



# Languages and international events

Are we ready to talk to the world in 2012?

Debra Kelly

with

Saskia Huc-Hepher and Alison Phipps

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Abridged version by Elnor Spearing

For full report see [www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/international](http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/international)



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# Executive Summary

## Headline

The 2012 London Olympics offers a unique opportunity to put in place a coherent national language strategy and policy, with Higher Education (HE) languages departments building on and developing the work of other Routes into Languages initiatives, CLIL and the Regional Language Networks. It is also a unique opportunity to foster an inclusive and collaborative approach to such a language strategy. The HE sector, through training, research and knowledge transfer, is key to the delivery of skills for effective linguistic and intercultural exchange on a vast scale, which is an essential factor for a successful Games.

## Why is language provision so important for 2012?

High quality language services – delivered to a range of audiences and in a variety of forms – will significantly enhance the image of Britain for international visitors (from top sporting bodies to sporting and cultural tourists). Those involved will gain a sense of how highly their linguistic and cultural knowledge and skills are valued in the wider communities across the UK (whom they are, to some extent, representing). This in turn will make a significant contribution to the Government's social cohesion agenda by helping to forge an evolved sense of British identity.

A national languages strategy and policy focused on the design and implementation of training in linguistic and intercultural skills at the planning stages for 2012, in the run-up to the Games, and during Games-time can be extended to other major international cultural and sporting events across the UK in the short, medium and long term, thereby ensuring a cultural, educational, economic and social legacy for 2012.

Sydney 2000 understood and supported languages, had more financial resources for them than previous Games and consequently achieved more. There were, therefore, more language services, more training and more volunteers.

The creation of a large, qualified workforce of volunteers and more permanent careers with skills that are transferable to other major events should be paramount in planning for 2012.

London's stated goal of sustainable economic regeneration could be achieved by, for example, language acquisition leading to lasting trade relations with new foreign investors. Just as it is crucial not to waste resources on building new stadiums and facilities to impress the watching international audience when the existing infrastructure is adequate, so it is crucial not to waste resources on short-term language strategies.

Finally, **what if the home of English began to reverse the trend in the decline in learning languages other than English, or at the very least demonstrate an understanding of the value and importance of all languages?** This includes both the "rich-world languages" and the currently "under-valued" languages (for example community languages), in which the UK is, in fact, so rich.

## Why use the HE sector for language provision?

The Higher Education sector provides significant 'value-added' outcomes that derive from its academic/research knowledge and expertise base. It is equally capable of providing training at very high or low levels of linguistic expertise, depending on the needs. It also has a proven commitment to long-term development and delivery, enabling long-term training and skills needs to be met.

In addition, it has a track record of delivery in all the dimensions required for such a national language policy and strategy. This is based on the experience of teaching, research and knowledge transfer; from evaluation, training and assessment to handling large amounts of confidential data.

It has a distinctive and open way of working amongst themselves and with other institutions and organisations

(both public and private). This is key to successful planning and delivery on the ground and to the implementation of an enduring language and intercultural skills policy. Specifically for 2012 a "Language Planning Consortium" should be established consisting of HE languages departments and other key language providers.

By the very nature of Modern Languages teaching and learning strategies and their diversity, flexibility and transferability, **HE languages departments are well-placed to develop international cooperation, communication and understanding.**

The UK has a well-established postgraduate translating and interpreting programme with a strong international reputation. High-calibre current students and early career professionals should be encouraged to apply for and secure key interpreting and translation posts at global events. At previous Games, there has been over-reliance on language professionals from overseas.

## “London’s HE Institutes and Further and Adult Education Colleges offer courses in over seventy languages”

Using universities rather than commercial providers whenever possible is more likely to make the most effective use of existing human and physical resources, lead to long-term training and skills needs being met, and to linguistic and intercultural expertise being embedded nationally for civic and economic benefits. **At Sydney, universities were central to training delivery** and this should also be the case in London.

For long-term benefits, established and proven networks of collaborating providers who share knowledge, resources and expertise are essential, not short-term commercial competitors. HE language departments, especially working with the achievements and ethos of the national Routes

into Languages programme, must work hard to communicate this message to regional and national government, and to the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG).

The Government has been very keen to promote the development of intercultural skills as part of its agenda to foster social cohesion. HEIs are particularly well-placed to train Language Specialist Volunteers in such skills, as intercultural awareness has come to occupy a major place in the approach of many HE Modern Languages departments to both teaching and research.

It would be cost effective to use HE language departments as service providers with the aim of ensuring sustainable (re)generation and a lasting legacy by:

- delivering both short and long-term language training;
- transferring the knowledge gained in this provision to future events and to a range of organisations;
- equipping those involved with experience and improved, nationally-recognised qualifications;
- bequeathing improved language services more generally across the UK.

Finally, London has a wealth of talent and expertise in languages education, which needs to be tapped:

*“London’s HE Institutes and Further and Adult Education Colleges offer courses in over seventy languages. [...] There are around 11,000 undergraduate and postgraduate foreign language students, [...] with an additional 15,000 students following optional or degree credited language courses [...] and 65,000 international students. The capital’s universities are a key source of current and future language professionals, expertise and technology. Nearly a quarter of London schoolchildren speak a language other than English at home. By 2012 today’s schoolchildren will be young adults. Imagine the impact on the perceived value and prestige of languages used at home, and learned at school, if languages were at the heart of pre-Games cultural, employment-related and volunteer programmes. Imagine also the impact on visitors in 2012 of a drive to use languages as a key customer service feature for a warm welcome and access to information and services.”*  
(Collis, 2005)

## Recommendations

- Ensure an enduring legacy and long-term skills development that link linguistic and intercultural competence to national standards and qualifications. The main opportunity to motivate, inspire and excite lies in the training stage, and training bequeaths legacy.
- Recognise the HE languages sector as an official training services provider of linguistic and intercultural skills needed for 2012. This status can then be extended to all international cultural and sporting events in the UK.
- Deliver a large-scale, linguistic-intercultural skills training policy and strategy, with graded qualifications in a coherent programme to ensure long-term benefits. This should use well-established HE networks and expertise and notably the Routes into Language programme as a springboard.
- Establish a regional/national database of Language Specialist Volunteers with linguistic and intercultural skills for large international events. Such volunteers may also be used on broader community endeavours, thereby furthering social cohesion and playing a role in other economic and civic activities.
- Create a large, well-qualified, extended workforce of general volunteers/employees for both international events and community-based projects, with transferable skills that include linguistic and intercultural expertise.
- London needs a high-profile Languages Champion now – but one who understands and appreciates the high-quality education sector contribution, and not solely that of commercial language services if legacy is to be sustained.

In addition, the issue of socio-economic inclusiveness is very important to London 2012. Evidence from Lo Bianco's report suggests that Language Specialist Volunteers in Sydney were already well-educated and successful citizens (Lo Bianco, 2000). A further aim for London and the UK is to provide training and skills for more disadvantaged and harder-to-reach members of society and to equip citizens in linguistic and intercultural provision at more broad-ranging levels. If this is to happen in a meaningful way, training needs to begin now.

Finally, other cities in the UK are intent on positioning themselves to host training camps for athletes preparing for 2012. Language provision could also be put in place at these camps, serving as a trial run for the linguists and as part of the training, and also a means of making the overall strategy less centralised in London and the South East. More comprehensive language services could also be

provided at international football matches in the run-up to the Games, which could then be used nationally at the Olympic football events. **There will also be a number of 'test events' in London from now until 2012, with which HE departments could get involved.**

### Work on language provision needs to start now

At Barcelona 1992, the Organising Committee set up a Language Service Department four and half years before the start of the event, organised in five sectors: translation and correction of texts; interpreting; announcers, style books and sports glossaries; and language hosts. It was the first time that an Organising Committee had set up these services so well in advance, and **the 1992 Official Report highlights that this foresight was shown to be more than justified.**

# Chapter 1: Research background

## 1.1 Context

Although this report covers much more than the Olympics, the primary focus is on the Games given the scale of such an event and of the possibilities for review and innovation that it engenders.

The modern Olympic Games are increasingly about much more than sporting excellence and are deeply embedded in a multitude of economic, political and cultural transactions. The Games can also be invested in multiple ways with meanings of profound national symbolic significance. Grasping the significance of the symbolic as well as implementing the practicalities will be essential for success.

As Lo Bianco (2000) writes: **“The modern Olympic Games are [...] beginning to stress the democratic ideals of equality, merit, integrity and peaceful co-existence through an awareness of cultural diversity and cross-cultural communication.** One demonstration of this (so that all may participate equally in this international festival) is the custom of requiring the host country to provide interpreting facilities and language services prior to and during the Games. **Language services have become an essential part of the international peace-making role of the Games in that they facilitate an ease of, and accommodation in, cross-cultural communication during all aspects of the Games.**” (Lo Bianco, 2000)

As in Sydney, **the languages of the 2012 Games will be French and English** (the official languages) together with **Arabic, German, Russian and Spanish** (which make up the six working languages of the Olympics, **with Chinese potentially assuming a new place following Beijing**) and, most importantly, **the idea of multilingualism will be included** as one of the 2012 Games' official languages. The whole of

London, and beyond, will be an extended Olympic venue. It is clear that HE language departments, by the very nature of Modern Languages teaching and learning strategies and their diversity, flexibility and transferability, are well placed to develop international cooperation, communication and understanding. It is also clear that intercultural communication shares the fundamental principles and spirit of Olympism.

There is, therefore, an opportunity for UK HE language departments to apply their knowledge and expertise to develop the national role of HE languages as a motor of economic and civic regeneration, and of personal and community development, through the planning, delivery and legacy of international events – such as the 2012 Games – in London and across the UK. No previous international mega-events have been as successful as desired in achieving national standards of long-term skills development; even Sydney 2000, which is widely regarded as a successful Games, fell short and missed opportunities in this area, notably concerning social inclusiveness in, for example, the use of volunteers, and therefore in legacy.

Looking at the issue of image, it is evident that the Games are catalysts for re-imagining and re-imaging, re-constructing and re-presenting the host cities and, to some extent, the host countries. **London 2012 presents the UK with the opportunity to shed its monolingual image and to project its vibrant multiculturalism and openness to internationalism.**

**Tourism, Sports and the Arts need to be used simultaneously to promote the UK and London, and language services need to be incorporated into all three areas** both for optimum tourist appeal and community success, and for optimum 'city re-imaging'.

The website of the Official London Organising Committee of the Games (LOCOG) emphasises the need for communication:

*“As an island nation, the United Kingdom is committed to using Olympic values to build bridges between our own communities and between ourselves and other nations”*

([www.london2012.com](http://www.london2012.com)).

It highlights London both as being (now and in the past) a place that welcomes “people, ideas, information and goods from around the world”, and as being “notably diverse”, with 300 languages spoken by seven million people. Language and intercultural provision will, therefore, need to extend far beyond the sporting events and locations.

How far, then, have British attitudes really evolved since the 1948 London Olympics?

*“While the International Olympic Committee rules lay down the provision of an interpreter service as a necessity for all Olympic Games, the celebration of the Games in an English-speaking country curtails this need very greatly. With the exception of the Finnish team, no interpreters were allocated individually to nations. So many of the competitors were English-speaking that they fulfilled the function for their teams at their housing centres”*

(Official Report, 1948)

This use of what may be termed the ‘accidental (and often self-selecting) linguist’ continues today throughout the private and public sectors, revealing (mis)perceptions and (mis)conceptions concerning language use and ability.

Looking at the UK’s existing reputation in linguistic ability and as a welcoming destination for global travellers, **statistics gathered by VisitBritain confirm that international visitors do not, on the whole, feel welcome here.** Work needs to start now on a new linguistic and cultural image. The CILT website ([www.cilt.org.uk](http://www.cilt.org.uk)) also notes Britain’s current image as ‘polite, but unwelcoming’. The main mechanism for positive tourism impact is ‘image enhancement’ (Smith, 2006b). **An image of London and of Britain, which can be enhanced by linguistic and intercultural training, as cosmopolitan, open and welcoming is paramount.** A broad-ranging and high quality

language service for 2012 on all levels will be an important factor in creating a positive international image. All of this rests on effective and well-timed planning.

There is no doubt that the legacy from an improved international visitor experience due to linguistic and intercultural sensitivity and capability is vital to public and private sectors and to communities. While the Atlanta Games became notorious for its lack of regeneration assistance, it is clear that London’s bid held local communities and the Games’ legacy to them at its core.

## 1.2 Aims of research

The aims of this research are to:

- develop key language initiatives to facilitate the UK Higher Education Sector’s contribution towards making Britain, in the UK Government’s words, “a generous host” and “a cultural inspiration” for the 2012 Olympics;
- widen participation and interest in languages both for personal development and at a moment of increasing internationalisation;
- contribute to a wider national multilingual policy for the public and private sectors in order to maximise the employment and skills benefits of the 2012 Games;
- contribute to the body of experience and history that constitute the heritage of the Modern Olympics, and the place of languages and culture within it;
- deliver knowledge transfer more generally between HE language departments and civic and business communities, producing mutual benefits and raising HE languages’ profile amongst the broader public.

## 1.3 Methodology

The research undertaken for this report used a variety of methods, based on qualitative data analysis procedures, namely desk research, semi-structured telephone interviews, focus groups, analysis and the commissioning of case studies.

# Chapter 2: International events past

## 2.1 Languages and the Games

The International Olympic Committee's (IOC) Charter mandates that French, English and the language of the host city are the official languages of the Olympic Games. For London then, only English and French are official but, as in Sydney, the languages of the Games will be English, French and "multilingualism" (Lo Bianco, 2000).

The main groups affected in varying degrees by the need for effective linguistic communication are:

- Athletes
- Officials and Dignitaries, including all the International Sports Federations (IFs), their delegates and the IOC
- Spectators
- Journalists

Extended groups then include:

- Transport Services
- Emergency Services; Hospitality and Retail Industry
- Tourism Industry (including Heritage, Museum and Gallery sector etc)
- Domestic Communities and International Visitors

Language Service providers, therefore, need to be very clear about how to cater for the differing needs of these target groups, and how to meet the specific expectations of each group. Research shows that **effective communication fails when there is a mismatch between the linguistic and cultural expectations of the target group, and the way in which the provider has "packaged" information** (MGIVE, 2007).

## 2.2 The key to success is in the planning: examples from recent Commonwealth Games

### 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games

The Manchester Commonwealth Games had a strong emphasis on social regeneration and cohesion, education/training and leaving a strong legacy both for the city and for the next Commonwealth Games in Melbourne. Relevant projects funded, all designed to be sustainable, included the very popular Games Xchange, an information centre providing information to locals and visitors on events and locations, and a Pre-Volunteer Programme. This focused on people from disadvantaged groups across the region who were given training before applying to be a volunteer; it also developed a database of volunteers that has since been used to provide a pool of volunteers for other sports and community events, including the London Triathlon. **A tangible legacy of two accredited courses for event and sports volunteering was left**, but institutions were nonetheless criticised for not devoting sufficient attention to the post-event period (Smith, 2007).

Manchester 2002 provides some possible models in which HE can be involved:

- Event projects – **targeted volunteering schemes** in particular – **were shown to be useful** in delivering training and support to those most in need of assistance. This was a regional and 'event-themed' regeneration scheme that did not simply rely on the direct impact of the Games event.
- **Urban regeneration schemes and funds at neighbourhood-level, "event-themed rather than event-led"**, running from 1999 to 2004 (Smith, 2006b). Local communities were thereby involved directly in a more sustained way which led to more sustainable objectives.

An equivalent timescale for fixed-term London-based projects would be 2009-2014 – therefore beginning next year. **Are we ready? Using Routes into Languages networks and projects we could be**, using language-planning programmes as beacons for 2012 preparation.

Has LOCOG envisaged that their information centres, similar to Manchester's Games Xchange, could be staffed by multilingual employees/volunteers? HE language departments are ideally placed, both in terms of location and human resources, to provide such a facility.

A further project also developed was the Manchester Music Map, with a guide that was available in several languages. Small-scale initiatives, such as these developed in association with mega-events, are critical if the momentum of an event is to be properly capitalised upon (Smith, 2006b). Once again Routes into Languages projects could be directed specifically at producing such materials, involving school and university students working together.

Similarly to Manchester, event-led tourism is likely to have a regenerative effect on the deprived areas of East London and South London and boost existing attractions (e.g. the Millennium Dome, Woolwich Arsenal, Silvertown Aquarium, Maritime Museum) (Smith, 2006b). All these sites would benefit from improved language services, and all are areas with diverse community languages.

There is, however, a tension between meeting the needs of the event and appropriate strategies for the long-term. For example, volunteers need to be given a balance of both short-term event-specific training and long-term prospects. The problem of short, sharp, "in the tent" training is that it is not nationally recognised. **HE can be involved in both the design and the implementation of short and long-term training** (managing volunteers, customer service, cultural and linguistic awareness).

### 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games

Melbourne's Strategic Training Issues and Recommendations for the 2006 Commonwealth Games report notes that there were missed opportunities in Sydney to maximise long-term benefits to industries through better integration of 'inside and outside the tent' skills. This is despite a key focus of the industry strategy in Sydney being on long-term skill development, particularly in the tourism and hospitality industries, and universities being involved in providing training for Melbourne 2006.

An interesting problem at Sydney 2000 noted in the report for Melbourne was that sport-related training was a National Sporting Organisation/SOCOG/ International Sporting Federation responsibility and resulted in many officials being brought in from overseas. Opportunities for long-term skill development in the sporting industries were

therefore lost. If we apply this to the languages services area, there is a lesson to be learnt.

Although some non-British linguistic expertise from previous Games will inevitably be used in 2012, opportunities for training at the very highest levels of translating and interpreting should not be lost and UK postgraduate translation and interpreting courses should be planning for this. The UK's well-established postgraduate translating and interpreting programme should be supporting high-calibre current students/early career professionals to apply for and secure key interpreting and translation posts at global events.

**High quality and internationally recognised HE postgraduate translating and interpreting courses across the UK will make a readily identifiable contribution to the Games, partly due to their strong links with professional bodies** (such as the Institute of Translating and Interpreting (ITI) and the Institute of Linguists (IOL)) and to employers, and partly due to the strong international reputation of their courses. **The work of the Routes into Languages National Networks for Translation and for Interpreting will continue to strengthen their profile and outreach** and specific planning should be put into place now to provide these high-calibre professional linguists. The need for forward-planning and for an understanding of the scale required is imperative. Previous Games have not always made the best use of their own national translators and interpreters.

## 2.3 Olympic Games talk: language services

**The transient nature of mega-events can lead to equally transient training and other programmes. This is incompatible with the notion of bequeathing a legacy,** both to the city and to its citizens, and to visitors. At past events there has been insufficient use of the broad range of high-quality HE resources for language provision and training. Disproportionate reliance on the private commercial sector has led, inevitably, to inadequate long-term legacy and to the exclusion of sectors of the population. Where language provision does offer interesting models, only the major, powerful languages are properly represented.

A further area for HE input could be effective and objective evaluation of language services. The delivery of language training and provision is often done on an ad hoc/acquaintance basis and it is clear that personal

connections and recommendations are very important. These services are therefore not objective procedures, but are simply passed on internally from one Organising Committee to the next. London could do better.

The lack of long-term commitment is a significant problem. Many employees are “employed on a short-term basis for the Games – so a lot of that [language services] information has gone with them” (Huc-Hepher; Respondent 11, March 2008). The Organising Committee ceases to exist after the Olympics, so people move on and volunteer outcomes are not recorded. This leads to inconsistent language provision and training from one city/event to the next.

In contrast with Los Angeles 1984, where language provision was good, there were very poor language services at Turin. The language test created for Atlanta was developed a little for Salt Lake City, whereas in Turin it was not required at all. This was due to very little funding being available for language services and a languages director being appointed only nine months before the Games. There was discontent among the broad Olympic Family in respect to the inadequate language services provided (Huc-Hepher; Respondent 11, March 2008).

**At Barcelona 1992, the Organising Committee set up a Language Service Department four and half years before the start of the event, organised in five sectors: translation and correction of texts; interpreting; announcers, style books and sports glossaries, and language hosts.** It was the first time that an Organising Committee had set up these services so well in advance, and the 1992 Official Report highlights that this foresight was shown to be more than justified. Professional translators and interpreters were used for all the translated texts and official meetings, while language students were used as volunteers.

### Atlanta 1996

For the period of the Games, Atlanta set up a Language Service Communication Centre to provide a central coordination for all language-related issues (Official Report, 1996; Lo Bianco, 2000). A company with an Atlanta presence, Inlingua, was selected by tender to provide auxiliary translation services (Official Report, 1996). It is hard not to conclude that some of the negative image of the Atlanta Games regarding community and lack of legacy

had its roots here. No university department seems to have been involved at any time.

UK HE French departments in particular should clearly be looking to develop further their already excellent and extensive relations with appropriate French government departments.

Negative recollections by a volunteer interpreter (Huc-Hepher; Respondent 7, March 2008) include the following:

- No language volunteers on the street to assist tourists;
- No signage in anything but the required English and French;
- Almost no language training, only Olympic terminology, and no university involvement at all;
- No test to check the standard of the respondent's German;
- No diploma or accreditation, just a letter of thanks;
- No legacy being left after the Games in terms of languages;
- Volunteers were not language professionals and were only expected to take on very informal, non-technical work, which was far from adequate for their actual situation;
- Volunteers' travel expenses and other costs were not covered;
- Post-Games outcomes were not recorded, nor their details for further volunteering opportunities;
- Taking part in the Games as a volunteer did not reinforce their sense of belonging to the city, or to the USA as a whole;
- Languages were seen as a very peripheral part of the organisation, in line with the attitude of most Americans.

The issues of ad-hoc language services, lack of coordination, “memory”, and indeed legacy, from one event to another occur again and again.

### Sydney 2000

Despite the generally positive view that Sydney was a success, questions have been raised about effective planning and contingency management (Cowan and Jackson, 2005). Adequate time must be allowed for the marketing and promotion of training programmes to industry. If high-quality language provision is to be high-profile for 2012, work needs to start now – lobbying, planning, training and delivering.

Lo Bianco's comprehensive report (Lo Bianco, 2000) is available through CILT. Highlights covering the place of HE languages are numerous. At a meeting at the 1999 Languages Expo in Brisbane, it was recognised that Sydney 2000 was an opportunity to develop a "truly multilingual policy for Sydney's hospitals, law courts, commercial and tourism operators" (Lo Bianco, 2000).

It was agreed to set up a non-profit consortium of organisations with an interest in communication issues. One of the crucial roles of the Language Planning Consortium was to "provide a bridge between the provision of language services within the strict requirements of the Olympic Family and the wider community need for communication support" (Lo Bianco, 2000). University academics in various fields participated consistently in the Consortium, along with many other professional and government bodies.

There is much to inspire in the scope of language provision at Sydney, and in the use of Language Specialist Volunteers (LSV). However, the evidence suggests that volunteers at these levels were already well-educated and successful citizens. **A further aim for London and the UK is to provide training and skills for more disadvantaged and harder-to-reach members of society and to equip citizens in linguistic and intercultural provision at more broad-ranging levels.** If this is to happen in a meaningful way, training needs to begin now.

**LOCOG will undoubtedly be business-focused** similar to Sydney, given the principles of the market-driven British economy in both private and public sectors. While it is recognised that the practice of Olympic committees is to put services out to tender, and that this may well be appropriate for some aspects of the languages provision for 2012 (professional translation and interpreting services, for example), **such a process does not make the most effective use of existing human and physical resources**, nor does it lead to long-term training and skills needs being met, nor to linguistic and intercultural expertise being embedded nationally for civic and economic benefits. **For the Sydney Games, universities were central to training delivery and this should also be the case in London.**

The major lesson from Sydney is that for long-term benefits, established and proven networks of collaborating providers who share knowledge, resources and expertise are essential, not short-term competitors. HE language departments, especially working with the achievements and ethos of the national Routes into Languages programme, must work hard to communicate this message to regional and national government, and to LOCOG.

Sydney understood and supported languages, had more financial resources for them than previous Games and consequently did more. There were therefore more language services, more training and more volunteers in Sydney. The creation of a large, qualified workforce of volunteers and more permanent careers with skills that are transferable to other major events should be paramount in planning for 2012.

#### Athens 2004

The evidence concerning the provision of language services at Athens is very contradictory. Much would suggest that Athens was not a linguistically successful event. French media reports in particular were disappointed with the level of access in French, particularly regarding signage and at the stadiums.

Training was very limited, carried out for about 600 language assistants – most of whom were Greek nationals – for two days just one month before the Games, and focused on culture/behaviour rather than on language. Volunteers were expected to have already the necessary linguistic skills (Huc-Hepher; Respondent 4, February, 2008). This led to a very restricted volunteer profile and there was no attempt at social inclusion.

Nonetheless, the whole of the official Athens website was available in French (and English and Greek). The main press centre (2 conference rooms) provided simultaneous interpreting in French with 50 professional interpreters. A trilingual (French, English, Greek) dictionary was published, along with a glossary with 5,000 specialised sporting terms. A 15,000 word trilingual database relating to Olympic administrative language was also produced on CD-ROM. A translation memory system was used, operating in the three languages, to contribute to more rapid translations in cases of texts with partial repetitions. Athens 2004 was awarded the Prix de la Francophonie by the French government and Greece became a full member of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie following the Games.

Overall, Language Services Volunteers covered 24 languages. During the Games "no functional or operational problems arose", according to the Official Report. A mobile emergency unit consisting of nine vehicles and 23 drivers operated round the clock. This unit was designed to transport interpreters and volunteers to respond to requests for less common languages at various venues.

# Chapter 3: International events present

## 3.1 “Beijing huanying ni”/“Beijing Welcomes You”: Beijing 2008

At the time of writing (June 2008) Beijing is aiming to operate multilingual information service systems that will “enable guests from all over the world to access various information services” (Beijing Pre-Games Training Guide, 2008). This is seen as enabling the Games to run smoothly, and to achieve the goal of “holding a ‘humanistic Olympic Games’ through the adoption of ‘Olympic Technologies’” (Beijing Pre-Games Training Guide, 2008). Most of the linguistic preparation undertaken to date focuses on the use of English.

Many of the general language volunteers are extremely proficient in English, chosen precisely because of their language competence and leading to a restricted volunteer profile. There has been no specific targeting of minority groups for the volunteering, but volunteers have themselves been involved in delivering language training to local residents.

There are also language assistants on the streets of the main tourist sites in Beijing, wearing badges to show what languages they can offer. Signage in English in the city has improved significantly and is substantial (Huc-Hepher, Respondent 5, March 2008)

Despite the focus on English, more than 20 languages will be provided as part of the language volunteers’ programme. These special language volunteers come from the main universities in Beijing, although the vast majority of language provision will be covered by commercial providers. Universities are, therefore, involved, but not in the best ways suggested by our research.

Volunteers are submitted to a rigorous selection process and give up holidays to take part in training. The best are also sent abroad for language training. “Volunteer Points” have been set up all over the city, where student volunteers educate the general public in various matters. Volunteers therefore fulfil a dual role: in the run up to the Olympics they educate the Beijing public, while during the Games itself they help foreign visitors.

The very particular political climate of China needs to be borne in mind to understand the context and delivery of the volunteer programme. It is Beijing Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG) BOCOG rather than the universities that organise and co-ordinate training and deployment of the volunteers; the impression is that universities have to accommodate the needs of BOCOG and deal with the knock-on effects on teaching and holidays, rather than being pro-actively engaged in the running of the volunteers programme.

How might this apply to London? A lot of enthusiasm and “can do” mentality is driving the general language preparation for the Beijing Olympics. However, the focus of the preparations is almost entirely on English. The assumption appears to be that the majority of people travelling to China in August 2008 will speak English. Based on this premise, London 2012 would not need any language preparation or policy at all outside that required by the Olympic Charter. Volunteers also receive training in the history of Beijing, the history of China, the history of the Games, basic first aid, as well as skills needed for their particular area of volunteering.

In terms of possible application of the Beijing experience for London 2012, the impression is that there is very little that can be ‘exported’. Due to the very different political

and linguistic context in which the Olympic Games will be held in 2012, there appears to be very little potential for learning from Beijing's university volunteers and the training in general. The more interesting example may be the commercial providers and the employment of foreign residents in Beijing during the Games. Universities in London will no doubt have to compete with commercial providers in 2012 to a greater or lesser extent depending on the impact of this report and other recommendations made.

### 3.2 Liverpool City of Culture 2008

The place of languages and of FE and HE's contribution in Liverpool is of considerable interest. The Liverpool Culture Company (LCC) established its 08 Welcome Programme with the aim of capturing the long-term benefits of the additional 1.7 million visitors expected to visit during the European Capital of Culture Year (08 Welcome Update Document).

Volunteering is a key aspect of the Welcome programme, offering added value to events in terms of information for customers, while also giving volunteers a number of benefits. The volunteer programme is linked to a range of other engagement and social inclusion programmes in the city, including the Skills for Life agenda, a new programme developed in partnership with Liverpool Community College. In addition, plans are being developed to embed the Welcome element into other college training courses, for example the tourism NVQ.

As far as languages are concerned, there are a number of positive examples in the Liverpool model. Liverpool's demographic includes both an indigenous population that includes Welsh, Scots and Irish, and immigrants including especially Chinese, Poles, Greeks and those of Caribbean and African descent. The city enjoys a global reputation for both music and sport (football, horse racing). In 2007, the LCC began to address language issues and to see how the city could capitalise on the '08 Year' both in the short term and as a lasting legacy.

**The Head of Liverpool Welcome** (and also a key member of the LCC) **believes that the comprehensive language awareness programme is "trailblazing"** (Baxter, 2007), **targeting** everyone in **the service and tourism sectors**, as well as the **business community and the population at large**. As well as working with the Merseyside Partnership (which has subsidised language courses), Mersey Travel and

Merseyside Police, **Liverpool Welcome works with a wide range of academic institutions and with the Regional Language Networks (RLN), based in Salford.**

The international courses have been set up with Mersey Travel (which runs local suburban trains and ferries) and a book has been published in seven languages, providing phrases and greetings for taxi drivers, restaurants, bar staff and so on.

It is not difficult to conclude, therefore, that a key to the success of the Liverpool language strategy is that it was initiated by, and is being implemented by, FE and HE providers working in collaboration with local and regional government.

“... a key to the success of the Liverpool language strategy is that it was initiated by, and is being implemented by, FE and HE providers working in collaboration with local and regional government”

Clearly, the courses offered for front-line staff are at a basic level focusing on first contact and aimed at dealing with queries concerning food and drink, accommodation and directions in the core European languages. However, this initial exposure can also reap further benefits. Each course (involving ten people at a time) is subsidised through the Mersey Partnership with a grant of £400 from the Liverpool 08 Culture budget for the initial taster period of three weeks. If individuals wish to continue, normal fees apply.

The uptake has been impressive. The incentive has appealed to SMEs and attention has been focused on employers' skills requirements. This language training initiative will have much wider potential for the region than just the 08 period, mainly because agencies beyond the linguistic community have been convinced by the importance and value of language skills.

The Partnership's strategy involves translation, information, basic language skills and a visitor guide. The aim is to show that there is a real need and use for language skills throughout the city. It is also clear that these 'taster courses' are just that – the real aim is to encourage staff to go ahead and learn more. Staff are encouraged to take courses at local colleges (even though it may be for 'personal use'). A free language-learning programme for staff to learn a language in their own time has a waiting list (Huc-Hepher; Respondent 3, February 2008).

Most of the language agenda for Liverpool has been the result of a special Language Forum set up by the head of Liverpool Welcome and the team at the LCC. This Forum includes the director of the RLN for the North West area who, having begun mapping the existing language skills base in the region against key private sector groups, was keen to help develop the language agenda for the Capital of Culture (Baxter, 2008).

Using this model, there is a very tangible opportunity in London, for example, for FE and HE to build upon the "Welcoming the World" programme from national RLNs and on the achievements of the national Routes into Language programme.

The key in Liverpool is that the 08 Volunteer programme has captured the imagination of many people. The head of Liverpool Welcome assesses it in this way:

*"We are hoping that businesses and individuals will all see the benefits of [...] falling in love with languages again – I did A-level German and French, and I do international work now, so I ought to put my money where my mouth is"*

(Huc-Hepher; Respondent 3, February 2008).

Importantly, all targets for volunteers have been exceeded, including that for Black and Minority Ethnic communities who make up 15% of volunteers from a population that is about 6% - more than double the proportion.

There has been a concerted effort in Liverpool to make industry more aware of the opportunities that arise due to the growing number of international visitors and to raise the profile of people who have language skills. Enabled by funding from the Regional Development Agency, Respondent 3 sees the four courses in French, Spanish, German and Italian, as "one of our biggest successes". Businesses have "jumped at" the subsidised training. Introduced on European Languages Day in 2007, there is also a 'language badge' scheme indicating those who can help visitors in those four languages, plus Polish, Chinese and Japanese, and there are plans for Arabic later in the year. (The limits of this are candidly admitted: "those who purport to be able to help a visitor out".)

A further step of the language initiative being considered is a type of 'buddy-scheme' for smaller attractions that may not have the facilities or the finance for translation by professional contractors. By paying a small amount of money, students could then undertake some translation work on a project basis (Huc-Hepher; Respondent 3, February 2008). This seems another potential project to be fostered under the Routes scheme, especially under an employability initiative (with caveats applying that these are not professionally-qualified translators with ITI recognition).

# Chapter 4:

## International events future

### 4.1 Vancouver Winter Olympics 2010

Vancouver represents a very particular social and cultural model, being an officially bi-lingual city in English and French. Fondation Dialogue (The Canadian Foundation for Cultural Dialogue) acts as the catalyst to support VANOC in realising its official languages mission, which is to promote Canada's linguistic duality and to ensure that the Games reflect the cultural diversity of the country. Here the UK can learn much by thinking in terms of its broader multicultural and multilingual communities and the two-way opportunities that large-scale events present to 'welcome the world', not only in the two official languages, but in a much broader range of languages.

**The National Action Plan** (February 2007) for the contribution of "francophonie" to the Winter Olympics in Vancouver **produced by the Fondation Dialogue, has much to inspire**. Entitled "Une Grande Occasion", it plays on the double meaning of the great/huge opportunity/occasion that it celebrates. While this plan concerns only the two official languages of Canada, its ambition to exceed the necessary obligations is admirable.

As in Sydney, various language associations have joined forces for the greater good of the Games and Canada. The general aim is to present to the world an image of a "contemporary, positive, dynamic, creative, multicultural and open" Francophone community (National Action Plan, 2007). **It deliberately targets young people**, and a more general aim is to consolidate links with the international Francophone community.

These aspirations could be applied to the UK languages strategy. Although we are not officially a bilingual nation, we are unofficially a multilingual one (despite the stereotypes),

and this is an opportunity/occasion to show it. As part of its legacy, Fondation Dialogue's language strategy aims to gain greater recognition of the country's bilingualism. This could be applied equally convincingly to the UK's multilingual population.

The Plan stresses the importance of communication and coordination to ensure the realisation of concrete language initiatives, for example:

- creating a Francophone "village" and activities;
- events on the Olympic Torch relay route involving communities on the way;
- promoting the Olympic spirit in schools;
- the creation of a virtual relay – a virtual torch-bearing itinerary in different primary and secondary schools (this could be used very effectively in the UK also, involving the whole of the UK and different ethnic and cultural landscapes);
- involving young journalists (for press, TV and radio) in coverage of the Games (another excellent idea for the UK, using multilingual young journalists reporting on the Games in community languages and mainstream modern foreign languages, perhaps aimed at international visitors).

**Around the Games, several other social and cultural events are planned** around exhibitions, shows, food, art, history, music, etc., in order to provide a high-quality Francophone cultural experience. **This is an illustration of smaller 'event-themed' rather than 'event-led' initiatives**, which can successfully enhance mega-events. Replacing "Francophone" with "multicultural", London will also be staging numerous events of this kind, and at various levels, from the LDA to local communities with, for example, the Cultural Olympiad launching in September 2008. HE could make a significant contribution to language provision at events of this kind, helping to promote the myriad cultural aspects of the city in an effective way.

Another exciting initiative, wherein a Francophone athlete sponsors a group of volunteers, could be adapted in the UK with a wider range of languages for volunteers from a variety of ethnic/multilingual communities.

The Plan will promote the exchange of ideas on the place of sport, leisure and physical activities in the development of "francophonie", as well as showcase the diversity of Canadian arts and culture; for the UK, once again read "multiculturalism". All of this is considered very important for the domestic and international tourism markets given increased international media attention before and during the Games. The hallmark of the Plan is its inclusiveness, aiming to embrace all sectors of the Francophone community from individuals to businesses, from micro- to macro-levels; for the UK, again read multicultural. The key is coordination and communication for the greatest impact.

With an inclusive recruitment strategy for volunteers for the Games aimed at, for example, inner city populations, the disabled and aboriginal people, the Games are seen as an opportunity to showcase the city's diversity and skills.

Regarding accreditation on completion of their language training / volunteering, officials "have been exploring opportunities for interpreter training, to culminate in some sort of certificate of completion" (Huc-Hepher, Respondent 8, March 2008). In Canada, there is a shortage of community interpreters, so it would make sense to make the most of the language volunteers. This could be used as a selling point to engage more volunteers: "not only is this a great Olympics experience, but we would also love to help turn this into a future career" (Respondent 8). [See Routes into Languages report: "Community Languages in Higher Education".]

## 4.2 The run-up to London 2012 – in London and around the UK: are we ready to talk to the world?

*"The Games are expected to deliver a £2 billion boost to Britain's international visitor economy. Games-related and Games-motivated tourism will mean over half a million extra visitors in London alone in 2012, but a 'halo effect' of global media coverage means that most of the growth will be achieved in the four years following the Games. [...] the importance of languages for*

*marketing purposes to enhance the UK's 'welcome' and opportunities to harness linguistic diversity in the hospitality and tourism sector."*

(Collis, 2007)

Our research suggests that few public or private sector institutions have any real idea how to communicate effectively with international audiences, let alone use languages for marketing purposes. LOCOG, therefore, needs to recruit a Director of Languages as soon as possible. According to an extremely experienced Olympics language services supervisor:

*"The International Community are already beginning to ask questions such as 'Who's in London? What's happening in London?' [...] "London is not behind yet, but they need someone helming the ship now"; "If you bring that person in too late, they can get forgotten about and be disregarded"*

(Huc-Hepher, Respondent 8, March 2008]

Respondent 8 also suggests that the success of Sydney's language policy was largely down to the media tycoon promoting it:

**"In Sydney, the government** – which was a major financial contributor – **saw the Games as Australia's big view to the world** [...] after the Games, Australia was on the map [...] they saw being open and welcoming, and being able to connect in a variety of languages, as key in presenting Australia to the rest of the world."

An ethic of languages being important filtered through more generally, and **hiring Jonathon Pepper** – well-known in the Australian TV industry and well-versed in PR – also **helped to convey the message**. Despite his own linguistic shortcomings, he recognised the power of languages in creating an image for Australia and knew how to obtain the funds to promote them (Huc-Hepher, Respondent 8, March 2008). **He was the public face of language services and "that was huge"**:

*"When you're jockeying with the Head of Press or the Head of Media Relations, you need somebody who can go into a meeting and be recognised and fight for budgets. A more traditional head of languages from a linguistic background would go in there and have a much more intellectual and probably more informed*

*approach in terms of the content, but would not carry the same weight as a 'big guy from the TV channel'*

(Huc-Hepher, Respondent 8, March 2008).

**London needs a high-profile languages champion** – but one who understands and appreciates the high-quality education sector contribution, and not solely that of commercial language services if legacy is to be sustained.

Inspired by London's successful bid for the 2012 Games, other cities in the UK, such as Birmingham, Manchester and Sheffield, all continue to bid for sports events, each also intent on positioning itself to host training camps for athletes preparing for 2012 (Smith, 2006c). Language provision could also be put in place at these camps, serving both as a trial run for the linguists and as part of the training, and as a means of making the overall strategy less centralised in London and the South East.

**Providing more comprehensive language services at international football matches in the run-up to the Games would also do this.** Such provision could then be used nationally at the Olympic football events to be staged all over the country. There will also be a number of 'test events' in London from now until 2012, with which HE departments could get involved.

The Games are an immense opportunity and occasion, as Vancouver has identified. Are we really ready to talk to the world?

# Chapter 5: The place of French at the Olympics

Article 27 of the Olympic Charter states that the two official languages of the International Olympic Committee are French and English, with French taking precedence in case of dispute. The French government is very active in promoting the French language through Olympic events, seeing it as an opportunity to secure and develop its international profile. It now also envisages increasingly co-opting other Francophone countries in this endeavour.

Special attention, therefore, needs to be focused on the use and place of French at Olympic events. The level of scrutiny that the French government exercises on the host city's Organising Committee is always high-level and intense. French media reporting on both the 1908 and 1948 London Olympic Games maintained a very negative tone (the weather; the poor organisation, the lack of interest amongst the British public). As a disappointed competitor for the 2012 Games, France's eye will be a critical one.

UK HE French departments in particular should clearly be looking to develop further their already excellent and extensive relations with appropriate French government departments.

Since 1994, France has been trying to rectify the way in which French had been used in preceding Olympic events, with considerable success. France makes available about a million euros a year, for three years, dedicated to the linguistic preparation of the Games.

## 5.1 French at Sydney 2000

The report on the use of French at Sydney is especially detailed: ([http://dglf.culture.fr/culture/dglf/Olympiques/sydney\\_rapportAM.htm](http://dglf.culture.fr/culture/dglf/Olympiques/sydney_rapportAM.htm)). The DGLF (Délégation générale de la langue française) is a public organisation attached since 1996 to the French Ministry of Culture and Communication. **The degree of scrutiny that the French government gives to the use of French is**

**extremely high. LOCOG needs to be fully aware of the seriousness with which this is viewed.**

The report concludes that the Charter's principles were respected and that the use of French was particularly satisfactory. This success is attributed to the cooperation between Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG), the French Embassy in Sydney and the SOCOG language services, with the director of the latter making the use of both French and English a personal mission.

Nearly all the Organising Committee's documents were produced in the two languages. The quality of French was deemed to be especially good. However, although the overall presence of French was good, there was an unequal use of the language across sites and events – and it was therefore perceived differently by various audiences.

The presence of French in the Olympic Village and the press centre was considered to be very visible, where signage was bilingual. The daily Olympic Village newspaper appeared in both languages. There was also very dense signage around the centre of Sydney. **French was clearly very present for the athletes and also for journalists.**

However; **for the French and Francophone public not at the Games, the presence of French was considered much less visible.** During the opening and closing ceremonies, and sometimes during the medal ceremonies, French could be heard on the television – but the cameras rarely showed the sign-boards, and the commentators spoke over the announcers. Announcements for competitions were often more complete in English than in French. Sports commentaries were only in English.

The presence of French in new media varied. The intranet, which contained athletes' biographies and all results, was entirely bilingual, which was especially useful for journalists.

However, the SOCOG Internet site was far from being available totally in French and was not kept up to date in French. Journalists ended up referring to the English site, bypassing the French one altogether as it was not reliable enough.

During the opening and closing ceremonies, French and English versions of the speeches appeared on the screens, but during the competitions the boards giving the names of the athletes and the results were only in English. This discrepancy between the written and the spoken word contributed to the differing perceptions of the use of French depending on different sites and events.

Members of SOCOG were given a training course in 'French sports language' which has been running since 1995 at the University Michel de Montaigne in Bordeaux (Huc-Hepher, Respondent 1, February 2008). The Alliance Française also gave courses from September 1997 onwards to around 300 SOCOG members and several hundred volunteers, and developed a French-teaching programme entitled 'En 2000 à Sydney'. It also acted as a central meeting point for teachers and the Francophone communities.

**What could have been done better?** The DGLF report draws the attention of succeeding events to the following: the use of French on the tickets; on the boards used for the names of athletes, their nationalities and the results; ditto for the intranet and the Internet; announcements should contain the same amount of information in both languages. The issue concerning the website arose because the contract with the company selected to deliver this did not contain enough precision on what should be provided in French.

There should be more prominent sports commentaries in French. The suggestion is that the French sports federations responsible for commentaries should examine with the international federations how this could be done bilingually.

**The DGLF report states that the objective for future Games should be to maintain a comparable level of French as at Sydney, but to have greater visibility.** Priorities concerning the amount of documents to be available in French should be reviewed (very labour intensive and not necessarily high profile) with a view to making the use of French as visible as possible. The fact that this emphasis on outward perception is now being considered as possibly

more important than the fundamental documentation is of interest when considering what the HE languages sector's contribution to the use of French could be. Also of interest is the issue of developing and maintaining the website as this is both high profile and visible, for the French language and also possibly for HE languages' contribution.

Although the experience of French at Sydney was largely positive, the DGLF believes that the presence of French at the Olympics remains fragile, as everything needs to be negotiated each time and with each host city. The French government needs to continue to provide political and financial support in order to ensure that the Olympic Charter is upheld. The Olympics remains one of the most effective methods for disseminating the use of French around the world and this opportunity is taken very seriously.

One final word for 2012. As at some other Games (Lillehammer and Nagano Winter Olympics, Atlanta 1996), the opening words spoken by the Governor General of Australia in Sydney were in English only. French government and Olympic officials, reportedly even the President of France, protested, as did some IOC and SOCOG officials. The symbolic is as important as the practical for the Games and for other international events.

## 5.2 French at Athens 2004

The power of French (or rather the lack of French) was demonstrated at Athens when the representatives of Cameroon, Benin, Niger, Burkina Faso and Congo walked out of a meeting of the international delegations when there was no interpreting service available in French and, when asked for, no translation could be provided.

However, the French language and culture strategy (based as much on "francophilie" as "francophonie") did leave a legacy, particularly on the Greek education system. Greek universities now collaborate closely with France and co-diplomas have been introduced. The number of HE students studying French has increased, as have numbers of secondary school students since 2003. The French Institute provided language training for Greek secondary school teachers so that they could promote the language during and after the Games. Greece has also now become a full member of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), (Huc-Hepher, Respondent 9, March 2008).

During the Games, a French newspaper was given to French language volunteers, as were French 'survival kits'. However, ATHOC did not always live up to the French language challenge; indeed, the official Olympic Family guide for the Games was only produced in English. Likewise, the ticketing was only in Greek and English, again flouting the language stipulations of the Olympic Charter (Respondent 9).

With regards to legacy, the Alliance hopes to raise awareness within the Chinese education system that French is a viable second language alongside English, with more and more French lycées opening in Beijing.

### 5.3 French at Beijing 2008

The agreement between the French Government and BOCOG concerning the observance of the Olympic Charter and its French language requirements was signed on 26 November 2007, and was given to the President of IOC in the presence of both the Chinese and French Presidents – an indication of the importance attached to it at the highest levels. It concerned translation, signage and the 40 translators and journalists required to ensure the promotion of French at the Games. Not only France, but Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, Monaco, Burundi, Madagascar and Senegal were involved in the promotion of French at Beijing.

**The symbolic power of any language strategy adopted in London should not be forgotten and it is far more complex than it at first appears.** Challenging the hegemony of English is important for many nations, not just France, and an open, dynamic attitude to world languages at the London Games would enhance the UK's image politically, economically and culturally.

The French government has been working to ensure that the use of French is correctly observed. The Alliance Française has been involved in training Chinese emergency medical staff in Beijing, who were then sent to France on an exchange. The Alliance has also given courses to members of the Olympic Committee who already had a good level of French, focusing on French sports language. (Huc-Hepher, Respondent 5, March 2008)

Funding for the French language training is from various sources: the French Embassy (100% for the schools initiative); the Chinese Health Service with the French Embassy (for the medical language training programme); and the BOCOG budget (for the training of their staff). The Alliance Française is also giving Chinese journalists a beginners' French general language course, with a slight emphasis on interviews and sports terminology.

# Chapter 6: The place of language training and intercultural communication

## 6.1 Training Language Specialist Volunteers

### Context: the scope of volunteering

“Languages, both generally and in the context of tourism, have come to be understood as functional necessities that may solve some of the myriad problems of intercultural communication and the mastery of which will provide basic skills, increase economic profit and personal pleasure.” (Phipps, 2007)

The importance of a well-organised volunteering programme for large-scale events is now well-recognised. Language Specialist Volunteers (LSV) are key to the success of such a programme. They should be placed at the heart of 2012 planning for the training and use of a volunteer workforce. This needs extensive and timely planning and preparation.

Sydney spent 50 million dollars on recruiting, training and accrediting (with, in addition, the practicalities of food, uniforms and transport) 62,000 volunteers, and offered them all free tickets to the closing ceremony as thanks. They also closed the city’s business centre for half a day to stage a volunteer parade (Smith, 2006a).

However, over-staffing of language volunteers at a given time or place can be a significant problem as they can become bored and frustrated. In Salt Lake City Respondent 8 explained how they introduced a “combo” system: for example, a language specialist based in the Olympic Family lounge might have been required to provide general welcoming or seating assistance, as opposed to interpreting assistance when this was not in demand.

It is essential that volunteers feel valued and are appropriately rewarded. In Atlanta volunteers working in the call centre/language line did not feel involved actively and centrally to events on the ground; rather, they felt “stuck” and isolated manning the phone lines for long periods at a time (Huc-Hepher; Respondent 8, March 2008).

Regarding the issue of socio-economic inclusiveness, there remains the discrepancy between those most likely to volunteer for Games events and those who need the most training. The Routes into Languages widening participation brief is essential here. For targeting the more disadvantaged sectors of society, pre-volunteer programmes can equip those less likely to volunteer with the necessary skills and confidence to participate. **Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games** successfully implemented this idea and **allowed disadvantaged volunteers to gain qualifications in event management.**

**Volunteering is an aid to personal and career development** and offers a way of gaining relevant and interesting experience. UK universities now offer volunteering opportunities through their volunteering units. The **benefits of volunteering include:**

- Gaining access to training and skills development;
- Learning transferable skills including leadership and teamwork, written and oral communication, initiative, motivation, multitasking, prioritising and flexibility;
- Contributing something back to the community;
- Acquiring career-focused work experience;
- Using new skills in a professional environment;
- Broadening horizons and a chance to meet and work with people from a diverse background;
- Gaining insight into a particular career choice.

(These are taken from the University of Westminster Community Volunteering Unit Student Volunteering Handbook. See also the Routes into Languages report, "Languages and Enterprise", on the benefits to language students of developing transferable skills through their course.)

### Talking 'outside the tent': training Language Volunteers for the extended venue

Volunteering is a way of "getting the city on side" as the Head of Liverpool Welcome 08 explains. Essentially it is how the volunteers are used that is the key to success. Liverpool 08 has used volunteers for events that would have been happening in 2008 anyway, even without the City of Culture, but which perhaps would not have taken place on such a large scale. "Volunteers have been [very successfully] linked to a range of large and small community and cultural organisations" (Huc-Hepher; Respondent 7, February 2008).

The whole of London and beyond will be an extended Olympic venue with a myriad of both event-driven and event-themed activities requiring a skilled volunteer workforce, ideally with a range of linguistic and intercultural skills. In this area, therefore, the broader 2012 aims will not be dissimilar to those of Liverpool 08:

- Improve information about what [Liverpool] offers to potential visitors, and where to go and how to find it when they are here;
- A programme to drive up and make more consistent the standards of service in the city's hotels, bars and attractions;
- Develop a volunteer programme to support [08] events and to involve local people in activities to make events and the city more welcoming and friendly.

### Talking 'in the tent': training Language Specialist Volunteers pilot workshop

The training for Language Specialist Volunteers is intensive and the time commitment is extensive. Selection is competitive for those who will work with the Olympic Family. The language training in Atlanta included a mandatory six-hour primary training session, with at least two additional three-hour workshops. During primary training, basic job responsibilities were described, interaction with other departments was explained, and techniques and ethics of consecutive interpreting were presented. The workshops were smaller sessions during which volunteers participated in role-playing, memory retention, and note-taking exercises (Huc-Hepher; Respondent 7, March 2008).

Can HE language departments deliver such training? The simple and obvious answer is yes – to a greater extent and with an enhanced quality of language services provision than at previous events, and all delivered cost-effectively due to the human resources, facilities and wide-ranging expertise at their disposal.

The following two-hour pilot programme for Language Specialist Volunteers was run for this project in June 2008. It was based on the 'Team 2002 Job Specific Training for International Client Services/Language Specialist' for Salt Lake 2002 Winter Olympics and Paralympics, provided by AchieveGlobal' the Official Training Service of the 2002 Olympic Winter Games. The training manual was used in Atlanta and Turin and will form the basis for training at Vancouver Winter Olympics in 2010. The role-playing activities were devised by a lecturer at the University of Westminster specifically for the workshop.

Although the official training manual proved useful, the experience left us with significant reservations concerning the emphases of the manual and the belief that HE language departments could considerably enhance the training for Language Specialist Volunteers to date.

There were 17 participants in the pilot programme, mostly Modern Languages students, who could be said to represent a body of people who might well respond to a call for volunteers (between them we noted a total of 17 languages spoken; the fact that there were 17 students was coincidental, some students spoke several languages). Many had undertaken some consecutive interpreting training as part of their undergraduate degree. They were a mixture of native and non-native English speakers. The five Modern Languages staff participants included an Intercultural Studies specialist. Students spoke an average of three languages each. The role-play activities were performed in Arabic, French, German, Spanish and Russian.

To begin the workshop, a brief overview of the role of the Language Specialist Volunteer was presented, abridged from the training manual. Every Team 2002 member was expected to be Committed; Helpful; Adaptable; Respectful; Gracious; (and) Enjoy! (CHARGE). The Code of Ethics for Interpreters was then covered. According to the manual, to resolve challenges Language Specialists use WARMTH – Willing to Help; Acknowledge and Assure; Restate to Clarify; Meet the Need; Thank.

The students then discussed and provided answers/feedback on three scenarios, for example:

- Scenario 1: A volunteer you are working with from another area is not confident about his job and wants you to do it because "you speak their language".
- Scenario 2: A team official you are interpreting for in the accreditation tent seems to be lying about his position to get into the venue.

The students gave considered, mature answers, and their responses were consistently appropriate to the situations outlined. However, students emphasised how very difficult it is for interpreters to remain neutral and impartial. A very high level of training would be required for volunteers to carry out their roles effectively in a very intense atmosphere. Far more intercultural knowledge is also required than is available in the present training manual.

Role-plays were then conducted. The students found this material, devised in-house, far richer and more demanding compared to the training manual. An example role-play follows:

#### 1. Spectator Enquiry

Role 1. Spectator (foreign national)

Role 2. Olympic Venue Official (British)

Role 3 Olympics Language Specialist Volunteer

Scenario: A non-English speaking spectator has just fallen victim to a pick-pocketing incident. They have lost their money and travel documents and all they have is their ticket to the Olympic Games. After offering sympathy and support, the Official gives them advice on reporting the matter to the police, travel insurers and so on, and tries to find out where they are staying so that transportation back to their hotel can be arranged.

Comments from the students on the above activities included:

- Acknowledgement of the incredible amount of pressure under which the LSV must carry out their role/duties;
- The issue of dealing with dialects and accents from around the world in the language in which they are working;
- The constant desire to want to add something to what the Official, for example, is saying;
- The difficulty of maintaining impartiality and a mediating role after being used to working in (a) language(s) in social situations;
- The need to be provided, and extremely familiar, with very specialised vocabulary;

- The "problem" of multilingualism – many of the students speak several languages and needed to find the correct expressions quickly in the language that were working in at that moment.

Further general observations on the pilot training workshop include:

- HE languages departments are uniquely equipped to deliver both (part of) the workforce and the training for Language Specialist Volunteers at this very high level of linguistic expertise (as well as at the lower levels of competence needed to deal with, for example, international visitors at the extended Olympic venue, including wider cultural events). This could be done through the enhancement of existing courses (including within undergraduate degrees). Westminster's Languages in Action strand, emphasising skills and employability within the BA Modern Languages degrees, is a good example of this (and there are no doubt similar elements in many other HEIs' Modern Languages departments); specialised short courses; offering consultancy and training services;
- The amount of training time dedicated to language training at this level at previous Games was very tight given the complexity of the tasks that LSVs are likely to face and the fact that they do not necessarily have previously acquired professional interpreting training in impartiality and other interpreting techniques.

Well-equipped volunteers also make a valuable contribution to the government's agenda to promote social inclusion and HEIs are again exceptionally well-placed to introduce strands of the volunteer training in relation to the social cohesion agenda. Volunteers will:

- Gain intercultural skills through their training and through the tasks that they are assigned;
- Gain a sense that their existing linguistic skills and cultural/knowledge skills are valued in the wider society and by the UK, whom they are representing;
- The level of inclusion implied by their participation (reliant, of course, on the backgrounds from which they are selected) should contribute to forging the evolved sense of inclusive British identity which government reports and statements have encouraged in recent years.

Considerably more attention needs to be given to intercultural competence and training than is the case at the moment. The Salt Lake 2002 training materials show a minimal awareness of the intercultural complexity of the situations in which volunteers will find themselves. The

WARMTH formula might need to be adapted when dealing with people of very varied cultural backgrounds. Similarly, the scenarios, whilst quite rightly prioritising conformity to key ethical principles, do not challenge volunteers to develop an awareness of the intercultural and linguistic complexity of the tasks they will have to perform.

The students found the scenarios too easy, partly because their ability to grasp the underlying ethical principles was very strong, but also because they were not challenged to reflect on how members of different cultures might behave in these critical situations and precisely because of the multicultural environment that London offers. At the same time, they were quite often overwhelmed by the complexity of what was asked of them in the interpreting role-plays. This was because they had to be aware simultaneously of key ethical considerations, function as interpreters with sometimes minimal training in interpreting techniques, and deal with two individuals from different cultural backgrounds who were often from different cultural backgrounds to each other and themselves.

All of this underlines the need to refine the training strategy to include the intercultural dimension. HEIs are particularly well placed to implement this as intercultural awareness has come to occupy a major place in the approach of many HE Modern Languages departments to both teaching and research.

**The government has been very keen to promote the development of intercultural skills as part of its agenda to foster social cohesion.** This is an important theme which could be far more present in the training provided. **The issue of validating minority languages and building an up-to-date notion of British identity,** which includes the value of those languages and heritages, **should also have a higher profile** (see the Routes into Languages Research Project and Report on Community Languages in Higher Education).

It is recommended that Higher Education becomes involved as soon as possible in contributing to delivering training in a range of LOCOG's planned test events and in cultural events leading up to 2012.

## 6.2 Training members of the Beijing Public Security Bureau (police) in preparation for the Olympics

This case study is included to highlight the type of high-quality, task/profession-specific linguistic and intercultural training that the UK HE language sector (in this case at postgraduate level) can deliver. It was prepared by Rob Williams, Principal Lecturer in Translation and Deputy Course Leader MA International Liaison and Communication, University of Westminster.

### Case study: Training members of the Beijing Public Security Bureau (police)

In 2000 or earlier the Beijing Public Security Bureau (PBSB) identified a need to train officers from all divisions in English in preparation for the 2008 Games. The University of Westminster already had a good reputation through its short course programme for delivering bespoke language training to specific groups. The agreement was to train 50 Beijing police officers over a period of four years from 2002-06 and enable police officers in China to compare methodologies with their counterparts in the UK, specifically the Metropolitan Police. Standards of English were very varied among the students. Initially all had general English language training followed by more specialised language training. Students were then incorporated into the MA International Liaison and Communication (MA ILC), gaining access to modules in:

- Intercultural Communication
- Intelligence and National Security
- Information and Media Studies
- Information Technology (with specific reference to security issues).

The aim was to provide the language tools necessary for their professional environment and broaden their professional knowledge base. There was also a programme of cultural and professionally relevant experience including visits to theatres, museums, police training academies, European institutions, and social events with UK police officers. A specialist guest lecture programme accompanied the tuition already described, covering topics such as policing for the Olympics, anti-terrorism and drug enforcement.

It later became clear that other skills beyond competence and performance in English were necessary. Equally, if not more, important than a person's ability to communicate as

an independent language user is a person's ability to handle information across two or more languages. They need a level of proficiency in the target language, but they must also be able to switch between languages effectively and rapidly. The focus of the language skills syllabus became, therefore, information handling, on to which discrete elements of grammar and lexis were built.

## 6.3 Regional Language Network London: Welcoming the World

Work with the Regional Language Network (RLN), in this case London, is an example of the fruitfulness of the collaborations that the HE languages sector is able to foster and maintain with other key organisations involved in language and skills delivery. It is essential that these relationships, which have developed further under the Routes into Languages programme, continue in order to coordinate (and not duplicate) and to develop and extend delivery of knowledge and expertise beyond the capacity of organisations working alone. This section was prepared by Jane Collis, Regional Language Network London (June 2008): [jane.collis@rln.london.com](mailto:jane.collis@rln.london.com)

The aim of the Welcoming the World initiative is to contribute to the driving up of standards for our international welcome before, during and after the 2012 Games, through improved use and understanding of language and cultural skills.

The Welcoming the World training and resources are designed to help people who work – or are seeking work – in frontline positions in Hospitality, Tourism, Transport, Retail, and Sport and Leisure. They focus on ways of improving and developing the customer service skills necessary to communicate with and serve international and UK-based visitors from a range of cultural and language backgrounds. They are also envisaged as valuable for people working – or wishing to work - at events as volunteers and ambassadors. The resources include a training manual, a reference booklet in Intercultural Skills, and a phrasebook with key customer service phrases in twelve languages. The one-day training programme focuses on intercultural skills, cultural background and customer service advice, and taster sessions in language teaching. Funding conditions for the programme require that a minimum of 50% of all delegates (beneficiaries) are from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and that 50% are women.

Initial feedback from delegates at a pilot training programme was overwhelmingly positive in terms of the quality of the training and resources and value of the programme:

- HE students were universally positive in their views of the programme, valuing intercultural, language and culture-specific aspects of the training in equal measure. The provision of similar bite-sized programmes to existing students within HEIs who hope to work in frontline roles in multilingual, multicultural settings warrants consideration.
- Promotional materials emphasised the employability skills to be developed by the programme and their relevance to future careers;
- It was a useful way of engaging students who do not necessarily view themselves as linguists or intend to embark on international careers.

Alison Phipps has considered the importance of providing basic language and training skills in, for example, the tourism industry: "The democratisation of travel has brought about a democratisation in the learning of languages for tourist purposes, but not yet in mainstream study." It is certainly the moment to seize the opportunity for just such a democratisation of language learning within the HE sector. As she continues: "**To be a good host, these days, is to be able to speak words of welcome – be it on websites, in tourist brochures, and as tour guides – in languages that are comprehensible, and even native to the tourists.**" (Phipps, 2007)

## 6.4 The International Visitor Experience

### Museums and Galleries and the International Visitor Experience (MGIVE)

The University of Westminster conducted a pilot project in 2006 on the enhancement of the international visitor experience to London's museums and galleries. Important lessons can be drawn from this experience on how to communicate with international audiences, which will be applicable to language provision at many events around the Games.

Research has shown that London's leading museums and galleries are already aware of the need to develop their international visitor numbers in an increasingly competitive global market. The websites of Tate, National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, the British Museum, and the Victoria and Albert Museum are good examples of the recognition by the

sector of the need for information to be available in languages other than English, but this remains very variable. (However, in 2008, the availability of information for international visitors has improved significantly.)

The printed information at the point of contact for international visitors remains generally at best inadequate, at worst alienating, and often poorly presented (photocopied sheets), suggesting to the visitor that information in other languages is of less value than that on offer in English. The National Gallery is the exception, with the foreign language information presented in exactly the same format as that available in English, and using the clear system of international symbols to indicate its facilities.

“To be a good host is to be able to speak words of welcome – be it on websites, in tourist brochures, and as tour guides – in languages that are comprehensible, and even native to the tourists”

Critically, information takes the form of translations, of variable quality, based on written information that originates in a British cultural perspective, showing no awareness of the needs, expectations and sensitivities of visitors from other cultural areas.

In the increasingly competitive global tourism environment, and in the light of planning for the 2012 Olympic Games, London's galleries and museums need to re-visit attitudes to the information (and by extension the welcome) that they provide for foreign visitors. While Britain is consistently

rated highly in visitor surveys for “culture”, it is almost universally rated poorly for “welcome”, according to polls carried out for VisitBritain.

Pilot project focus groups for MGIVE identified that the material currently on offer, originating from a British cultural perspective, showed no awareness of the needs of international visitors. Translations vary in quality (sometimes supplied by a very familiar figure in the full report of this Research Project – the “accidental linguist”), revealing preconceptions concerning communication and culture which are often negative in subtle ways, and ultimately leading to lower outcomes in terms of cultural mission and economic development.

Workshops were held to discuss how to enhance the experience of the international visitor; to find a model for the development of culturally informed and high-value information for international visitors, and to develop guidelines for best practice.

The MGIVE team research resulted in the creation of an original, cutting-edge model/process of producing material (University of Westminster research, known as ‘Communication for Intercultural Navigation’; CIN), which interrogates not only how to communicate most effectively with international visitors, but more generally how to package information meaningfully in the museum/gallery context. This has enormous potential for replicability across areas of the public/private sectors with international and inter/multicultural reach.

MGIVE research findings include the following:

- museums and galleries have (admittedly restricted) budgets to spend on visitor information, but (as the sector readily admits) little thought goes into overall strategy/policy despite awareness of need to provide appropriate experience for international visitors;
- some museums and galleries believe they have developed a ‘global brand’, often embedded in the institution’s own promotional discourse, but this does not transfer readily into other cultural areas;
- a model is needed (CIN developed as above) for the production of high-value, specifically targeted, culturally informed material based on effective intercultural communication that meets the cultural and linguistic expectations of international visitors. This would be used by linguistic/intercultural specialists in discussion with the needs of the specific museum/gallery to counter the above problems;

- support is needed to identify the target audience and to provide them with a better experience.

### The Olympics and the International Visitor Experience

The following summary is based on focus group work carried out by the MGIVE team in France, Spain, Germany, the Arab Gulf (Bahrain) and Russia during 07/08. Significant benefits emerged to carrying out surveys, interviews and focus group work in the native language and on home territory rather than gathering on-site feedback in English.

HE languages departments are well-equipped in terms of both research skills and resources to carry out just such small-scale pilot/exploratory projects in the international arena (which can then be extended to larger projects). This section is included not only for its research findings, but as an illustration of the transfer of the HE skills, knowledge and expertise base to extended areas of operation.

#### Focus group participants revealed that they would like to find free information at the airport and also at the hotel.

They would expect the information to include the following, in their own language as far as possible:

- addresses of tourist information centres around London;
- a colour-coded London map that highlights London's famous attractions;
- the contact details of London Transport Enquiry Service;
- a simplified tube map with a guide that explains the types of tickets used in the underground, e.g. Oyster Card, daily cheap travel card, day single, day return, etc. and prices for adults and children;
- a train timetable with a guide that explains the different types of train tickets and prices for adults and children;
- contact details of car rental companies with clear price guide;
- contact details of multi-lingual taxi drivers with clear price guide explaining metre price and destination;
- London tour buses timetable;
- addresses of London piers and boat trips timetable;
- addresses of a range of family-orientated hotels that provide children with entertainment facilities;
- addresses of mosques and Islamic centres with opening times;
- addresses of banks that have branches in their countries, Bureaux de change, money transfer agencies;
- a list of mobile phone shops that sell sim cards and mobile top-up cards;
- addresses of a range of good quality and family-orientated restaurants that provide halal and vegetarian food in various cuisines such as Italian, Indian, Iranian, Moroccan, Egyptian, Lebanese, Thai, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish and Mexican;
- addresses of children's entertainment facilities e.g. theme parks, children's theatre, museums, circus, aquarium, London Eye, children's sports centres;
- a list of cinemas that offer children's movies with an opening time guide;
- the contact details of screened babysitters with a service price guide;
- addresses of cinemas and theatres for adults with a price and show time guide;
- addresses of theatres and special exhibitions in London with opening times and price guide;
- addresses of areas heavily populated by particular ethnic communities, recommending the most convenient means of transport to get there;
- information on shopping, including addresses of particular ethnic supermarkets and bookshops in London;
- addresses of night pharmacies, dental clinics and hospitals in London;
- addresses and contact details of embassies and cultural centres;
- details of a help-line with multilingual volunteers to be reached in an emergency; perhaps with special telephones, free to use, which only dialled emergency numbers (for example, call centres have been used for the Olympic Family but not the general public, which can lead to volunteers feeling very isolated);
- addresses of accredited language centres with price guide;
- security tips and areas best avoided for security reasons in the UK.
- information on habits and customs, the "dos and don'ts", to avoid cultural mistakes.

Information should be presented as colourful leaflets, booklets or magazines and at information desks.

#### Summary of focus group suggestions

- **Arrival at the airport is a crucial point in the visitors' experience; to have information desks and staff who can speak foreign languages, together with printed information, enhances the visitor's experience from the start.** Hotels would also ideally do this, but it was generally felt to be less essential there.
- Airlines might also play an important role as they could provide visitors with targeted information before they arrive.

- Public transport maps need amendments (for instance by adding symbols) to make them more user-friendly for foreign visitors; buying tickets needs to be explained more clearly in some cases, and ideally by multilingual staff as well as in information in stations/on buses.
- Visitors would welcome being able to buy tickets for public transport and cultural (not only sports) events in advance.
- Taxi drivers could indicate if they are able to speak a foreign language. Access to other services in languages other than in English would also be welcome especially for emergencies.
- “Fan parks”, large screens and free events are regarded as being very important.
- Visitors are keen to exploit the cultural aspects of London and would like to have information on cultural events available in their language in a variety of printed forms and on other media platforms.
- Information is needed on children-specific services and activities.
- Attention needs to be given to the provision of family facilities.
- Provision of information needs to be in combinations of oral, printed and electronic formats at event venues (and in other tourist-oriented locations).

# Chapter 7: HE language departments and international audiences

## 7.1 The National Gallery: case study of good practice

Following participation in the 'Museums and Galleries and the International Visitor Experience' (MGIVE, see chapter 6), the National Gallery has identified the provision of high quality, culturally informed and audience targeted information as a priority area for development, in view of not only the increasingly competitive global cultural tourism market, but also the preparation for, delivery of, and legacy succeeding the 2012 Olympics. This also looks forward to the period around the Games for which many of London's museums and galleries are planning special Olympics-related exhibitions. Changes to the National Gallery's language policy include:

- Starting to map out audiences and their needs based on actual usage of (limited) information and interpretative material available;
- Creating information vaults for each of its target groups, analysing patterns of usage throughout the year;
- Separating English print from foreign print, and internal lobbying to focus on international audiences in every area of the Gallery's work, from curatorial to educational, from marketing to front-of-house.

In effect, the MGIVE workshops triggered a completely fresh way of thinking about communications planning for international audiences. The Gallery is now working with the MGIVE team at the University of Westminster on developing plans for an ambitious new interpretative programme for its permanent collections. The National Gallery is a high-profile example of an organisation that believes that having an academic (as opposed to commercial) partner offers significant 'value-added', with a joint focus on sustainability and ensuring long-term and varied benefits of the resources developed.

## 7.2 Further recommendations

Some areas that HE language departments could consider developing collaborative projects around are:

### Go global

- Develop multilingual websites for public and private sector organisations, including more comparative work in a global context with both web-based and printed material. Greater investment is needed by (for example) the UK museum and gallery sector to compete in a global market and to reach international expectations on what a website can offer the visitor:

### Language and new technologies

- Work with university departments such as Computer Science, Informatics, Media and so on to look at the needs, opportunities and challenges of languages in the technological society. Beijing 2008 is seen as the first "digital Games", with huge investment by the Chinese government, international broadcasters and global telecom giants to ensure that the communication and technology infrastructure meets the needs of the estimated 4.5 billion viewers.

"The scale of communication challenges presented by the Games will require innovative technological solutions" (Collis, 2007). One example of a possible solution is the LTC Communicator, a multilingual eCommunication tool that allows non-English speaking users to interact with different service providers (information provided by The Language Technology Centre Limited). For London 2012, the LTC Communicator could be integrated with an existing website to provide a multilingual helpdesk for tourists, organisers and athletes. The user and the helpdesk team do not need to share a common language, as user

requests are routed through the LTC Communicator translation components, displayed to the helpdesk in English, whose solution is then routed back through the translation environment to appear in the user's language. Technology could also help with language and cultural training. With broadband networks giving fast, reliable connectivity, live collaborative teaching networks allow the tutor to create learning groups easily in a virtual classroom, bringing together students of a similar skill level, time availability and language need irrespective of their geographical location.

### Tourism and leisure

- Work with the Tourism and Leisure sectors more broadly: MGIVE's research findings clearly have implications for broader sectors such as high-profile international and sporting events, including City of Culture and the Olympic Games.
- Contribute to cultural events: diverse, small initiatives that are not necessarily sport-orientated provide a more sustainable basis for tourist development. Manchester's Music Map is an example of a positive legacy left by the Commonwealth Games, despite being thematically unrelated to them. Event-themed, rather than event-led, encapsulates this concept.

### Way finding

- Contribute to "Wayfinding" as an emerging (inter)discipline: ideally a small pilot project potentially leading to a large-scale collaborative HE project, bringing together language departments with other disciplines.

*"The challenge of moving vast numbers of people visiting for the first time – many with little knowledge of English – presents opportunities for linguists to work in partnership to create signs, maps and other graphic or audible methods to convey site locations and directions. [...] Multilingual touch screens, helpdesks, and information podcasts could all help provide information in different situations."*

(Collis, 2007)

## 7.3 Conclusion

HE language departments should aim to make the 2012 Olympics exceed both the specific expectations of the Olympic Charter and the more general expectations of the global community as far as language provision is concerned. In so doing, it will provide a sustainable and lasting cultural, social and economic legacy.

*“The past decade has simultaneously seen an unprecedented growth in mobility across international borders and a decline in the learning of languages other than English in the mainstream of higher education across the globe.”*

(Phipps, 2007)

Finally, what if the home of English began to reverse the trend in the decline in learning languages other than English, or at the very least demonstrate an understanding of the value and importance of all languages? This includes both the “rich-world languages” and the currently “under-valued” languages (such as community languages), of which the UK has so many.

**It would be cost effective to use HE language departments as service providers with the aim of ensuring sustainable (re)generation and a lasting legacy by:**

- delivering both short and long-term language training;
- transferring the knowledge gained in this provision to future events and to a range of organisations;
- equipping those involved with experience and improved, nationally-recognised qualifications;
- bequeathing improved language services more generally across the UK.

Sustainable economic regeneration could also be achieved by, for example, language acquisition leading to lasting trade relations with new foreign investors. Just as it is crucial not to waste resources on building new stadiums and facilities to impress the watching international audience when the existing infrastructure is adequate, so it is crucial not to waste resources on short-term language strategies.

Short-lived training/employment opportunities are likely to be commercially sponsored which can lead to other

problems: “the contents of Sydney’s educational packs left school children with the impression that McDonald’s and the Games were indelibly linked” (Lenskyj, 2002; Smith, 2006b). Training and education programmes, information and packs using the UK HE ‘brand’ would avoid such commercially-induced ethical problems.

What is LOCOG’s own current thinking on education, culture and languages within the overall planning and delivery of the Games? The LOCOG website ([www.london2012.com](http://www.london2012.com)) states that its educational programme is for, amongst others, “colleges and universities - there will be special programmes to involve students. Some institutions might provide additional services to support the Games”. It continues: “cultural activities and education will combine with sport for an unforgettable experience and lasting change”.

Although the official LOCOG website states: “the majority of this site is available in French as well as English”, this was not yet the case at the time of writing this report, when only one section on culture was available in French. At the time of writing there was no mention of an official LOCOG Language Services team or manager.

*“The main ‘new’ skills that will be required of those working at or around the 2012 Games will be: games knowledge; cultural awareness; disability awareness and language skills.”*

(Analysis of the skills needed to improve the visitor experience and sports presentation for the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games: Impact Research Skills for the Business Network (June 2007)

Our research would lead us to question how much in-depth research has been done into improving the visitor experience.

A final observation: Toulouse has submitted its bid for European Capital of Culture 2013 and its official City of Culture website is already fully available in French, English and Spanish.

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## Interviews:

all conducted by Saskia Huc-Hepher (2008)

Respondent 1: Director of the DEFLE (Département de Français Langue Etrangère) de l'Université de Michel de Montaigne – Bordeaux 3.

Respondent 3: Head of Liverpool 08 European Capital of Culture/08 Welcome Team (February 2008).

Respondent 4: Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008 Language Specialist Volunteer and Torch Bearer (February 2008).

Respondent 5: Responsable Pédagogique at the Alliance Française Beijing (March 2008).

Respondent 7: Former Chair of Modern Languages at Georgia State University and Volunteer German Interpreter for Wrestling and Ping-Pong Events at Atlanta 1996 (March 2008).

Respondent 8: Member of the Language Services Management Team at Atlanta 1996 and Salt Lake City (Winter) 2002 and 'loaned employee' at Sydney 2000 for three months during that time; Consultant for Turin (Winter) 2006 and Vancouver (Winter) 2010 (March 2008).

Respondent 9: Former Head of French Language Promotion at the French Institute in Athens and Responsible for Higher Education Cooperation in French at the Ministry of Culture for Athens 2004 (March 2008).







Languages and international events: are we ready to talk to the world in 2012?

ISBN: 978-1-905788-91-0

January 2008

Authors: Debra Kelly with Saskia Huc-Hepher and Alison Phipps

This timely report brings major events into the spotlight and shows that planning for languages requires careful consideration across the arenas of sport, culture, tourism and the media. Learning from the experiences of previous international events in the UK and beyond, the report makes recommendations to ensure that the 2012 Olympics in London succeed in bringing about a lasting legacy for language learning.

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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