

Conference Report

Community and Lesser Taught Languages: Planning, Promotion and awarenessⁱ



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Peterborough, UK

Aim

The aim of the conference was to promote the COLT project, develop links and opportunities for involvement in the project as well as information dissemination, discussion and sharing good practice. The conference was aimed at Community Languages policy makers and language planners, complementary and mainstream school teachers and head teachers, researchers and doctoral students. The COLT project is a Consortium of five universities (Manchester Metropolitan University (lead institution), University of Manchester, University of Salford, University of Bolton, and the University of Central Lancashire) working together with organizations such as Aim Higher, Manchester City Council and the Specialist Schools Trust, as well as supplementary and mainstream schools in the region.

Speakers included, Dr Sharon Handley, Professor Itesh Sachdev, James O'Donoghue, David Mallows, Pura Ariza, Sarah Cartwright, Anthony Capstick, Craig Brown, Nilufar Chowdhury, Mohamed Elhaddad, Amy Wang, Stella Bullo-Alos, John Walker, Stephen Toal, Jo Wiggans, Juliet Park, GEE Macrory, Feixia Yu, Dr Amy Wang, Dr Gee Macrory, Elena Polisca, Caroline Foster, Charlie Pybus, Mourad Diouri, Qi Zhang, Joanne Eastlake, Ian Newby, Jim Anderson, Yu-Chiao Chung, Carmen Herrero, Naresh Chandla, Amy Wang, Robert Hamilton, Emine Cakir Surmeli, Julien Boast and Professor Richard Towell.

Brief accounts of the contributory papers are given below:

Contributors:

Dr Sharon Handley - Promoting Community Languages in the North West Region: The Community and Lesser Taught Languages (COLT) Project

Professor Itesh Sachdev - Valorising Community Languages

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James O'Donoghue and David Mallows - A Strategy for the Development of the Teaching and Learning of all World Languages

Pura Ariza - Bilingual Pupils and MFL: A Report on Pupils' Perceptions, with Implications for Practice

Sarah Cartwright - Our Languages: Promoting Community Cohesion through Diversity

Anthony Capstick - Language, Identity and Belonging in Lancashire and Mirpur

Craig Brown and Nilufar Chowdhury - Complementary and Mainstream School Partnerships: A Case Study

Mohamed Elhaddad - What are Supplementary Schools?

Amy Wang and Stella Bullo-Alós - Parental Attitudes to Language Learning in Arabic and Chinese Supplementary Schools: A Case Study

John Walker - Signall II: Raising the profile of Signed Languages within Europe

Stephen Toal - Urdu in HE Market Research: Process and Results

Jo Wiggins - Language Applicants to HE: Analysing the Statistical Evidence

Juliet Park - Triple Your Uptake! How NVQ Language Units can Motivate, Inspire and Raise Attainment

Gee Macrory - Promoting Diversity in Language Learning: The Role of Teacher Education

Feixia Yu, Dr Amy Wang and Dr Gee Macrory - Developing Chinese Classrooms in the UK: Some Implications for Teacher Education

Elena Polisca, Caroline Foster and Charlie Pybus - Supporting the Italian Studies Curriculum: The Holistic Approach of Manchester

Mourad Diouri - Visual e-Lingua: How to Empower New e-Learning Technologies to Support Visual Based Learning and Teaching of COLT Languages

Qi Zhang - A Pilot Study on British Students' Attitudes towards Mandarin Chinese and the Development of Intercultural Sensitivity through the Learning of the Language

Joanne Eastlake and Ian Newby - Towards a Critical Model of Teacher Education for Languages of the Wider World

Jim Anderson and Yu-Chiao Chung - Creativity in the Community Languages Classroom

Carmen Herrero - Using Film for Teaching Community and Lesser Taught Languages: Multiliteracies through Film

Naresh Chandra - Showcasing Good Practice in Teaching of Community Languages

Amy Wang, Robert Hamilton and Qi Zhang - To Film or Not to Film? A Case Study of using 'Little Red Flowers' on a Chinese GCSE Day

Emine Çakır Sürmeli and Julien Boast - Community Language Learning: From Three Different Perspectives

Professor Richard Towell - The Context of COLT

Dr Sharon Handley: *Director of Routes into Languages NW consortium and Head of the Languages Department, Manchester Metropolitan University.*

She presented the various aspects of the COLT project. COLT's (Community and lesser Taught languages) main project aim is to increase the up-take of community languages, especially to promote Urdu, Italian, Chinese and Arabic. The project has been enhanced through collaboration with Corner House Cinema to run film screenings with language workshops, which are open to schools free of charge. Project also developed a support network for teachers and managers planning to introduce Arabic, Chinese, Italian and Urdu into the curriculum. Project also offered language taster sessions and cultural activities. Initial data from schools suggests that events have increased the uptake of languages and that there is a demand for all of these languages in Higher Education. Supplementary schools are a rich source of linguistic and cultural knowledge, providing a pool of potential students and teachers as well as knowledge associated with the community cohesion agenda in schools; however, they are often struggling to survive on the edge of the education system. She said we believe that they can become part of a collective solution to a national problem if appropriate training and resources are put in place.

Professor Itesh Sachdev

Key note speaker and a leading community language expert focused on the value of developing the sociolinguistic capital latent in our communities in the context of globalisation and super diversity. He said "In the UK, languages in general are not valorised, and that's even truer of community languages such as Urdu, Mandarin, Arabic and Italian.....community languages bring a lot cultural currency and vitality to the communities that use them and beyond."

James O'Donoghue and David Mallows: *Project Managers, Languages in the Children's Workforce. Training and Development Agency (TDA) for Schools.*

The TDA study looked at a strategy for the development of the teaching and learning of all World Languages. They are investigating the similarities and differences between the pedagogy of teaching different languages, and looking at how the research could affect training structures and school structures, in order to respond to changing demand for languages in schools.

Pura Ariza

The report investigated the perceptions and attitudes of bilingual secondary school pupils studying a foreign language in the classroom. The study explores how bilingual pupils perceive their classroom based language learning, and whether this has particular implications for their use of heritage languages in school.

Sarah Cartwright

Highlighted the impact of complementary education on the attainment of bilingual pupils across the curriculum in mainstream schools. It has brought together community language teachers from both the voluntary and maintained sectors, academics, teacher educators and representatives from national agencies to promote the benefits of bilingualism and celebrate diversity.

Anthony Capstick

The paper sets out the methodology for capturing the flow of literacy practices across boundaries such as home and school as well as across national boundaries. The paper looks at an analytical approach which investigates the everyday language use of families in Pakistan and the north west of England, alongside the social institutions within which they are embedded.

Craig Brown and Nilufar Chowdhury

This presentation involved mainstream and supplementary school partnerships which would be mutually beneficial. Craig outlined some of the issues surrounding such partnerships, along with the benefits which the partnership had brought his own school, whilst Nilufar considered the benefits from the perspective of the supplementary school. Craig shared how this partnership acted as a catalyst for further developments such as a Pan-Medway Multilingual Poetry Day and what their plans are for the future.

Mohamed Elhaddad

The Supplementary Schools (SSs) are one way to help people settle and integrate within their new society whilst keeping their own beliefs: religion, language or culture. The research focused on two SSs in the context of valuing language, cultural diversity and academic achievement. It investigates the educational impact of the SSs aiming to discover whether the SSs are making, or can make, any contributions towards the improvement of BMEYP achievements, by providing a strong evidence base to help policy makers, educational agencies, and sponsors to understand SSs.

Amy Wang and Stella Bullo-Alós

The study analyzed parental attitudes in the learning of two heritage languages, Arabic and Chinese, at supplementary schools in the UK. The paper drew on empirical data of two focus groups run with Arabic and Chinese parents of supplementary school children in Manchester. The results of this paper had significant implications for supplementary school education in the UK.

John Walker

This paper explored SIGNALL II, led by the University of Sussex, where local, national and European communities were engaged to facilitate knowledge exchange and empowerment. This work fundamentally attempts to bring the local language user closer to the language planners, offering valuable lessons for moving forward.

Stephen Toal

This presentation looked at ways to involve members of the Urdu-speaking community in market research, particularly in relation to assessing demand for an Urdu degree. If such degree to be established, it would be the first of its kind in the UK.

Jo Wiggans

The workshop considered statistics, what they tell us about who applies for higher education language courses and how they can help to inform our outreach strategies to increase interest in, and recruitment to, languages courses. Aim Higher Greater Manchester regularly analyses data about the attainment and progression of young people through the stages of their education. Aim Higher Greater Manchester is a partnership of ten local authorities, 150+ high schools, 22 colleges, seven higher education institutions, plus work based learning providers, Connexions services and others. Aim Higher in Greater Manchester has a budget of more than £5million per annum and runs a targeted programme of interventions and activities to raise awareness, aspirations, attainment and support progression to higher education in schools and colleges with little or no HE heritage.

Juliet Park

This workshop introduced the main features of the NVQ, why it works so successfully, how business languages can be made pupil friendly and the steps necessary to set the pathway up in schools.

Dr Gee Macrory

This paper discussed language learners of all ages and that all languages are entitled to skilled and dedicated practitioners. He said in this country, some languages enjoy a much higher profile than others. We need to build upon the range of language skills that beginner and more experienced teachers bring to the classroom. Within the COLT project we have adopted a 'train the trainers' model in order to provide teacher training opportunities for teachers of Arabic, Urdu and Mandarin.

Feixia Yu, Dr Amy Wang and Dr Gee Macrory

This paper presented the preliminary findings of two innovative Chinese language teacher training projects. The focus of the paper was (a) supplementary and mainstream teachers' perceptions of effective teaching and learning and (b) an evaluation of the different elements of the teacher training courses they had followed.

Elena Polisca, Caroline Foster and Charlie Pybus

The paper presented an overview of, and to share good practice of, the measures adopted by Italian Studies at the University of Manchester, with regard to the challenges encountered by the lesser taught languages in the current languages climate.

Mourad Diouri

Explored the impact of using visual based technologies on learning and learners with a dominant visual learning style. The paper examined a case study, based on a three year project, to investigate how any foreign language can be taught using a blend of technology enhanced and traditional teaching methods.

Qi Zhang

This paper reported a pilot study on the attitudes of British students towards Mandarin Chinese and the development of their intercultural sensitivity through the learning of the language.

Joanne Eastlake and Ian Newby

Study looked at the Postgraduate Certificate by Portfolio in Teaching Languages of the Wider World. This course is directed at experienced language teachers that recognise that the teacher is the expert within their own context and language.

Jim Anderson and Yu-Chiao Chung

This paper reported on preliminary findings from a two year research project, currently in progress at Goldsmiths, University of London, entitled 'Creativity in the community languages classroom: pedagogies and professional development'

Carmen Herrero

Focus was upon the use of film in language classes and developing multi literate and intercultural skills, which are essential for living and working in a changing global society.

Naresh Chandla

This paper referred to a range of lesser taught languages taught in the City of Wolverhampton. Community Languages Panjabi and Urdu are offered and taught as an option in foreign languages at Key Stage 4 through City wide 14-19 provision at GCSE and A Level. He said we have produced resources and schemes of work to support supplementary classes which are on 'Our Languages' website.

Amy Wang, Robert Hamilton and Qi Zhang

Paper discussed their experience of using the film 'Little red flowers' on a Chinese GCSE day.

Emine Çakır Sürmeli and Julien Boast

The study focused on Turkish, the 7th most widely spoken community language in U. The panel shared their experiences looking from three perspectives:

1. Organizational and status arising
2. Pedagogical/ language teacher

3. Learner

Professor Richard Towell

In his concluding remarks, professor outlined the background which led to the setting up of the Routes programme, the nature of the activities which accompany COLT, and the specific role of COLT within the programme. He also discussed the role of languages in plural-lingual societies and the future of community languages in general.

Conclusion

I attended this conference as a trainee teacher along with my Edge Hill University Urdu tutors, Waheeda Qazi and Nuzhat Shah. Bursaries for teachers within the supplementary school sector and students were provided through Routes into Languages. Venue was excellent and location was easy to find. Overall conference was very informative and educational especially for me as a trainee teacher. I gained and gathered a lot of up to date information about my subject (Urdu). I especially benefitted from Stephen Toll sessions (Urdu in Higher Education). He revealed in his presentation that Urdu is the most widely used community language in England. There were nearly 6,000 entries at GCSE level in 2007 and over 500 entries at A Level of which a quarter were from the North West. I also read in the CILT (The National Centre for Languages) report 2005 that Urdu is spoken in sixty-nine local authorities in UK.

Considering the high demand of Urdu, Routes into Languages North West (RIL) proposed a combined degree (based at the University of Manchester) consisting of three pathways:

1. Urdu Language and Culture combined with a choice of sciences and psychology, social sciences or built environment.
2. Urdu Language and Culture combined with a choice of Historical Studies, Language and linguistics, literary studies and drama, Film studies, Philosophy and Religious Studies, Sciences and Psychology and Social Sciences.
3. Urdu Language and Culture combined with a choice of World languages, Translation studies, History and Religion, Cultural diversity, changing society and globalization and Eastern studies (Islam, Muslim societies, Indian philosophy and South Asian Art).

'Aspect' was commissioned to conduct a research of Routes into Languages to measure levels of interest in the course and to gain reactions to the Urdu degree pathways. 'Aspect' is also doing an online Urdu survey that can be accessed by the following link: <http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/northwest/news/1368>

All participants will get the opportunity to be entered into a prize draw to win a Nintendo Wii. Despite the cold winter weather, the conference was a great success and attracted a diverse audience composed of students, academics, journalists, and teachers. It was well organized but it would have been nice to see more student teachers to attend.

End Note

¹ Routes into Languages North West Conference, City Inn Hotel, Manchester, 18 and 19 November, 2009.