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Languages in Context in the UK: broadening the range and changing the brief

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Introduction

The sharp decline in language take-up in schools and universities in the UK over the last two decades has become a matter for concern for a variety of reasons and from a range of perspectives. There have been a number of initiatives and interventions to foster language learning in schools, including the creation of a nation-wide portfolio of outreach activities by Routes into Languages.ⁱ Although the work of Routes into Languages has demonstrated that activities and events can have a positive impact on student attitudes towards languages,ⁱⁱ the UK is still witnessing an unprecedented decline in languages uptake in schools, particularly at 'A' level. The purpose of this paper is to explore some of the reasons for this decline and evaluate how the introduction of a wider range of languages, including some community languages, could form part of the solution.

The Languages Conundrum

There are several paradoxes in relation to Language Policy and Practice in the UK today. We live in a multicultural country, with many multilingual communities, yet the languages spoken by those communities are not widely taught in mainstream schoolsⁱⁱⁱ or universities, and many pupils leave school without knowing any language other than English.^{iv} The potential language and cultural resource within our multilingual communities has never been harnessed, yet several of the languages spoken by these communities are also of strategic importance to the Government and the business community (Chen and Breivik 2013), and the cultural knowledge within these communities could enrich the learning experience of many pupils. We are part of the European Union which has for some time promoted multilingualism as a key objective,^v yet our Language Policy is based on the premise that mono-lingualism is the norm with the result that this is becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy, particularly in light of the myth that everyone speaks English.

Language policy still operates on the assumption that everyone has a first language and that people will acquire a second language (a foreign language); the focus is on European languages, with opportunities to learn a slightly broader range of languages in higher education. This is no longer necessarily the appropriate paradigm, with many multilingual communities living within the UK

and a range of non-European languages rapidly increasing in global importance. The decline in the number of students in the UK studying a language has been widely documented both within the schools sector (Dearing and King 2006; Coleman, Galaszi and Astruc 2007; Holmes 2014) and in higher education (Marshall 2003; Footitt 2003; McPake, Sachdev et al. 2008, Worton 2009; Board 2014; Holmes 2014; Tinsley & Board 2014). Furthermore, the lack of availability of community languages^{vi} in higher education, both as a degree subject and as part of teacher education programmes, has been identified as a problem (McPake, Sachdev et al. 2008; McPake 2007; Tinsley & Board 2014; OFSTED 2008).

League tables

The introduction of league tables as a strategy to drive up standards in schools has, paradoxically, worsened the quality of language education for many pupils because some schools, mainly from the state maintained sector, have opted to close languages options in favour of ‘less difficult’ subjects, as measured by higher grade results at GCSE and A level, in order to improve their league table position. This is depriving pupils in those schools of the advantages associated with a languages education. The Interim Findings of a recent British Academy report outlined the situation as follows:

Between 2004, when languages ceased to be a statutory requirement for fourteen-year olds, and 2010, the percentage of state maintained schools retaining compulsory languages dropped from 30% to 20%. Meanwhile the Independent Sector appeared to be prioritising languages, with figures for compulsory language learning rising from 75% in 2004 to 89% by 2010 (Holmes, 2014: 12).

There are some worrying sociological implications to this trend. Roger Taylor, Chair of the Open Public Services Network (OPSN), commented on a report from the OPSN on GCSE statistics from 2013 which shows that only one in four pupils in Middlesbrough studied a language whilst, in areas such as Chelsea or Hammersmith, almost all pupils studied a language. In his words:

These data show that children’s educational opportunities are defined by where they live. We can see that the curriculum taught to children in poorer parts of England is significantly different to that taught in wealthier areas. This would be of little concern if these differences reflected the needs and choices of pupils and families. Our worry is that instead they reflect decisions made by schools and are based on calculations as to how schools can appear better on league tables by encouraging children to avoid taking on more challenging subjects. The evidence suggests that in areas where most children are expected to do less well in exams, the educational opportunities for all children are being restricted.^{vii}

This is something that should be of concern to anyone who believes in equality of opportunity and the benefits of diverse cultural and social backgrounds as drivers of innovation and change in society. The situation for community languages is even worse. OCR and AQA took the decision to close a number of community languages at GCSE and A Level due to low demand^{viii}; this follows the decision in 2012 to close Asset Languages, which accredited a wide range of languages. The decisions in both cases are understandable as business decisions on the basis of viability. However, this situation is at least partially an unintended consequence of the policy decision not to recognise Asset Languages alongside GCSE as part of the EBacc, and therefore as part of the school performance indicators. This has meant that community languages continue to have low language status and have not benefitted from the same structural changes in schools in response to the league table performance indicators that have driven improvements in provision and uptake in French, German and Spanish.

The marketization of higher education, originally intended to give students greater choice, has paradoxically resulted in less choice for pupils from many state schools wishing to study a language. This is because, with a few exceptions, Languages have become the preserve of independent schools and Russell Group institutions; the marketization of higher education has made cross-subsidy to support small subject areas untenable, with the result that many university languages departments around the country have closed, disenfranchising many students in terms of their access to language education.

In contrast with (or perhaps as a consequence of) the decline in languages in schools and at Honours Degree level in universities, there has been a substantial increase in the number of students taking a language on Institution Wide Language Programmes. Whilst it is positive to see the growth of languages as additional subjects in higher education, the provision does not reflect the diverse portfolio of languages spoken in the communities around the UK, nor the level of specialist expertise required by some Government agencies (Chen and Breivik 2013). Furthermore, the decision to close Asset Languages, however well justified as a business decision, means that there is no longer accreditation of a wider range of languages reflecting (and valuing) the diversity of the country and the needs of the Government. There is a sign that this may change in light of the Government intervention in July 2015, when Schools Minister Nick Gibb announced that the government would take action to secure the future of some community languages. Gibb stated that, 'All pupils should have the opportunity to study foreign languages as part of a core curriculum that prepares them for a life in Modern Britain. This should extend to community languages'. If followed up with action, this is a positive comment which could open up opportunities for the languages communities.^{ix}

Motivation in language learning

In addition to the variable opportunities for studying languages in schools, depending on postcode and financial means, there is a further factor in relation to the decline of language take-up: the fact that many students opt not to study a language even when the opportunity exists. This raises fundamental questions about attitudes towards languages. There is a considerable body of research on motivation in language learning, including the work of Ager (2001), Gardner (2005) and, more recently, Coleman, Galaszi and Astruc who concluded that, 'for many [pupils] languages are irrelevant to life and career, and are more difficult, more demanding and less enjoyable than other school subjects' (Coleman et al 2007: 245-280). Further evidence that perceived level of difficulty is one of the reasons why many pupils decide not to continue with a language at university was documented in a UK school-leavers' survey on attitudes towards languages, undertaken in 2007. This report concluded not only that 'higher education language study is envisaged to be difficult' (*Hobsons' Research* 2008: 5), but also that: 'white students appear to have the least affinity to languages, while the black or black British student group demonstrates more positive perceptions across the board' (*Hobsons' Research* 2008: 5). Similar attitudes have been recorded in various *Language Trends* reports, particularly in relation to 'A' Level.

Despite the more positive attitudes among BME groups, languages classes in universities around the UK are predominantly white, suggesting that we are not capitalizing on this positive predisposition. This could be due to the language choice available at university, with many institutions offering only French, German and Spanish. However, universities do respond to market trends which has resulted in a growth in Mandarin in many institutions and, in response to research conducted by Routes North West on demand for Urdu, Manchester Metropolitan University introduced a Minor Route in Urdu; this is a step in the right direction. However, recent trends in the take-up of a range of community languages suggests that part of the challenge is the fact that students are not opting to study these languages even when provision is available prompting exam boards to close them^x thus reinforcing the impression that they are less important.

Gardner observes that motivation in language learning is broadly related to two variables: 'Attitudes towards the learning situation on the one hand, which can be greatly influenced by the skill and passion of the language teacher' (2005: 6) and 'the degree of integrativeness: an individual's openness to taking on characteristics of another cultural/linguistic group' (2005, 7). In other words, the curriculum design and the competence of the teacher are important influences on motivation levels, as is the degree of integrativeness of the pupils. The latter typically relates to their curiosity about other cultures and their interest in meeting

people from other cultural backgrounds. Instrumental motivation, that is the desire to learn a language for external reward such as career enhancement, is according to Gardner, a secondary variable:

Another variable that can be implicated in second language achievement is an instrumental orientation, or more generally instrumentality. In many situations, individuals might well want to learn a language for purely practical reasons, and to the extent that this orientation is related to achievement it is reasonable to expect that the relationship would be mediated by motivation' (Gardner 2005: 8).

Over recent years, there has been a strong focus on appealing to the instrumental motivation of young people, emphasising the fact that knowledge of languages improves employment prospects, and can result in higher paid jobs. Less emphasis has been placed on the integrative motivation of young people who may be more interested in the culture of the country where a given language is spoken, and more motivated by passion for the subject than by desire for external reward. Discourse around languages and curriculum content over the past two decades has focussed on acquiring transactional language, with little opportunity to develop critical thinking around the cultural context, and the discourse around languages as a discipline has focused on employability: languages as a communication skill within a global context. Evidence from surveys of students suggests that this could be part of the problem as it fails to communicate the intrinsic value of the discipline as a lens into a cultural context.

A pupil survey, conducted by Scottish CILT in 2003 to find out what activities pupils most enjoyed in their Modern Languages education, concluded that 'Finding out about other people and their ways of life was ranked the third most popular learning activity, but in the chart of ten types of activities they do in class, it came ninth.' (Oates, 2008: 3). More recently, Routes into Languages has been tracking responses by 1st year undergraduate languages students across the country on a range of issues, including the reasons why they decided to study a language. According to the most recent survey (which is in line with the findings of previous surveys), by far the most frequent reason for studying languages was enjoyment, which was mentioned 519 times (26.2% of reasons provided). There were a further 174 references (8.8% of reasons provided) to interest. The report concludes that, 'this suggests that many of these university students are strongly intrinsically motivated and aligns with findings from previous studies which have found that students at all levels study languages because they enjoy them' (Gallagher Brett, 2012: 5). Despite the fact that there have been several major national campaigns to highlight the benefits of languages in terms of employability and career prospects, the report notes: 'Reasons related to employability and careers were referred to 269 times (13.6%)'. Although this

does indicate that ‘an instrumental rationale is important for many students’ (Gallagher Brett, 2012:10), this instrumental rationale is less predominant than other reasons for studying languages. This conclusion is in line with the results of evaluations of Routes into Languages outreach activities, which have found that pupils responded best to sessions involving exposure to cultural activities and to native speakers of the languages (Handley, 2011:149-162). In other words, the integrative orientation is important to many young people who find other cultures interesting, and activities related to culture enjoyable. This is something that could be nurtured, placing languages at the core of the national curriculum for the way they can develop not only language skills but also intercultural understanding and an international perspective.

Working within the current policy context

The inclusion of languages in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) has had a positive impact on the uptake in certain languages at GCSE, prompting some schools to re-establish languages in the curriculum. However, the failure to recognise Asset Languages (in addition to GCSE) as part of that performance measure disenfranchised a range of community languages, resulting in further decline in those languages. Furthermore, the distribution of the improvements is uneven. The latest *Language Trends* report published by the British Council shows that entries for GCSE languages (excluding ancient languages) increased from 41% in 2012/13 to 48% in 2013/14 with a continued upward trajectory, albeit a smaller increase, to 49% in 2014/15 (Board and Tinsley, 2015: 23). However, the distribution of language provision is uneven. In Middlesbrough, for example, only 26.6% of KS4 pupils take a language GCSE in comparison with 70.8% of pupils in Barnet (Board and Tinsley, 2015: 27).

Overall, there has been a 60% decline in language entries at A Level since 1996, and recent falls in French and German have been severe whilst entries in other languages have continued to grow steadily albeit from a low base (Board and Tinsley, 2015: 30). The perceived level of difficulty of languages as a discipline, reinforced by exam results which are often lower than in other subjects,^{xi} are contributory factors in the high attrition rates in languages; this is partly due to the fact that, ‘motivation can be badly affected by language anxiety. Poor performance in exams reduces motivation’ (Gardner 2005: 8). Teacher comments in the Language Trends survey allude to this issue:

‘Take-up post-16 is becoming a challenge, as students are reluctant to opt for a language, since it would appear to be very difficult to access the higher grades at AS and A2 level.’

‘Marking by exam boards continues to be extremely irrational, meaning that pupils work very hard for seemingly little reward compared with other subjects.’ (Board and Tinsley 2015: 100)

This suggests that there are problems either with the curriculum design (including level of difficulty) or with the teaching methodology or both. It is important to learn lessons from the experience of a decade of language learners who, in many cases, have been required to engage with rote learning of presentations at GCSE level on topics such as healthy eating or environment for their oral exams with very little, if any, critical thinking or opportunity to explore the culture behind the language. Teachers have been required to teach to a rigid curriculum with very little room for incorporating creativity, innovation and culture into their teaching. Even though a skilled teacher can bring the curriculum to life,^{xii} this approach has impacted on the learning experience for a whole generation of language learners who have consequently voted with their feet. This is particularly significant in light of the evidence suggesting that many pupils are motivated to study a language by interest in the culture as well as the language.

Primary Languages

The decision to introduce Languages as a compulsory part of the National Curriculum in primary schools from Key Stage 2 is an important landmark in Government policy in relation to languages education in England. The fact that pupils are now taking a language in primary school has the potential to inspire a passion for languages and the associated cultural contexts from an early age. If well implemented, it could inspire pupils to continue to study languages throughout their school career and beyond. However, this will only happen if languages are taught in a creative and interesting way, by confident teachers and with appropriate consideration to transition arrangements between primary and secondary schools. Therein lies a challenge which could threaten the success of this policy but which could also provide an opportunity for community languages to be part of the solution.

According to the most recent *Language Trends* survey, 28% of those teachers who are currently teaching a language in primary schools have only an A Level in a language, and 31% of schools have no member of staff with a language qualification higher than a GCSE (Board and Tinsley 2015: 54). This is worrying, because it is difficult to bring a language to life with limited language competence. According to the 2013/14 survey, 41% of teachers at Key Stage 1 were ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ confident, 27% at lower Key Stage 2 were ‘not at all’ or ‘not very’ confident and 30% at Upper Key Stage 2 teachers were ‘not at all’ or ‘not very’ confident. As one teacher noted in the free text comments:

Most staff feel ill equipped to teach foreign languages. As a teacher, you want to feel confident that you know your subject matter well. Rusty 'O' level and only being a page or two ahead of the children is not ideal! (Board and Tinsley 2014: 41)

The reality, then, is that the first phase of the primary languages policy has been implemented, pupils are learning a language (or a number of languages) at primary school, but the teacher and pupil experience is variable and, in some cases, poor. There are problems of transition from primary to secondary school with only 28% of state schools catering for pupils continuing with the same language (Board and Tinsley 2015:70). In some schools, pupils are placed in sets based on their results in English and Maths at KS2 (Board and Tinsley 2015:70) and, in those cases where pupils do continue with the same language, their previous knowledge is so varied that it has little value. Free text comments from teachers refer to the transition problems which demotivate pupils:

'We have found that those who have studied a language at Key Stage 2 only have very basic knowledge, mainly lists of vocabulary, but are unable to make sentences orally. We therefore see little advantage in their previous knowledge.'

'To be honest, often their level is very, very low and they are often demoralised after their time at Key Stage 2.' (Board and Tinsley 2014: 59)

Free text comments from teachers in the 2014/15 record further reasons why it is impossible to guarantee continuity with the same language at secondary school:

'Too many feeder schools teach different languages at different stages to differing degrees, covering different topics, so we can't cater for direct continuity.'

'We do not find even amongst students who have taken a language before that there is enough prior knowledge to warrant setting differently. We cannot cater for all the different arrangements and so we do not really build on anything they did before' (Board and Tinsley 2015: 76).

Schools which were not offering languages at Key Stage 2 noted that, 'staff knowledge, skill level and confidence is a barrier' (Board and Tinsley 2015: 35). Schools which do offer a language also identified staff confidence and availability of appropriately qualified staff as key challenges, with some staff teaching a language after very limited CPD to equip them to do so (Board and Tinsley 2015:43). Clearly, the availability of staff with the appropriate language skills to inspire pupils is an issue. Given the complexities around guaranteeing

transition in the same language between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, there is a case for arguing that primary languages education should be more about providing a foundation for language learning, kindling enthusiasm for other cultures through innovative activities, and inspiring pupils to see language learning as an enjoyable experience.

Languages and Intercultural Understanding

Within this context, if we accept the premise that primary languages education should be more about inspiring pupils with the desire to learn a language than attaining mastery in one language, a modified approach could be preferable. Qualitative data from the *Language Trends* survey indicate that the presence of a specialist teacher, or someone with a high level of skill in the foreign language, either on the staff or working in a peripatetic capacity, boosts confidence (Board and Tinsley 2014:41). The language input therefore could derive from a native speaker student, a language assistant or peripatetic teacher shared with other schools, or a language tutor from the local community, in partnership with a qualified teacher from the school. This would open up an opportunity for offering a wider range of languages, including community languages, within schools without putting teachers with very limited competence in a language under pressure to teach that language. The community language tutors would benefit from any training opportunities within the school, and would work as part of a team with the mainstream schoolteachers. This model would also open up the opportunity for mainstream and complementary schools to work together, building partnerships between these communities.

Pupils could learn a different language each year at Key Stage 2, including modern foreign and community languages, with a focus on language in context, culture, and basic language acquisition through role-play, songs, films and other cultural activities. Several languages currently spoken as a first language by immigrant communities are important global languages of strategic importance to the UK, and this is therefore a rich but untapped resource. This approach could also develop a sense of intercultural understanding, as activities would develop an appreciation of the cultural heritages within local communities.

The value of languages in preparing pupils to be global citizens, and to succeed in a multicultural context, is recognised by teachers in comments recorded in the *Language Trends* report:

‘I believe it is vitally important for languages to be taught within Key Stage 2, primary level. They are so keen to learn a new language (...) The cultural aspect is also vital as we need to build our pupils to be global citizens.’

‘We believe it broadens our students’ knowledge of the multicultural society in which we live and reinforces the need for respect and understanding of other cultures’ (Board and Tinsley, 2015: 46).

Such an approach would address the issue of transition between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, as pupils would study two or more languages at Key Stage 2 within a cultural context; the focus would be on instilling a passion for languages and the associated cultures rather than transactional competence. All pupils could then start to specialise in an individual language at Key Stage 3. This would have the advantage of introducing pupils to a range of languages from different language families, broadening their general knowledge, rather than limiting their experience to one or two European languages.

Language Choice

Despite the growing number of people who are speakers of a language other than English at home, community languages have remained on the margins of the education system. Staffing structures within the school sector and in higher education reflect and perpetuate this. The fact that most teacher education courses within the UK still focus on French, German and Spanish despite declining interest from pupils in German and French reflects historical practice in schools and therefore perpetuates the *status quo* rather than responding to the current context. The *Language Trends* data reveal that there is a growing interest in Mandarin Chinese, although it is still primarily taught as an extra-curricular activity. 17% of State Schools and 35% of Independent Schools now provide Mandarin Chinese as an extra-curricular activity, demonstrating a growing demand for this language (Board and Tinsley 2015: 127). A recent report on British language needs for the future, using a range of criteria, identified Spanish, Arabic, French and Mandarin Chinese as the top four languages for the future, followed by German, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Turkish and Japanese in that order (Tinsley 2014: 17). That same report identified Punjabi, Urdu and Bengali as the top three languages spoken by English schoolchildren (Tinsley 2014:18) and recent INSET days for teachers as well as GCSE events for schools organised by Routes into Languages North West^{xiii} were attended by more teachers and pupils for Urdu than for German.^{xiv} Furthermore, a British Council report on *Languages for the Future* noted that:

Indian languages are important because of India’s position as the second most populous country in the world and a growing economic power. Department for Education statistics show Panjabi, Urdu and Bengali as the top three languages spoken by English schoolchildren with English as an additional language (...) However, Indian languages are currently taught at the margins of mainstream education, supported by families and local

communities. Entry numbers at A-level and at GCSE are small and Indian languages are not widely available at degree level in British universities (Tinsley and Board 2014: 18).

There is therefore an argument for offering a broader range of languages in schools, not only for the intrinsic value that knowledge of any language has in terms of the increased mental flexibility,^{xv} but as part of a strategy to prepare pupils to live in a multicultural context, and work in multicultural teams. Chinese and Arabic, languages spoken by two of the largest minority ethnic communities in the UK, are also official languages of the United Nations and growing in global importance. In addition, there has been a proposal that Hindi should become the seventh official language at the United Nations. In other words, these languages are an important resource for the language education of the future, and should be incorporated into the curriculum in schools. This has been recognised recently by a Government Tender for a Mandarin Teaching Expansion Programme which, if successful, could provide a template for developing provision in a wider range of languages (<http://www.chineselanguagepublishing.eu/po-mep.html>).

Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)

The lack of clearly identified routes to Qualified Teacher Status for languages other than Spanish, French and German has resulted in a shortage of qualified community language teachers which, in turn, militates against the introduction of these languages into the mainstream curriculum (McPake, Sachdev et al. 2008: 70). In 2008, Ofsted recommended that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCFS) should provide web resources for a wide range of languages and the Teacher Development Agency (TDA) should ensure that all community language teachers have the opportunity to achieve qualified teacher status (OFSTED 2008). Despite some progress in this area, there continues to be a number of obstacles for community language teachers, and the main languages prioritised in Teacher Education Institutions across the country, with a few exceptions, continue to be French, German and Spanish despite the changing international context. It remains to be seen whether the Teach First initiative could become part of the solution to this problem by providing alternative routes to Qualified Teacher Status.

Despite these general trends, there are schools which have successfully integrated the teaching of community languages into the curriculum through partnership with local communities. A report in the Guardian covered a case of a primary school in Sheffield teaching Somali, reflecting the high proportion of Somali speakers in the local community. It was noted that:

By teaching Somali the school unifies all children around a language that's spoken in the community. Pupils who aren't from the Somali community have a chance to try it out because it's in all the local shops. It also helps children who speak Somali at home but have a poor model of the language because they are also being taught English by their parents. (<http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/may/15/languages-primary-schools-2014>)^{xvi}

This approach provides a useful space for sharing cultural heritage and valuing diversity in a way, which benefits all pupils, opening their eyes to new worlds, counterbalancing negative images of some cultures in the media and enabling them to learn a language within context. Case studies of similarly innovative approaches to language learning using native speakers and local communities are outlined in *Language Trends* (Board and Tinsley 2015: 60-64) and quantitative data from Routes into Languages identified the value of languages to developing intercultural understanding in schools.^{xvii}

Conclusion

It is clear that there have been and continue to be significant challenges in relation to language education in schools and higher education; this situation has been exacerbated by Government policies, the languages curriculum in schools as well as the monolingual mind-set which prevails in the UK. However, recent Government initiatives, and the changing global context, have opened up opportunities for community languages to become part of the solution. There is an opportunity for complementary schools to work in partnership with mainstream schools to offer a wider range of languages at Key Stage 1, as enrichment activities, and at Key Stage 2 as part of the curriculum. Community language teachers who are parents or Governors of local schools can help to make the connections between mainstream and complementary schools; all teachers can work with national languages networks, such as the Association of Language Learning (ALL) or Routes into Languages, to share good practice and speak with a collective voice.

Complementary schools are a rich resource of linguistic and cultural knowledge, and they could play a significant role in the revival of language learning in the UK. It is therefore important to incentivise joint initiatives between complementary schools, mainstream schools and universities; such initiatives could help to challenge the monolingual mind-set, inspire an interest in languages and cultures from a young age, and help to build mutual understanding between communities.

The recent GCSE and A level reforms, with the introduction of culture, literature and film into the curriculum, open up opportunities for an enriched learning experience, which may inspire the next generation of language learners. The new 'A' level qualification in modern languages aims 'to enhance significantly candidates' linguistic skills in the language of study, and to develop their capacity for critical and analytical thinking on the basis of their knowledge and understanding of the language, culture and society of the countries of the language of study' (<http://alcab.org.uk/reports/>). This is a significant step forward and provides an opportunity to engage pupils in greater evaluation of the context of the languages they are studying. However, the fact that the focus is still on French, German and Spanish, with a reduction in the number of languages offered by our two largest exam boards, coupled with the fact that several community languages have been dropped, is a retrograde step. It is essential that the languages communities work together to present the case for languages, including community languages, as a core part of education within a global context.

A recent report commissioned by the British Academy observes that:

Languages (...) should position themselves as an essential part of core knowledge and behaviours, and show how learning a language is transformative, changing attitudes and behaviours, shaping and refining them, to enable young people to develop an international outlook, intercultural understanding and strong multilingual communication skills. These are the attributes of the global mind-set, which young people should develop, if they are to be competitive and successful in the global labour market, and happy and fulfilled individuals within society (Holmes 2014: 37).

Community language teachers can play an important role in this transformation of the languages landscape. Whilst there are still considerable challenges to the languages communities at all levels, evidence suggests that a diversification of the languages portfolio offered in schools, partnership working, the sharing of resources, and the innovative use of cultural context as part of language teaching are all part of the solution. The key challenge is to work together and engage with any opportunity to present the languages case with one voice.

NOTES

ⁱ Background on the Routes into Languages initiative can be found at: <http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/index.html>.

ⁱⁱ **Gallaher Brett, Angela** 2012 *Routes into Languages first-year undergraduate survey in England and Wales: students' prior engagement with languages outreach and enrichment activities*
https://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/sites/default/files/1st_year_ug_survey_2011_report_england_and_wales_final.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ There are no strong indications that lesser taught languages are gaining ground in the school system. However, the study of Chinese is increasing slowly from a small base, with three per cent of primary schools offering pupils the opportunity to learn Chinese, six per cent of state secondary schools and ten per cent of independent schools offering the language as a curriculum subject. However, in common with other lesser taught languages, its sustainability is not assured. (Holmes 2014: 116)

^{iv} In 2012, the European Commission carried out the first European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC) with fourteen member states taking part. The survey collected information about the foreign language proficiency of a representative sample of 54,000 European pupils at age 17. England was bottom of the table with only 9% of pupils achieving the level of an Independent User, defined as the ability to deal with straight forward, familiar matters (B1 or above) in Holmes (2014): 16.

^v The European Commission stipulates that: 'Every European citizen should have meaningful communicative competence in at least two other languages in addition to his or her mother tongue' (*Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: an Action Plan 2004 - 2006* section 1.1) and that 'the range on offer should include the smaller European languages as well as all the larger ones, regional, minority and migrant languages as well as those with 'national' status, and the languages of our major trading partners throughout the world' (1.6) <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52003DC0449>

^{vi} We are using a broad definition of community languages as 'languages in use in a society, other than the dominant, official or national language' (McPake, Sachdev et al. 2008: 6). The term community language has been challenged on the basis that it allocates inferior status to these languages in relation to Modern Foreign Languages although no alternative term has been generally agreed and it is therefore used in this paper simply to differentiate between Modern Foreign and languages spoken within the wider community.

vii Roger Taylor, Chair of the Open Public Services Network (OPSN): <https://www.thersa.org/action-and-research/arc-news/opsn-publishes-new-data-on-access-to-gcse-subjects-across-england/>

viii AQA will stop offering A Levels in Polish, Panjabi, Bengali and Modern Hebrew from 2016 <http://www.aqa.org.uk/supporting-education/policy/gcse-and-a-level-changes/structure-of-new-a-levels> and OCR will stop GCSE and A Level Dutch, Gujarati, Persian and Turkish <http://www.ocr.org.uk/news/view/%20redeveloping-gcses-and-a-levels-for-2017/>

ix ‘Future of community language qualifications secured’, Gov.UK (<https://www.gov.uk>)

x Teresa Tinsley has observed that, ‘we can see a very uneven picture, with some big increases in Russian, Polish and Portuguese, balanced by declines in Italian, Urdu and other Indian subcontinent languages’

<http://www.speaktothefuture.org/what-is-happening-to-languages-at-gcse/> .

AQA and OCR have recently closed a number of community languages due to low uptake, suggesting that there is low demand for these languages in the communities where they are spoken.

xi Free text comments by teachers allude to this issue in the *Language Trends* report:

‘Students perceive a language A level as difficult and due to some of the erratic marking over the past few years they have seen bright pupils gaining As and A*s in other subjects but coming out with one grade lower in Spanish. They do not want to risk it with more and more AAA offers being made by universities.’ (Board and Tinsley 2014: 96).

xii The nature of the learning situation will influence a student’s level of motivation. An interesting, devoted skilled teacher with a good command of the language, an exciting curriculum, carefully constructed lesson plans, and meaningful evaluation procedures will promote higher levels of motivation, other things being equal, than a teacher lacking in some of these attributes. (Gardner, 2005: 6).

xiii The North West Consortium, led by Manchester Metropolitan University, brings together the Universities of Liverpool, Manchester, Central Lancashire, Lancaster, Edge Hill and Chester, working in partnership with schools in the North West region. For more information see: <http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/northwest>.

^{xiv} A Routes North West INSET Day for Film in 2014 was attended by 15 Urdu teachers, 12 German teachers and 6 Italian teachers. At a recent Cornerhouse Languages day, there were 165 pupils for Urdu and 138 for German.

^{xv} There is a considerable body of research on the benefits of speaking more than one language in terms of mental agility. See, for example:
https://agenda.weforum.org/2015/03/the-advantages-of-speaking-two-languages/?utm_content=buffer75ef8&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer

^{xvi} There have been similar projects conducted in other parts of the country with very positive results. For more information on this see [Kenner, Charmian](#) and [Ruby, Mahera](#), 2013: 395-417.

^{xvii} Mother Tongue Other Tongue is a multilingual poetry project, sponsored by the Poet Laureate Dame Carol Ann Duffy as a Laureate Education Project and, last year, by boxing champion Amir Khan. In 2014-15 over 14,000 pupils took part. Pupils write a poem in their Mother Tongue (home language) or Other Tongue (foreign language) with support from student ambassadors from local universities. www2.mmu.ac.uk/mothertongueothertongue/

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