



Community languages in higher education

Towards realising the potential

Joanna McPake and Itesh Sachdev

with

Tessa Carroll, Teresa Birks and Anjoom Mukadam

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Executive Summary

Aim and methodology of study

The overall aim of this study was to map provision for community languages in higher education in England and to consider how it can be developed to meet emerging demand for more extensive provision. Community languages are defined as 'all languages in use in a society, other than the dominant, official or national language'. Most recent work on community language learning has focused on provision aimed at children of school age. We believe that this is the first UK study of provision in higher education.

The methods employed in this study included a literature review; a desk-based survey of 133 Higher Education Institutions in England; interviews (30) and workshops (110 participants completing surveys and engaging in focus groups) with a variety of stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally (including community language speakers, teachers, students, parents, employers, policy makers).

This data was analysed to set out clearly the range of languages for which provision is made and to describe the nature of this provision: to produce an account of the key factors influencing the development of appropriate provision; and to generate recommendations for HEIs and policy-makers concerned with languages in higher education.

A history of discrimination

The history of community languages in England since the 1960s, when policy-makers and education providers first began to address the implications of immigration from Asia and the Caribbean, has been one of discrimination and assimilation. While considerable emphasis has been placed on ensuring that immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers living in the UK learn English, there has been less attention to maintenance and development of community languages. This is despite the fact that decades of research point to the benefits of plurilingualism (a person's ability to speak

more than one language) for the individuals concerned and for societies.

Benefits of plurilingualism

Findings from several decades of research into plurilingualism (i.e. competence in several languages, rather than just one) show that there are considerable benefits both for the plurilingual individual and for a society which promotes plurilingualism among its members, if community languages as well as the dominant language are supported. For the individual, plurilingualism is known to produce cognitive advantage (Bialystok, 2001), to improve performance on a range of tasks related to educational attainment (Ricciardelli, 1992), including acquisition of literacy (Kenner, 2004), to facilitate the learning of additional languages (Cenoz & Valencia, 1994) and to delay the effects of ageing on the brain (Bialystok et al., 2006). There are economic advantages for societies in which adults can use more than one language in commercial contexts (CILT/ InterAct International, 2007) and social gains to be derived from ensuring that public services are linguistically accessible to all (Corsellis, 2001). People who grow up speaking more than one language in their daily lives therefore have the potential to gain personally but also to constitute a valuable resource for wider society.

'Community' versus 'foreign' language learning

We distinguish community language learning from foreign language learning on the basis of the learner's opportunities to learn the language in question in informal circumstances (in the home, in the community, as a result of time spent living in another country) before beginning formal study, at school or subsequently. Community language learners may also have different goals – often a wider range of goals – from foreign language learners: in addition to using their community languages to enhance their prospects for careers with an international dimension, in support of further study, or for cultural engagement, community

language learners may also be concerned with developing identities or planning careers with communities who speak the same language, in the UK or elsewhere.

Thus this study does not focus on provision for specific languages in higher education – any language can be a community language if it is in use among people living in the UK – but rather on provision specifically targeting community language learners and geared to their linguistic needs and aspirations.

Most provision is for foreign language learners

Our research showed that there is currently provision for 81 languages, as degree components or modular courses, in English universities, but most of this is organised for foreign

“Community language learners are often discouraged or bared from joining courses on the basis that provision is not suitable for them”

language learners. Community language learners are often discouraged or barred from joining courses on the basis that provision is not suitable for them. There are a small number of modular courses specifically designed for community language learners.

There were no degree courses in the four most widely used community languages in England: Urdu, Cantonese, Punjabi and Bengali, although SOAS will offer a degree course in Bengali from autumn 2008. There are, however, professional and postgraduate courses which require advanced levels of competence in these and other major community languages, for example in initial teacher education and translation and interpretation.

Meeting needs and aspirations

Community languages students and their teachers identify three key reasons for engaging in higher level study of community languages: enhanced career and business opportunities; furthering intellectual ambitions; and enabling learners who have had limited opportunities for academic success to gain recognition for an area in which they have achieved a high level of competence, as a way of opening doors to higher education more generally.

Not all providers are convinced that community languages should be accommodated in higher education, some arguing that demand is limited and at a low level, and better catered for in other sectors, or that making such provision could open their institutions to charges of social bias. Other providers recognise the potential both for enhancing their institutions' international profile and for supporting the widening access and participation agenda.

Teaching and learning

Devising effective provision for community languages presents providers with significant challenges, as pedagogies specifically designed for the teaching of community languages are in their infancy.

Few providers have mechanisms to assess students' competence in their community languages when they start a course, or to investigate their goals, and therefore few have a comprehensive picture of the nature of the demand or how to meet it. As a result, it is difficult to establish the qualities required in community languages teachers in higher education and to recruit suitable staff, or to identify effective teaching resources.

Actual and potential students are concerned about the quality of provision, which does not always conform to their vision of university level teaching.

A small number of providers are actively addressing these issues and seeking to develop distinctive provision which meets the needs and aspirations of community language learners.

Professional education

Two fields in which there is currently professional education specifically targeting community language learners are education and public service translation and interpreting. Although demand for professionals in both fields is increasing and growing numbers of community language speakers express interest in qualifying to work as teachers or interpreters, many are discouraged by low pay and precarious work conditions.

Providers of initial teacher education courses for community languages teachers encounter a number of logistical barriers. Resolving these difficulties requires a very high level of commitment on the part of those responsible for these courses.

Very few higher education institutions offer sustained professional courses in public service interpreting and translation. There is considerable scope for a more substantial contribution from academia to an area which requires high-level language proficiency, sophisticated communication and mediation skills, and specialist applied linguistics input.

Policies and strategies

The principal policy arguments put forward to justify and expand provision for languages in higher education are:

- a multilingual workforce is needed for the UK to maintain and enhance its share in international business;
- the study of other languages brings intellectual and cultural benefits and contributes to global citizenship;
- skills in other languages are now, and will increasingly be, essential to participation in the information society.

Strategic decisions and funding for course provision are based on these perceptions of the needs and aspirations of

21st century graduates. These apply equally to community as to foreign languages. In many contexts, community languages add value by providing opportunities for greater diversification of languages in use and by ensuring that the UK profits from existing linguistic and cultural knowledge.

Making provision for community languages can also contribute to universities' widening access and participation agendas, but should not be seen as valuable solely for this reason.

Advanced level competence in community languages is also valuable in the context of an increasingly multilingual UK, in support of businesses and services targeting minority ethnic communities, and social and cultural initiatives within and beyond these communities such as the 2012 Olympics. The support of higher education providers is needed to ensure that community languages skills are developed to a professional level.

Recommendations

We propose a **broader vision** of language learning which encompasses the interests of community and foreign language learners, breaking down artificial distinctions between the two areas and benefiting all learners, whatever their background and whatever their goals.

Our recommendations specifically concern **improving provision** for community language learning in higher education, but should also contribute to the development and embedding of this wider vision.

We recommend that a series of awareness raising activities be initiated among providers, among policy makers and politicians, and among linguistic communities, to draw attention to the benefits accruing from investment in community languages.

We recommend extensive reform of current provision for community languages in higher education, in terms of degree level provision, modular provision and provision for professional education for teachers and public service interpreters.

We recommend that the main national policy-making bodies and decision-makers with responsibility for languages within HEIs adopt the broader vision for languages set out in this report, and thus ensure that community languages are systematically included in the development of rationales for provision and in strategic decisions which ensue. **Further research, both policy-related and academic, is required to support this work.**

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

This report forms part of the Routes into Languages initiative funded by the Higher Education Funding Council in England (HEFCE) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The overall aim of the initiative is to increase and widen participation in language study in higher education, by fostering closer collaboration between the secondary, further and higher education sectors and developing languages curricula in the areas of community languages, enterprise, and engagement with major international events. This report was jointly researched and written by the Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (Scottish CILT) at the University of Stirling, and the SOAS-UCL Centre for Excellence for Teaching and Learning 'Languages of the Wider World' (LWW CETL).

1.2 Aims and methods

The study set out to map higher education provision for community languages, defined as 'all languages in use in a society, other than the dominant, official or national language' (McPake et al., 2007). In England, where the dominant language is English, some 300 community languages are in use (CILT, the National Centre for Languages, 2005), the most widespread being Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Cantonese, Arabic, Turkish, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese, Gujarati, Hindi and Polish.

Provision for some of these languages is relatively well-established at secondary school level, where GCSE, A/AS and A-level examinations and qualifications through the Asset Languages scheme are currently available in 25 languages, and in further education. Complementary providers (out-of-school classes run by local groups) are known to cater for over 60 languages (CILT, 2005). This study investigates opportunities for those who have studied a community language during their school or college careers – whether formally, at school or college or in complementary classes, or informally through family connections or periods of time spent in a country where the language is spoken – to continue this within higher education.

The aim of this study is to map provision for community languages in Higher Education, with the intention of:

- examining the extent to which current provision responds to the language needs and potential of England's increasingly multilingual population;
- considering how provision can be developed to meet emerging demand for greater diversity in language provision in the business, public sector, and aid and development fields.

The methods employed in this study included a literature review; a desk-based survey of 133 Higher Education Institutions in England; interviews (30) and workshops (110 participants completing surveys and engaging in focus groups) with a variety of stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally (including community language speakers, teachers, students, parents, employers, policy makers).

1.3 'Community' versus 'foreign' language learners

The coining of the term 'community languages' is generally attributed to Clyne (1991) who devised the term to refer to languages in use among people living in Australia, other than English (the dominant language) and the indigenous (aboriginal) languages. It is widely used in both Australia and the UK to refer to the languages of populations of immigrant origin. In England, the term has traditionally been associated with communities of non-European origin in England.

However, any language is potentially a community language – the term is not restricted to particular languages or categories of languages (e.g. 'non-European' languages or 'minority' languages). **In England, any language in use, other than English, among families or other groups of people living here, can be defined as a community language.**

Languages such as French or German will be community languages for some, even though they are likely to be 'foreign' languages for most people in the UK who may use these languages abroad, or when communicating with foreigners visiting the UK. Conversely, some of the most

widely used community languages in England, such as Arabic, Russian or Portuguese, are also foreign languages for some.

In this study, we are concerned with the distinction between foreign and community language learners. **The defining characteristic of community language learners is that they have opportunities to use the language in informal contexts within their own ‘communities’, however defined** (McPake, 2006). Thus community language learners typically have a degree of oral fluency when they first begin formal study of the language, but lack literacy skills; they may speak a non-standard variety of the language, or may have high levels of competence in certain domains (e.g. religion) but have limited ability in domains such as those commonly taught in the early stages of foreign language learning.

In contrast, foreign language learners typically first encounter the language they wish to learn in a classroom as ab initio (that is, starting from no knowledge at all) learners. They usually develop spoken and written skills in tandem, although in recent decades the emphasis has tended to be on the spoken language. Also, acquiring fluency in the spoken language is a significant challenge for those with limited opportunities to hear the language in use or to converse with fluent speakers. Foreign language learners, particularly those learning other European languages, typically progress in a predictable way, following examination syllabi. This is not necessarily the case for community language learners who may have very different levels of competence across the four skills (e.g. high levels of oral fluency, low levels of literacy) and within skills (e.g. extensive conversational vocabulary but limited understanding or competence in formal forms of the spoken language).

Community language learners and foreign language learners **may also differ in terms of their goals.** Foreign language learners typically wish to learn a foreign language in order to study, travel or work abroad or to communicate for either personal or business purposes with foreigners, or perhaps because of an interest in other cultures and ways of thinking. On the other hand, community language learners may wish to strengthen their cultural identities, gain the skills to participate more actively in social or cultural processes relevant to their communities, or improve communication with relatives who do not speak English but who may be living in the UK, in other diasporic communities, or in countries where their languages are

widely spoken. They may also wish to acquire the skills which would enable them to use the language for work purposes, in the UK with communities who speak the same language, or abroad, in similar ways to foreign language learners.

1.4 Methodology

There were three phases to the research for this project:

- Phase 1 mapped existing provision for community languages in English HEIs. In this phase a literature review, a desk-based survey and provider interviews were conducted.
- Phase 2 built on these initial findings by conducting a workshop (Workshop A) where the needs of a variety of stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally were considered. A survey was conducted along with a series of interviews with teachers and others involved in community language teaching, students in higher education, other community language learners, employers and other stakeholders.
- Phase 3 involved analysis of the data collected in Phases 1 and 2, a workshop (Workshop B) where the preliminary recommendations were presented, and the writing of this report.

The majority of the participants in Workshop A worked in educational contexts (e.g. schools, further and higher education, AimHigher; Schools Inspectorate, etc.), though participants from other institutional contexts including local government, the health services, and the private sector were also represented. A large number of community languages were represented.

Participants outlined a series of advantages and drawbacks concerning community language provision. Advantages included valuing and developing community in-group identity, valuing societal diversity and social cohesion, and enhancing socio-cognitive skills development (including employability in the context of globalisation). The main drawback was perceived to be a serious lack of resources and quality.

The findings revealed that the needs and aspirations of community language learners (e.g. status of community languages, identity-cultural needs), teaching and learning issues (e.g. materials, teacher-training) and aspects of provision (resources, sustainability) were the main challenges facing community languages in higher education. When participants were specifically asked about the **main challenges for teachers and learners of community languages, teaching and learning issues were key.**

Chapter 2: A map of provision for community languages

2.1 Current language provision

What opportunities are there for people to study their community languages in higher education? This chapter maps – or describes – current provision for all languages taught in English colleges and universities; and then focuses more closely on the twelve languages most likely to be studied as community languages, rather than, or as well as, foreign languages.

Because our definition of community languages depends on the learner's background rather than the particular language, we cannot, a priori, focus on a specific set of languages. French and German are community languages for some learners, though undoubtedly foreign for most, while Arabic and Russian are foreign languages for many UK students, and community languages for others. It is likely that the majority of those studying Urdu, Bengali or Punjabi are community language learners, but they may be foreign languages for some.

The map reveals that **there is currently provision for 81 languages in English HEIs**, as degree components, professional certificates or diplomas (usually postgraduate) or modular courses. Provision for language study within higher education is very diverse. While degree studies (single or joint honours courses, and degrees including 'major', 'subsidiary' and 'minor' elements) continue to be a key form, many HEIs have developed institution-wide language programmes (IWLPs) or other forms of modular provision which enable all students to study languages, either as credit-bearing units in a very wide range of

degrees, or on an extra-curricular basis (i.e. they do not count towards degrees). Some university-based courses leading to professional qualifications include a language element either as a compulsory or as an optional element of the course. In addition, many colleges and universities now make provision for the wider local community to study languages, for example through evening classes or provision tailored to business requirements.

2.2 Languages spoken by school children in UK

Unfortunately, there is, at present, no accurate way of establishing how many languages are currently spoken by people living in the UK, nor how many people speak each language. The UK Census collects information on ethnicity, but not on people's linguistic affiliations. As a result, the data collected in 2003-2004 on the provision for community languages for children of school age, conducted by CILT, the National Centre for Languages, Scottish CILT and CILT Cymru, remains the most accurate indicator of the range of languages in use by the school population in England.

The CILT data show that 288 languages were in use by schoolchildren in England in 2003-4. Although we cannot say which languages have the greatest number of speakers (as few local authorities collect this information) we can say which are the most widely spoken (i.e. those recorded in the greatest number of local authorities). Chart 2.1 shows the twelve most widely spoken community languages across England.

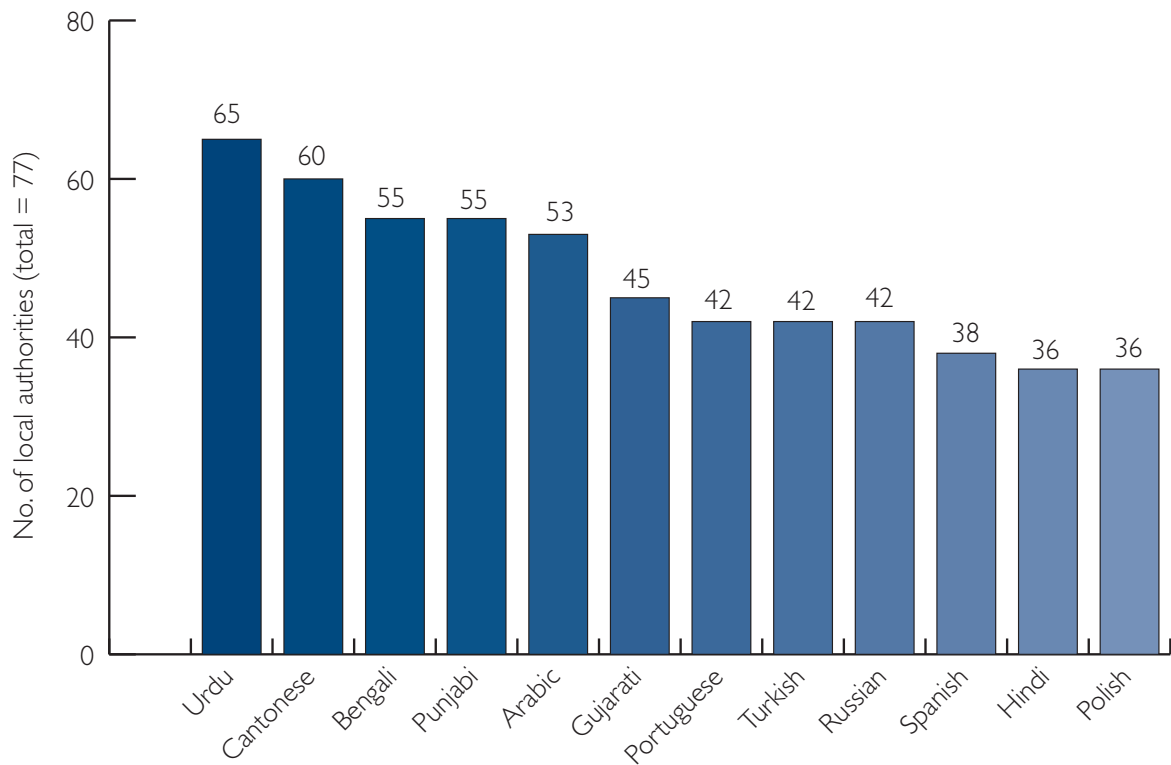


Chart 2.1: Most widely spoken community languages, 2003-4

Community languages studied in school

The survey also found that there is provision for children to study 61 community languages in complementary classes and that 35 community languages are taught in mainstream schools. Mainstream schools principally teach the languages for which GCSE, AS and A-level examinations exist. Chart 2.2 shows the numbers of presentations in the main community languages for GCSE and A-level examinations in 2007.

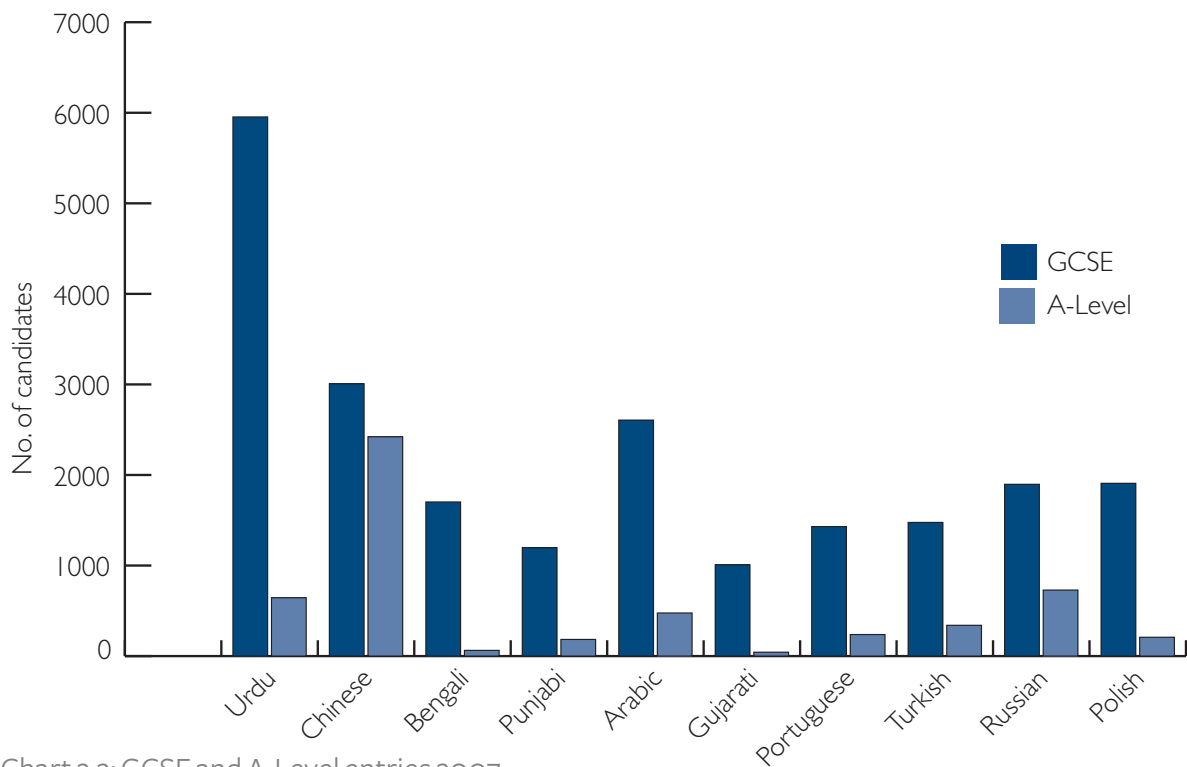


Chart 2.2: GCSE and A-Level entries 2007

These data show that, excluding Spanish, Urdu, 'Chinese' (which includes Cantonese and Mandarin, with separate oral examinations) and Arabic have the highest number of presentations at GCSE, but that at A-level, Chinese and Russian outstrip Urdu. The total number of A-level presentations in these languages in 2007 was 5,347, indicating considerable potential numbers in a good position to continue their studies in these languages in higher education.

The 'retention rate' (i.e. the percentage of students continuing from GCSE to A-level) for most of the languages listed above is high. The retention rate over all languages (i.e. including French, German and Spanish) from 2005-07 was 7.5%. Retention rates for languages likely to be studied as community languages are considerably higher: for example, Chinese (78%), Polish (51%) and Russian (42%). Only Bengali (3%) and Punjabi (4%) have retention rates below the overall figure. This indicates that community language learners can, generally speaking, be regarded as committed students, and potentially good candidates for continued study of these languages in higher education.

Regional variations in GCSE and A-level entries

There is considerable diversity, both in the numbers of students

presented and in the linguistic patterns, across the UK. While the North East has few community languages entries, London has the highest number overall. However, there are more entries for Urdu in Yorkshire and the Humber; the West Midlands and the North West than in London; and, although Urdu has the highest number of entries overall, it is not the dominant language in the East Midlands (where there are more entries for Gujarati), London (Bengali), the South East (Chinese) or the South West (Chinese). Almost all entries for Portuguese and Turkish come from the London area. These regional variations suggest that **universities making provision for community languages should take into account the languages most likely to be in demand locally.**

2.3 Community languages in higher education

With these points in mind, we now turn to the question of which languages can be studied in higher education, the types of course available and the target students. Taking the twelve languages identified above as the most widely spoken and studied community languages in the UK, we can see that patterns of provision for these languages contrast quite markedly with patterns for the main languages likely to be studied as foreign languages, as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Provision for main 'community' and main 'foreign' languages, 2007

Languages	No. of HEIs making provision	Degree level study	IVLIP/modular provision	Professional	Wider community
Urdu	16	0	8 (50%)	7 (44%)	5 (31%)
Cantonese	8	0	4 (50%)	1 (12.5%)	6 (75%)
Bengali	4	0	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	2 (50%)
Punjabi	4	0	4 (100%)	0	3 (75%)
Arabic	52	13 (25%)	37 (71%)	12 (23%)	36 (69%)
Gujarati	1	0	1 (100%)	0	1 (100%)
Portuguese	39	16 (41%)	23 (59%)	12 (31%)	24 (61.5%)
Turkish	17	5 (29%)	9 (53%)	4 (23.5%)	11 (65%)
Russian	50	16 (32%)	36 (72%)	15 (30%)	33 (66%)
Hindi	4	2 (50%)	3 (75%)	0	2 (50%)
Polish	24	3 (12.5%)	17 (71%)	6 (25%)	14 (58%)
Spanish	93	63 (68%)	76 (82%)	54 (58%)	56 (60%)
French	99	66 (67%)	80 (81%)	61 (62%)	59 (60%)
German	89	59 (66%)	78 (88%)	50 (56%)	58 (65%)

Languages such as French, German and Spanish, unsurprisingly, are more widely taught than the main community languages. In contrast, courses in Urdu are taught in 16 universities, while Punjabi, Hindi and Bengali are taught in 4, and Gujarati in 1. **For the four most widely spoken community languages in England – Urdu, Cantonese, Punjabi and Bengali** – there are no degree courses available, despite the fact that these languages **have been well-established in the UK since at least the 1960s**, and that substantial numbers of secondary school children have studied these languages to A-level. There is, however, some modular provision for these languages, and they form components of certain professional qualifications, such as Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) courses and diplomas in public service translation and interpretation. The latter courses require advanced level competence in these languages, begging the question of how this can be acquired when there are no degree programmes.

Very few universities have specifically targeted community language learners or developed provision designed to meet their needs. Lack of awareness of the needs and aspirations of community language learners undoubtedly causes barriers for those who would like to study these languages at university level. Often those who have informal skills in the language but no qualifications are assigned to ab initio classes, which can be frustrating when learners already have a certain level of competence, and may lead to drop out. Conversely, those who have GCSE or A-level qualifications may be refused entry to courses which assume an ab initio start, because they are 'too good' for the class. It seems that providers very rarely make provision to assess candidates' language skills at the outset and assign them to appropriate levels. Providers seem unwilling to allow learners with existing skills to go straight to an intermediate or advanced class, on the basis that classes composed of students from different year groups would be difficult to manage.

Where there is provision which specifically targets community language learners, most commonly this takes the form of postgraduate professional courses for community languages teachers and public services translators and interpreters. A total of 16 languages are provided for in these qualifications.

The existence of this type of provision presents a paradox. Language teaching, translation and interpretation are all jobs requiring advanced linguistic competence. But limited opportunities to study the most widely used and taught community languages to degree level means that it is

difficult to identify and recruit students to these postgraduate courses, and thus students on these courses often need substantial additional support to improve their language skills, making them labour intensive to run. Given that there is demand for teachers, translators and interpreters specialised in community languages, there is a clear need for degree level provision to prepare candidates for these roles.

Four universities offer other types of courses tailored for community language learners. SOAS offers courses in Arabic, Bengali, Kurmanji, Somali and Urdu literacy for speakers of these languages who have not had the opportunity to learn to read and write them. King's College London runs courses in basic literacy in Arabic for those who already speak the language, and a course on reading the Arabic press for those who speak varieties of Arabic and want to develop their competence in modern standard Arabic. Warwick puts on summer courses in conversational Arabic for those who have studied Qur'anic Arabic. Imperial College London, King's College and SOAS all offer courses in Mandarin language and literacy for speakers of Cantonese.

2.4 Implications of changes in student numbers

Consideration of how best to improve provision for community languages needs to take into account more general trends in provision for languages in higher education. One potentially significant trend is the rising numbers of students studying Spanish and some of the major world languages such as Arabic and Chinese, accompanied by a fall in the numbers studying French and German.

National statistics on student numbers relating specifically to languages are collated by CILT, the National Centre for Languages. A key problem with these data is that languages are grouped together in very broad categories, particularly as the 'Other European' and 'Other non-European' categories contain very large number of students.

Analyses of trends in student numbers from 1996 to 2005 show a decline in the number of students accepted on languages degree courses generally. Although the numbers of students of French and German fell, this loss was almost compensated by a rise in the numbers studying Spanish and 'Other European' languages in particular. Table 2.3 summarises UCAS data for this period and includes data for 2006.

Table 2.3 Students accepted on language degree courses 1996-2006

Language acceptances	1996	2001	% change 1996 - 2001	2005	% change 2001 - 2005	2006
French	5555	4077	-28%	3964	-3%	3700
Spanish	2155	2331	10%	2547	9%	2461
German	2288	1736	-24%	1503	-13%	1401
Italian	837	786	-6%	639	-19%	610
Russian and Eastern European	418	380	-9%	425	12%	409
Modern Middle Eastern Studies	214	260	21%	362	39%	378
Chinese	165	165	0%	352	113%	392
Japanese	272	249	-8%	331	33%	306
Other Asian Studies	161	171	6%	142	-17%	118
Portuguese	128	117	-9%	118	1%	141
Scandinavian Studies	65	36	-45%	57	58%	19
African Studies	54	57	6%	57	0%	67
Other European	2200	1507	-32%	1667	11%	1647
Other non-European	2514	1900	-24%	1248	-34%	1185
All	17123	13772	-20%	13412	-3%	12834

(CLT, 2007) analysis of UCAS data. UCAS figures give potential first year students only and should not be compared with HESA figures, which count all students across all years of study.

These data suggest a tentative interest in a wider range of languages than was the case ten years ago, perhaps reflecting globalisation and greater awareness of the value of learning languages which give access to areas of emerging economic and political importance, such as China, Russia and the Middle East. As many of these languages are community languages in the UK, they suggest that the time is ripe for the development of courses which allow community language speakers to take advantage of a new interest and new opportunities in these parts of the world.

2.5 Implications of shift from languages degrees to IWLP enrolments

Another potentially significant trend is that, while numbers of students taking degree level language courses have declined over the last decade, the numbers taking credit bearing modules currently stand at some 83,000 students, six times as many as are taking language degrees. In addition, demand for extra-curricular language courses is outstripping the demand for courses assessed as credit-bearing modules. This may point to a need for such courses to be offered by all HEIs to fulfil the needs of students who:

- want to learn a language for both professional and personal reasons;
- want to learn a language outside of their main studies whilst recognising the importance of language learning as both a means to an end (professional development), and an end in itself (personal development);
- are willing to pay for this activity.

These developments suggest that languages in higher education are shifting from degree study for students wholly or partly dedicated to this subject area, to modular study for students from a wide range of subject disciplines.

These findings raise the question of the best way forward for community languages. Although there are no degree courses in the main languages in use in the UK, there is a range of IWLP and professional courses, and courses targeting the wider community. Such provision goes some way to ensuring that community language learners who wish to graduate in other subjects also have the opportunity to formalise their language skills and gain accreditation of potential use for future careers. Nevertheless, it is still important to encourage providers to set up degree courses too. Without such courses, it will be difficult to find teachers with sufficiently advanced level skills to teach community languages on IWLPs.

Chapter 3: Meeting needs and achieving potential

3.1 Investing in community languages

Linguistically, the UK and Ireland occupy a unique position in Europe. With English increasingly recognised as a 'global language', our European neighbours need to invest substantial amounts of curriculum time – at all levels of education – in ensuring that their inhabitants become highly proficient in the international language of communication, commerce, science and political discourse. But countries where English is the dominant language can, many believe, dispense with a comprehensive second language education policy because their inhabitants are at a natural advantage.

This widely-held view has been challenged, however, by a number of studies which argue that other factors need to be taken into account. For example, there are more speakers of Chinese than any other language around the world, and, as the Chinese economy expands, the dominance of English around the world may be threatened (Graddol, 1997; 2006). Furthermore other languages, notably Arabic, Hindi/Urdu and Spanish, closely followed by Russian and Portuguese, are strong competitors. In a world where 'everyone' (in reality, probably around 25% of the world's population) speaks English as a first or additional language, competence in these other languages is likely to constitute a 'competitive edge'.

Less heralded but equally significant, however, is the fact that the UK and Ireland are among the most multilingual countries in Europe: some 300 languages are in use in the UK and over 150 in Ireland (McPake et al., 2007b). This means that we have the potential to develop high levels of proficiency in a very wide range of languages. A relatively small investment in provision at higher education level could reap substantial rewards, given that community language learners are already proficient to some degree

and often very committed language learners.

UK policy has already recognised the changing context for language learning. The *Nuffield Languages Inquiry (Languages: The Next Generation, The Nuffield Foundation, 2000)* argued persuasively that in the 21st century, English will not be enough for individuals setting out in their careers and for businesses seeking global success. Many different languages are needed – not only French – and these will include both the major 'world' languages of Asia and Latin America, and languages of local significance. As the UK becomes increasingly multilingual, the other languages of new and well-established communities will play an important role in local business, public services and tourism and have the potential to expand the scope of international trade into developing markets. **The Inquiry expressed concern that the range available in educational institutions was narrowing at precisely the time it should be expanding.**

The *National Languages Strategy (DfES, 2002)* argued that languages are increasingly important not only for economic reasons but also because they contribute to the cultural richness of society, to personal fulfilment, to mutual understanding and global citizenship. The *Strategy* argues that to realise England's languages potential, there is a need to develop mechanisms which formally recognise competence in community languages as well as the languages typically studied at school. Furthermore, the decline in the numbers of students taking languages degrees has contributed to the designation of languages in higher education as 'strategic and vulnerable' subjects by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE, 2005), with a particular emphasis on what are termed 'minority' languages in the UK – broadly speaking, Eastern European, Middle Eastern and Asian languages

3.2 Meeting employer needs

Recent findings by CILT on the employability of languages graduates include:

- executive recruiters see competence in at least one other language in addition to English as 'critical' for business success in Europe, Asia and Latin America, and that plurilingual executives have 'significant competitive advantage';
- language skills are required at every level of business, not just in the professional and managerial echelons;
- there is a clear correlation between good business practice in relation to languages and increased turnover;
- a lack of language skills prevents UK businesses from tapping into developing markets (where English is less likely to be used), despite the fact that these have greater potential than mature markets for economic growth.

(CILT, 2005c)

Employer demand is for a wide range of languages, with the major European languages in the lead, but Chinese, Japanese, Arabic and Russian and eastern European languages on the increase (CILT, 2005b). For **some companies interviewed for this study**, the specific languages were immaterial, as was whether languages had been learned as a community or foreign language: they **saw students with languages as more flexible and adaptable, more likely to appreciate the need for intercultural communication skills and more able to build relationships with counterparts or clients in other countries.**

Strong cases can thus be made for making provision for these 'world languages', particularly Mandarin and Arabic. Some providers of degree courses in these languages noted high levels of take-up among students for whom these are not community languages for precisely this reason. However, achieving high levels of competence in such languages from an ab initio start, even for those who study these languages to degree level, is a major challenge for learners. By supporting community language learners, the UK has the potential to produce graduates with a very high level of competence in languages for which there will be increasing demand.

In addition to work for companies or organisations with a high international profile, there is a wide range of local opportunities for community languages speakers, including teaching and community liaison work, public service translation and interpreting and other public service work, and community-based journalism (particularly radio), which

has recently experienced significant growth. Businesses catering for the needs of communities living in the UK also seek employees who can speak the language well. For instance, according to CILT (2005b), two thirds of independently owned shops in the UK belong to people from minority ethnic groups who are likely to have complex multilingual needs.

However, employers involved in all of these areas report a very substantial skills gap. Plurilingual public service workers need to have a sophisticated command of specialised linguistic domains in community language(s) and English. Journalists need well developed communication and literacy skills and the ability to handle sensitive issues for the communities they serve, balancing different perspectives. These journalists can play important roles in social cohesion, for example Punjabi and Turkish local radio stations addressed community relations after the World Trade Centre attacks in New York and the London Transport bombings. These are not, therefore, jobs which community language speakers can take up simply by virtue of the language skills they have acquired informally: **they need opportunities to develop their community languages for professional use.**

3.3 Student perspectives: rationales for studying community languages

Many community languages students wish to realise the economic potential of their languages, particularly those such as Mandarin and Arabic for which, as noted above, there is growing employer demand. Both Arabic and Mandarin present some problems in this regard, **however, as many students have** studied varieties which are significantly different from the standard or elite form or have, for example, **strong oral fluency but weak literacy.** The courses they attend need to take into account the particular needs of these potentially high achieving students. Beginners' courses in these languages which assume no knowledge at all are off-putting for these students – or indeed they may be barred from taking part because of their existing competence – and thus fail to engage them or retain them. However, there appear to be few courses specifically designed for such students and opportunities to capitalise on their existing commitment and expertise are therefore very limited.

Some students wish to develop their community language competence in higher education for intellectual rather than

purely economic reasons. They are interested in studying cultural or social aspects of the countries associated with their languages and argue that to do so requires them to be highly fluent and fully literate in these languages. Such aspirations are valuable - the British Academy argues that a lack of language skills adversely affects the quality of British scholarship:

We are deeply concerned about the effect that a decline in language learning is having upon UK scholarship — and not just in language based subjects. It is already possible to see the negative consequences of this trend at doctoral level, and above. Increasingly, research projects undertaken by UK PhD students in the humanities and social sciences do not have an international dimension because students do not have the language skills, or the time to acquire them, with the risk that UK research will be increasingly insular in outlook.

(British Academy, Response to the Dearing Review Consultation on Language Policy, 2006)

Such students were critical of much current provision, arguing that courses of community language study should be as intellectually demanding and stimulating as any other higher education course. The precarious nature of much provision and low rates of pay for tutors were understood to impede the engagement of the best qualified teachers.

Improving provision of community languages in higher education can act as a trigger to engagement with academic study in other fields for those lacking in confidence or with very limited family or community experience of higher education. Such students might have previously struggled academically because their schooling had been disrupted or because limited competence in English in their first years of living in the UK had prevented them from acquiring the qualifications that would allow them to go on to further study.

3.4 Provider perspectives: identifying and responding to demand

Why is provision so limited, when policy thrust, employer demand and the existence of potential students are clearly identifiable? Three factors appear to be influential:

- few providers have done market research in this area and are therefore largely unaware of local needs and demand;
- there are perceptions of tensions between what

providers perceive to be very local concerns and the espoused goals of their institutions to become 'world class' universities;

- for those providers who do seek to make provision, there are a number of challenges both in rethinking models of language provision to match the needs and aspirations of community language learners and in resourcing such provision.

Strikingly, many participants in our research held that there was little or no demand. Some argued that this was because there was already extensive provision elsewhere (in schools and in adult education), or else that low demand reflected low status of the languages in question among the communities themselves. It was, however, clear that few respondents had conducted systematic market research to establish demand (or the lack of it). The target market for these courses was seen as beginners, people with no knowledge of the language who have nevertheless identified a need to learn them. **Students** for whom these are community languages **are not targeted because they are thought not to have the business or professional interests** for which the courses are designed. **This is a problematic position** because, as we have seen, **this assumption conflicts with what actual and potential students have told us.**

Furthermore, **university languages departments have** long nurtured **international links** by virtue of the subject area with which they are concerned, **but these links are often overlooked by senior management** (Footitt, 2005). There appears to be a parallel in the case of community languages. Certainly, those with an interest in these languages may have local and community specific reasons for doing so, not least the realisation that there are local jobs for which highly developed skills in the languages in question would be valuable. But by default, **all community languages have links to the wider world, not only the countries from which the languages originate but, in many cases, diasporas around the world.** Supporting the learning of these languages, helping students make and develop these connections, could in fact support universities' ambitions to become key players in the fast developing higher education markets of the Far East, the Indian sub-continent, the countries of the former Soviet Union, the Middle East and Latin America, all areas with which the UK's community language speakers have links.

These differences between learner and provider perspectives suggest an urgent need for market research

investigating potential interest, particularly among school or college students of community languages seeking to continue their studies in higher education, as this group constitutes a major source of students already committed to formal study of the languages in question.

3.5 Provider perspectives: meeting needs and aspirations

Language politics also present a significant challenge for those wishing to offer community languages. Providers with extensive expertise in community languages draw attention to the need to understand the ways in which social power imbalances affect community language learning. English sits at the top of the linguistic hierarchy, affecting community languages in ways which have some parallel with the experiences of foreign language providers. It is well-established that interest in learning languages such as French and German is waning not only in the UK where there is a widespread view (despite the best efforts of the Nuffield Inquiry) that 'English is enough'; but also internationally, where **the ascendancy of English language learning is accompanied by a decline in interest in studying other languages.** The effects of this worldwide

phenomenon are exacerbated for community language learners in the UK by a politically-motivated insistence on the importance of speaking English as the key to integration in British society, often accompanied, explicitly or implicitly, by negative views concerning the value or usefulness of the other languages in use.

These kinds of views have had a negative impact on provision, both in terms of devaluing the achievements of those who have studied community languages at school, and of discouraging people from continuing to study them.

Learners – or potential learners – may have received few positive messages about the value of their languages in the past and may also be embarrassed or dismayed about language loss, particularly when in the presence of 'native speaker' teachers only recently arrived in the UK from the country of origin.

While challenges to providers undoubtedly exist, there are examples of successful provision based on a detailed understanding of the local context, the learners' needs and the potential for outcomes valued by the students themselves and potential employers, as shown in the following case study.

Case study: Community Languages at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)

SOAS is the only HEI identified in our desk research that makes explicit reference to provision for community language learners. This case study focuses on provision for Somali, Bengali and Chinese, to illustrate the ways in which courses have developed to suit the needs of learners of different languages.

Somali

In addition to offering ab initio courses in Somali for students without prior experience, classes in Somali literacy are run for those who speak the language fluently but have not had the opportunity to learn to read or write. Many people of Somali origin came to the UK as refugees from the 1970s onwards. Few are literate in Somali due to very limited opportunities, but many Somalis are committed to becoming literate in the language and to gain access to the culture of a country which some of them have never had the chance to visit.

The success of basic literacy classes in Somali has led to the establishing of advanced classes in formal usage (which includes

grammar and vocabulary expansion and the development of translation skills) and literature and culture. Although these classes are open to those not from the community, who began as ab initio students, only a few are able to reach this advanced level, as the community language learners, once they have acquired basic literacy, progress much more rapidly.

Bengali

Literacy classes in Bengali are offered to community language learners living in London. The success of these classes has led to the decision to offer a degree in Bengali, from autumn 2008, with multiple entry points, so that ab initio students, those with GCSE Bengali and those with A-level Bengali can start the course at appropriate levels. This will be one of the very few degrees to be offered in one of the UK's main community languages to cater for students who have already reached A-level standard. Community language learners without formal qualifications will be placed in the beginners' class because the tutors feel strongly that they need a good grounding in formal aspects of the language, but they

expect the course to benefit from the mix of foreign and community language learners.

Chinese

The Chinese courses offered at SOAS include classes in Mandarin and Cantonese, with opportunities also to study Hokkien, Hakka and Shangainese when there are sufficient numbers of students. Around a fifth of the students (20%) have cultural links with China: they may be of Chinese origin or have a Chinese partner. Their competence in the language is assessed when they register, and a wide range of courses is available at different levels, to cater for

different needs. However, the co-ordinators deliberately avoid creating separate classes for students who speak fluently but are not fully literate, because this would isolate them; rather, they seek to integrate them with other students. There are courses in Mandarin for Cantonese speakers, where a very different teaching approach is needed; cultural courses taught in Chinese are available for students defined as 'native speakers'; and specialist courses in Mandarin for lawyers and for business which require a very high level of competence, and are thus aimed either at those who already have a degree or have acquired high levels of competence as community language speakers.

There are similar plans for a course in Urdu as part of the IWLP offered at the University of Sheffield. In contrast to the other courses which could be defined as 'foreign' language studies, Urdu has been chosen as a language of

relevance both to the local community, where there is a need for qualified teachers of Urdu and translators and interpreters, and as an important world language.

Chapter 4: Learning and teaching

4.1. Prior learning experience and the need for differentiation

The teaching of community languages requires pedagogical approaches which differ, in some important ways, from those used to teach foreign languages. In particular, they need to recognise and respond to **pre-existing cultural, educational and linguistic differences among the learners**, differences which will, in most cases, be greater than those found in the typical foreign language class.

Community language learners will, by definition, have had some prior experience of the language informally and, in some cases, through formal provision in mainstream schools or complementary classes. They may also have had the opportunity to study in a country where the language is used as the medium of instruction. Many students will have reached a high level of oral competence, and some may have developed literacy skills. Any given intake is therefore likely to contain students with very different linguistic skills. In some cases, it may be possible to run separate classes which focus on different skills, at different levels of ability: some students who are orally fluent may need to acquire basic literacy, while others may be interested in developing more specific areas of competence, such as academic literacy, or the professional language relevant to future careers, e.g. legal terminology, an understanding of business language practices or journalistic writing. Community languages students themselves are aware of **the need for differentiation and suggested pre-course assessment** leading to appropriate placement.

Students were critical of what they perceived to be standard practice in IWLPs: that the first course to be offered should always be at beginners' level, with others to follow if demand is generated. Some course providers recognise that this is a problem, but seem not to feel that it can be resolved, while others have taken action, aware that they risk losing students if provision does not meet their needs:

Community language speakers often try to join beginners' courses because they do not have reading and writing skills and so would be behind at lower intermediate level. Potential students are assessed in the four language skills through a needs analysis form, and those who speak fluently but are not literate are offered a more suitable course if available. Any such students who slip through tend to give up after about three lessons because the classes are not suitable.

(Language Centre Co-ordinator)

Students and teachers of community languages in mainstream schools, complementary classes and colleges are concerned that, in the case of languages where it is possible to sit GCSEs and A-levels, there are few opportunities to pursue their interest in these languages beyond this point to degree level:

There is definitely a dire need for those who do A-levels to be able to pursue their studies further.

(Examiner)

One possible solution is to make links with universities in countries where the languages are widely spoken, to enable students who have already reached A-level standard to progress in the language through distance learning, with accreditation from the overseas university. This is already happening with some of the languages of the Indian subcontinent.

Different entry points is another solution: SOAS will, from 2008, run a degree course in Bengali which will have three different entry points: ab initio, post GCSE and post A-level, recognising that there is a need, and demand, from school students who have reached A-level standard by the time they leave school.

Such provision also needs to demonstrate **sensitivity to imbalances of power and prestige** amongst speakers of the

language offered. For example, most Bengali speakers in the UK are of Bangladeshi origin and therefore likely to wish to acquire the standard form used in that country. This in itself represents a challenge, as many UK Bangladeshis trace their families back to the rural region of Sylhet where a variety markedly different from the standard form is in use. They are unlikely, however, to wish to learn the Bengali of West Bengal, in India, despite the fact that this has traditionally been regarded as the most prestigious form. Provision which fails to recognise such issues is likely to alienate community language students.

4.2 Diverse purposes for community language study

Community language learners have not only a wide range of prior learning experiences, but also the purposes for which they wish to study a community language vary considerably. For some, the decision to return to studying their community language can come when they start a family of their own and realise that they wish their children to learn the language, even though they themselves may not be fluent.

Students' goals overlap to some extent with those on foreign language courses, in that they see a role for their community languages in the careers they wish to pursue. But the emphasis can be different: a greater interest in aid and development work abroad, or social services in the UK than might be the case with traditional foreign language students. In this context, they may be joined by ab initio learners who have identified **a need for skills in community languages** because of the work they already do, or plan to do in future. **In the UK** these professions include **teachers, doctors, police, social work, health professionals, ethnic minority achievement teams, lawyers; abroad**, this includes **journalism, business development, diplomatic health work**.

In the case of specific languages, particular political contexts mean that demand can fluctuate over time: for example, the demand for Somali has recently increased considerably due to the younger generation of refugees who arrived in the 1980s now wanting to acquire literacy in their language (Lecturer). But precisely because of these histories, students can be particularly committed to retaining or developing skills in a language which circumstance have prevented them from acquiring in the country of origin. These courses provide a rare chance for these students to study their own language and culture to higher levels.

4.3 Developing suitable pedagogical approaches

Thus the pedagogical approaches adopted for the teaching of community languages need to reflect both the learners' different prior language histories and the range of goals. This is a challenge for all providers, for **there is as yet no shared view on ways of catering effectively for such diversity**. For some of those offering community languages via IWLPs, the key seems simply to be flexible and well prepared, while others place the emphasis on the acquisition of formal language skills, rather than communicative competence which many students will already possess. Once these formal skills have been acquired, community language learners can pull away quite rapidly from ab initio learners who may initially have joined them in the beginners' classes.

One experienced provider summed up what was needed as a 'modified second language approach' and argued that developments in second language acquisition theory and its implementation in foreign language classrooms are, in fact, bringing foreign language learning and community language learning closer together:

The growing emphasis on intercultural competence and integrated language and content learning coming into foreign language teaching is far more applicable [than models which focus on tourism and transactional language] to community language teaching. [...] A modified second language approach is most appropriate for community language teaching, taking into account prior knowledge and experience. (Course co-ordinator)

But there is still considerable work to be done both in developing pedagogical models and in applying them, particularly given the fact that **numbers alone will require most providers to run mixed ability classes** combining community language learners with a wide mix of skills and aspirations, and ab initio learners.

4.4 Staffing

Bearing in mind the pedagogical factors described above, finding suitable staff to teach community languages in higher education is a major challenge for providers. The ideal teacher should be:

- highly qualified in terms of formal knowledge of the language;
- highly experienced in teaching the language;
- familiar with the language teaching approaches favoured in the UK;

- familiar with the cultural context in which the language is used, in the UK and in the countries where the language is widely spoken.

However, these requirements present barriers for many of those who seek community language teaching posts. Those who have been educated in the UK, and who are therefore familiar with UK teaching approaches and with the contexts in which the language is used here, are not always able to develop their linguistic proficiency to a suitably high level because of the lack of such courses in the UK: **for example, it is not possible for Chinese teachers based in the UK to go beyond A-level themselves, as virtually all university Chinese courses are aimed at ab initio learners.** In contrast, potential teachers who have come relatively recently from a country where their language is widely spoken, and who may have high level language and teaching qualifications, may have been trained according to quite different pedagogical principles. If appointed, they may need support to adjust to learning and teaching expectations in the UK.

Providers have found a range of solutions to these issues.

In the absence of formal qualifications, some providers ask potential tutors to undergo a practical teaching assessment as part of the recruitment procedures. Elsewhere, policy has been to identify good teachers, whether or not they possess formal qualifications, and to ensure that they receive appropriate support and training once they have started work. There is widespread recognition of the need for professional development for new and experienced teachers alike, and **some providers identify the need for a shared cross-sectoral approach between schools, complementary schools and HEIs**, particularly as many tutors work in mainstream and complementary schools as well as in higher education.

However, the fact that **most community languages tutors** (along with many foreign language tutors employed on IWLP courses) **are paid hourly** makes it difficult to introduce or sustain professional development. Staff may quickly find better paid work elsewhere, and turnover can therefore be high. **Hourly paid staff cannot be asked to take part in professional development courses unless they are paid to do so**; in fact, some programme directors pay a fee to tutors for participation in such courses. One university had a policy of starting courses on a sessional basis, but moving staff on to full-time employment when course numbers had built up. In another, fractional contracts were offered to all IWLP tutors. In both cases, programme

directors noted that the shift had improved recruitment and retention. Using graduate students who are native speakers of the community languages sought is another option, although they too are likely to require training and support.

4.5 Resources

Finding suitable resources for teaching community languages in a higher education context **is another major concern.** Most providers reported very considerable difficulty in this regard, as few UK publishers address the needs of this group of learners. In the absence of other sources, teachers find themselves using materials devised for younger learners, those for adult ab initio learners (typically self-study textbooks such as Teach Yourself), or materials published in the country where the language is spoken. Few of these types of resources are regarded as adequate.

Some providers had identified solutions. The Internet and satellite TV can be very useful sources for the kinds of texts which learners would be interested in studying. Tutors also produce a lot of their own materials. But **there is a fundamental need for the basic tools which are well developed for languages which have a long history of being taught in higher education in the UK**, but are lacking for more recent arrivals. One lecturer is currently working on a new Bengali grammar, due to be published in 2009. This will be the first substantial Bengali grammar in English in many years. It will provide a descriptive analysis of the modern language, in contrast to traditional grammars of the language, which deal with the origins and morphological development.

There have also been some preliminary moves to set up a network of providers offering the same languages within the UK, which might be able to facilitate the developing and exchanging of materials. **Universities offering courses in British Sign Language are already collaborating on curriculum design**, with funding from the Higher Education Academy, with the aim of making this available online; this may be **a model which other languages could adopt.**

4.6 Certification

Both students and providers identified a need to **review certification** in community languages. From the point of view of students, particularly those studying on IWLP courses, **failure to offer certification** on completion of courses **is a disincentive**, particularly when students are

aware of the difficulties of persuading employers to recognise community language competence as an achievement rather than something acquired 'naturally'. It is difficult to offer appropriate certification when students start courses with different levels of competence, meaning that some students could easily meet assessment requirements while others might require years of work to achieve the same level. One respondent suggested that certification should reflect progression rather than pre-determined outcomes, and that flexible degree courses should be able to incorporate such an approach.

Employers, however, are looking for detailed evidence of the linguistic competence of their potential employees, particularly where the job relies on high-level language skills, as is the case with interpreting and translation:

There is a need to have levels of competence acknowledged, e.g. through the Languages Ladder, and to look at different kinds of competence – spoken, written, formal etc. It is important that qualifications such as the Languages Ladder and the European Language Portfolio are used and recognised by employers. Interpreting needs higher level skills that can be developed by people with community language skills with less effort and investment than by those starting from scratch.

(Interpreting agency employer)

Employers are therefore likely to be less interested in certification which measures progression rather than level of competence achieved. Students looking to enhance their CVs are also expected to prefer this.

Chapter 5: Professional education

5.1 Community languages professions: demand and obstacles to supply

Professional courses enabling community language speakers to use their skills, either as **teachers** of their languages or as **translators and interpreters, are the most developed sector of provision for community languages**, as these are fields in which there is a high level of demand. Both seek to recruit people who are not only highly competent in specific community languages but also familiar with the UK contexts for communities speaking these languages. This entails sensitivity to different language varieties and cultural differences, as well as a commitment to public service.

Despite periodic government announcements that community translation and interpretation services are to be curtailed (in order to encourage non-English speakers to learn English), it appears that demand is increasing, sometimes to levels where public services cannot cope.

This is not surprising as the numbers of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers coming to the UK have increased significantly in the last decade (Eurostat, 2005; Vertovec, 2006). However convinced of the importance of English, newcomers cannot learn the language instantly. It is not surprising that as they settle into a new home, they require social service support of various kinds, or that this is likely to entail translation and interpretation, at least at first. Moreover, even those who have a degree of fluency in English, and who are able to use the language for social encounters and in the specific context of the work they do, may find themselves struggling when required to use the language in unfamiliar situations (such as coping with serious illness, involvement in legal proceedings or discussions about their children's educational progress). In such contexts, it can be important to understand exactly what is said, including nuances of expression or implicit

meanings. Thus skilled interpreters who can convey these both in English and in the community language in question are essential.

Similarly, it appears that there is growing demand for community language teachers in part as a result of the relaxation, in 2007, of legislation concerning the range of languages which schools could offer. In addition, there is greater awareness in schools, particularly in inner cities, that teachers who speak community languages can play an important role in liaising with the different communities that they serve. There is considerable interest in teaching careers among community language speakers too. For refugees who were teachers in the countries they left, the possibility of teaching their language, of maintaining their cultural heritage, and of passing it on to the next generation, can be particularly attractive.

However, among those involved in encouraging community languages speakers to take up these opportunities, **there is considerable concern about the low levels of pay for teaching and translating/interpreting work, and the precarious nature of such jobs**. Some schools stand accused of exploiting community language speakers' skills and refusing to reward them financially, particularly when the teacher offers two quite different specialisms, such as maths plus a community language. It is, of course, also the case that many complementary school teachers, fundamental to the survival of community languages, are volunteers, and thus unpaid. There is therefore little incentive for these teachers to gain qualifications (and many have full-time jobs in other sectors) and it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit new teachers. Undergraduates studying community languages are well aware that these careers may lack status as well as being badly paid.

Some education specialists are sceptical about the depth of government commitment to community languages,

suggesting that the recent publicised expansion of the range of languages which schools can offer is more about the introduction of certain major world languages, particularly Mandarin, as foreign languages:

Community languages still have low status. The government is making noises about community languages but there is a difference between valuing them (as mentioned in the Dearing report) and promoting and investing in them. The government (particularly Lord Adonis) is saying positive things about complementary schools and promoting Mandarin, but as a foreign language. While Dearing recommended promoting Mandarin and Urdu and schools teaching Mandarin appear frequently in the media, there has been no media coverage of Urdu. No one is talking about Hindi, the national language of India, the other economy often quoted as likely to dominate the 21st century. [...] There is also an argument for promoting community languages for community cohesion and breaking down barriers, but there is no big push on this.
(Ofsted Inspector)

These concerns about the viability of careers as community languages teachers (or teachers with community languages) and public service translators and interpreters **constitute a significant obstacle** for those offering professional education in these fields.

5.2 Initial teacher education in community languages

Two key factors encouraged teacher education providers to set up Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) and the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) courses in community languages:

- the publication of the National Languages Strategy (DfES, 2002);
- the introduction of flexible PGCE courses by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), also in 2002.

Since political commitment to this field waxes and wanes, provision before this period had been sporadically available: for example, in the 1980s the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) actively promoted community language learning, and 12 languages were taught in ILEA schools, supported by an inspectorate and advisory service. Much of this provision was lost when ILEA was abolished in 1990.

In 2007, Ofsted conducted a review of provision for community languages in schools and of initial teacher education for those wishing to become community languages teachers. The authors investigated current take-up for PGCE and GTP courses in community languages (Bengali, Chinese, Gujarati, Japanese, Punjabi, Turkish and Urdu). A number of difficulties were encountered: several advertised courses were not running, and the available information changed frequently and seemed unreliable. These factors were thought likely to discourage potential candidates from pursuing careers in this field. **The authors also found that many of the PGCE courses were 'fragile'**, dependent on the dedication of particular individuals; if they were to leave, the course was likely to close. Thus they found several examples of courses which had run for a couple of years and then been discontinued, or courses which were theoretically available but did not run every year. In 2006-2007, there were 35 trainee teachers on five community language PGCE courses.

The authors also identified a number of logistical challenges. First among them was the question of students' linguistic competence. Given the lack of degree level study in community languages in the UK, course providers needed to find other ways to determine the competence of potential candidates in the languages they sought to teach. As many would not have had extensive opportunities to study these languages formally, providers were likely to have to invest more time in supporting students' linguistic development than would be expected of providers of PGCE modern languages courses. This was a hidden cost which was often borne by course tutors and lecturers in terms of unpaid additional input.

Second, the authors of the report noted that most courses were full-time, and this posed problems for many potential students, who tended to be mature entrants to the profession and often hoped to qualify as teachers part-time whilst in employment.

Third, because of the difficulty of finding full-time posts teaching solely community languages, several courses encouraged or required students to train to teach a major European language as well, but this operated as a disincentive as relatively few community language speakers had studied European languages to a suitably high level. Some providers had sent community languages students on extension courses to learn French or German, so that they could offer a second language.

Ofsted recommended more flexible provision in which students could train to teach a community language and another curriculum subject (not necessarily another language) such as maths or ICT, where there were currently teacher shortages. This would improve the employability of community languages teachers and would have cross-curricular potential. However, they noted that the TDA was currently moving away from flexible PGCE courses of this type because they were more time-consuming and expensive to run.

Other respondents confirmed that many of the issues raised by Ofsted created barriers to recruiting and supporting students on these courses, and identified some additional problems. For example, **placements are extremely difficult to set up**, partly as a result of the 'chicken and egg' situation facing community languages in

schools. Despite growing demand, few schools currently offer community languages, and they may not be able to provide placements that enable students to experience the full range of teaching situations. **But unless more community languages teachers can be trained and appointed, there will be no way of expanding provision.** Moreover, community languages are affected in the same way as foreign languages by the general decline in uptake for languages in schools; in particular, this can make it very difficult for student teachers to gain opportunities to teach beyond Key Stage 3. (CILT's 2007 Language Trends survey reported that fewer than 50% of English secondary schools now offer languages for all students in Key Stage 4.)

A case study of the PGCE course at Goldsmiths College, London, illustrates how one institution has sought to overcome these obstacles.

Case study: Community Languages PGCE Course Goldsmiths College, London

Through the Flexible Secondary PGCE in Community Languages, Goldsmiths aims to support inner city London schools and communities. The PGCE in community languages was set up in 2002. Before that, staff on the PGCE modern foreign languages programme had been keen to support students who could combine French with a community language, particularly Arabic or Turkish, by giving them at least some experience of teaching the community language as well.

Initially the course offered Arabic, Mandarin and Punjabi, then Urdu was introduced in 2004. This language selection was determined largely by the availability of specialist expertise, resources, mentors and placements. There is demand for speakers of all four languages locally, nationally and internationally, with particularly rapid growth in demand for teachers of Mandarin. Bengali, Turkish and Gujarati are also being considered.

The flexible aspect of the PGCE in Community Languages is crucial. The course consists of supported self-study modules, school-based experiences, and a small number of compulsory college-based workshops and individual or small group tutorials. Students can take up to two years to complete the course. Students are mainly native speakers of the languages they plan to teach, and were typically educated overseas, but are now resident in the UK. They are mainly female, with an average age of 37

(compared to 27 on the one-year intensive Standard PGCE Secondary MFL). They often have existing family commitments, and they may already be teaching their community language in a complementary school.

Previous teaching experience in the UK or overseas can be taken into account in terms of teaching practice requirements. Students do not have to offer a second (European) language although some students take extension courses in other languages. However, students are encouraged to combine their main language with training to teach English as an Additional Language (EAL) and graduates from the course are ideally placed to offer EAL support in future posts. The emphasis in all the courses is on pedagogy, but the students' language skills are also audited. They also take part in events organised by CILT and other national networks. Most graduates go on to teach in state-maintained or independent secondary schools, while some also teach in complementary schools.

All the students accepted so far have some knowledge of the language as a community/family/heritage language. This may change as more non-native speaker students graduate with UK degrees in Mandarin, but only if there is good progression from school to university so that graduates can teach up to A-level. Currently, this is not the case, and those who have applied so far do

not have this level of expertise. The College is considering expansion into primary teaching, as it already offers a successful PGCE in primary level Modern Foreign Languages; this would possibly be in Arabic and Mandarin.

All the tutors are native speakers of the relevant community language. They are specialist link tutors, experienced in teaching to secondary level, and specialist school mentors. They have full-time jobs elsewhere and are released to work for Goldsmiths through voluntary tutor hours. While some pupils are effectively learning the language as a 'foreign' language — particularly for

Arabic and Mandarin — others are bilingual. Thus, teachers have to cope with widely differing levels of literacy in the same class. This represents a major challenge for new teachers.

Goldsmiths is now the largest provider of community languages in a PGCE, but there are concerns. The long-term sustainability of community language teaching depends on what happens in schools and in government policy. Currently much depends on the commitment of individuals, particularly headteachers' awareness of and support for languages.

5.3 Professional education for public service interpreters

For those working with community languages and English there are two professional routes into careers in public service interpreting and translation:

- university accredited courses (most of which are for postgraduate students);
- the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI), offered by the Chartered Institute of Linguists (IoL) at first degree level.

The IoL sets and administers the DPSI examinations but does not itself run courses to prepare candidates for them. These are offered by a range of further, higher and adult education institutions. Numbers seeking the DPSI qualification have increased threefold over the last ten years (there were 1,091 candidates in 2007), an indication of the growing demand in this field, and 53 languages are currently offered.

Five universities offer courses leading to the DPSI – De Montfort University, Goldsmiths College, London Metropolitan University, Middlesex University, the University of Bedfordshire and the Salford University – covering 15 languages in total. These are all part-time courses, usually one day or one evening a week. Two of these universities – London Metropolitan and Salford – offer other translation and interpreting courses potentially of relevance to community language speakers:

- London Metropolitan University offers a postgraduate certificate, diploma, and MA in interpreting, including public service interpreting, along with conference interpreting and remote interpreting. The range of languages available includes Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian,

Japanese, Russian and Spanish. Other languages are sometimes offered, depending on demand.

- The Salford University offers a number of undergraduate and postgraduate courses in interpreting and translating, principally in the major European languages. There is also a BA in Arabic/English translation and interpreting, and postgraduate diplomas and MAs in Arabic and Chinese translating with interpreting. These courses are regarded as preparation for professional translation or academic careers. There is no mention of public service work.

For those working in the field of public service interpreting and translation, **there is frustration at the lack of interest shown in this area by HEIs**. While the DPSI is seen as valuable, it is more suitable as a formalisation of the skills of practising interpreters than as a training course for those new to the profession. Our case study of Praxis, an organisation supporting immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, provides a stakeholder perspective on what is needed.

Case study: Praxis – supporting the integration of new UK residents

Praxis is a community-based charity in East London providing advice, support, education and training to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Its work is rooted in concepts of human rights and community development. Almost all the staff are bi- or multilingual in a range of languages.

A key area of the organisation's work is providing support and training for those wishing to become public service interpreters and their trainers and assessors. The three central elements of their courses are:

- mother tongue development for native speaker interpreters, including literacy development, different registers and language domains, terminology, other/standard dialects, and overcoming a history of language oppression;
- glossary development for specialised fields;
- intensive courses/tuition for those with fairly advanced skills in other languages to reach native-like levels of competence.

There is considerable scope for Praxis and similar organisations to work with HEIs in joint delivery of courses of this kind. With funding from the European Social Fund, Praxis developed a training package for public service interpreters which could be offered as part of a foundation degree, but they do not have the funding or vehicle to run this themselves. However, it has the potential to be offered at several centres across the country and as a distance-learning course.

Current HEI provision to support public service interpreting or other professional use of community languages is very weak. There is a pressing need for universities to open up progression routes, so that people can continue to study their community

languages in higher education, even if only at a subsidiary level. If HEIs were to enter into greater dialogue with employers who need community languages and potential employees, who already have the basic skills, they could identify gaps and develop provision to meet demand. Praxis and similar organisations could act as brokers between universities and communities. Opening up HE resources – libraries, language labs etc. – to the voluntary sector, FE colleges etc. would also be helpful, and encourage more people to consider degree level studies.

Interpreting is a very competitive field with many divergent attitudes and perceptions, particularly between conference interpreters and public service interpreters. Conference interpreters on the international circuit have higher qualifications and are much better paid than public service interpreters. For this reason, there is a particular need for HEIs to support professional development for public service interpreters, to campaign for higher standards, and to challenge the persistent view that unqualified interpreters are acceptable.

There is a need for government recognition of the importance of public service interpreting, not only in legal contexts, but in all other areas of public services. There will always be a need for interpreting given the ongoing immigration into the UK. Trained interpreters have valuable skills in mediating across communities and ensuring that public services meet their obligations to the public. Cutting back on professional (suitably qualified and experienced) interpreters is a false economy, while using untrained interpreters is really a waste of public money.

In summary, two types of action are required on the part of those seeking to promote community language learning in higher education. First, they need to draw attention to the wide range of (potentially better paid and more prestigious) **careers** in which skills in community languages are considered to be an asset: these range from **international finance, media, law, aid and development, trade, diplomacy and defence**, in addition to **public service careers**. The 'employability' characteristics of graduates with foreign languages apply equally to those with community languages: for example, all language learners can be expected to be **sophisticated communicators**, to be **aware of the need for cultural sensitivity**, and to have **effective problem-solving and critical thinking skills**. These are core competences which all

employers seek and are **typical of all graduates with advanced skills in other languages**.

Second, it is important to change the realities of careers in teaching community languages and public service translation and interpreting, given that there are currently severe shortages of qualified and committed professionals. This entails ensuring that professional education is – and is seen to be – as challenging and as rigorous as similar education for foreign language teachers or conference interpreters; and further entails a drive to establish the professional status of qualified practitioners and the advantages – in terms of quality and therefore, ultimately, of value for money – of employing them.

Chapter 6: Policies and strategies

6.1 Making the connections: foreign and community languages policy in higher education

Since the publication of the Nuffield Inquiry in 2000, considerable attention has been paid to the UK's language needs in the 21st century, and to the role which higher education should play in ensuring that today's graduates are equipped with the linguistic knowledge and skills which they will need both for career purposes and for other aspects of their adult lives. Three lines of thinking can be discerned in this policy debate, each of which is significant in terms of the development of higher education policy:

1. the role which languages play in **business and other economic activity**;
2. the intellectual and cultural benefits of language study, including their contribution to **citizenship**;
3. the importance of language skills in the **development of the information society**.

6.1.1 Languages and business

A key policy focus, not only for languages but for higher education more generally, is the increasing internationalisation of business and the need to recruit graduates competent to operate in an international context and deal with international markets (Gillingham, 2006). Markets where there is potential for growth will benefit from development of the UK's capacity not only in the major European languages – French, German and Spanish – but, critically, in some of the less widely taught languages, ranging from Polish and Portuguese in the European context, to Chinese, Arabic, Hindi/Urdu and Russian internationally. All of these languages are widely used as community languages in the UK, and there is thus potential to reach high levels of competence very quickly, giving UK businesses the chance to be at the forefront of commercial development in parts of the world where these languages are spoken.

In addition to business, skills in different languages are required in careers ranging from diplomacy, defence and development, to media, education and public services. These arguments apply not only to languages graduates but also graduates in other disciplines with language skills, acquired via IWLP provision (Footitt, 2005).

While French, German and Spanish will remain important in all of these contexts, the ability of diplomats, aid workers, journalists or the police to draw on a much wider range of languages in the different contexts in which they work is now – and likely to remain – critical to their success. These arguments hold equally for foreign language learners as for community language learners, but community language learners 'add value' in this context. **The wide range of languages in use in the UK** means that sectors of the population already have pre-existing interests and competence in many of the less widely taught languages. It **provides the UK with a head-start, particularly in relation to languages such as Chinese, Hindi/Urdu or Arabic** which require many years of dedicated study from ab initio learners before high levels of competence can be achieved. We need to make use of all the resources we have, given the low level of linguistic competence currently (DfES, 2002).

Studies of graduate employability have established that, apart from competence in specific languages, the kinds of skills which languages students develop in the course of their degrees – problem solving, critical thinking, communication, team work, interaction – are all highly desirable attributes. **Modern linguists are seen as more flexible**, able to consider employment in a number of fields, and to move within these in the course of their working lives (British Academy, 2004). Furthermore, many linguists' motivation for choosing such disciplines have been found to stem from a wider interest in and enjoyment of the intellectual stimulation and cultural insights associated with

these subjects (Allan, 2006). These advantages are not associated with specific languages and therefore apply equally to languages studied as foreign languages as to those studied as community languages.

6.1.2 Cultural and intellectual benefits

The argument that cultural and intellectual benefits accrue from language study is well established. Higher education students expect not only to gain knowledge and experience of professional value to them but also to engage in work which is intellectually challenging and which broadens their cultural horizons. This is as true of those studying languages as community language learners as it is of foreign language learners.

Despite the current emphasis on employability in higher education policy debate, it would be a mistake to believe that intellectual and cultural activities are a luxury we can no longer afford. As we saw in Chapter 3, the British Academy is concerned that the lack of language skills among postgraduate students, in any given discipline, puts UK research and scholarship at risk: students who can study and communicate their ideas only through English are likely to have a narrow, Anglo-centric view of their field and may not be able to identify or engage with leading or challenging work in other languages. While the major European languages will remain valuable, it seems likely that many community languages will grow in importance as the countries with which they are associated become more powerful economically. **As the 21st century progresses, we will need academics competent in Chinese, Arabic, Russian, Hindi/Urdu and some of the major African languages** to understand and engage with the economic, political, environmental and developmental shifts already predicted for this century. Support for the learning of these languages now is thus likely to be a good investment.

There is also the potential to link the new cultural perspectives acquired through language study to growing policy interest in ensuring that students develop a sense of themselves as global citizens. Universities have an important role to play in ensuring that the **next generation of graduates** is equipped to respond in an informed and positive way to this role, acting as **global citizens, finding global solutions and communicating across boundaries**.

In fact, business schools are already aware of the importance of teaching **the principles of intercultural communication skills**. Although business schools do not always require their students to learn a language as a

consequence, linguists who understand these issues 'from the inside' are needed to inform this work. Community language learners, often well used to the role of cultural intermediaries between the people and culture associated with their community language and Anglophone society, can provide valuable 'insider' insights. Migrant communities in the UK have substantial knowledge of their home cultures that is largely untapped.

6.1.3 Languages and the information society

Terms such as information society, knowledge economy, or network society have all been used to describe the shift in the late 20th century from economies and societies based on the production and exchange of material goods and resources to a world in which knowledge and information play an increasingly important role economically and more widely in society. In particular, the work of Castells (2000) and Barney (2003) has drawn attention to the growing importance of communication via digital networks as a transforming factor for the 21st century.

The implications for language learning are only beginning to be identified. In the 1990s, as use of the World Wide Web gathered momentum, virtually all content was in English. However, over the present decade, this situation has changed significantly. In 2001, it was estimated that approximately 80% of the Web's content was in English. The most recent figures (November 2007) show that English now accounts for only 30%. This puts English still well ahead of its closest rival, Chinese (15%); but the balance of linguistic power has clearly shifted and is likely to continue to do so, given that the 2006-7 growth rates on the Web for languages such as Chinese (470%), Spanish (332%), French (410%), Portuguese (571%) and Arabic (1576%) outstrip that of English (165%) (data from Internet World Stats: www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm, accessed 30/12/07). This shift makes clear that **English alone is no longer sufficient for Web-based networking purposes** — those seeking to gather or disseminate information, for the myriad purposes for which the Web is now used, are increasingly likely to need to be able to operate multilingually.

In addition, the move to Web-based communication, including email and instant messaging, has brought about a change in the relationship between the spoken and the written language. Technological advances in the early 20th century — the invention of the telephone, the radio and the television — meant that the spoken language rose in prominence after centuries in which the written word had

been the principal means of recording and disseminating information and ideas. Language teaching methods (eventually) followed suit, moving away from teaching methods which focused principally on formal literacy (the 'grammar and translation' approach) to those which gave at least as much attention to communicative competence in the spoken language.

However, the most recent developments suggest that the balance needs to be re-evaluated. Although the Web operates as a multimedia domain, there is no doubt that the written word has primacy, and **those who need to communicate via the Web must be able to read and write fast**. This indicates that the focus of language learning and teaching may need to be reviewed and literacy skills, in the context of Web-based communication, may need greater attention. This is as true for foreign language learning as for community language learning. The next generation of community language learners, accustomed to instant messaging, may have considerably higher levels of technologically-based literacy than their predecessors, and a wider range of contacts, across languages and extensive geographical areas than their monolingual peers.

6.2 Community languages and the widening access and participation agenda

Widening access and participation initiatives aim to enable people from families or communities without a history of involvement in higher education to consider university study. It is often argued that making provision for community languages can contribute to such initiatives, in that course participants may come from groups which traditionally have had little involvement in higher education. We recognise that community language provision may indeed pave the way for some students who might otherwise not have considered higher education. **However, where widening access and participation is seen as the sole rationale for making provision for community languages, problems ensue, particularly when these kinds of initiatives are seen as conflicting with a university's internationalisation agenda.**

Universities' remit to widen access and participation has been HEFCE policy for at least a decade (HEFCE, 1996). Early analysis of the effectiveness of the AimHigher initiative indicates that 'new' universities have been more proactive in terms of developing strategies to increase access by under-represented groups, while 'old' universities, concerned about the possible impact on their teaching and research

reputations, have made fewer changes to their marketing and course offers (Tonks and Farr, 2003).

Three paradigms of widening participation have been identified, reflecting different institutional positions (Shaw, J. et al., 2007):

Academic: which represents a model of assimilation — finding the 'brightest and best', and supporting potential entrants to acquire the characteristics (especially academic preparedness and entry qualifications) of the existing student body.

Differential provision: which is broadly based on putting on alternative types or modes of provision for under-represented groups, sometimes in different locations. This may increase the overall diversity of the student body, but some parts of the institution will remain unaffected.

Transformative: in which mainstream provision and services is examined and changed where necessary in order to support the success of a diverse range of students. Diversity and difference are viewed positively as assets.

Universities' rationales for introducing community languages as a way of supporting widening access and participation can be mapped on to these three paradigms:

- Universities operating within the academic paradigm aim to identify good students with community language competence in major world languages such as Chinese or Arabic, and fit them into their existing provision already on offer to ab initio learners.
- Those within the differential provision paradigm set up provision for community languages which was not previously on offer, with the intention of stimulating local demand and bringing into the university students who might not otherwise have considered higher education. But the students recruited in this way may still encounter barriers, in terms of the value placed on the community language skills they have acquired or the fit with other aspects of the course.
- Universities operating within the transformative paradigm are likely to be rare, because this requires a radical review of existing provision and a new approach to recruitment and to models of learning and teaching.

In these cases, languages departments review both the range of languages on offer and models of teaching and learning, in order both to offer languages likely to be of interest to local populations and to teach these in ways which reflect prior experiences and diverse goals. Market research is conducted in order to establish demand for particular languages, existing levels of competence within the communities to be targeted, and purposes for language learning. Links with other degree courses are reviewed or initiated to develop IWLP modules, joint degrees etc. likely to be attractive to the target group.

Tensions exist between the widening access and participation agenda on the one hand and the internationalisation agenda on the other, with internationalisation generally as the higher priority: for example, many HEIs are more interested in investing in English language courses for international students than in community language provision for students from the local area. Universities expect internationalisation – a strategy in which the recruitment of large numbers of students from beyond the EU plays a major role – to bring substantial financial rewards. In fees alone, non-EU students contributed £1.5 billion in 2004–5 (Vickers and Bekhradnia, 2007). In contrast, the costs of widening access and participation are considerably higher than the premium which universities receive for recruiting students from non-traditional backgrounds, and this translates into unpaid work by academics and other university staff (Universities UK/ HEFCE, 2002).

Other institutions, however, have made explicit links between widening access and internationalisation policies, on the basis that cultural (and implicitly linguistic) diversity is an asset. For example, the Leeds Metropolitan's Curriculum Review document makes these connections in listing the benefits for students of the cross-cultural curriculum:

As a graduate attribute for effective and responsible engagement with a globalising world, cross-cultural capability can be seen as comprising three major elements:

- *Intercultural awareness and the associated communication skills... ;*
- *International and multicultural perspectives on one's discipline area... ;*
- *Application in practice.*

(Killick, 2006b)

Such examples indicate that widening participation and internationalisation policies need not be seen as in conflict with each other and that community languages can contribute to both agendas.

6.3 Demand for community languages in a multilingual UK

Although much of the focus of discussion about employability of languages graduates, or graduates in other disciplines with languages as an additional skill, has been around international business, language skills are needed within the UK too, given increasing linguistic diversity internally. Some of this work involves the provision of translation and interpretation services and, where appropriate, the employment of bilingual public services workers for those whose English is not sufficiently well developed to enable them to cope in specialist or stressful situations (such as medical discussions, social service hearings or legal matters). In addition, there are business and cultural services targeting minority ethnic groups – ranging from community journalism, music and theatre to food outlets and financial services – where knowledge of the community language in question and of the cultural context in which it is used are indispensable.

However, few studies of the role of languages in UK business have explored the importance of languages in the local context and it seems that **many UK businesses fail to recognise the potential of community languages to grow their business, at home or abroad.** There is an urgent need for business training and support agencies to work with education providers to raise awareness of the potential of community languages, and to develop strategies to work towards the realisation of this potential:

Regional organisations, such as the Regional Development Agencies, Learning and Skills Councils and Sector Skills Councils, and UK Trade and Investment need to show leadership and vision and work with the educational sector to encourage businesses to help raise awareness among employees of the need to maximise linguistic potential. So far there is little activity on the part of these organisations. (Business Language expert)

Regional Language Network (RLN) London has recently set out to address this situation, in an overview of London's language needs and linguistic resources (RLN London,

2006). London is one of the most multilingual cities in the world but a failure to recognise or value the language skills of the local population has led to the development of agencies specialising in the identification of suitable foreign 'native speakers' for the many jobs in which plurilingual staff are required. Moves to redress the balance have included the development of the London Language Plan, to ensure that public service workers in the capital have the language skills to deal with a multilingual user population.

Other Regional Language Networks have similarly begun to recognise that competence in community languages can be an asset for employees in businesses whose clientele consists of local people who, in some cases, speak little or no English and therefore can only access services through other languages; and in others simply prefer to do business in their community language even if they also speak English, much as French customers prefer to do business in French even when they speak English well. RLN West Midlands cites the examples of the West Bromwich Building Society which matches staff language skills (and encourages staff to learn community languages) to their customer base so that staff can communicate in languages which customers prefer; and Smartlyte, a training company which offers first aid courses in community languages, following the realisation that few people from local minority ethnic communities were enrolling in such courses because of the language barrier and that this was putting lives at risk. (Information on West Midlands case studies taken from www.rln-westmidlands.com/case_studies/WM/default.aspx)

RLN London also points to the multilingual communication demands which the 2012 Olympic Games will make in an enormous and diverse range of contexts — not simply in terms of the event itself, but for all the related hotel, catering, transport and media business which will be generated — and the need to capitalise on the city's existing linguistic resources to meet these demands (**see Routes into Languages report, Languages and International Events: Past, Present, Future, 2008**).

Education providers are seen as having a key role to play in ensuring sufficient numbers of interpreters, translators, multilingual staff, training providers and language technology and media support. Implementation of RLN London's Language and Cultural Skills Strategy for London (2007) will begin in 2008, and will include the mapping of language and cultural skills provision in further and higher education, and among private sector providers.

Chapter 7: Recommendations

7.1 Introduction: a broader vision of language learning

In the course of this research, we engaged in many discussions with respondents and workshop participants about the use of the term 'community languages'. While many recognised the importance of marking what is distinctive about community languages and their learners, they were also concerned about potential ghettoisation. Many believed that the day when all languages are simply considered to be languages, without the need for categorisation, would mark a more egalitarian approach to provision and to learners' linguistic achievements.

We share the view that policy and practice concerned with languages education at all levels should aim to be as comprehensive as possible, including as wide a range of languages as can feasibly be taught, on the basis of demand rather than status. But we are concerned that community languages should not simply be subsumed into the existing foreign language project, given the limitations of current approaches from the perspective of community language learners.

We argue for a broader vision of language learning which encompasses a wide range of learner histories and goals. In this report we have characterised community language learners as having more varied backgrounds and interests than foreign language learners are typically considered to have. But in fact, foreign language learners may sometimes have comparable learner histories to those of community language learners: children whose parents speak French and spend every summer holiday in France, for example, may acquire quite an extensive informal knowledge of French before they start to study the language at school, and may find themselves equally ill at ease in a class which assumes no knowledge of the language, or where the teacher is critical of colloquialisms or of fluent but 'ungrammatical'

speech. Similarly, students who spend a gap year in another country, and then decide to study the language formally through an IWLP or to degree level when they enter higher education, may find beginners' classes too basic for their needs, but that if they join more advanced classes they lack the formal underpinning required. In the course of this study **we have come across a number of examples in which students who 'knew too much' of the language they hoped to study or 'knew the wrong kind of language' were discouraged or excluded from classes** and we suggest that **this indicates a narrow conceptualisation of the language learner on the part of the provider.**

We have also argued that community language learners have a wider range of goals than are typically assumed for foreign language learners, but again suggest that such assumptions represent a failure on the part of providers to appreciate and cater for the full range of purposes for which people may wish to learn languages. If we consider the history of provision for foreign language learning over the latter part of the 20th century and the early years of the 21st, we can discern a shift in policy discourse concerning purposes for language learning, from an assumption that language learning was an intellectual end in itself (1950s and 1960s), through a period in which transactional skills for tourists were seen as the key focus of provision (1970s-1990s), to an emphasis on the importance of languages for international business communication (1990s and 2000s). None of these shifts are uncontested, and learners and their teachers now may express preferences for one or other of these goals, or more than one. They may also promote other rationales which become more salient at higher levels of study, such as engagement with 'high' culture or with certain social sciences, such as linguistics or anthropology, where knowledge of other languages is required.

If we add to this list some of the reasons which community language learners typically put forward for wishing to study their languages, which include strengthening of cultural identities or a desire to engage in public service work in the UK or aid and development overseas, none of these purposes need specifically exclude foreign language learners. They may be interested, for example in exploring a wider 'European' identity than is encompassed in English alone, or participating in cultural activities (ranging from culinary experiences to dance, drama or religious study) available in the area where they live even if not historically associated with the learners' own family backgrounds. Anyone preparing to teach or to enter social work, or to work in aid and development projects, may wish to study the languages of the people they plan to work with: they do not have to come from a family or community with links to the language in question.

We commend, therefore, to all concerned with languages education at all levels – but particularly, in this context, within higher education – a broader vision of language learning based on diverse learner histories and learner goals as beneficial to all learners, not only community language learners. At the same time **we urge that the interests of community language learners should no longer be neglected in discussions of future educational provision for languages.**

We recognise that this entails many changes to existing models of provision and presents a range of resource and logistical challenges. In this final chapter, we make recommendations concerning the kinds of changes to be made, and the people or bodies responsible for making them — with this broader vision in mind, but with the more specific intention of ensuring that community languages and their learners are more effectively catered for than has been the case up till now.

7.2. Awareness raising

In this report and elsewhere, we and many others have argued that the community languages in use in the UK constitute a valuable resource which would contribute very substantially to achievement of key linguistic goals (ranging from progress towards the Barcelona 1+2 agenda, to improving the capacity of British business to expand its share of international trade). However, this message is not yet widely understood or accepted.

We recommend a series of awareness raising actions to promote community language learning.

- *Among providers*, drawing attention to the potential contributions community languages can make to universities' internationalisation agenda and in terms of a developing academic field; in view of globalisation and superdiversity, academic investment in community languages and the cultural and political contexts to which they relate could put the UK in the forefront of developments in language policy and planning in the 21st century.
- *Among local and national policy makers and politicians*, promoting a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between English and the UK's community languages which sees these languages not in competition with each other but as contributing in different ways to an individual's overall ability to communicate in different ways in different contexts – and thus contributing to, rather than threatening, community cohesion.
- *Among linguistic communities themselves*, so that learners place greater value on their existing expertise and on the socio-cognitive benefits to be gained from maintaining and developing their languages; and so that they become more aware of the potential uses to which their languages could be put and more committed to enhancing their language skills through the various higher education opportunities available to them.

A number of national bodies have initiated activities likely to contribute to such awareness-raising. **The Routes into Languages initiative commissioned this study**, which we hope will be widely publicised, **and funds the North West Consortium** whose goal is:

to raise the status of languages spoken within the diverse communities of Greater Manchester and their learning, as well as to promote the continuation of language learning at university. The initial focus will be on the teaching and learning of community and 'lesser-taught' languages in Greater Manchester, and the project will work closely with mainstream schools to support the widening of choice and opportunities for their pupils. (see Routes into Languages website www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk)

CILT's *Languages Work* campaign, which has created a range of resources to promote language learning for workplace use, has consistently adopted an inclusive approach, drawing attention to the value of community languages as well as foreign languages in its posters and case studies. This work

could be built on by LLAS targeting higher education students, lecturers and careers advisers more specifically.

There is a need for similar initiatives at local level and within HEIs, and for good examples of such work (which we did not encounter in this study but which may exist) to be collated and shared – a task which may also fall within the remit of LLAS.

High profile debates on the topic of community languages and social cohesion, engaging policy-makers and politicians, could be initiated by LLAS, CILT and/ or the LWW CETL (www.lww-cetl.ac.uk), with the aim of taking forward and shaping further work in this area.

7.3. Provision

Currently, provision for learning community languages in higher education has to be described as limited and unsatisfactory, despite a small number of examples of innovative work in certain institutions. **There is a need for new pedagogies**, developed and delivered by teachers with access to the professional development which will enable them to take on such tasks, and supported by resources which reflect the new conceptualisation. Fundamental questions of progression and accreditation need to be addressed.

7.3.1 Degree study in community languages

We recommend the establishment of at least one degree course in each of the main community languages in use in the UK as an essential prerequisite for the development of the field. Taking community languages seriously entails opportunities for high level, academic study of the languages – just as there are for the major European languages. This would ensure a supply of competent graduates qualified to teach in schools, colleges and on IWLPs, as well as to go on to the other careers that require high level language skills listed in this report; and also to provide academic leadership alongside the knowledge and skills required to develop pedagogical approaches and teaching resources. Without degree courses, there will always be a shortage of community languages teachers, in all sectors, or an over-reliance on recruiting teachers from overseas; and the field will continue to lack direction or to suffer from attrition as highly committed individuals eventually abandon positions condemned to low status because they are not seen as having academic credibility.

The decision to designate languages in higher education as 'strategic and vulnerable' makes specific mention of

'minority' languages which include many of the main community languages in use in the UK. The report of the advisory group on strategic and vulnerable subjects indicates that HEFCE should take action when there is a problem with supply in higher education, and we therefore recommend that HEFCE address this issue. The regional breakdown of GCSE candidates in community languages discussed in Chapter 2 provides an initial indication of where it might be most appropriate to locate provision for different languages – for example, an East Midlands HEI should offer a degree in Gujarati, as, in this region, this is the language with the greatest number of GCSE candidates — **but further analysis of linguistic diversity within the regions is needed.**

7.3.2 Provision for community languages in Language Centres and IWLPs

We recommend that directors of Language Centres and IWLPs consider the development of more flexible and more targeted provision, taking into account both the diversity of community language learners' prior learning experiences and their more specific or specialised needs and goals. This entails good market research to identify community needs and aspirations, and to make links with existing providers so that progression routes can be devised. Similarly, within HEIs, there is a need for more systematic liaison with the range of degree course providers to which modules in community languages could be linked. Effective assessment of competence prior to placement and formative and summative assessment, with appropriate accreditation are also needed.

Provision for community languages within Language Centres or IWLPs raises different issues from foreign language provision and requires dedicated support for teachers' professional development and the sourcing or creation of suitable resources. We recommend that bodies such as AULC and the LLAS investigate ways of supporting innovation and development in this field, particularly through the establishment of networks for community languages teachers. CILT has been proactive in setting up a national advisory group for community languages and organising events where teachers – mainly from the school sector – can meet. The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) has set up email interest groups for teachers of specific languages. LLAS has established a specialist interest group for teachers of less widely taught languages and HEFCE has funded the SOAS-UCL CETL for 'Languages of the Wider World'. These bodies could include a more specific focus on community languages in higher

education, and **investigate the possibility of setting up interest groups for specific languages**, similar to those established by the SSAT for schools.

7.3.3 Professional education for community languages specialists

Professional education for community languages specialists currently focuses on the formation of community languages teachers and public service interpreters. Both fields suffer from low status, low pay and precarious work conditions. Therefore the logistical difficulties encountered by teacher educators who wish to train community language teachers and the limited interest among HEIs in providing high level education in public service interpreting and translation comes as no surprise, despite growing demand for qualified professionals in both fields.

In the case of initial teacher education, we recommend that the TDA review its position on flexible PGCEs and consider how additional support might be allocated to ITE providers who undertake to train community language teachers, given the extensive demands that this makes on time and resources. These should be developed in light of findings and recommendations set out in OfSTED's review of provision for community languages in mainstream schools (OfSTED, 2008).

In the case of public service interpreters, we recognise that the IoL has played an important role in professionalising the work of public service interpreters, but there is a need for academic input into the training to support diploma candidates, and for higher level courses (e.g. MAs) similar to those available for conference interpreters, in order to enable the field to develop, and to secure higher professional status for practitioners. We recommend that the IoL work with selected HEIs to identify the best ways of achieving this.

7.4. Policy and strategy

At present policy discussion of the place of languages in higher education and the contribution which a national capacity in languages other than English makes to the economic, cultural and social dimensions of our lives only sporadically refers to community languages. Consequently, strategic decisions relevant to recruitment and provision for languages in higher education rarely take into account community language issues.

We recommend that the main national policy-making bodies and decision-makers with responsibility for

languages within HEIs adopt the broader vision for languages set out at the start of this chapter and thus ensure that community languages are systematically included in the development of rationales for provision.

Inasmuch as these rationales are linked to wider initiatives within higher education, such as the internationalisation agenda, they should make explicit the contribution that community languages, as well as foreign languages, can make. They need also to explore new territory for languages, such as the implications of multilingualism within the UK, which rationales focused on foreign languages traditionally have not addressed. One consequence of this broader vision would be that HESA and UCAS would collect language-specific data to enable progress in making provision for England's major community languages to be tracked, rather than many languages being in aggregated blocs as at present.

Policy needs to be backed by research, but there is currently little research in the UK which looks at the uses of community languages, outside of education. Some work in this area has been initiated in the US (Brinton et al. 2007), while Pauwels et al. 2007 provide a set of articles constituting a comparative review of developments relevant to language policy and planning in this context around the world. We recommend that LLAS and HEFCE consider commissioning research of direct relevance to policy development, and that they support more academic research in this field through the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

7.5. Summary list of recommendations

In the context of our broader vision of language learning, which links foreign and community language learning and promotes an even-handed approach to each, we make the following recommendations:

1. National, regional and local bodies with responsibility for languages should devise awareness-raising activities for providers, local and national policy makers and among linguistic communities themselves.
2. HEFCE should take action to ensure that at least one degree course in each of the main community languages in use in the UK is established.
3. Directors of Language Centres and IWLPs need to develop more flexible and more targeted provision for community language learners.
4. Bodies such as the AULC and the LLAS should investigate ways of supporting innovation and development in this field, particularly through the establishment of networks for community languages teachers.
5. The TDA should review its position on flexible PGCEs and consider how additional support might be allocated to ITE providers who undertake to train community language teachers, given the extensive demands that this makes on time and resources.
6. The IoL should work with selected HEIs to develop academically-based professional education for prospective public service interpreters.
7. National policy-making bodies and decision-makers with responsibility for languages within HEIs should adopt the broader vision for languages described here and ensure that community languages are systematically included in the development of rationales for provision and strategies deriving from these rationales.
8. LLAS and HEFCE should support – directly and indirectly – further policy-related and academic research into provision for community languages and into the benefits to wider British society from investment in this field.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ab initio	starting to learn a language with no prior knowledge
AHRC:	Arts and Humanities Research Council
AULC:	Association of University Language Centres
CETL:	Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
DCSF:	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfES:	Department for Education and Skills
DPSI:	Diploma in Public Service Interpreting and Translation
ESRC:	Economic and Social Research Council
GTTR:	Graduate Teacher Training Register
HEFCE:	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI:	Higher Education Institution
HESA:	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HMI:	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
IoL:	Institute of Linguists
ITE:	Initial Teacher Education
IWLP:	Institution Wide Language Programme
LLAS:	Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies
LWW CETL:	SOAS-UCL Centre for Excellence in 'Languages of the Wider World'
OFFA:	Office for Fair Access
Ofsted:	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PGCE:	Post Graduate Certificate of Education
RLN:	Regional Language Network
Scottish CILT:	Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research
SOAS:	School of Oriental and African Studies
SSAT:	Specialist Schools and Academies Trust
TDA:	Training and Development Agency for Schools
UCAS:	University and College Application Services
UCL:	University College London



Community Languages in higher education: towards realising the potential

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Authors: Joanna McPake and Itesh Sachdev with Tessa Carroll, Teresa Birks and Anjoom Mukadam

This significant report defines language learners by their prior knowledge rather than by their choice of language. It explores students' motivations in making progress in their language studies and identifies a gap in provision at degree level. The authors make a number of recommendations to increase understanding of community language users and to enhance provision in higher education.

Views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of Routes into Languages. Weblinks are active at the time of going to press.

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