Institution: University of Ulster

Unit of Assessment: 28B Modern Languages and Linguistics – Modern Languages and Linguistics

a. Context   The impact of research in the Modern Languages and Linguistics Unit at Ulster relates directly to policy makers, teachers of languages at a variety of levels, local dialect speakers, multilingual families and language professionals in the community, in local government, in education and in industry.   The development of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) at Ulster has informed changes in language teaching methods in UK Higher and Secondary Education. In particular, the Centre for Excellence in Multimedia Language Learning (CEMLL) funded by CETL (Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning) provides a rich bank of digital multimedia resources that are used by educators across the world.   The unit has played a significant role in the development of language policy and practice, the provision of public services and the development of effective language pedagogy through its involvement in initiatives such as The Northern Ireland Languages Strategy; The Ulster Scots Academy Implementation Group; The European Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning (EuroCall); The Worldwide Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning (WorldCall); The Centre for Excellence in Multimedia Language Learning (CEMLL); and UCoM (Ulster Centre on Multilingualism).   In addition, the unit has influenced public discourse about language and local varieties in the region through engagement in public fora and in the media, and through the external activities of the Confucius Institute at Ulster, launched in April 2012. It has also impacted on industry by engaging with a number of multinational companies to develop software and professional development material regarding language teaching.

b. Approach to impact   In broad terms, the unit has influenced educational policy and practice, public discourse and services, through a network which has prioritised the following areas: *b.1 Provision of expert advice to government*   The unit has achieved this through: • the development, in conjunction with Queen's University Belfast and Celtic at Ulster, of a Northern Ireland Languages Strategy (**Gillespie**)   http://www.deni.gov.uk/languages_for_the_future.pdf   • frequent acceptance of invitations to participate in working groups such as the The Ulster Scots Academy Implementation Group (**Henry**)   • Giving evidence to the Northern Irish Assembly's Committee for Employment and Learning (**Ó Dochartaigh**, Barr, Ó Corráin)   *b.2 Influence on pedagogy in the area of language learning*   The unit achieved this through: • the founding of the Centre for Excellence in Multimedia Language Learning (CEMLL)

http://www.cemll.ulster.ac.uk

- the organisation of training events and good practice workshops under CEMLL

- the provision, via CEMLL, of consultancy expertise to a number of UK HEIs

- the organisation of the WorldCALL 2013 conference in Glasgow which brought together educators from underdeveloped countries where traditionally multimedia language learning methods are not available (Barr) http://www.worldcall2013.org

- the provision of training to secondary teachers from across the UK (Barr**, Gillespie,** Leakey)

- the LASER project which focused on use of digital multimedia in the teaching of Spanish in secondary schools in areas of social need (**Black**)

- the leadership roles in European Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning (EuroCALL) and in the World Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning (WorldCALL) (**Gillespie,** Barr)

- the leadership role in the development of a sectoral qualifications framework in the humanities across the EU through the Tuning Academy (SQF: HUMART) (**Rhys**)

- the delivery of invited talks for professional conferences for Irish medium educators (**Henry**)

b.3 Contribution to innovation in industry:

- the UoA has been involved in software design and testing for Sony and Auralog (**Gillespie,** Leakey**)**

b.4 Contribution to professional development in business:

- the unit was instrumental in developing digital multimedia tools used in the delivery of teaching on language and culture to employees of Michelin, Bombardier, Wrightbus and Moypark

b.5 Contribution to preservation of cultural heritage:

- the unit participated in community initiatives such as the Ullans academy (**Henry**)

b.6 Engagement with local communities, charities and organisations on issues relating to language

This was achieved through:

- the high profile launch of UCoM which drew attention across the community to our work on multilingualism (**UCoM team**) http://www.socsci.ulster.ac.uk/ucom/

- the online presence of UCoM via its website and twitter feed (**UCoM team**)

- the frequent participation in community events such as a community roundtables, community workshops and parents group (**UCoM team**) (http://www.socsci.ulster.ac.uk/ucom/events.html)

- the delivery of workshops for social workers involved with adoption, and speech and language therapists (**Sevdali and Foll**)

- the establishment of a new initiative with Barnardo's to provide language support for refugees and asylum seekers (**UCoM team**)

All staff are encouraged and mentored to develop applications of their research in the community, and all staff in the unit have contributed to impact in the areas of CALL, language documentation, language disorders, multilingualism, language planning, and local dialects. These are areas which we will continue to develop and focus on in the future.

c. Strategy and plans

The overarching goal of the Modern Languages and Linguistics unit at Ulster is to bring into focus the crucial role that language plays in many walks of daily life in the community. It is undeniable that, in many connected ways, society has thus far underestimated the contribution that competence in more than one language variety plays in social and cultural well being and, ultimately, in economic prosperity. The unit has thus far played a crucial role in transforming public awareness and discourse and educational policy and practice in this regard and it will continue to do so by:

- targeting of research funding to develop and sustain research and outreach work in the area of Applied Linguistics and Language Strategy;

- extending the reach of the impact of the unit by widening the use of Ulster's language learning tools and expertise, including liaison with software and hardware manufacturers. The unit will engage as design consultants for the creation and use of multimedia labs and multimedia technology and the continuation of our involvement in testing software developed by multimedia language learning manufacturers such as Sony, Auralog and Robotel and developers of community focused software apps;

- consolidating existing, and developing new relationships with international businesses through provision of an enhanced suite of multilingual training courses;

- developing training in Multilingualism for language professionals such as Speech and Language Therapists and teachers;

- providing community outreach initiatives under the auspices of UCoM;

- continuing to develop the "Ulster Dialects" website, including the development of packages for teachers;

- contributing linguistics expertise to curriculum development for Irish medium educators;

- bidding for major funding to develop publicly accessible databases of trilingual language development and milestones;

- developing resources to tackle linguistic prejudice in areas of social deprivation through existing links with community organisations in North and East Belfast.

These initiatives once established will be promoted widely in the region.

d. Relationship to case studies

The impact case studies exemplify two core branches of the UoA's impact activity which has concentrated on Computer Assisted Language Learning and language in the local community.

In CALL, the case study arises from a long-term strategy of the unit to conduct research in the development of new technologies in language learning, culminating in the establishment of the CEMLL for the dissemination of effective practice.

In linguistics, the case study arises directly from our strategy to promote work on local language varieties, Irish medium education and an active outreach service in support of multilingualism.