businesses do not seem to back this up with either adequate training on the job or requirements on prospective employees to have these skills. So the situation is more complex than it seems.

UCML/AULC survey of IWLPs

Any effective lobbying, especially if funding is being sought, has to include facts and figures. For language centres it is particularly difficult to acquire data, even for the basic overall numbers of language learners in our institutions, as these are not included in the national HE statistics, because many of our activities do not fit into standard degree programmes and their component modules. In order to collect these and the more useful qualitative data on languages and levels offered and the specific experiences of language centre managers, it is necessary to conduct our own surveys.

The latest survey (conducted in Autumn 2012 and reported in 2013) was an attempt at setting up a regular annual exercise in collecting relevant data. 62 language centres (or equivalent institutions) responded, reporting a total of 50,000 students registered on IWLPs. This number excludes those learning English as a foreign language in language centres. This demonstrates that, purely in simple totals, such forms of learning are not a minority activity in comparison with students on single or joint honours degree programmes. Although previous surveys over the last 10 years have focused on similar activities, it is hard to make direct historical comparisons. However, a few trends are clear. The most obvious is a shift in relative popularity between the traditional European languages and the languages of the Middle East and East Asia. In 2001 French was taught in 49 institutions, Italian in 27, Chinese in only 9 and Arabic in 2. In 2012 French and Italian had grown in breadth of coverage, as the total number of LCs has expanded (55 and 47, respectively) but Chinese and Arabic are now no longer exotic minority languages and have become mainstream (taught in 48 and 43 institutions, respectively), thus achieving parity of visibility. The percentage of IWLP students taking these languages also reflects this trend. In 2001 students of French accounted for 34% of all IWLP students, Italian 8%, Chinese only 0.7% and Arabic a miniscule 0.06%. By 2012 French has declined to 25%, Italian remains at 8%, while Chinese has risen to 8% and Arabic by almost a hundred times to 5%.

Some quotes from language centre managers support this generally buoyant outlook.

“The provision of languages is seen as an important part of the institution’s employability agenda and internationalisation agendas.”

“There are strong institutional initiatives to develop employability, and language skills feature prominently in this context and enjoy institutional support.”

“On a number of occasions senior officers of the University (Vice Chancellor and others) stressed the importance of such provision for the institution.”

“Many students see language learning as an important part of their professional development, a trend that seems to be growing. There has definitely been growing awareness regarding the necessity of foreign languages over the last years.”

(UCML/AULC 2013)

To readers from other parts of Europe, these comments may appear unexceptional, making points that they would take for granted. However, amidst gloom in some of the foreign languages professions in UK HE, they may stand out for their optimism.

Opportunities and trends

Looking at ways in which language centres can contribute to language learning in HE, a few possible developments can be identified.

Demand

While there appears to be some healthy growth in student numbers on IWLPs, knowing what future demand will be in terms of languages and levels is difficult. The British Academy’s *State of the Nation* report (2013) identifies Turkish, Farsi and Polish as languages responding to “new economic realities”. The more serious question is not so much what the languages of the future will be but how can university departments be organised in order to identify and then respond to demand. Language centres often find it easier to produce a rapid response to new interests, since they simply need to employ a tutor and find a classroom, and any investment is low-risk. They may work with academic departments of languages to provide a principled response and division of labour. For example, some languages and levels (e.g. *ab initio* Spanish) may be easier