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Irene Wilkie

Routes into Languages: £8 million programme for languages

The Routes into Languages programme is a joint initiative funded by HEFCE (£4.5 million) and DfES (£3.5 million) to increase and widen participation in language study in upper secondary and higher education as well as support the role of languages as a motor of economic and civil regeneration. Developed by the University Council of Modern Languages (UCML), the HE Academy Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (LLAS) and CILT, the National Centre for Languages, the programme is running for four years from 2006/07 to 2009/10.

Under the programme,

- 2 national networks have been set up to promote translation and interpreting as careers;
- 3 research projects have been commissioned to help universities develop programmes in community languages and enterprise;
- 9 regional consortia have been established where groups of universities work together and with schools and colleges to enthuse and encourage people to study languages.



**Launch of Routes into Languages,
London, 5 February 2008**

South West Consortium

Led by the University of the West of England (Bristol), the South West consortium has been formed involving 8 other HEIs - the Universities of Bristol, Bath, Bath Spa, Gloucestershire, Exeter, Plymouth, the Combined University of Cornwall and the University College Plymouth - StMark and St John.

Irene Wilkie, the consortium director (who is also the manager of Comenius SW, the regional branch of CILT), says: "This project is very important for a number of reasons, not the least being that our young people need to seriously improve their language capability if they are to compete on an equal footing with young Europeans from other countries where knowledge of at least one, if not two, foreign languages is the norm. Our project will include a wide range of activities that the consortium will be taking into schools such as intensive courses, master classes, business links and language taster days, but also more innovative ideas that young students can relate to, such as blogs, podcasts and video diaries. We shall be targeting students in Years 9 and 11 – the key transition points when students make their option choices for GCSEs and AS levels."



Languages and the strategic context

"I want to put languages at the heart of learning", says Alan Johnson

Quotes from schools:

"It is great to have links with HEIs as it helps the pupils to look beyond the narrow horizons of school."

"They are all buzzing about it today and we have had an increase in languages uptake as a result."

Languages are of crucial strategic importance to the UK economically, socially and politically. This has been recognised in a number of reports, confirmed in the Government's National Languages Strategy, and integrated into HEFCE's review of strategic subjects. These sources recognise that languages are vulnerable and have suffered a serious decline in recent years, especially since schools were allowed to make foreign language study an option beyond Key Stage 3.

The Nuffield Languages

Inquiry (May 2000) found that when it comes to the nation's capability in languages, the picture is bleak: "The UK workforce suffers from a chronic shortage of people at all levels with usable language skills. Companies increasingly need personnel with technical or professional skills plus another language, and often their only option is to recruit native speakers of other languages. Mobility of employment is in danger of becoming the preserve of people from other countries'. Moreover, 'nine out of ten children stop learning lan-

guages at 16, and FE and university language departments are being closed'.

There is therefore an urgent need to increase the number of people studying languages in secondary, further and higher education.

From 2010, modern foreign language lessons will be compulsory for children from the age of seven to 14 - for the first time in England's primary schools - as the government attempts "to put languages at the heart of learning", said the education secretary, Alan Johnson.

Talks to Year 9 and Yr 11 students

One very important aspect of our work during the first 6 months of the project has been the visits to schools to talk to Yr 9 and Yr 11 students about the importance of continuing with the study of languages. Staff from 5 of the partner HEIs have been involved as well as dedicated School Visits Officers appointed by UWE and the University of Plymouth. Standard presentations appropriate to each year group form

the basis of the presentation, although individual staff will obviously put their own slant on the talk. The presentations include video clips of people who have discovered the importance of languages in the world of work and also the views of some students themselves who see the value of language study.

To date we have given about

60 talks to Yr 9 students and 20 to Yr 11 students. They have been very well received, and here is a quote from one of the visited schools: the Language Talk "...managed to provoke thought and debate among our students, woken from their often encountered lethargy, when it comes to thinking about their futures and about the usefulness of languages to them."

Languages at Work in the SW

Bristol

We are currently working on producing a DVD of video clips specific to the South West. We will be visiting various companies who have recognised the importance of employing people with language skills at all levels and interviewing key people

within the company. We have already visited Flybe, based at Exeter airport, and in the next few weeks we hope to be filming in 2 engineering companies, a fish and chip shop, and a finance company and interviewing a foreign correspondent and an account executive at a London magazine.

The aim of this CD is to focus on people based right here in the South West, engaged in a variety of jobs and using a foreign language at different levels. The end product will be made available to schools to use as they wish.



Flybe Reservations,
Exeter Airport

Routes into Languages SW in progress



Plymouth

Languages staff in the Plymouth Business School is embracing the 'Routes into Languages' ethos in the city. They have undertaken a number of events designed to aid our partner colleges and compact schools boost their pupil's language skills.

Language lecturer Philip Edwards organised a University 'Taster Day' event on Monday

28th January, twenty five Year 10 pupils from Sir John Hunt Community Sports College, Plymouth, visited the University. The day included a languages session in the Roland Levinsky building and a themed, tasty lunch at the Business School. The pupils were given a tour of the Business Language Information Service (BLIS) by student Nathalie Ducker and BLIS Manager Emma Thompson. Later they had experience of hands-on interactive learning with student Naomi Burtenshaw and Phil Edwards. The pupils also heard a talk from Routes into Languages School Liaison Officer, Amanda Pléven, and they enjoyed a DVD presentation about Life in the University of Plymouth from the Widening Participation team.

On Thursday 31st January 2008 some of the Languages Group staff (Dr. Marie-Marthe Gervais-le Garff, Dr. Doris Dipold, French Assistant Emilie Stervinou, and Amanda Pléven) along with a number of PBS Students helped to run a "Routes into Languages: Making Languages Our Business" event at Devonport High School for Boys. Over a hundred Year 9 pupils from seven Plymouth schools were challenged to design their own laptop and make a presentation in two different languages (a combination of French, German or Spanish) to a judging panel comprised of staff and students from the University. The winning team were 'The Little Sausage Company.'

Exeter

Department of Modern Languages at the University of Exeter has put in place a programme of varying activities to engage all learners of foreign languages between years 10 and 13 (Aged 15-18) to grasp the attention of young minds, persuading them to understand the opportunities that might become available to them if they study a language.

Course Sampling Day on 6th February was conceived as an

opportunity to taste University study for year 12 students. Activities led by academic colleagues were offered in 5 languages: French, German, Spanish, Italian, and Russian. Language Taster



Day for Yr 11 on Wednesday 27th February was run as a series of "entertainments" by undergraduate students bringing each of our five main languages to life by presenting a scene from a 17th century French drama, a short Russian play, some Spanish poetry, a German quiz, two songs by a French choral group, an excerpt from the award winning Italian film *La Vita è bella*, and more. Very positive feedback has been received from students and teachers attending, 66% of the students said that they would continue to study languages at A-Level, with 97% of students intending to go on to higher education.

"It is a very positive experience for them and I know that some of them are really considering coming to Exeter to study. All these days that you have done have gone really well and it is very important for students to see what the next stages are in their studies, so thank you very much."

Marisol Foster (Torquay Boys Grammar School)

Enter our competitions to win prizes!

Routes into Languages SW has recently launched two competitions which are open to all schools and colleges in the region. Do not miss this exciting opportunity to win some fantastic prizes!

As an incentive for more schools to engage with the international business agenda, we are launching **Languages for Business Competition**. If your school/college is doing anything innovative we would like to hear from you. Win a cash prize and showcase what your school is doing!

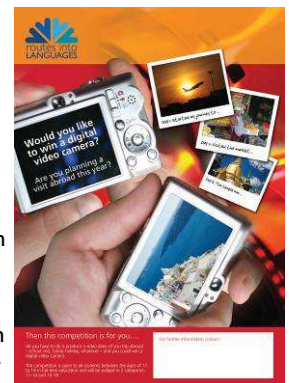
Closing date: 2 June 2008.

To find out more about this competition go to:

<http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/events/02-jun-08.html>

We are aware that many schools, and indeed individual students, enjoy working with digital video and are capable of producing some excellent material. Why not take part in our **Video Diary Competition** and win a digital video camera? Closing date: 16 May 2008.

To find out more about this competition go to: <http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/events/28-feb-08.html>



Forthcoming Events

Wed 23 April 2008, 9.30 am – 3 pm

Languages Day (Yr12)

University of the West of England

http://www.uwe.ac.uk/hlss/llas/events/news_langday.shtml

Tues 6 May – Fri 9 May 2008, 9am – 5pm

Sea, Hear – Languages at Sea: the ArtemisTransat Yacht Race in Plymouth (Yr 7, 8, 9)

University of Plymouth

Wed 14 May 2008, 10am – 3pm

French and Spanish Languages Taster Day (Yr 9)

University of Plymouth

Fri 16 May 2008, 5 pm

Closing date for Video Diary Competition

University of the West of England (see details overleaf)

Mon 2 June 2008, 5 pm

Closing date for Languages for Business Competition

University of the West of England (see details overleaf)

Mon 2 June 2008, 10am – 3pm

German Language Day – Put a little German into Your Life! (Yr 10)

University of Plymouth

Wed 25 June 2008, 11 am – 3 pm

The Benefits of Studying Modern Languages Conference (Yr 10)

University of Exeter



For full details of these and other events, please contact the relevant regional coordinator (see contact details below) or e-mail: Irena.Holdsworth@uwe.ac.uk

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