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Contents

Artistic expression in modern languages: skills improvement and self-actualisation

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Abstract: About a year ago, I arrived in Edinburgh to work as a French language assistant for nine months. Without any specific training but with a true interest in educational issues, I got the best practice I could ask for: working with small groups of teenagers every week to teach them my native language. Convinced that teaching languages was more effective through cross-curricular activities and collaborative learning, I built up most of my work as an assistant on those two concepts. This is how drama, music, dance, and arts became tools, if not the basis, of most of my projects. It is a blend of feelings and reflections on how artistic expression is a key to the pupils' academic and personal actualisation. This article introduces some of the activities that I employed during my assistantship.

Introduction

A foreign language assistant (henceforth FLA) is a living example of language learning. We leave our home country to go and work abroad for almost a whole school year (nine months). We take this opportunity to improve our language skills while teaching our mother tongue to young people. But it turned out to be much more than that for me: it was an opportunity to develop my very own way of teaching through projects I was allowed to create and lead with pupils from S1 to S6.

Knowing from my own experience that artistic expression can unlock many doors on the way to self-actualisation, and considering the latter as a crucial element in the learning process, I tried to figure out how I could link both to establish a different and efficient way of teaching French.

Starting with a short overview of what is at stake today in teaching and how that influenced the way I conceived my projects, you will then read about effective activities mixing language learning with music and drama, and in the third and last part, the example of participating in the French drama festival *Les Rencontres Théâtrales*.

The age-old educational paradox: what is at stake?

Having spent all my school years in France, it took me a little while to understand the features of the Scottish education system and Curriculum for Excellence. Soon enough though, I realised Scotland faced the same paradox almost every school system has: Assessment practices may sometimes seems at odds with the expressed goal - in the

case of language learning - to become a good (if not a fluent) speaker of another language.

I realised this paradox when I was asked to prepare S4 and S5 pupils for a speaking test. They had learnt off by heart a piece of writing as well as the answers to possible questions, and they had to recite it all as a practice for the official test. Once the main part was checked, I picked a few questions from the list at random. When I asked a Higher French girl *As-tu des frères et soeurs?* (Do you have any brothers or sisters?), she replied: *J'aime partir en vacances avec mes amies* (I enjoy going on holidays with my friends). This inability to respond appropriately and flexibly indicated that the pupil was not yet ready for the exam, but it would also be difficult for her to take part in a conversation with French people.

Artistic expression seemed to me a possible way of overcoming this paradox. It would help learners gain confidence and spontaneity when speaking, and develop many other useful language skills for the exams and for real life as well. Here are a few examples of activities.

Classroom/period format artistic activities to improve language skills
Language is music: melody and rhythm, pronunciation and word stress

In my view, every language is like music, composed of a melody - pronunciation and intonations - and a rhythm – word and sentence stress. Therefore, singing turns out to be a very helpful medium to teach languages. Using the melody of *Bella Mama* and *Wade in the water*, I made up two short songs in French with harmonies to focus on the "_oi_" syllable, pronounced [wa] and often difficult to assimilate by English speakers. As a tongue-twister, the sentences repeat the same or almost the same sound through words with different spellings:

Emmène-moi là-bas.

Ecoute la voix.

Quand les gens autour de toi ne voient pas.

When working with higher level groups, it is possible to insist on other syllables with common sounds such as *"_an_"/"_em_"/"_en_",* mute endings or tricky combinations like *"_qu_"* pronounced [k]. When the pupils sing while looking at the lyrics, they memorise the spelling as well as the pronunciation of the words, and since the sentences are short and repeated, it enters the long-term memory. Results of such an activity are easy to observe: when reading an unknown text afterwards, the pupils made no pronunciation mistakes of the sounds as practised in the song[1].

Rhythm can be practised at any time to emphasise intonation and word stress. French has an easy stress pattern to learn because it usually falls on the last syllable of a word.

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[1] Lyrics and recordings of the songs are available on demand at annelise.becavin@gmail.com

Therefore, when my pupils mispronounced a word in French, I asked them to repeat the word and stamp their feet when pronouncing the syllable which had to be stressed. Extended to a sentence, it becomes a rhythm exercise which helps the pupils memorise how to stress words and sentences at once. Like the song, the rhythm is internalised and eventually becomes out natural when speaking in French.

Learning through music offers a more intuitive, instinctive approach to a foreign language. Not only does it help with pronunciation and intonation, it also develops listening skills. It is much easier to understand native speakers when you know their use of word and sentence stress because the key words become clearer, and thanks to music the ear is trained to spot the differences of tones, essential to discriminate a question from an interjection for instance. On a more personal level, it definitely increases self-confidence. When I suggested the choir activity to Intermediate 2 and Higher pupils, most of them were very enthusiastic, although some were too shy to feel comfortable singing at first. So it became a collaborative learning exercise: to begin with, those who wanted to sing sang, and the others listened to their friends, corrected pronunciation mistakes and gave advice on how to make the song sound nicer. Eventually, however, the group dynamics worked in such a way that everyone joined in and ended up performing in French in front of the departmental staff.

Language is drama: staging and interpreting, gestures and intonations

Music then can help a good deal in mastering the pronunciation and intonation of a language, but so can drama. Just think of all the diction work an actor has to do so s/he can be understood by anyone under any circumstance - on stage, in a noisy hall, shouting, whispering... Tongue-twisters have become very popular in modern languages classrooms, but there are of course many more possibilities.

I found the following activity with pupils from Intermediate 1 to Higher French both fun and effective: Select a number of short texts in the foreign language that belong to different registers: a sketch, a poem, a political speech, a letter… Then imagine characters the pupils could imitate when reading those texts; an old woman for example, a statesman, a very sad person or someone losing their temper. In the classroom, ask each pupil to pick up a text and a character at random, give them about fifteen minutes to familiarise themselves with the text and find out how to read it (or should I say "act" it) and let them read it out loud in front of the class. No worries for shy pupils: everyone is free to stand up, go in front of the class or stay at their desks to read the text. Since they focus on their characters, they take their time to read the text clearly and work on pronunciation without even being aware of it.

Another form of drama is improvisation. In the ball game for instance, the pupils stand up and form a circle along with the FLA or the teacher. The latter throws an invisible ball to one of the pupils, and gives it a name (e.g. a colour, family member, or a word from any vocabulary list the pupils have to learn). The pupil pretends to catch the ball and throws it to someone else repeating the word, and so on. If things are going well, other balls with different names can be added to increase the teenagers' concentration.

This sort of improvisation also seemed to enhance spontaneity with those of my learners who were moving towards Higher and Advanced Higher levels. A good starter activity was story-telling. One pupil has to start a story he/she makes up with one sentence only. Then, someone else adds another sentence to continue the story, and the activity is declared over when everyone has given at least one sentence and a proper ending to the story has been found.

All the possibilities given by drama enabled me to bring my pupils closer to the real language experience where conversations can come up at any time, with anyone, and on any topic. Acting in character facilitates the understanding of the world from different perspectives, develops self-confidence and a capacity of adaptation.

In the next section I give details about a more complex project which again sets artistic expression at the centre of language learning.

French and artistic expression in larger projects: *Les Rencontres Théâtrales*

Organising large projects over several weeks or months certainly demands more time and effort from the teacher or the FLA, but they provide excellent learning experiences for the young people in the long run. I found I had to ensure that everyone had a role play and work with other partners for it to be a perfect collaborative learning activity.

First lesson: commitment.

The *Institut Français* (French Institute) in Scotland organises an annual French drama festival called *Les Rencontres Théâtrales,* which is held in a number of locations across the country. In both the secondary schools in which I worked I supported a French drama club with the ultimate aim of taking part in that competition. Below follows a detailed account of the project at School A. It involved volunteers from S1, S2 and S4, who dedicated a lot of time to it at lunch time, and sometimes after school or during exam leave. This project demanded a huge commitment, which was probably the first thing the pupils had to come to terms with.

Drama as defined earlier, has many advantages to offer for language learning, and it is ideal for collaborative work. The fields involved are language (the text itself, its meaning, pronunciation, intonation, and so on), staging - an excellent way of approaching body language and the cultural differences in gestures -, costumes, setting, musical background, lighting and choreography when needed. In each field there are possibilities for a pupil to find his/her place and be a part of the project. The main challenge is time. In my case this was particularly acute as I was aiming for the first available performance date in March. Then, as luck would have it, School A could not take part at that time because the pupils had to prepare their exams. However, we decided instead to postpone our performance to the last available date, which then gave us more time to prepare and perfect our play.

Second lesson: enjoying oneself

The first step was to brainstorm with all the participants in order to find out what they would enjoy doing on stage. We decided to mix two stories in one: the French Revolution and Cinderella. With those two topics we had something of cultural interest as well as something fun and original. So we adapted and mixed together a French sketch by *Les Inconnus* called *"La Révolution"*[2] and the fairy tale. We imagined the main parts of the play, and the pupils themselves asked to include singing and dancing in it, first because it went along with the Disney atmosphere of Cinderella, and also because they liked the idea of a musical where everyone can express themselves.

Third lesson: it is not worth doing (or saying) anything if you do not understand it in the first place.

Once the script was done and coherent, we dedicated a few weeks to read it and make sure everybody understood the whole play. Pupils realised they could not act out the scenes properly without understanding what they were saying – and I was thrilled to find that some of them started to feel the same about their speaking exam essays, which they had previously simply learned off by heart without fully grasping all the intricacies of meaning.

Making the play their own through staging and interpreting

We began our first rehearsals at the beginning of January and worked out how to stage a play. Even though the main stage directions were included in the script, the pupils gave their opinion on cues and positions for each character, and they suggested ideas regarding the interpretation. They were by now really actively taking part in the project, making it their own. I found it really rewarding to reach the point where I could let the pupils take it from there. When they started getting involved in the very organisation of the project, a real team atmosphere appeared. From then on, I began to hear comments such as "I'll take care of the choreography we need for the ball", "I've found a dress for Cinderella", "Could we book the assembly hall to rehearse on an actual stage?", or "I have an idea on what setting we should have at the back".

When you reach the double aim of seeing them grow as pupils and as young men and women

Without even realising it, the pupils took charge of almost everything. Apart from correcting pronunciation and intonation when needed, I felt as if I had reached my true goal: accompanying young men and women through a pupil-centred learning process where they were the actors and actresses of their own personal achievement.

The positive outcomes were numerous. In class, the learners showed a better understanding of the modern language as well as an improved pronunciation. They also felt more confident and so their participation in class lessons increased. They were less nervous about trying to say something, even if they did not possess all the necessary vocabulary. They started using coping strategies to compensate for a word they did not know and even added gestures to make their meaning clear. Being involved in a drama

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[2] *Au secours, tout va mieux.* By Bernard Campan, Didier Bourdon and Pascal Légitimus. (1989) Comical show. Palais Royal Theatre, Paris. Performers: Bernard Campan, Didier Bourdon and Pascal Légitimus.

project also taught pupils a methodology for exam preparation: they felt the need to understand first, which helped them memorise essays or lessons as a meaningful whole and no longer as a mere series of words or sentences. The risk of 'having a blank' on the day of the exam was reduced because they were able to remember the main ideas and could then try expressing them in different ways.

Last but not least, there was a significant evolution on a personal scale. Each pupil was able to work in a team, contribute to and participate in a project until the end, face difficulties and figure out how to fix any problems as they arose. The shyer pupils gained self-confidence by finding their place in the group and contributing to the project, and also by performing on stage, in front of an audience and judges. The pupils ended up winning the Glasgow competition of *Les Rencontres Théâtrales* last June but that was just the cherry on the cake for they were already very proud of themselves, of all the hard work and effort they had put in over the preceding months.

If we sum all this up, these young people improved their French a great deal (**successful learners**), they found a way to express themselves within a group (**responsible citizens**), to take charge of an entire project (**effective contributors**) and be happy with who they are and what they do (**confident individuals**). They developed skills that will serve them for their exams, but also for future life. And it all started with someone asking one day: "Would you like to learn French through drama?"

Concluding Thoughts

The paradox we face in many educational systems is not impossible to overcome. The more we promote cross-curricular and collaborative learning, the closer we will get to what is awaiting our pupils in the future. And the more we promote artistic expression, the more we help our young people to know who they are and find their place in society. Although the activities described in this article clearly do not provide the answers to *all* the issues teachers have to tackle today they have certainly proved to be effective for my learners.

If there was something to remember from all this, it would be that happiness and enjoyment is the road to success. Happy pupils are good learners. And it goes for teachers too! Most of the time, happiness makes people gather to be successful together. My projects worked because they were based on and emerged from group dynamics. I owe a lot to everyone I have met and worked with during my assistantship for their invaluable support. I owe my pupils too for teaching me about myself and help me know who I am today. We are all a teacher to someone on the road to happiness.

Teaching and learning Mandarin tones in an English secondary school

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Abstract: This study investigates the tonal production of five Anglophone young beginner learners of Mandarin Chinese and their ability to notice and self-correct their tonal errors during and after speech production. Set within the context of learning Chinese at a comprehensive secondary school in the north of England and adopting a case study research design, the aim of the study was to identify major barriers impeding successful tonal acquisition and to propose appropriate pedagogical interventions. The largest obstacle hindering tonal acquisition appeared to be due to participants' inherent unfamiliarity with tones, as evidenced by their general inability to notice or correct their tonal errors during a stimulated recall interview. A combination of more explicit instruction which focussed on providing learners with a deeper understanding of the formal tonal system, with the more implicit teaching methods currently employed, was proposed as a suitable pedagogical strategy.

Introduction

As a teacher of Mandarin Chinese at a comprehensive secondary school in the North of England, it has been worrying to observe the relative stagnation in the numbers of British schools teaching Mandarin in the last few years. In a recent YouGov poll of UK teachers commissioned by the British Council and HSBC, only three per cent of primary and nine per cent of secondary teachers said their schools offer Mandarin lessons. Two per cent said their schools no longer teach Mandarin, with only one per cent planning to start (British Council, 2013). A sobering warning comes from Australia where despite twenty years' experience of the provision of the teaching of Mandarin at school level there is still a 94% attrition rate among classroom learners before they reach the final year of secondary school (Orton, 2008: 5). One of Orton's key recommendations for remedying this problem is for 'concerted, sound and innovative development in pedagogy for Chinese and in education of teachers of Chinese' (ibid. 6). Fired up by Orton's 'call to arms', the main aim of this research project is to help make a contribution, albeit a modest one, towards creating a specific 'Chinese pedagogy'. The perspective that underlies my study is that before we can make authoritative pedagogical recommendations about how to teach Mandarin to Anglophone teenagers, far more understanding is needed of how such students learn Mandarin. Although Mandarin has a number of intrinsic linguistic challenges for Anglophone students in particular, including reading and writing characters and the

complex system of particles (Orton, 2008: 30-2), the focus here is exclusively on the teaching and learning of Mandarin tones.

The tonal system of Mandarin Chinese

It is widely accepted that (at syllable level) there are four basic tones in Mandarin (as well as a short and weak neutral tone which will not be discussed in this study). The most commonly used system for describing Mandarin tones is in terms of the five pitch levels. Chao (1968) proposes dividing the range of a speaker's voice into four equal levels, marked by five points, 1 low, 2 half-low, 3 middle, 4 half-high, and 5 high [so that] practically any tone occurring in any of the Chinese dialects can be represented unambiguously by noting the beginning and ending points, and in the case of a circumflex tone, also the turning point (ibid. 25).

Table 1: The four basic tones in Mandarin Chinese (Adapted from Chao, 1968: 25)

Tone	Description	Pitch
1st	High-level	55
2nd	High-rising	35
3rd	Low-dipping	214
4th	High-falling	51

Like other pieces of research mentioned in this article, my study also leans heavily on Chao's conceptualisation of Mandarin tones. Indeed, an adapted form of Chao's framework is set out in the textbook my students have been following (Zhu & Bin, 2010: 5). Nevertheless, I agree with Duanmu (2007) that Chao's system is 'intrinsically vague' (ibid: 226) and while relatively user-friendly it does not always 'translate readily into phonological features of the present day' (ibid. 228).

Why are Mandarin tones difficult for Anglophone learners?

Although there is agreement in the literature that Anglophone learners experience difficulty acquiring Mandarin tones (e.g. White, 1981; Shen, 1989; Chen, 1997; Winke, 2007; Zhang, 2010), there is a lack of consensus on the origins of these problems. White (1981) claimed that tonal errors could be 'partially traced to speaker transfer of English intonation patterns onto Mandarin sentences' (ibid: 27) whereas Shen (1989) highlighted negative interference from L1 English speakers' lower pitch range compared to L1 Mandarin speakers. More recently, it has been suggested that a major source of difficulty stems from English speakers' lack of familiarity with tones *per se* (Winke, 2007). Zhang (2010), conversely, argued that the tonal productions made by English speakers are constrained by at least two universal phonological phenomena, referred to as the Tonal Markedness Scale (TMS) and the Obligatory Contour Principle (OCP).[4]

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[4] See also: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obligatory_Contour_Principle

TMS 'can be read as rising tones are more difficult to produce than falling tones, which are more difficult than level tones' (Zhang, 2010: 43). In the context of Mandarin Chinese this translates as 'level' Tone 1 being the easiest to acquire, followed by 'falling' Tone 4. 'Rising' Tone 2 and 'dipping' Tone 3 are the most problematic tones. According to OCP 'adjacent identical elements are prohibited' (ibid: 43). While this principle is observed for Tone 3 in the Mandarin Chinese tonal sound system (i.e. if there are two consecutive Tone 3 syllables, the first one changes to Tone 2), there are also a number of other identical tonal combinations which Zhang found were particularly problematic for English-speaking undergraduate students in her examination of their disyllabic tonal combinations (ibid: 53).

Presentation of the Research Questions

In my study, I aimed to answer the following research questions in relation to five students from my own Year 10 class[5] who began learning Mandarin *ab initio* in September 2012 at a suburban comprehensive school in the north of England:

1. Which tones, if any, are the most problematic for beginning Year 10 British school learners of Mandarin to produce?

2. Can learners' tonal errors be attributed to two universal phonological principles, the Tonal Markedness Scale and the Obligatory Contour Principle?

3. To what extent are learners able to notice and correct their tonal errors both during speech production and after the event?

The common theme linking these questions is an attempt to better understand some of the major factors affecting the production of Mandarin tones by Anglophone learners and in particular young beginner learners in a secondary school with the aim of drawing up some recommendations for the teaching of Mandarin tones to Anglophone beginner learners.

Procedure

Five learners were invited to participate in two oral proficiency tasks at the end of February 2013 (after participants had been studying Mandarin for six months). The first oral proficiency task took the form of a role play in which I played the part of a Chinese person meeting the participant for the first time, similar to one developed by Winke (2007: 30). The role play covered areas of language already learnt in class (e.g. hobbies, food and drink) and participants were expected to respond spontaneously to questions without any recourse to notes. The role play lasted around 90 seconds. The second task was a pre-prepared speech in which the learner spoke for up to one and a half minutes on a topic of his/her choice (e.g. family members), also without notes. By collecting performance data from these two different tasks, I was able to acknowledge the inherent variability of learner language and look for 'points of convergence' as evidence of what learners knew (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005: 7), as well as consider whether learners' tonal performance was affected by the nature of the task. Participants had

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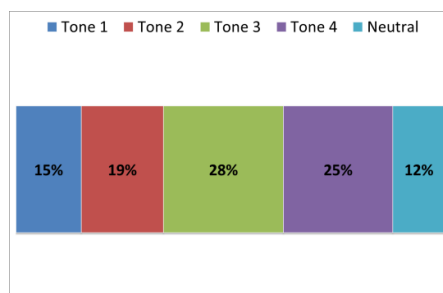[5] Equivalent to S3 in Scotland (ages 14-15 at end of school year)

been informed before the tasks that their pronunciation, but not specifically their tonal performance, was being investigated (Zhang, 2010: 47).

Stimulated recall interviews were also carried out in order to investigate the extent to which learners were able to notice and correct their tonal errors. Each participant was presented with ten audio extracts from their oral proficiency tasks. Each extract contained a meaningful Chinese utterance between two and six syllables long. The fact that the audio extracts were of different lengths was regrettable but this was in order to present participants with meaningful utterances rather than shorter extracts taken completely out of context. Five of the extracts were independently judged by at least two L1 Chinese raters to contain at least one major tonal error while the other five extracts were judged by at least two L1 Chinese raters to be acceptable and containing no significant tonal error. Participants were also presented with a written transcript of each extract in Chinese characters to increase the strength of the stimulus (Gass & Mackey, 2000: 54) and after listening to the audio extract were asked to judge the acceptability of their utterances in terms of tonal production. They were told before the interview that five of the extracts had been judged as correct and five contained at least one tonal error. At the end of the interview, in order to make the stimulated recall experience as useful as possible for the learners, I went through each audio extract with each participant and pointed out any discrepancies between their perceptions and their actual tonal performance.

Analyses and Results

The corpus of speech produced by the five participants totalled 855 characters with a range of tones as set out in Figure 1.
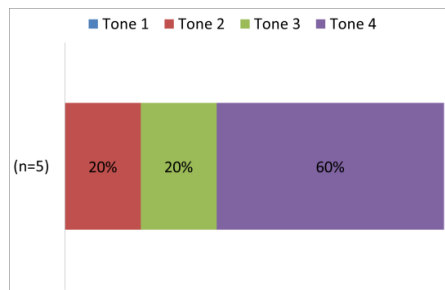
Figure 1: Distribution of tones in corpus of speech (855 characters)

Each character was coded independently by the three L1 Chinese raters as acceptable or unacceptable. Following Chao's (1968) system of tone values, the two main parameters of judgement used were tonal register denoting pitch height and tonal contour denoting pitch movement (Zhang, 2010: 47). Raters were informed not to be overly strict and only highlight tonal errors which led to 'a breakdown of intelligibility' (Collins & Mees, 2008: 208). Given the subjective nature of the coding, it was essential to examine the levels of agreement between the three raters. In order to increase the reliability of the study, only tones coded as acceptable by all three raters were used in the following analyses to answer the first two research questions. Regrettably, I had to use some audio extracts for the stimulated recall interviews in which only two of the three raters

were in agreement. Based solely on the percentage distribution of acceptable tones across both oral proficiency tasks, the five participants provide a range of responses to my first research question, highlighted in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Which tone(s) are the most difficult to produce (n=5)?

Essentially, the answer can be summed up with 'anything but Tone 1' although it is noteworthy that three of the five participants found Tone 4 to be the most problematic tone, possibly as a result of the narrower pitch range of L1 English learners (Shen, 1989; Xing, 2006) or as a result of negative transfer of English prosodic features (stress and intonation patterns, Chen, 1997). Also, three of the participants actually produced more accurate tones in the role play rather than the pre-prepared speech. These results may suggest that 'distance to a native speaker's model' (or at least to a competent L2 speaker) affects tone accuracy (Nguyen & Macken, 2008: 56) more than the nature of the task. However, it is important to remember that the role play may not have been truly spontaneous as it contained many pre-fabricated chunks and some overlapping of content with the speech. Moreover, I also have my doubts about the extent to which all the participants had prepared their speech in advance. Perhaps the most important finding is simply the low overall accuracy rates of participants' tonal productions with only one participant scoring over 50 per cent, suggesting that at the early stages of learning 'it is the whole skill of using tones in general that causes problems' (Tsai, 2012: 48), rather than one or two specific tones.

In the second research question, I considered whether TMS and OCP could help explain participants' tonal errors with the results somewhat inconclusive. Certainly, for four of the five participants, 'flat' Tone 1 is by far the easiest and requires the least effort to produce, as predicted by TMS. Yet surprisingly, only two participants experienced the most problems with 'rising' Tone 2 and 'dipping' Tone 3. However, the error rates of Tones 2, 3 and 4 are generally fairly similar. In other words, some participants may simply be further along the development sequence for 'downward' Tone 4 and consequently making more errors. While such an argument may seem somewhat tenuous and counter-intuitive, it cannot be dismissed until substantial longitudinal data is collected, tracking the same group of participants over a longer period of time. With regard to OCP, it appears that all participants tended to struggle with identical Tone 2 and Tone 4 combinations, although much less so, if at all, with identical Tone 1 tonal combinations. The evidence from the participants' productions of Tone 2 Tone 3 combinations is more convincing with all participants appearing to have difficulties.

Whether this is a definite consequence of the combined effects of TMS and OCP is less certain although it certainly seems a plausible explanation.

Arguably the most conclusive data came in response to the third research question, which focusses on participants' ability to notice and correct their tonal errors. Remarkably, none of the participants provided any examples of successful tonal repair during the oral proficiency tasks and only one participant attempted a tonal repair. This is contrary to Winke (2007:38) who found that the majority of the participants in her study (N=32, 62%) 'repaired or attempted to repair at least one of their tonal errors.' The results of the stimulated recall interviews, with scores between 20 and 40 per cent, also suggest that all participants in my study have problems processing their own tonal productions. However, I should add that some of the audio extracts were less than clear-cut in terms of the acceptability of participants' tonal productions.

Pedagogical Implications

I would like to start this section, in which I endeavour to draw some pedagogical implications from my research findings, with some important caveats. As Ellis (2012) notes of language teaching research in general, its value 'lies in its ability to identify problems that otherwise might go unnoticed and, sometimes, to provide evidence as to how these problems might be solved in specific teaching contexts' (ibid: 4). The 'problem' that I have been trying to address is the difficulty my students have in producing Mandarin tones. I have gone about tackling this issue by focussing on participants' tonal production and by examining their ability to notice and self-correct their own tonal errors. Unsurprisingly, there appear to be wide levels of diversity between all five learners, which highlight the need for not only more data from more participants, but also more data from each participant, including longitudinal data, so that the trends discussed in the previous section can be confirmed or modified (Nguyen and Macken, 2008: 74). Moreover, I appreciate that I have not considered a number of potentially very important factors affecting participants' tonal production, including the position of a tone in a clause, and the possible effects of syllable structure and voice (ibid: 56). It has also been beyond the scope of this research project to investigate the complicated relationship between tonal perception and production (Ke, 2012: 79). Nevertheless, my aim has not been to be comprehensive, but to 'point out possibilities it might be profitable to explore' (Widdowson, 2003: 15, as cited in Ellis, 2012: 4). What follows, therefore, is an attempt at interpreting the findings of the data and thereby providing a plausible and convincing response to the challenge of teaching Mandarin tones to a group of Year 10 beginners in an English secondary school. While the pedagogical suggestions I make are framed with reference to my own students, in line with the action research context of this study, my aim is that they will also be useful for wider application within the context of the teaching of Mandarin as a foreign language to young beginners. It is my hope that this discussion, which is primarily linked to increasing participants' declarative knowledge (Johnson 1996), will resonate with other Mandarin teachers in Anglophone settings or at least lead to fruitful dialogue.

DECPRO and PRODEC

Johnson (1996) argues that there are two equally valid routes towards language mastery, or in this case, successful tonal acquisition, which he terms as 'DECPRO' and 'PRODEC' (Johnson, 1996: 100-1). DECPRO involves moving from initial declarative knowledge towards more procedurally oriented knowledge and is described by Johnson as 'a learning strategy' (ibid. 100). PRODEC, which relies more on 'acquisition-based approaches to teaching' (ibid. 100), accounts for 'a means of processing whereby procedural precedes declarative [knowledge]' (ibid. 100). Johnson readily admits that in reality, 'the language learner does not exclusively follow either one or the other of these sequences, but mixes the two' (ibid. 101). Nevertheless, he argues that:

> *The main value of conceptualizing language learning and teaching in terms of DEC and PRO is that it identifies declarativization and proceduralization as central to both processes, and hence provides a framework within which to locate the various tasks and problems a learner is likely to meet* (ibid. 101).

In the figures below, which are adapted from Johnson (ibid. 102-3), I reflect on the implications of the 'DECPRO' and 'PRODEC' models for the teaching of Mandarin tone to L1 Anglophone learners.

Figure 3: DECPRO model (adapted from Johnson 1996: 102)

Figure 4: PRODEC model (adapted from Johnson 1996: 103)

All the participants in this study have arguably followed a far more 'procedural' route towards tonal acquisition thus far with the emphasis in the classroom, in line with mainstream communicative language teaching approaches, on providing 'activities and language samples to help stimulate the acquisition processes' (Klapper, 2003: 33). In many ways, this approach has been broadly successful. Levels of motivation amongst this group of learners are generally very high, possibly as a result of frequent 'learner-centred' activities, and the fact that all five participants, after only six months' Mandarin learning, easily coped with the demands of the oral proficiency tasks by being able to

respond to the questions in the role play and give a 90 second speech is testament to the progress they have made. Nevertheless, a close analysis of their tonal performance revealed high levels of a kind of default 'flat' Tone 1 setting. Moreover, when participants' tonal productions were judged to be acceptable, this was often due to a total reliance on unanalysed pre-fabricated chunks with little or no understanding of how the tonal system works. What follows, therefore, are a few practical teaching suggestions aimed at redressing the balance. This certainly does not mean that the more learner-centred activities should be dropped as it is crucial that participants' procedural knowledge of tone is maintained and encouraged. Indeed, Myles *et al* (1998) demonstrate convincingly that L2 French beginners use pre-fabricated chunks extensively as a normal and essential part of the process of language acquisition. However, in view of participants' difficulties in self-correcting their tonal errors, coupled with the risk of faulty proceduralised forms becoming 'highly automised and impermeable to change' (Johnson, 1996: 99), I think that it is also time to add some more declarative tonal knowledge to the learning mix.

Promoting declarative knowledge of tone

One practical way of highlighting tone is the use of gestures and other body movements (Tsai, 2012) as set out in Table 3 below. Tsai points out that hand signals mean that students can be corrected without interruption although she acknowledges that older students may feel self-conscious making some of the actions (Tsai, 2012: 46). Moreover, the gestures may even become fully proceduralised and difficult to eradicate in the future (ibid. 46).

Table 2: The use of gestures and body movements to promote awareness of tone (Adapted from Tsai, 2012: 46)

Tone 1	Flat hand moved across body
Tone 2	Raise eyebrow
Tone 3	Drop and raise chin
Tone 4	Stamp your feet

Tsai also advises using different colours to highlight tones which can then be 'extended to flashcards with characters at later stages of learning' (ibid. 46). In light of participants' uncertainty remembering which tone a character should carry, this seems to be a useful suggestion. I will also endeavour to insist that students mark the tone of the character when carrying out weekly vocabulary tests, similar to some French and German teachers insisting on the correct gender of the noun (M. James, personal communication, June 6, 2013). As Orton (2008:31) notes, it is crucial to encourage learners to accept 'the need to attend to tone' as well as to help them realise 'what tone means for communication'. Rather than using numbers to describe the tones, I will invite students to come up with their own descriptions such as 'flat', 'up', 'bouncy' and 'down' which may be more meaningful and memorable. Ultimately, however, learners need to move away from separating tone from phonemes, i.e. they would ask 'is this *má* or *mà*' rather than 'what tone is ma?' (ibid: 31).

Xing (2006) raises the difficult issue about what to do when faced with students' pronunciation errors in the classroom. An overly zealous approach, while raising learners' awareness of tones, may unwittingly destroy their confidence. However, by not correcting learners' tonal errors, there is a very real risk that they will become fossilized in the learners' interlanguage grammars. Ultimately, each teacher needs to know the personality traits of their own students. Perhaps a more productive approach is to generally ignore tonal errors in the classroom, unobtrusive gestures notwithstanding, and to carry out frequent 'tonal awareness tasks' similar to the activity used in the stimulated recall interview. Participants certainly seemed to find this task beneficial for their learning although it does require a lot of time to prepare on the part of the teacher. I am also keen to involve learners in peer assessment activities in which they carry out their own tonal noticing/correction exercises in small groups. This could easily be done in a computer suite using USB microphones or in more traditional classroom settings with digital voice recorders, although such activities will obviously need to be monitored carefully, possibly utilizing L1 Chinese assistants. Following Zhang (2010), identical tonal combinations and Tone 2 Tone 3 combinations could also be emphasised and subsequently practiced for a couple of minutes at the start of lessons. While such controlled teacher-led practice could be seen as promoting more procedural knowledge (Johnson, 1996: 101), I intend using this activity primarily to raise metalinguistic awareness of both tone and also more universal phonological principles by explicitly warning my students of the possibility of OCP and TMS affecting our tonal production.

Towards the creation of a Chinese as a foreign language pedagogy

Giving learners an understanding of how the Chinese tonal system works is arguably at the heart of creating a methodology for teaching Chinese as a foreign language. The teacher's role is crucial. Over-emphasizing tones for Anglophone beginners, or in Johnson's terms, 'providing too much DEC and not enough PRO', could easily backfire and be extremely demotivating for learners, playing into the 'Chinese is impossible' discourse, frequently observed in the mainstream Western media (Duff et. al., 2013: 3). Yet the dangers of the alternative approach of 'too much PRO and not enough DEC' are arguably evidenced by the interlanguage systems of the five participants in this study and run the risk that learners will either ignore tones altogether, or have no real understanding of how the tonal system works, or even find their faulty tones fossilizing into a kind of pidgin language (Johnson, 1996: 99). In this study, I have argued that Johnson's (1996) conceptualization of language learning and teaching in terms of PRODEC and DECPRO can help negotiate the tightrope of Mandarin tonal acquisition. Importantly, it also appeals to my sense of 'plausibility' as a teacher (Prabhu, 1987 as cited in Johnson, 2008: 212). Yet as Mitchell and Myles (2004: 261) point out, 'there can be no 'one best method', however much research evidence supports it, which applies at all times and in all situations, with every type of learner'. My aim here is consequently more to start a conversation with other Mandarin teachers in Anglophone secondary school settings on our journey towards the creation of a Chinese as a foreign language pedagogy.

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Implementing action research in the modern language classroom

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Abstract: In this article, we report on an action research project we facilitated with three modern language teachers working in secondary schools in the West Midlands and Yorkshire. Over a period of approximately nine months we worked collaboratively with the teachers to facilitate action research processes in their classrooms, where they were teaching either French or Spanish. We outline the structure we put in place to sustain the project and explain what conducting classroom-based action research involves. We then briefly describe the research projects carried out by the teachers. We conclude by reflecting on some of the impacts of action research on the teachers' practice and on our own thinking as teacher educators.

Keywords: action research, teachers as researchers, classroom practice, reflection on teaching and learning

Introduction

Over the last three years, we have been fortunate to collaborate with modern language (ML) teachers working in secondary schools in the West Midlands and Yorkshire. Together, we have been using action research (AR) as a way of exploring teaching issues identified by the teachers as important challenges in their classrooms. Our first venture into AR in the ML classroom came about through cooperation with Links into Languages (now known as Network for Languages, a national network of which Aston University is a regional centre)[6]. On the basis of this experience, we applied for further funding from the British Academy to extend the research to other teachers. As a result, we have been able to follow up teachers' explorations in their classrooms in more detail and have been able to identify some of the key ways that AR has impacted on their professional lives. In this article, we will first explain what the workshops at Aston University entailed, we will then outline briefly the key processes of AR, followed by a description of the research conducted by the teachers. Finally, we will suggest what impact the experience has had on the professional development of the teachers involved.

The workshops

The British Academy study involved us in working with three ML teachers from different secondary schools in the UK to facilitate their classroom action research. We also documented our interactions as a group and our responses to the AR collaboration. The teachers, who each participated in the research voluntarily with a view to enhancing

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[6] http://networkforlanguages.org.uk/ (NB: This link may not work in all browsers).

their practices within their classroom contexts, attended three workshops at Aston University.

In the first workshop, in November 2012, the teachers were introduced to principles of action research (outlined and explained below), a form of research which enables teachers to engage in exploring aspects of teaching and learning issues that are important to them in their daily work. In the workshop, each teacher identified an area of particular relevance to their own teaching context that they wanted to explore and investigate in their classroom. When they came to the second workshop in March 2013, they had already put into practice some of their action plans and had the opportunity to report back on their experiences. The facilitation of the workshop involved reflection and was built around reflecting and planning for further action, using concepts discussed in Burns (2010:141-168).

The teachers reported on the teaching strategies they had implemented, the procedure for each action that they had taken, the rationale behind each action, and the learning they had experienced in their first cycle of action research. There was specific emphasis on data collection techniques, insights into the data that were collected, discussion of some initial findings, potential challenges that each teacher faced in their teaching contexts, and a plan of further actions for the second cycle of action research. When the third workshop was held in June 2013, the teachers were ready to report on their action research in more detail, outlining the actions they had taken at different stages and the changes they were able to bring about within their teaching context. The likely impact of the projects on the pupils' learning and the effect the projects had generated in discussions in staffroom settings were also discussed.
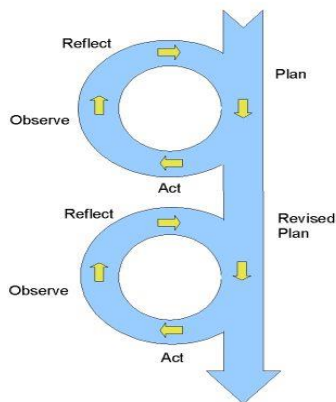
Below we explain the processes involved in AR and then report on the outcomes of each project, which the teachers themselves had the opportunity to share in a public event held at Aston University on 9th July 2013.

Action research: What is it?

AR is an approach to investigating issues in our own social and professional contexts and for most teachers this means their classroom or school. It usually involves addressing a dilemma, challenge or curiosity about what is happening in our classrooms that we might want to understand more deeply. It can also mean introducing changes to the way we currently approach our teaching. In the process the action researcher systematically collects information (or data) about the changes that are put in place, so that there is evidence on which to base the discoveries and reflections that emerge.

The process begins by identifying what it is we want to focus on and then carrying out a cycle of different, but interactive, steps to take our ideas further. The model of AR presented by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) (Figure 1), is one of the most widely used as a way of capturing the process, and we used this as a basis for our work in this project.

Figure 5: The cyclical process of action research

Kemmis and McTaggart refer to the steps in this model as the four key 'moments' of AR. Although they may appear to occur in a fixed order, in practice these steps represent a dynamic process through a spiral of activities that can be implemented flexibly as the research progresses.

Plan: The planning stage involves refining your ideas about what to investigate in your classroom, and if possible developing some questions you would like to answer. Then, it is possible to develop teaching strategies or activities to try out.

Act: This stage involves acting on your plans and experimenting with new approaches or activities.

Observe: In this stage, you collect information, or data, on what is happening as a result of implementing your plans. We provide some ideas for collecting data in the discussion below.

Reflect: This part of the process occurs from the time the research begins as you reflect more systematically than usual on what effect your research is having. However, it is also important to identify the overall messages coming from the research, which help you to articulate your personal teaching philosophies or theories about practice.

Frequently, teacher researchers find that they are only just beginning to understand the issues they are investigating after the first AR cycle. As Figure 1 suggests, AR is an emerging process and it is often valuable to continue in a new or different direction, using what you have already discovered to inform the next stage of your explorations.

There are many ways to collect data about what happens as a result of the plans that are put into action. For busy teachers, many of the tools used can double as classroom activities. For example, teachers and students can draw on surveys, interviews, examples of student writing, classroom materials, reflective diaries or journals, self or peer feedback or evaluation, discussions, photographs, maps or diagrams (see Burns, 2010 for ideas about how to use these tools). Teachers can also involve their students

as co-investigators in the research, which often increases their motivation to participate more effectively in classroom activities.

One of the most important aspects of AR is the reflection on practice, which not only occurs from the time the research begins, but is also a way of identifying towards the end of the process how the research has (re)shaped the way teaching and learning take place. Reflection involves analysing the data that you have collected, but also considering what the analysis tells you about your classroom, your practice and your students' learning. New insights can continue to be drawn out of the cycles of AR until the process reaches what you consider to be a logical conclusion.

The Teachers' research

The three teachers, who worked with us during the period November 2012 to July, 2013 were Liz Black, from Stokesley School in Yorkshire, and - from the West Midlands - Olga Cordero-Nieto, from Cardinal Newman Catholic School, Coventry and Nofer Fari, from Smith's Wood Sports College, Birmingham[7]. We briefly describe their research and the key insights they gained.

Liz, Stokesley School

Liz worked with Year 7[8] students, who were involved in Challenge 7 lessons incorporating Drama, IT, Geography, RE and MFL. She wanted to improve students' English oracy and literacy and to see whether learning a foreign language, French, also had an impact on students' understanding of dialect, grammar and use of register. Using 'dilemma-led learning' and Storyline approaches, she initiated a virtual campervan journey through Britain, during which the students had to create their van and deal with various unexpected situations. One involved being snowed in at a Scottish campsite, where they met a lost French lorry driver, French families and a Cuban dance troupe. The students had to communicate to give directions, hold conversations, and create a menu for a French recipe. Not only did the students have to collaborate to use their problem-solving skills, but they also had to extend their understanding and use of grammar and vocabulary in both English and French.

At the end of Liz's project, 80% of the 84 students involved in Challenge 7 indicated, through a survey, that they felt more confident about grammar, which was also assisting them in learning French. Their parents were invited to an information evening that explained the project and several subsequently completed surveys and interviews. One parent commented: "His command of language has improved a great deal and Challenge 7 has boosted his confidence".

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[7] The teachers' names have been used here with their permission.

[8] Equivalent to S1 in Scotland

Nofer, Smith's Wood Sports College

Nofer's school is situated in a location ranked in the top 5% of the most deprived areas nationally. His Year 10[9] French class were a top set of 13 female and 11 male students, 50% of whom had been identified as Gifted and Talented. He wanted to improve their motivation and maximise their achievement in GCSE French. He focused on experimenting with various techniques and activities to meet the students' aspirations to succeed, which he had fostered continuously over the three years he had taught them. He developed challenging and thought-provoking homework assignments, involved the students more in leading the lessons, offered after-school 'Question and Catch-up' sessions, increased formative assessment for learning by giving detailed feedback, and created language "checklists' that transformed the course criteria into the grammar and discourse points to be achieved. Each time he introduced one of these new practices, he discussed them with the students and they reflected on whether and how the activities had worked, after which he adjusted them again as necessary. The students reported that they felt able to take more control of their own learning, as they had clearer understanding of the levels to be achieved for high results. By introducing the criteria to be achieved step by step, Nofer observed that their confidence developed as shown by their greater willingness to participate in class and their higher scores on class tasks.

Olga, Cardinal Newman Catholic School

Olga's Year 10 (S4) Spanish GCSE class was composed of 20 students. She was concerned about their lack of motivation and attention in class. They were often distracted and appeared uninterested in the activities she presented. Although her students responded quite well to 'fun' lessons involving games, she was not convinced that learning was occurring at a deep level. She changed her teaching approach to include tasks that involved more thinking and reflecting skills and collaborative work and asked her students to give their opinions about these tasks, not only about their enjoyment of them but also about what they had learned. To Olga's surprise, the students took their feedback very seriously and she learned that they especially enjoyed team tasks where one student was given the responsibility to be the 'captain', leading and instructing the group. She found from these class discussions and her own observations that the students' level of motivation and achievement increased noticeably. During our visit to Olga's class we observed firsthand the pupils' enthusiasm for the new activities and how they competed to be team captains. Olga also reported that they started to complete the tasks much more quickly than previously, and achieved higher scores.

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[9] Equivalent to S4 in Scotland

The impact of the action research

The action research projects carried out by Liz, Nofer and Olga had a noticeable impact in their teaching contexts and on their own motivation as teachers. They each acknowledged the value of carrying out AR in their own classrooms. In explaining the outcomes of her research, Liz stated that:

> As a researcher directly involved in the research, I found that I was not so afraid to make changes as I went along and respond to the thoughts of the pupils and adapt my planning. […] as the key aims of action research are to deepen teachers' own understanding of their classroom, I would say that it has been very beneficial to me and I have been doing a lot of thinking about how first and second language acquisition could be merged more effectively. I would certainly recommend this type of research to any teacher who desires to reflect on and improve their own practice.

Nofer summarised the importance of the reflection process he experienced during his project, stating that:

> After each implementation of a new initiative, it was important to reflect on this to assess and track the impact and adjust according. Ultimately, it became clear that in breaking down the journey towards the final goal into manageable and achievable steps, pupils were more able to take control of their learning, which in turn snowballed into building confidence, improving interest, and finally increasing attainment.

Olga, too, stated that she had benefited greatly from having carried out her AR project. During the first workshop, she acknowledged that she "felt demotivated and frustrated" because her pupils "seemed to lack curiosity for learning, autonomy and perseverance". By the end of the project she felt refreshed as a teacher:

> The research has allowed me to get to know my students much better and the most curious thing is that motivation and independent learning have improved in my other groups because I piloted some of the ideas with them too.

Olga also stated that her enthusiasm for AR had only just commenced and that she "could easily continue exploring in my classroom for another two years".

Concluding remarks

We believe we can claim that this action research project has been an engaging and enhancing professional development experience for the teachers. However, it has also affected our own development as advocates of action research and as teacher educators. It has become very clear to us that teacher professional development has the most profound impact when it is closely tied to the specificities of a teacher's own classroom and to the challenges and aspirations that the teacher concerned holds for his or her students. We concur with the view of Freeman and Johnson (1989: 405) that language learning pedagogy needs to be understood, not from the perspective of decontextualised subject-matter knowledge, as it is often presented in teacher preparation programmes or in-service workshops, but "against the backdrop of teachers' professional lives, within the settings where they work, and under the

circumstances of that work". Adopting an action research approach when working with teachers enables teacher educators to appreciate more deeply the nature, realities, challenges and self-perceptions implicated in teachers' work. It is a learning experience as much for the teacher educator as for the teachers they work with. This approach also allows for 'unproductive pedagogies' to be challenged and reshaped through collaborative dialogic work and classroom investigation, which, importantly, is scaffolded by supportive others. Our experiences in this and our previous project have confirmed to us that our own teacher education approaches should continue to be based on the following central principles (drawing on Legutke and Schocker-v Ditfurth, 2009). Teacher education needs to be:

- Inquiry-based: developing a research approach to teacher learning, where the complex dynamics of the classroom can be explored and understood more deeply

- Experiential: negotiating and understanding action-oriented models for language teaching that will enable teachers to sustain exploratory and critical action into the future

- Experimental: developing dynamic responses to classroom interactions and routine practices, in contrast to recipe-type models (e.g. presentation, practice, production) that may be taught in pre-service programmes

- Collaborative: opening up the classroom and its challenges to other colleagues, to encourage a view of teaching that is based on peer-dialogue, sharing of expertise, and continuous learning.

We aim to seek further funding opportunities to continue working with modern language teachers through action research in the future and would encourage readers who are interested to contact us. In the meantime, we hope that this brief account has inspired other teachers and teacher educators to adopt action research into their work.

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Residence Abroad: A modular approach to support students and document their progress

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Abstract: Internationalisation is a key thematic area which the Higher Education Academy in Scotland is seeking to develop. This study contributes to previous research on the benefits of studying abroad by demonstrating how students form graduate attributes whilst abroad and how these developments can be documented in a module set by the home university. The paper shows how this module has the additional benefits of preparing students for their study abroad and supporting their development whilst abroad. The research focusses on contributions made by language students of Edinburgh Napier University during their first three months abroad in 2012 and 2013..

Keywords: Internationalisation, Study Abroad, Year Abroad, Residence Abroad, Graduate Attributes, Student Support

Introduction

Many universities in the UK have recently outlined graduate attributes in an attempt to define general aims of Higher Education. These attributes describe the desired skills and abilities of university graduates beyond the disciplinary knowledge (Bowden et al. 2000, Barrie 2004). This paper aims to show how the year abroad contributes to the development of graduate attributes and how this process can be documented in a module. The study is based on the Edinburgh Napier University module "Studying and Living Abroad" (SLA).

Background

Internationalisation is a key element in current Higher Education policy in Scotland and one of the Thematic Areas in which the Higher Education Academy Scotland is engaging. Internationalisation is working well when considering the number of international students studying in the UK (16% at tertiary level in 2010, OECD 2012); however, the number of UK students studying and working abroad is far smaller. Recent trends, particularly in regard to Scotland, give some hope for optimism as the number of students from Scotland undergoing an Erasmus exchange rose by 9.7% from 2010-11 to 2011-12 (British Council 2013). Actual figures, however, show how this increase must be considered in relative terms: In Scotland 216.332 students were enrolled in Higher Education in 2011-12 (HESA 2013); 1.362 of these took part in an Erasmus exchange (British Council 2013). This is a far cry from the target of 20% outward mobility for members of the EU which was outlined by the EHEA in 2012. The low uptake shows that

further support is needed for students to study abroad and to realise the potential of this opportunity.

In 2012 the British Academy and the University Council for Modern Languages issued a joint statement „Valuing the Year Abroad" in which they called on the UK government to recognise the strategic importance of the Year Abroad „delivering both competitive employability advantages for the students themselves and wider long term benefits for the whole UK economy". Based on a survey of students who had undertaken a year abroad, the statement describes various areas of development which students typically undergo while abroad. These areas include not only linguistic, but also academic, cultural, intercultural, personal, and professional gains.

In a recent contribution to this journal Giraud-Johnstone (2012) reported on a module to critically assess the development of language students working as language assistants abroad. In a qualitative content analysis of students' work during this module and their end-of-year reflections the following topics emerged as recurring themes in which students had undergone development: improved language skills and cultural awareness, positive contributions to self-image and self-belief, and valuable teaching experience. These themes roughly overlap with the above mentioned areas of development outlined by the British Academy's statement paper „Valuing the Year Abroad"(2012).

In line with other universities in the UK, Edinburgh Napier University has composed a „conscious employability model"(2012), which describes desired graduate attributes to „help students identify what makes them unique and stand out from the crowd" (Edinburgh Napier University, Graduate Attributes, 2012). Table 1 shows how these desired graduate attributes correspond to similar areas or themes of development as described by the British Academy and by Giraud-Johnstone (2012) in regard to the year abroad.

Table 3: Thematic overlap between areas of development abroad and desired graduate attributes

British Academy (2012) Areas of development during year abroad	Academic	Cul-tural	Inter-cultural	Linguistic	Personal	Professional
Giraud-Johnstone (2012) Themes of development of language assistants abroad		Cultural awareness		Language Skills	Self-image and self-belief	Teaching Experience
Desired graduate attributes in the „conscious employability model" (Edinburgh Napier University, 2013)	Constructive reflection, self-review, evaluation, goal-setting	Working with others, respect for self and others, challenge taken-for-granted assumptions, recognition of diversity		Communication: oral, written and digital; professional standard of linguists	Proactive, self-reliant, resilient, personal networking	Commitment to continuous „learning to learn"

For language students at Edinburgh Napier University a period of residence abroad is a mandatory part of their programme of study, and students on other courses are also increasingly encouraged to study abroad as part of their university education. This is a crucial stage in a student's academic development and the module "Studying and Living Abroad" (SLA) was developed in order to support language students prior and during their time abroad. As will be argued in this paper the module has the additional benefit of documenting the process of students' development.

On the basis of data drawn from the SLA module this paper will aim to further develop the research carried out by the British Academy (2012) and Giraud-Johnstone (2012) by discussing whether students' developments abroad contribute to the formation of graduate attributes. Additionally, the paper aims to establish how effective the SLA module is as a tool for supporting students and demonstrating the development of graduate attributes.

The findings will contribute to a wider discussion of the benefits of the year abroad and the usefulness of modules from the home university for enhancing the year abroad and documenting students' developments.

Description of the module and methodology

The SLA module was developed and first delivered in 2012. The language team had realised that students were often ill-prepared academically and personally for their stay abroad and this module had the dual aim of preparing students better for their time abroad as well as giving them an opportunity for reflecting on their experiences. Accordingly, the module is delivered in two parts. Part one takes place in the semester prior to students' departure and consists of a series of workshops and tasks designed to prepare students for their time abroad. The workshops include a training session for the electronic portfolio used as a platform for students' contributions, as well as intercultural workshops and practical briefings. Tasks are made up of an essay on culture shock, information research on the student's destination and current affairs reports. Part two takes place during the first 3 months abroad and consists of the final two tasks: Students write a reflective reportage on their personal and academic development and they analyse two current affairs showing how these have developed over time.

Seventeen students took part in the module during the first year of the implementation in 2012-13. Twelve students went abroad for a full year and five for only one semester. The destinations of these students included Belgium, France, Germany and Spain. All students used an electronic portfolio as a platform for their module content and 15 students completed a survey at the end of the year to evaluate the module.

The following analysis is based on the reflective reportage written by the students during the first months of their time abroad in 2012-13. As these reportages were written in the target language translations of the original texts are used. Extracts from the reportage have been chosen through qualitative content analysis. Categories were based on the areas of development described in table 1 (cultural and intercultural were

combined into one category) and extracts were coded according to these categories. The extracts were then analysed for evidence of graduate attributes.

All names and identifying features were changed to avoid recognition of individual students and ethical approval through Edinburgh Napier University was granted for this research. The contributions referred to in this article orginate from students who had given formal consent for their work to be quoted.

Findings

The following section will examine the development of graduate attributes which was demonstrated in the reportage of the SLA module. It should be noted that students were self-reporting and, for this reason, there is no objective evidence of students' developments. It is possible that students, on occasion, wrote what they thought their lecturers were expecting to hear. However, many of the specific graduate attributes examined in this study were not explicitly mentioned to students.

Academic

While studying abroad in a new academic environment attributes such as constructive reflection, self-review, evaluation and goal-setting are of particular relevance. In the reflective reportage students on the SLA module were required to set up an action plan and critically evaluate their learning experience according to this plan.

Students commented on how they felt under pressure in the new learning environment, but managed to overcome this: „I think that I can now deal with a greater workload and I am more organised".

In respect to goal setting one of the students wrote: "In order to improve my French, I have conceived an action plan: in general I try and practise my French as much as possible" and goes on to list the opportunities which she has identified for doing so (daily situations, reading of magazines, encounters with native speakers).

Other students were critical in their self-review: „My language learning didn't always go according to plan. I have only been to the cinema once and this wasn't a German film. I will have to make changes [...]. On the other hand I listen to German radio every morning and I find that I can understand much more than when I first came here." A student based in France expressed disappointment not to have managed to see as many films or read as many books as she had originally planned due to practical constraints but ends her comment on a positive note: "but fortunately I can continue to watch French films and read French books when I am back in Scotland. I would also like to join the French Institute as they lend books and films!"

Students seemed prepared for their need for adaptation and were also aware of subsequent benefits:

"I knew there would be many good and bad surprises when I arrived in this new environment which was so foreign to me and I knew that I would need to get used to that environment."

"[The need to prepare for examinations] helped me to improve my time management and consequently my learning strategies."

These extracts demonstrate how graduate attributes linked to academic development were reported. Students reflected on their learning, often changing their strategies according to the situation and their needs, thus evaluating themselves critically and setting new goals for themselves.

Intercultural

The following graduate attributes are linked to intercultural development: Working with others, respect for self and others, challenging taken-for-granted assumptions, recognising diversity. Unsurprisingly, students made a lot of contributions in this area demonstrating their reflections on cultural differences: "Before I left Scotland and came to Germany I had many expectations about my life there. I think some of these expectations were correct, but I also think that many were completely wrong." At the end of the first semester abroad, another student concludes that "the difficulties experienced [in academic work and daily living] have enabled me to understand better French culture and the way of life." The same student emphasizes her eagerness to return to the institution and meet more challenges in the Spring.

Previous research has warned against the problem that students' stereotypes might even be enhanced when they feel they have personal evidence of a cultural difference (Tusting, 2002). Tusting particularly warns against putting students into a situation where they feel they are being encouraged to stereotype and this might be a problem with tasks where students are specifically asked to describe cultural differences. However, most extracts were balanced or showed how students were reflecting on their own culture as well. An example of this is the following extract where a student elaborates on an aspect of culture which she had initially found irking:

In a conversation [...] I tried to ask why people aren't annoyed with the „queues" in Germany. I was told that it just isn't important as everyone will get on the bus, so it doesn't matter. This was so simple and refreshing to hear. She is right, of course, everyone will get on the bus, so why should it matter whether you are 1.2. or 3. Maybe this works better in Germany because when the bus is full the driver will still let more people board it – in contrast to Great Britain with its „Health and Safety" rules. - [...] it was interesting for me to see this under a new perspective.

A student based in France elaborates on a similar pragmatic issue (annoyance with long queues in supermarkets) and issues of politeness related to time-keeping before moving on to the following reflection, which indicates some distancing from her pre-Erasmus perceptions:

I had been told by my friends and family that a number of French people are rather impolite and rude, especially towards foreign students! I was pleasantly surprised to find out that most people in France are pleasant and have helped me with my French when I get it wrong. However, there are sometimes people who are not friendly, who don't even say 'thank you' or 'please' or who don't even smile.

In the following extract a student demonstrates awareness of the longer-term benefits of her intercultural competencies: "I have met many people of different nationalities. These are useful skills to have when I have to go to job interviews or start a new career. I will be more aware of different cultures and feel I will adapt better to new situations."

Most students reported that they felt well prepared for the cultural differences and experienced less of a culture shock than they had expected. This might well be due to their preparation during the first part of the SLA module. Their contributions demonstrated that they were reflecting on intercultural awareness and recognising diversity without resorting to stereotyping.

Linguistic

Communicating effectively is a desired graduate attribute even in one's native language, and being able to do so in a foreign language is an added advantage to a student's employability as well as their outlook on life. For linguists this ability is a vital part of their education.

While this paper is reporting on a variety of themes, linguistic progress in the target language is still a key motivator for language students to study abroad. It should be noted that oral language gains were mostly self-reported in the reportage and, for this reason, usually not specifically demonstrated (though students had the option to include videos and audios). However, most students wrote their reflections in the target language, thus demonstrating their written level.

Many students commented on the fact that they were feeling more confident when speaking. However, some students were unhappy as they were not speaking the foreign language as much as they had hoped: „It is a disadvantage that the majority of my friends come from Great Britain, Ireland or Australia (and they don't speak German!), so I nearly always speak English in my free time. I hope to find German friends during my second semester. I also hope to find a job which will help financially and linguistically!" The opportunity to reflect on these difficulties during the first semester seems to have been a real incentive for this student to make plans for improvements in the second semester (similar to the above described reflections on the action plans).

The reportage showed that not all students were aware of their language level and the written text sometimes demonstrated a lower level of progress than realised by the students. In these cases, self-awareness of the students was lacking. It should also be mentioned that while most students outline plans for future linguistic improvement there is no evidence whether these plans were subsequently carried out.

However, most students will be expected to have made considerable progress during the full year abroad, enhancing their ability to communicate (though this will vary across the student group).

These language gains all contribute to develop another important graduate attribute - the professional standard of linguists.

Personal

Graduate attributes in regard to personal development can be described as being proactive, self-reliant, resilient, and able to engage in personal networking. In the reportage students reflect on their self-development. Their contributions describe how they have become more self-reliant for instance by learning to budget and understand new concepts, such as local transport. The new situations required students to move outside their comfort zones and overcome barriers, such as self-doubt or shyness. They learnt to persevere and this resulted in considerable gains in confidence: „I was worried about making friends before I came because I am quite shy. However, this was not so difficult. I am now more confident about meeting new people."

Being placed in a different context enabled some students to discover new aspects about themselves, as commented by the following student who studied a trimester in France: "Retrospectively I am pleased to have had the opportunity to live alone for a limited period of time as I know now that I prefer to live with other people."

Enhanced self-knowledge takes many other forms: "I think that I am more proactive than before. I have discovered new things which interest me; for instance, I have tried a Zumba class in French, which was a funny way to learn the language."

However, students were also shown to be struggling with their situation: „I don't really feel integrated in the German society. I don't live with Germans and most of my friends here are international students. I think I ought to join a sports club next semester to meet more Germans. "

This extract demonstrates the student's self-awareness. Once more, the reflection gives the student the opportunity to develop strategies which could improve her situation.

Professional

Arguably, the most valuable graduate attribute is the skill of „learning to learn", which is vital for any professional route. The tasks of the SLA module are intended to encourage self-assessment amongst the students in order to develop "the capacity to be an assessor of learning" (Boud and Falchicov 2006, p402). If students realise that they constantly have to work on their skills and reflect on the strategies they have chosen they will be extremely well equipped for their future life.

The last extract is an example of how one student reflects on the necessity to continue learning: „My foreign language classes are good for the first semester, but if I really want to improve my German I have to challenge myself more all the time. Only then can I say that I have received the best learning experience during my time abroad".

Summary of findings

The above findings show that the SLA module is effective in demonstrating how valuable graduate attributes are being formed. (Clearly, the depth of self-development will vary amongst the student group and the fact that students are self-reporting should be kept in mind). It might well be argued that studying abroad, in itself, would lead to considerable self-development. However, the module gives students the opportunity to become aware of and critically reflect on their development. As the reflective reportage takes place during the first three months of the year abroad, students still have the opportunity to develop strategies where necessary and lecturers gain an insight into the situation of the student. Furthermore, the documentation of experiences will come in useful at a later time when students prepare for interviews or simply remember their time abroad.

Conclusion

This paper has shown how students have self-reported the development of valuable graduate attributes whilst abroad and that the SLA module is an effective instrument for demonstrating these developments. The graduate attributes were formed on academic, intercultural, linguistic, personal, and professional levels. On a practical level the SLA module prepared students for their residence abroad by giving them pre-departure tasks, and it supported their academic progress by encouraging them to compile and reflect on an action plan and by asking them to write part two in the target language.

In order to evaluate the module students were asked to fill in an anonymous survey after they had completed the module and received their marks. In general, the feedback was positive: In response to the question „What did you think of the new module? " 13 of 14 students regarded it as "useful" or "very useful". Students felt that the module prepared them well for their time abroad and they enjoyed the tasks. Based on students' feedback in the survey the authors recommend that students have some contact with the module deliverers during their time abroad to ensure they understand all tasks and have the guidelines, marking criteria, and due dates readily available. It would also be useful to discuss the benefits of documentation with the students, making them aware that they are gaining graduate attributes which will be beneficial for their future.

The authors are hopeful that this module or a similar version will be of interest to students from other courses who are embarking on a year abroad. At Edinburgh Napier University requests from other schools have been made to accept their students on the module. This will call for some adaptation, such as writing part two in English for non-language students.

The authors are confident that the SLA module and similar modules (such as the version presented by Giraud-Johnstone, 2012) will serve to demonstrate to students, educators and other stakeholders how a period of residence abroad can support the development of graduate attributes. This will show that internationalisation has real advantages for

the students, enriching their personal and professional lives as well as contributing "to their home country's prosperity" (British Academy, 2012, p2).

Coleman (2013) recently described the long-term benefits of students who studied abroad between 1985 and 2010. All former participants of a Senegal placement were sent a questionnaire and 47 (82.5%) were returned. Of these „all respondents without exception viewed their semester(s) abroad as a good investment, virtually all found the skills learned valuable in their employment, and more than three-quarters were in a job requiring cultural mediation" (Coleman 2013). Further research should give more evidence on the long-term benefits of residence abroad and trace how the attributes gained abroad can benefit students in their further lives and careers.

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Social capital and modern language initiatives in times of policy uncertainty

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Abstract: Language professionals across the United Kingdom have long been apprehensive about low levels of participation in language learning, as well as disparities in gender and social class of language learners. However, the distinct policy contexts in England and in Scotland have led to divergent [re]actions with regard to this common concern. This article traces the policy paths taken by the respective governments since the start of the 21st century. The development and impact of a major funding programme in England, the 'Routes into Languages' initiative, are outlined, assessed and contrasted with the situation in Scotland. Using Putnam's notion of social capital (durable networks between people from different social groupings) as a powerful means to implement change the authors demonstrate that in England considerable and beneficial links across previous educational divides have developed as part of the 'Routes' initiative, despite the continuing threat of transient policy contexts. In Scotland, the implementation phase of the new 1+2 languages policy might provide the impetus to develop a comparable initiative to 'Routes'. Arguably, a sea change in attitudes to language learning is unlikely to happen without durable and sustainable social capital between staff in school and university.

Introduction

Time and again, studies of subject preferences and subject choices at secondary school indicate that languages in the UK generally, and in its four constituent countries – England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland – are not popular options and that attitudes towards language study are similarly unfavourable in comparison with many other subjects (e.g. Colley & Comber, 2003; Blenkinsop et al, 2006). Indeed, the UK has been described as being 'in the throes of a huge linguistic slump' (Bawden, 2013). Attention has also been drawn to the narrow social profile of languages students: Uptake of languages for GCSE (the optional school-leaving exam for 16 year-olds in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) tends to be markedly higher in independent than in state comprehensive schools, especially where there are high numbers of pupils from poorer families (Davies et al, 2004; Dearing & King, 2007; Tinsley, 2013a) . Similarly, pupils at independent and selective grammar schools are around twice as likely to study languages at Advanced Level (the school-leaving exam for 18 year-olds in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Cambridge Assessment, 2009). These imbalances continue into higher education across the UK where it has been noted that specialist languages provision is offered in fewer institutions and is increasingly concentrated in elite Russell

Group universities and among mainly female students from more favourable socio-economic backgrounds (Footitt, 2005; Hudswell, 2006; Bawden, 2007; 2013; Coleman, 2013). Geographical differences in participation have also been found to exist. In the secondary school sector, pupils in London and South East England are more likely to take a languages GCSE than those in the North East (CILT/ALL/ISMLA, 2010), and in higher education around one third of undergraduates studying languages are similarly to be found at universities in London and the South East. In terms of diversity of language provision, the regional coverage in English universities of languages outside the 'big three' (French, German and Spanish) is, at best, very uneven (Footitt, 2005). In connection with all of the above, the decline in the specialist study of languages has become a source of considerable anxiety (Kelly & Jones, 2003; Bawden, 2007; 2013) resulting in a 'crisis of confidence' amongst higher education (HE) language professionals about their subject (Worton, 2009: 6). Barriers to participation continue to be regarded as substantial, not least because of perceptions of a lack of public understanding of the importance of language learning (Worton, 2009: 38). All this is despite substantial evidence pointing to the adverse impact of the scarcity of language skills on the UK's economic and diplomatic capabilities (British Academy, 2013; Pawle, 2013).

Social capital – opportunities and challenges

We find Putnam's (2000) conceptualisation of social capital, which focuses on the importance of social networks and reciprocal relationships to effect positive change, a useful analytical tool. Putnam and others (e.g. Baron et al, 2000) showed how the trust that people build up between one another whilst they create social networks and interact through them can lead to greater cohesiveness and a sense of community, thereby enabling individuals to do more collectively than they could on their own.

Doughty & Allan (2008) distinguished between three different types of social capital, bonding, bridging and linking. As envisaged by Putnam (2000) bonding social capital involves close support from members of a group with similar identities and interests thereby reinforcing that sameness among the group members. Like family units language professionals within a school or university may have strong bonding social capital because of a shared sense of commitment to their subject. However, such relationships tend to be more inward-looking.   Bridging social capital is said to be more conducive to effecting change than bonding social capital (Schuller et al, 2000) because it involves connections between heterogeneous groups, for our purposes between language professionals working in different sectors such as secondary and tertiary education, or between language staff from diverse, and often competing, universities. Linking social capital (Woolcock, 2001:13-14) assumes that individuals with different amounts of power, e.g. senior management and other staff or lecturers and students, can connect in a mutually beneficial way by leveraging resources, ideas, information and knowledge within a community or a group. For example, it could be argued that the prior existence of bridging and linking social capital in the form of the then Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (LLAS) and its associated networks facilitated the establishment of the 'Routes into Languages' initiative in England (and later Wales), as outlined below.

Doughty and Allan's case study exemplified how the staff development team of the then Scottish Further Education Unit purposefully encouraged the creation of bridging social capital through careful design of professional development sessions, which in turn led to a more inclusive practice amongst FE lecturers. On the other hand, the government's heavy reliance on the development of social capital to implement policies has been criticised (e.g. Cardini, 2006; Dhillon, 2009) because the largely short-term nature of policies, coupled with financial under-resourcing left many projects in danger of collapsing once initial funding was withdrawn. Indeed, as Dhillon (2009) exemplified, it is only when sufficient trust between partners has been built up that social networks can be sustained in the long term and are able to persist in the face of policy fluctuations. In this paper, we compare the extent to which the distinct language policy contexts in England and Scotland have helped to support the establishment of different levels of bridging or linking social capital amongst the respective HE language communities. We then examine to what extent the resulting networks of cross-sector collaborative activity amongst HE language professionals in England have been able to counteract some of the negative factors affecting language provision as outlined earlier. Finally, we look more closely at the potential for similar initiatives in Scotland in light of its new 1+2 languages policy (Scottish Government, 2012b).

Distinct policy contexts…

Since the constituent countries of the UK each have their own educational system, there have also been distinct policy initiatives with regard to language learning, although the greatest differences can be found between England, Wales and Northern Ireland on the one hand, and Scotland on the other. For the purpose of this article we concentrate mostly on the juxtaposition between England and Scotland as they are the main drivers in distinctive policy development and are therefore more likely to engender distinctly different re/actions from language professionals. Taking as our retrospective starting point the publication of the last UK-wide inquiry into language provision (Nuffield Inquiry, 2000), we note that in England (and Wales) this was followed by the development of national languages strategies (DfES, 2002, Welsh Assembly Government 2003; 2010), which made an economic as well as a socio-political case for languages and set out to increase the numbers of young people studying them. In Scotland, the government accepted most of the recommendations from the report by its own Ministerial Action Group on Languages (Scottish Executive, 2001) which presented similar arguments. At the same time, both sets of reform effectively abolished the compulsory status in post-14 education that modern languages had enjoyed until then, either legally (in England and Wales) or consensually (in Scotland). It seems that the population was not convinced by the positive proclamations, however, because the following years saw a decline in uptake of language qualifications at and beyond the statutory leaving age in both countries, which has continued, although the drop has been more pronounced in England than in Scotland (e.g. Tinsley & Han 2012; SCILT 2013). Languages are widely perceived to be difficult and, in England, also suffer from severe grading at both GCSE and A-level (Coleman, 2013).

Policy contexts have shown themselves to be of a transient nature with frequently changing educational and assessment priorities. For example, in England, following the publication of the National Languages Strategy, languages were identified as strategically important and vulnerable subjects in English higher education (HE) while in Wales they were declared to be subjects of broader importance (HEFCE, 2005; Hudswell, 2006; HEFCW, 2008) alongside other disciplines, notably Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (the so-called STEM subjects). However, immediately after the election of a new UK government in 2010 commitment to the National Languages Strategy appeared to wane. At the same time, the Coalition Government introduced the English Baccalaureate, which is a wrap-around qualification for 16 year olds including a language among five GCSEs. This resulted in an immediate and significant rise (20%) in modern language entries at GCSE (Tinsley & Han, 2012). More recently, the Government announced that languages will be statutory from the age of seven in England's primary schools (Department for Education, 2012). It is too early judge how these initiatives will develop, and whether they will be more successful than preceding policies in changing attitudes to language learning. In Scotland, the policy directives have been more muted. After a hiatus of several years, a draft strategy had gone out for consultation (Scottish Executive, 2007) but its implementation was abandoned after the establishment of a new government following general elections to the Scottish Parliament in May 2008. The Scottish Government confirmed its intention to put in place, over the course of two parliaments (equivalent to ten years) measures that will allow every primary pupil in the country to study two languages in addition to their mother tongue, i.e. not necessarily English, and has largely welcomed the report by the Working Group (Scottish Government, 2012a; 2012b). One key recommendation, making language study to Higher Grade a compulsory element of initial teacher education, would have repercussions in provision for several Scottish universities that currently offer initial teacher education courses.

...provoke divergent professional responses

In England, the publication of the National Languages Strategy in 2002 (DfES, 2002) was followed by a report on the National Languages Strategy in Higher Education (Footitt, 2005), which recommended the organisation of a partnership project of universities in each English region to provide modern languages outreach provision involving schools and colleges, effectively encouraging the establishment of bridging social capital. At that time, although cooperation between universities, schools and colleges existed, it was 'uncoordinated, ad hoc and dependent upon enthusiastic staff and students' (Davis, 2006: 4). Despite this lack of coordination, existing language organisations at that time including LLAS, the University Council of Modern Languages and CILT, the National Centre for Languages were able to work in partnership to develop a bid to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), which led to the establishment of the Routes into Languages programme. Routes into Languages has a remit to increase and widen participation in language learning to include groups who have hitherto been less involved (i.e. students from socio-economically challenged backgrounds and boys). Thus

the establishment of the 'Routes' initiative can be seen as a successful example of leveraging resources through bridging and linking social capital.

The Routes into Languages Programme has undergone various iterations with regard to funding. Initially, it was funded solely by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). Subsequently, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and it successors, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department for Education (DfE) provided additional funding until March 2011. HEFCE twice extended its financial support by a further year and, as of August 2013, committed itself to three years funding for a new Routes into Languages project following an open call for proposals for a demand-raising programme in languages. The new Routes programme continues the focus on increasing and widening participation in language learning but additionally prioritises promoting mobility (specifically the year abroad) among undergraduate students of all disciplines.

In Scotland, language incentives initiated by government have arguably encouraged the creation of bonding capital across the teaching profession in schools through initiatives such as the Glow intranet. However, the building of bridging social capital between schools and universities has been limited (cf. Doughty, 2009). Although HE language practitioners have, independently of one another, attempted to create bridging social capital by organising promotional events such as competitions, language days, and master classes for senior students, there have been no nationwide initiatives of strategic collaboration. In other words, despite Scotland's smaller population size, cooperation between establishments in different education sectors exists but has remained uncoordinated. Indeed, true to the warnings given by Cardini (2006), the short-term nature of policy incentives in Scotland in the 1990's has meant that a number of initially successful instances of cross-sector initiatives failed in the medium or long-term (Doughty, 2011).

It must be recognised, nevertheless, that since the advent of the new Scottish Government in 2008 there has been a greater focus on languages (as well as science), culminating in the current 1+2 languages policy. True to its manifesto commitment (SNP, 2007: 11) the Scottish National Party instigated the introduction of a Scottish Science Baccalaureate and a Scottish Languages Baccalaureate in 2009. The latter award requires candidates to study two languages to Higher/Advanced Higher Grade, and to complete an Interdisciplinary Project (an Advanced Higher Grade unit) which demonstrates the relevance of languages in one of five broad contexts. However, the introduction of the language entitlement policy in 2001 had led to a curtailment in language provision, as outlined above. Consequently, few establishments are still able to offer the necessary range of languages to potential candidates and uptake of the Language Baccalaureate award, although rising, has been low in comparison to its 'sister' award in the Sciences. In England, the positive impact on GCSE entries of the English Baccalaureate could prove to be short-lived as the qualification has been amended to include languages as one of eight subjects rather than five, which could result in schools no longer needing to specifically promote languages.

The Routes initiative – achievements and remaining challenges

Establishing bridging and linking social capital

Under the umbrella of Routes into Languages in England, nine regional consortia of more than 60 universities formally cooperate to promote languages. Each consortium consists of one lead university working with a range of partner universities. Three main types of partnership have developed, all of which can be said to fall into the bridging social capital category:

- University with university
- University with schools and colleges;
- Universities with organisations and businesses in the wider community.

A small central team based in LLAS at the University of Southampton co-ordinates, manages, and evaluates the overall scheme but the devolved structure has enabled each region to develop its own profile and expertise, to focus on particular themes and issues and to pilot different types of activity with a strong emphasis on trying to enthuse young people to study languages. The new Routes programme which came into being in August 2013 has as its main focus those activities which have proved successful over the preceding years. These include:

- Sustained interventions in areas of high socio-economic deprivation which are aimed at raising attainment such as mentoring schemes and learning languages in conjunction with another subject area (e.g. Business or Sport);
- One-day events which are intended to motivate learners such as taster days, careers events, sixth form conferences and cultural events;
- Activities which involve student language ambassadors
- National and regional language competitions such as the Foreign Language Spelling Bee, the Mother Tongue Other Tongue Poetry competition, the Language Factor Song competition and the Pop Video competition;
- Activities to promote the year abroad such as adopt-a-class.

Consortia will also be able to devote a proportion of their resources to developing and piloting innovative activities as part of the new programme.

Routes into Languages activities have helped to develop bridging social capital within each region but consortia also cooperate across regions to provide support to schools that are situated close to regional boundaries. Bridging social capital is similarly evident in the contribution that school teachers have made to increasing the reach and impact of Routes activities, for example by cascading film training received to other schools in their locality (Canning et al, 2010) and by their involvement in extending the reach of another activity, the foreign language Spelling Bee which was designed by teachers in conjunction with a Routes consortium. Under the auspices of the new programme, each consortium will lead on developing activities in a particular thematic area. For example,

one consortium will concentrate on languages in areas of social deprivation while another will emphasise languages for culture, history and society. Ideas and resources from these thematic developments will be disseminated across the national Routes network in another example of bridging social capital. Significant cross-border collaboration between Routes partners in England and Wales also shows how bridging social capital can be extended across diverse policy environments.

So what of linking social capital which involves engagement with groups of differing status? This is evident in the representation that schools have on regional advisory boards and steering groups, which has given school teachers a stake in the planning and delivery of activities. This has been particularly important in instances where schools have better knowledge of local circumstances than universities and where universities may lack understanding of school timetables and other issues. A particularly advantageous form of Routes collaboration, and we would propose of linking social capital, has been identified for pre-university learners who are benefitting from the availability of impartial information and advice available via the collaborative approach of Routes, rather than being subjected to institutional marketing (SQW, 2011). Thus, even just three years into the initiative, Worton considered that Routes had brought into being 'innovative and potentially sustainable cross-sector partnerships' (*ibid*: 8). In Dhillon's terms it would seem that Worton believed sufficient trust had been built up between some institutions to survive beyond prime funding.

Positive impact

Nationally, more than 225,000 pupils in 2,016 schools had been reached by the programme by 2012 (Schechter et al, 2012). The success of the Routes programme in building a collaborative model and fostering the establishment of bridging and linking social capital are arguably based to a large extent on the 'shared norms and values' (Dhillon, 2009: 701) of participants, manifested in a love of languages and a strong desire to enthuse young people to study them. The sharing of ideas and good practice across the consortia has become one of the key strengths of the programme.

So what of the impact of partnership and collaboration with regard to the original aims of the Routes programme, i.e. to increase and widen participation in language study? All consortia have conducted pre- and post-event evaluations throughout the life of the project (SQW, 2011) and there is a growing body of data to indicate that Routes is having a longer-term favourable impact on attitudes to languages, including in schools with low uptake (Canning et al, 2010; McCall, 2011a, 2011b; Handley, 2011). Surveys of first-year university students suggest that around three quarters of those who have participated in enrichment and outreach activities such as those organised by Routes believe that such engagement had improved their views of language learning (Gallagher-Brett, 2012a; 2014). Evidence is also beginning to emerge which implies that Routes activities may be more highly valued by learners attending low-achieving schools (Gallagher-Brett, 2012a, 2012b). Measuring the effects of the programme on the numbers studying languages has proved more difficult but there are, nonetheless, positive indications of an impact on uptake at GCSE. Teachers have reported increased

numbers at GCSE in their schools following engagement with Routes (Canning et al, 2010; Gallagher-Brett, 2012b). Handley (2011) tracked groups of students who had participated in Routes activities in North-West England and found sustained improvements in attitudes, which converted into decisions to study languages post-14. A particularly interesting development in the North West has been the resulting increased uptake in French, German and Spanish GCSE following engagement with activities in languages such as Arabic and Urdu. Furthermore, evidence from some schools in socially deprived areas demonstrates that the programme is helping to keep GCSE going (Schechter et al, 2012).

Challenges

The Routes into Languages Programme has been able to show a positive impact on specific schools and individual learners but it is more difficult to demonstrate a global impact on the numbers studying languages across England. Although elements of the policy environment are clearly favourable to languages, notably the commitment to primary languages, other policy challenges pose potential threats. The introduction of greatly increased university fees in England from 2012 appeared to result in an immediate and substantial drop in the numbers of students wishing to apply for the longer four-year languages degree (UCAS, 2012). This is a situation in which collaboration, however well-intentioned, could find itself under increased tension from competition and institutional fights for survival.

On a practical level, notwithstanding the support consortia provide to each other across regional boundaries, geographical difficulties have not been entirely overcome. English regions do not represent cohesive geographical communities so it is not always obvious how schools in one county can work together with universities which are located at some considerable distance. Universities are not evenly distributed across the country and this can be problematic for schools in some rural areas. However, this is being proactively addressed in the new programme as consortia seek to extend the geographical coverage of their activities and to involve those universities which have hitherto not participated in the programme.

As a result of the aforementioned difficulties, widening participation and convincing young people from disadvantaged backgrounds of the value of language study look set to remain key challenges for the HE languages community. Evidently, sustained interventions over a period of time are required to effect positive change in languages in socio-economically challenging environments (Schechter et al, 2012). Building relationships, fostering a climate of trust and establishing bridging and linking social capital in these areas takes an investment of time, effort and money so local initiatives, however successful in the short-term, require some central support mechanism if they are to be sustained long-term.

Implications for Scotland

With the implementation phase of the 1+2 languages policy now well under way, Scotland has the potential of moving to a more favourable situation with regard to languages education in schools, although the prospects for languages in the tertiary sector remain uncertain. It would therefore be useful for policy stakeholders to consider and to reflect upon the successes and challenges of the 'Routes' initiative. For example, 'Routes' has provided a range of possible collaborative models that enable the development of bridging and linking forms of social capital both horizontally (i.e. between formerly competing institutions) as well as vertically (i.e. each university working with schools and colleges in their areas to develop distinct profiles and to respond to local need). Whilst geographical barriers may similarly represent a problem for Scottish universities, the establishment of the University of the Highlands and Islands, which is formed from a collection of dispersed educational establishments, may go some way to alleviate this particular challenge. Crucially, we believe, unless the Scottish HE community can be enabled to develop its cross-sector collaborative potential, the policy's transformational potential will not be fully realised.

Concluding Remarks

Making the case for languages to young people could be compared to Galileo trying to convince the authorities that the earth was moving around the sun rather than the other way around. Whilst recent commissioned reports by the British Academy and the British Council respectively have tried to counter the taken-for-granted assumption that 'English is enough' (Tinsley, 2013a; Tinsley, 2013b) there is arguably still a need to develop a range of projects that convincingly demonstrate the necessity of using languages other than English for communicative purposes *despite* or even *because of* the status of English as a global language. Through the establishment of sustainable social capital between the secondary and tertiary sector this becomes more easily achievable. Students in higher education are more likely to experience this need, although it may not necessarily 'translate' into language study on a full-time basis. However, they could help make these experiences come to life in the languages classrooms of secondary or primary schools, as appropriate. University students can also reflect back on their earlier language learning experiences and let teachers in school know what kind of approaches worked best for them, and why. There are a number of media vehicles that could be used to disseminate the findings from successful 'Routes' case studies, which could be supplemented and supported by cross-sector workshops.

Certainly, the Routes initiative has shown that the bridging social capital created through targeted government funding has had positive impact.   The evidence suggests that positive policy proclamations with regard to languages in an Anglophone context need the solid underpinning of a coordinated approach to tackling 'common-sense' perceptions of irrelevance in light of the rise of global English. We have also seen that whilst both England and Scotland share concerns about levels of modern language

provision and attitudes to language learning, the distinct policy contexts in each country have engendered different responses from HE language staff. Transiency that characterises both policy contexts means that anxiety about provision remains an on-going problem in both countries, so Cardini's and Dhillon's concerns with regard to durability of social capital networks hold true. Worton's depiction of a 'crisis of confidence' in modern languages (Worton, 2009: 6) is still applicable, and the levels of trust which have undoubtedly been developed may not be sufficient to enable HE language professionals to transcend adverse policy contexts. In a HEFCE evaluation (Curtis & Cartwright Consulting, 2011), it was concluded that languages remain vulnerable in English universities, and arguably this also applies to the Scottish situation. Governmental school policies in both countries still limit the extent to which universities can act. However, the Routes initiative has clearly demonstrated that language staff in both HE and school can develop a much better understanding of each other's concerns and respond more appropriately. In Scotland so far, there has been insufficient impetus to marshal the loose networks that exist between language staff across the universities into coordinated and concerted action over a longer period of time. Nonetheless, as we have argued earlier, the 1+2 languages policy can provide the impetus for strategic discussion and decisive action with the ultimate aim of enabling the revival of language provision across all sectors.

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Recent Publications: Abstracts and Weblinks

British Academy and Cumberland Lodge (2013) Multilingual Britain

http://tiny.cc/MultilingualBritain2013

Key Points:

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

British Council (2013) Speaking the World's Languages Conference (18 November)

PowerPoint Slides from the Keynote Speakers are available here:
http://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/speaking-languages

Churches, R (Ed) (2013) The Quiet Revolution: transformational languages research by teaching school alliances, CfBT

http://bit.ly/QuietRevolutionResearch

This compilation of action research projects published by CfBT focuses on the teaching and learning of languages and covers topics such as understanding language structure, writing skills and finding ways to get pupils to speak in the target language. The reports, written by the teachers themselves, tell the story of their research in their own words. The 28 reports cover seven themes, although there is overlap between many of the areas:

1. grammar, writing and reading
2. memorisation and pronunciation improvement using body language and gesture in the classroom
3. motivation to learn a language, intercultural understanding, authentic materials and activity
4. special educational needs and less able learners
5. spontaneous talking strategies as the gateway to attainment
6. talk in the classroom, understanding the barriers to speaking
7. leadership of Modern Foreign Languages and whole-school approaches.

Doughty, H (2013) Language Trends, SCILT

Trend of SQA language entries at SCQF Levels 4-5 (rom 2009 and SCQF Level 6 (Higher) from 2008.
http://bit.ly/sciltstats

European and External Relations Committee (2013) Foreign language learning in primary schools, Scottish Parliament

Report published by the Scottish Parliament following its inquiry and conference in the spring of 2013.
http://bit.ly/mlps2013

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

http://tiny.cc/ML_StateOfNation2013

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

Tinsley, T and Board, K. (2013) Languages for the future, British Council

http://bit.ly/Tinsley_Board2013

It is a widely held – if not undisputed – view that the UK is lacking in the necessary language skills for the future, partly because of the status of English as the language of international communications. This report seeks to provide a strategic analysis of the UK's long-term language needs, looking at a variety of economic, geopolitical, cultural and educational indicators and scoring different languages against these. It identifies a list of ten languages which will be of crucial importance for the UK's prosperity, security and influence in the world in the years ahead. (Extract from Executive Summary, p. 3)

Language Strategy of the State of Victoria, Australia

You might be interested in finding out more about the language strategy in another Anglophone setting, in this case the State of Victoria in Australia. You can read the final strategy document here http://bit.ly/MLStrategy_Victoria. The state government of Victoria has also published more generic information about how their language vision for 2025: http://bit.ly/LanguageVision2025_Victoria

Downloadable Articles from Academic Journals[10]

Language Learning & Technology (LLT)

Open/free-access journal. Homepage: http://llt.msu.edu/

Language Learning Journal (LLJ)

The journal's most popular articles available for downloading without a journal subscription (look for the green **full access** button):

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

The list is updated every 24 hours and based on the cumulative total of PDF downloads and full-text HTML views from the publication date (but no earlier than 25 June, 2011, launch date of the website) to the present. The articles below were available as free downloads during the week beginning 13 January 2014. (**NB**: additional articles available by subscription only)

1. Language acquisition. Nick Dwyer (2011)
2. Language learner strategy research and MFL teaching & learning. Michael Grenfell (2007)
3. Score in French: motivating boys with football in Key Stage 3. Ian McCall (2010)
4. The beliefs of two expert EFL learners. Sarah Mercer (2010)
5. Motivation of UK school pupils towards foreign languages: a large-scale survey at Key Stage 3. James A. Coleman, Árpád Galaczi & Lluïsa Astruc (2007)
6. Language learner strategies. Michael Grenfell & Lynn Erler (2007)
7. Optimizing visually-assisted listening comprehension. Ahmad S Kashania et al (2010)
8. Gender differences in motivation and L2 accent attainment: an investigation of young Kurdish learners of Turkish Nihat Polat (2010)

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

The list is based on articles that have been cited in the last 3 years. The statistics are updated weekly using participating publisher data sourced exclusively from CrossRef. The articles below were available as free downloads during the week beginning 13 January 2014. (NB: additional articles available by subscription only)

1. Teaching in the target language: Problems and prospects Carole E. M. Franklin (2007)
2. The year abroad and its effects Paul Meara (2007)
3. Promoting use of the target language in the classroom Francine Chambers (2007)
4. Motivation of UK school pupils towards foreign languages: a large-scale survey at Key Stage 3 James A. Coleman, Árpád Galaczi & Lluïsa Astruc (2007)

LLJ (2011) Volume 39 (Issues 1-3) can also be downloaded without subscriptions

http://tiny.cc/LLJ2011_Vol39_1
http://tiny.cc/LLJ2011_Vol39_2 Special Issue: Languages of the Wider World: Valuing Diversity.
http://tiny.cc/LLJ2011_Vol39_3

Language Teaching (LT)

You can access the top downloaded and top cited articles for the previous 12 months. Rankings are updated on a monthly basis. **http://bit.ly/LTJournal** (Look for the link on the left-hand side of the journal's home page)

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

http://tiny.cc/FLAnnalsSummer2012

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[10] Date checked: 17 January 2014

Selected Events January – December 2014[i]

Date	Details
23 January	**e-learning symposium 2014**. LLAS event. University of Southampton.
14 February	**Researching foreign language teaching in primary schools**. University of York.
18-19 Feb	**Crossing Continents: EPOSTL around the world**. ECML, Graz, Austria
23 February – 01 March	**Creative Approaches to the Teaching & Learning of Languages**. Malaga, Spain
7 March	**Japan Conference for Schools**. The Embassy of Japan, London
04-05 April	**Language World 2014**. University of Lancaster
30 April	**Scotland's Universities and the 1+2 Languages Policy**. Symposium jointly organised by SCILT and UCMLS (University Council for Modern Languages Scotland). This event forms part of the Engage with Strathclyde week.
30 April	**The Usefulness of Language Learning in the Age of Global English: Language Assistants and Scotland's 1+2 Languages Policy**. Showcase and Cross-Sector Networking Event jointly organised by SCILT and the British Council (Scotland). This event forms part of the Engage with Strathclyde week.
09-11 May	**European Youth Event 2014**. Strasbourg, France.
22-23 May	BAAL Annual Seminar: **Language Teaching and Language Learning. Intercultural Communication SIG**. University of Edinburgh.
25 May – 01 June	**Funded language course in Spain for primary and secondary teachers**. Santander, Spain
12 – 14 June	**Early Language Learning: Theory and Practice in 2014**. University of Umeå, Sweden.
10-14 August	**World Congress of the International Association of Applied Linguistics** Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
04-06 September	**BAAL Annual Conference**. University of Warwick
04-06 September	**2014 CercleS Conference "Language Centres in Higher Education: Exploring and Shaping Plurilingual Profiles and Practices"**. Fribourg, Switzerland
02 November	**SALT Annual Conference**. University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. Check the website for details nearer the date. http://www.saltlangs.org.uk/

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[i] Check our Events pages: http://tiny.cc/SCILT_Events for further details and more recent editions. If you come across an important language-education related event we have missed please inform us by emailing scilt@strath.ac.uk.