nstitution: University of Essex

Unit of Assessment: 28 - Modern Languages and Linguistics

a. Overview

The Department of Language and Linguistics' international reputation for linguistic research reflects both the variety of perspectives it adopts for the study of language (description of languages; first language acquisition; second language acquisition; language processing; language use; and language teaching) and the multiplicity of theoretical positions it takes (minimalist; constraint-based; cognitive; variationist). Its strategy is to foster this multi-faceted approach to linguistic enquiry by appointing excellent researchers with different theoretical orientations to work together in three research clusters: **applied linguistics** (covering second language acquisition/language teaching research), **theoretical and descriptive linguistics** and **psycholinguistics** (covering first and second language acquisition and language processing). Each cluster is responsible not only for undertaking innovative research, but also for training new researchers through its doctoral programmes, with impressive results: 111 PhD students were supervised to successful completion during the assessment period. The future objectives of the UoA are to exploit synergies between the different theoretical orientations to gain a better understanding of core linguistic phenomena; to engage non-academic populations in the development of its research (parents/carers in the investigation of child language acquisition, language teachers in the investigation of second language acquisition); and to undertake cross-institutional, multi-disciplinary projects on language description, language development, language processing and language variation.

b. Research strategy

The aims set out in the UoA's 2008 strategy were:

(i)   to 'achieve research excellence in the areas where our new appointments show particular promise';

(ii)   to 'maintain our strong international profile in linguistic theory' (specifically in the areas of syntax/morphology);

(iii)   to exploit theoretical expertise in the investigation of language acquisition/language disorders, language processing (psycholinguistics) and language variation (sociolinguistics);

(iv)   to facilitate the production of high quality research by freeing research active staff from some of their teaching duties by employing staff on teaching only contracts, using GTAs where appropriate, and offering early career staff pump-priming funding for pilot research work.

Evaluation of the 2008 strategy
Proactive succession planning has ensured the recruitment in key areas of new senior leaders and of ECRs, crucial to achieve aims (i), (ii) and (iii). The UoA appointed 6 new staff during the assessment period, enabling each research cluster to either maintain or develop further its profile.

In line with our strategy of achieving excellence in **Applied Linguistics** (i)**,** two senior researchers with experience of managing large collaborative funded projects (**Myles** and **Schmid**) and a promising early career researcher (**Skoufaki**) were appointed, to extend **Hawkins'** ground-breaking work on morpho-syntactic knowledge in adult L2. **Myles** is known internationally for her research into classroom second language learning. Her cross-institutional projects with colleagues at Southampton and Newcastle have led to the development and analysis of databases of the oral language of classroom learners of French and Spanish. This work has been supported by grants from the ESRC, AHRC and British Academy totalling £956,721 for five different projects. Three of these are rated as outstanding, one as very good, and one is still under review. These computerised databases (the largest corpora of oral classroom learner language anywhere) are being used extensively by researchers and doctoral students around the world. **Schmid**'s work on language attrition (the loss of native languages, particularly as it affects syntax/morphology) is adding a new dimension to our understanding of how language is represented in the bilingual mind, and has provided a radically new source of evidence in the debate about whether there is a

critical period for language acquisition. **Schmid**'s work has been supported by over €2m of European funding. **Skoufaki** is investigating how L2 speakers deal with idioms and metaphorical meaning.

The **Theoretical and Descriptive Linguistics** cluster has maintained the UoA's very strong international research profile in linguistic theory, thanks to its policy of supporting world class researchers who study language from the perspective of a number of different theoretical paradigms. This diversity of approach within the same UoA is unusual in the field. **Arnold, Borsley** and **Sadler** have produced constraint-based analyses of a range of phenomena (agreement, negation, comparative correlatives, expletives, subject-auxiliary inversion, relative clauses, among others) in a range of languages (Arabic, Australian, English, Maltese, Welsh). **Spencer**, working within the General Paradigm Function Morphology framework has developed the 'Lexical Relatedness' hypothesis and applied this to the analysis of phenomena in Hungarian, German and Japanese, among other languages. From a minimalist perspective, **Radford** has published work on the syntax of present-day spoken English and French, and **Kula** has continued her investigation of the properties of Bantu languages, particularly Bemba, and produced important descriptions of deverbal nominals, nominal compounding, associative phrases and relative clauses. From a variationist perspective, **Patrick** has conducted innovative work on the analysis of language samples from asylum seekers in courts of justice (see impact case study), and **Chand** (ECR) investigates Indian English and the political and social context in which Hindi and English are used in India.

To sustain the Department's international profile in the application of linguistic theory to **Psycholinguistic** research (iii), the Department has invested in new facilities (e.g. the new *Little Language Learners Lab;* see infrastructure section for details) and two ECRs have recently been appointed. **Hofmeister** is investigating the effect that linguistic representational complexity has on sentence processing in adult native speakers. He has already published articles reporting this work in some high impact journals in the field (*Language*, *Language and Cognitive Processes*, *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*). **Skoruppa**'s work on prosodic and phonological perception in infants, supported prior to her appointment by a prestigious Marie-Curie Intra-European Fellowship (€171,741), has provided important findings about the effects of context on perception, complementing **Eisenbeiss'** work on the development of morphosyntax in young children. **Schmid**, whose research on language attrition straddles Psycholinguistics and Applied Linguistics, is providing leadership to this group. The Psycholinguistic research group has strong links with the Department of Psychology; for example, they jointly run the MA programme *Language and the Brain,* hold joint weekly research seminars and have access to their Centre for Brain Science with EEG facilities (set up in 2009).

The third aim (iii) informs much of the work of the UoA. The multiplicity of theoretical approaches adopted underpins the empirical work that is being undertaken in language acquisition, language processing and language variation. Researchers in the Applied Linguistics cluster draw on insights from the minimalist program, cognitive linguistics, and socio-cultural theory in constructing hypotheses for investigation in second language acquisition (**Ganem; Hawkins; Myles; Roehr-Brackin; Schmid; Skoufaki**). Topics being investigated include knowledge of English verb phrase ellipsis by Chinese and Arabic learners, the emergence of tense and aspect marking in Spanish in adolescent English-speaking classroom learners, the processing of grammatical gender in German and Dutch by native speakers who have 'lost' those languages and second language learners, the learning of English idioms by Chinese speakers, the effect of learning an 'easy' language (Esperanto) on subsequent language learning success. Researchers in the Psycholinguistics cluster, drawing on insights from the minimalist program, constraint-based and cognitive linguistic theories have investigated 'shallow structure processing' and the dual-mechanism model of morphological representation in adult and child monolingual and bilingual speakers in a variety of languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, German, Greek, Japanese, Spanish, Turkish), the effects of grammatical complexity on sentence processing, the perception of suprasegmental information by infants (**Eisenbeiss; Hofmeister; Skoruppa**). **Chand** is investigating the linguistic correlates of Alzheimer's disease from a variationist perspective (with clinical colleagues at UC Davis), and **Kula** is applying some of her insights from phonological theory to second language phenomena.

To give staff on academic and research contracts the time to devote to research (iv), the Department of Language and Linguistics employs between 12 and 16 GTAs each year to provide

class support for undergraduate teaching (primarily for first year students). Five members of linguistics staff are on teaching-only contracts, providing further support. Early career researchers receive pump-priming funding from the Department's research promotion and research endowment funds to support pilot research projects (£10,000 per year).

Vision and strategic plans

The vision of the Linguistics UoA is to enhance the work of its existing research clusters through collaborative and cross-disciplinary projects. These projects will be informed by the exchange of ideas and methodologies between the research clusters and cognate disciplines (psychology, cognitive science, education). Projects will make greater use of existing and emerging technologies (reaction-time measurement, eye-tracking, EEGs, high density video recording, computerised analysis of corpora). Doctoral students will be further integrated into the UoA's collaborative research projects. Potential users of the UoA's research findings (parents/carers of infants, language teachers, speech and language therapists) will play a greater role in shaping the direction of research. To support this work the UoA will make more use of external funding provided by the Research Councils and the EU.

Key themes for investigation will be 'language learning and language loss across the lifespan', 'language and identity', 'the implications of second language learning research for language teaching', and 'the interface between linguistic knowledge and other cognitive systems'.

Developing initiatives that follow from this vision are:

(i)   a series of research 'awaydays' where members of the three clusters exchange information on their ongoing research and develop ideas for collaborative interdisciplinary bids;

(ii)   a series of thematic workshops on specific research topics that bring together Essex and external researchers with a view to initiating cross-institutional projects;

(iii)   a series of workshops on emerging technologies and methodologies;

(iv)   the creation of a Centre for Research in Language Development throughout the Lifespan to facilitate interdisciplinary research in the area of first and second language development and language loss;

(v)   expansion of the work of the 'Little Language Learners' lab (which investigates early language development in infants) to involve parents/carers in the research process and to disseminate the results of research to both academic and non-academic users through an open-access website;

(vi)   involvement of practising language teachers in the development of research projects on language learning in the classroom, and dissemination of findings to research users (e.g. teachers, policy makers);

(vii)   using the existing staff-doctoral student research groups in phonology, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, conversational analysis, language and computation, Arabic linguistics, Lexical Functional Grammar, morphology, second language learning, English language teaching and morphology/argument structure to develop collaborative projects between staff and students.

Underpinning these initiatives will be our continuing commitment to the same four strategic aims that we articulated in 2008: appointing excellent staff; maintaining our international profile in each of our research clusters; and protecting staff time to enable them to produce high quality research outputs, and to engage in research activities which have impact in the world beyond the academy.

c. People, including:

i.   Staffing strategy and staff development

The recruitment of new staff with high research potential, and support for the research of existing staff, is crucial for ensuring that the UoA's strategic objectives are met. The ability to contribute to the UoA's research culture, and to produce work of the highest international standard (for inclusion

in this and subsequent REF exercises) are stated as essential requirements for academic (with research) posts in all advertisements, and assessment of research potential is accorded the highest priority in the selection process. This policy has enabled the appointment of outstanding senior academics **Myles** (from Newcastle) and **Schmid** (from Groningen), and early career researchers **Hofmeiste**r (from UC San Diego), **Chand** (from UC Davis), **Skoruppa** (from Potsdam) and **Skoufaki** (from Cambridge) during the assessment period. Those appointed to their first lectureship are initially appointed on a three-year probationary contract. Permanency at the end of that period is in part determined by evidence of research output and the potential for substantial future research contribution to the UoA. New members of staff are mentored by senior members of established staff who meet with them regularly to monitor progress and offer advice on research plans. Probationary staff are given light teaching loads to allow them to establish their own personal research agendas, and they are paired up with established staff for PhD supervision, enabling them to gain experience at the onset of their career. They have access to an extensive programme of personal development activities offered by the University's Learning and Development Unit. All staff (both probationary and established) participate in a personal development review programme led by senior staff, a substantial part of which is devoted to research planning and review, and advice on research funding and engagement activities is also provided by the University's Research and Enterprise Office. All research staff are eligible for one term of research leave after every 6 terms of normal teaching, and probationers are encouraged to take this leave in their third year. A departmental 'Research Strategy Group' chaired by the UoA's director of research monitors the research plans of every member of research-active staff annually, and the research plans and outputs of staff on research leave. It provides feedback and advises on sources of research funding and outlets for publication. This group also disburses funds from the Department's Research Endowment Fund to support pilot projects (all ECRs have benefited from this fund). Every member of research active staff is given financial support to present work at conferences and related events of at least £700 every year.

Career progression is managed through an annual review of members of the UoA by senior staff in the Department where performance in research, teaching, administration and knowledge exchange are assessed. The senior staff make recommendations on progression and promotion to the University's Staffing Committee. In line with the University's policy on equality and diversity, the Department is committed to the value of diversity and equality of opportunity. Existing and prospective staff are assessed solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, political beliefs and affiliations, family circumstances or other irrelevant distinction; four out of the five new appointees are women, including the two professorial appointments. The University facilitates flexible working, has a set of harassment advisers, and trains all staff involved in making appointments in equality and diversity issues. It has carried out a project on 'Caring for Carers' that has developed recommendations to support staff caring for others. It recently secured an Athena Swan Bronze award for its work in eliminating gender bias and creating a culture that values all staff across the whole University. It also has accreditation for the use of the 'Two Ticks' disability symbol. Mentors and those carrying out appraisals within the Linguistics UoA help to ensure that those whose research is interrupted for maternity leave or any other reason are fully supported in their return to research activity. The HR Manager in the Social Sciences Faculty oversees compliance with the Concordat for Research Staff.

Research integrity and quality is ensured through the adherence to strict ethical guidelines for all research involving human participants, whether it is carried out by staff or students. The UoA has a departmental Ethics Officer who deals with ethical approvals and provides advice on the process, e.g. holding regular sessions for research students and staff, providing pro formas for informed consent, information for participants etc.

ii.   Research students

Staff in the UoA currently supervise an impressive 113 registered PhD students who come from many different linguistic backgrounds (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Greek, Japanese, Malay, Polish, Thai, among others). 44 are sponsored by overseas governments and 3 by British Council schemes. Two students hold ESRC awards through the Essex's Doctoral

Training Centre (one of only 21 in the UK), and one through the AHRC Block Grant Partnerships scheme. The UoA is also part of a successful consortium of 7 institutions in Southeast England (CHASE) awarded an AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership (worth £17m) from 2014. 62% of our doctoral students are female. The diversity of our research student community contributes enormously to the richness and vibrancy of the individual student experience. Each doctoral student is supervised by at least one experienced supervisor who they meet on a regular basis. Student progress is monitored through twice yearly meetings of the student's supervisory board which includes two members of staff in addition to the main supervisor. The student's progress against agreed milestones and targets is assessed at formal board meetings and recommendations concerning the student's candidature made to the Graduate School. Many of the students who successfully completed during the assessment period are now in academic posts worldwide, including Bahrain, China, Egypt, Germany, Greece, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Kuwait, Mexico, Oman, Portugal, Saudi Arabic, Syria, Turkey, Thailand, the United States and the UK. Some now occupy prestigious positions, such as Dean at the University of Dammam, Senior researcher in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oman and Professor at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training in Kuwait.

Research students are a vital component of the research environment, and they are treated as the future colleagues we expect them to become. Their training needs are assessed by their supervisor as soon as they arrive, and they are directed to relevant modules from one of the UoA's eight Masters programmes, as well as other courses they need to attend. They are assigned a workspace, and have access to PCs, networked printing facilities, photocopying facilities and a small research library within the Department. The Department runs a weekly seminar series with invited speakers from all areas of the discipline at which research students are expected to be present. Here they can meet and network with eminent visiting speakers. As already described in section (b), research staff and research students participate actively in research groups which meet regularly through the year. Doctoral students benefit from the University's *Proficio* programme which allocates them up to £1,000 to participate in professional development activities. Within the Department students attend a professional development module which provides workshops on topics such as the use of Praat (for speech analysis); the use of R (for regression analysis); the use of ELAN (for data encoding); CHILDES tools and Mechanical Turk methods for data acquisition; writing for publication; conference abstract writing/reviewing; among others. Students have also attended workshops run by the AHRC-funded Consortium for Humanities and Arts Southeast England (on 'Going Digital: introduction to digital research methods', and 'Digital analysis of language data') and the Advanced Core Training in Linguistics Programme, hosted by UCL and supported by linguists from Cambridge, Essex, Oxford, QMUL, UCL and KCL. They have participated in international exchanges organised through the Doctoral Training Centre, including between Language and Linguistics and JNU in Delhi focusing on methodological innovations in 'experimental linguistics in the field', and many take advantage of the advanced training in quantitative methods offered by the Essex Summer School in Social Science Data Analysis and Collection by attending relevant courses.

The Department encourages independent and collaborative thinking by providing doctoral students with the academic and financial support to organise an external conference, *LangUE*, (now in its ninth year and with its own online proceedings); two internal conferences - *SociolinguistEssex* and the *Essex Graduate Conference in Linguistics* – and an annual student-edited, on-line working paper series: *Essex Graduate Student Papers in Language and Linguistics*. Financial support (up to £300 per student per year) is available from a departmental budget to help students giving papers at external international conferences. Often, this work is the product of collaboration with supervisors, and, if published in proceedings or in international journals, will be jointly-authored.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Income

The UoA received £347,455 in external research funding during the assessment period for projects on the description of Welsh, Siluyana, Indic, Albanian, Bemba and Great Adamanese; for the study of sentence and morphological processing in native and non-native speakers (children and adults); and for the study of English language teaching. The work of some of its new appointees was

supported by substantial research funding (**Myles**, **Schmid** and **Skoruppa's** external research funding totalled close to £4m over the assessment period).

Infrastructure and facilities
The UoA can draw on extensive facilities in support of its research. The University's Albert Sloman Library has extensive collections in Linguistics and allied disciplines, with 21,900 Linguistics books, 1,600 Linguistics e-books, and 140 current journal subscriptions, as well as offering access to numerous databases and datasets. The Library has long opening hours and offers overnight access to the stacks and working areas.

Substantial investment has been made in new technical infrastructure in the Department. A successful bid for £100K SRIF/RCIF funding enabled the unit to invest in equipment for high-density longitudinal video-based studies (notably in the area of language acquisition) and to substantially upgrade and extend its facilities for eye-tracking and reaction-time research. More than £66K was invested in new equipment for eye-tracking (both head-mounted and in-screen systems) and reaction time experiments, and substantial refurbishment of the lab space has also taken place. As already mentioned, investment has been made in the creation of a 'Little Language Learners' lab for work with infants and young children, which will support the work of the psycholinguistics research cluster on developmental language acquisition. The department now has four dedicated linguistics labs and, as noted in section (b), also has access to EEG facilities in the Department of Psychology's *Centre for Brain Science* for collaborative research. These laboratories are being used extensively not only to enable the research of **Eisenbeiss** and **Skoruppa** in first and bilingual acquisition, **Schmid** in language attrition and **Hofmeister** in language processing, as well as that of many PhD students, but also for training in these methodologies the new generation of postgraduate students (PGR and PGT, e.g. in the context of the MA in Psycholinguistics and Neurolinguistics.
The UoA has also contributed to the production of significant datasets. (i) **Myles** was the principal investigator on ESRC, AHRC and British Academy-funded projects that have led to the development of the two largest databases of tagged oral classroom learner data in French and Spanish in the world. These are available on-line to the research community (www.flloc.soton.ac.uk; www.splloc.soton.ac.uk); she has written extensively on the development and digital exploitation of learner corpora for second language research, as well as given training workshops or plenaries in many countries (UK; France; Belgium; USA; Sweden); (ii) **Chand** is using a collection of around 500 oral language samples from a cohort being followed longitudinally at the UC Davis Alzheimer's Disease Center, in order to explore the presence and progression of linguistic correlates of Alzheimer's Disease; (iii) **Chand** has collected a contemporary Indian English corpus (approximately 450,000 words of digital audio and transcription) of sociolinguistic interviews, used in the investigation of language ideology and language plans; structural features of Indian English; internal variation and/or evidence for diachronic change in Indian English structure; (iv) a corpus of 190 hours of English and Japanese videoed interaction for the comparative study of linguistic and embodied interaction (collected by **Clift**); (v) a German child language corpus (collected by **Eisenbeiss**) consisting of two sub-corpora with nearly 2000 video recordings, including a longitudinal high-density video corpus involving four children (0-7 years) and their family.

e. Collaboration or contribution to the discipline or research base

Given its international make-up (linguistics staff originate from 8 different countries), the international nature of recruitment to its doctoral programmes and the interdisciplinary nature of its research, the Department is committed to the widest research collaboration. Many members of the Department have collaborative arrangements, both official and informal, with academics at other institutions within the UK and internationally. The Department has hosted visiting scholars from ten countries during the assessment period (China, Germany, India, Italy, Kuwait, Morocco, Spain, Switzerland, UK, USA). Evidence of the strength of these links is provided by the volume and spread of published collaborative research.

e1)   Partnerships and Networks: The UoA has been involved in a number of partnerships/ networks including: a European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) network involving 30+ institutions from 12 countries investigating natural language parsing (**Arnold, Kula**, **Sadler**,

Spencer); staff and PhD student collaborative links with the University of Konstanz and Jawaharlal Nehru University (India) investigating possessive constructions and grammatical case (**Kula**, **Spencer; Eisenbeiss)**; a European Network Project with partners from the Universities of Leiden, ZAS (Berlin), Trieste, Verona, Trento and SOAS on the structure of nouns and noun phrases in Bantu, Chinese and Romance (**Kula**). **Kula** was also part of the British Academy UK-Africa Network project with partners from SOAS, and the Universities of Durban, Namibia and Botswana. **Schmid** led the international network *Interdisciplinary perspectives on multilingual development*, funded by NWO 2008-11 and involving 6 European countries. Patrick led the LADO (Language Analysis for Determination of Origin) ESRC network (2011-12), with members (forensic linguists, lawyers, human rights practitioners, NGOs, government experts and academics) in the UK, Europe, North America and Australasia (see case study).

The UoA is committed to maintaining and expanding its international research partnerships and networks over the next assessment period.

e2) *Professional subject associations and learned societies:* Members of the Department make a considerable contribution to the wider research and scholarly community. **Myles** has served as President of EUROSLA since 2011 (Vice-President 2007-11) and as member of the Research Committee of the Association for French Language Studies since 2003. **Schmid** is a member of the EUROSLA Executive Board (from 2011) and member of the Scientific Committee of the International Symposium on Bilingualism (from 2009).

e3) *Editorial activity:* Members of the Department serve on the editorial boards of 21 international journals. **Borsley** has been editor of the *Journal of Linguistics* since 1994. **Myles** served as editor of the *Journal of French Language Studies* 2006-12 and **Hawkins** as editor of *Second Language Research* 2002-2009.

e4) *Cross-institution collaboration and joint publications:* Departmental staff work with colleagues at Harvard (Polinsky), Oxford (Dalrymple), Melbourne (Nordlinger)*,* Potsdam (Felser, Vasishth), New York (Collins), Gent (Haegeman), Sizuoka (Yokota), Waseda (Iwasaki), Coimbra (Luis), Goldsmith's College (Popova), Surrey (Corbett), Kentucky (Stump), JNU (Abbi), SOAS ((Nikolaeva), CNRS Paris (Peperkamp), Stanford (Sag), University of the Basque Country (Garcia Mayo), UCDavis (Reed, Farias, Baynes), Stony Brook (Casasanto), Manheim (Hopp), UCL (Rosen), Southampton (Mitchell, Dominguez), among others.

e5) *Peer review work:* During the reporting period, **Borsley** and **Myles** have served as members of the AHRC and ESRC Peer Review Colleges respectively, and **Sadler** as an Expert for FP7-ICT (European Commission). **Myles** is a member of the 2013 REF subpanel 28. **Schmid** is on the advisory board of the *Center for Language and Cognition, Groningen* (CLCG) and the *Landelijke Onderzoeksschool Taalwetenschap* (the Netherlands National Graduate School for Linguistics: LOT). Members of the Department have also served as external assessors for chairs and other senior research appointments in Canada, France, Ireland, Jordan, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the UK.

Departmental members have served as referees for about 90 journals, and funding applications for 16 research councils around the world (all the UK Research Councils, as well as their equivalents in Canada, China, Israel, the Netherlands, Qatar, Sweden and USA).

Book manuscripts have been reviewed for academic publishers including: John Benjamins, Blackwell, Cambridge University Press, Continuum (Bloomsbury), CSLI Publications, MIT Press, Oxford University Press, Palgrave Macmillan, Routledge, Sage, Wiley.

e6) *Examining doctorates:* Over the assessment period, departmental staff have examined doctorates at a variety of UK and overseas universities: Birkbeck, Birmingham, Cambridge, Durham, Institute of Education, London, Lancaster, Leeds Metropolitan, Liverpool, Newcastle, Salford, SOAS, Southampton, Surrey, UWE, York, ANU (Australia), Århus, Bergen, Budapest, Carleton (Canada), Eötvös Loránd (Hungary), Iowa, Nijmegen, Oslo, Ottawa, Pais Vasco (Spain), Toulouse le Mirail (France) and Trondheim (Norway).

e7) *Organisation of conferences and scholarly encounters:* members of the Department have been involved in organising 10 conferences/symposia (including the LAGB conference at Essex in 2008).