

Impact template (REF3a)

Institution: University of Essex
Unit of Assessment: 28 - Modern Languages and Linguistics
<p>a. Context</p> <p>Research in the Department of Language and Linguistics at Essex is focused in three sub-disciplines: Theoretical and Descriptive Linguistics, Applied Linguistics and Psycholinguistics. Researchers share the belief that, because language is central to almost every aspect of life/society, they have a duty to ensure that a sound and rigorous understanding of its workings is disseminated as widely as possible, whenever appropriate. This duty is fulfilled through a lively programme of engagement activities with a wide audience of non-academic users (listed below). The Unit will continue to build upon the links it has been forging with industry, public bodies and education stakeholders locally and nationally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Applied linguists have taken every opportunity to engage with language teachers, teacher trainers, local schools, the general public, professional associations and policymakers through broadcasts (radio; vodcasts); talks in schools; conferences aimed at teachers and at teacher trainers (e.g. the annual <i>Essex Language Conference for Teachers</i>); contribution to policymaking (e.g. the review of the new languages curriculum and the teaching of foreign languages in primary schools); and events for the public (e.g. the Language Learning Café). This group has produced very popular textbooks (e.g. Hawkins' pedagogical grammar and workbook of French – 99,989 copies sold, or Myles co-authored book on Second Language Learning Theories – 3rd ed., 33,793 copies sold), and has provided research consultancy to the Esperanto Association of Britain on language learning and language education (Roehr-Brackin, working with a PhD student). ▪ The theoretical/descriptive linguists have made their research accessible to students of linguistics, language teachers, and speech and language therapists through the writing of textbooks, some of which have become established standard texts throughout the world within their respective fields (Radford; Spencer; Borsley; Johnson). These textbooks have impacted on generations of students and ensured their sound understanding of language when being trained for professions such as language teaching or speech therapy. For instance, Radford has published eight textbooks whilst at Essex, with sales figures totalling over 165,000 – this includes two books published during the 2008-13 period. Translations of these textbooks have appeared in Chinese, Japanese and Korean. Additionally, research in the practical deployment of leading-edge computational grammar theories, tools and techniques has contributed to the design of prototype natural language interfaces for defence and security systems (Arnold, working with BAE Systems). Work on language variation has had an impact on legal practices and advice relating to the role of language in asylum seeker cases within the context of Language Analysis for Determination of Origin (LADO). Chand, in collaboration with partners (both academics and clinicians) from the Alzheimer's Disease Center, University of California Davis and the Memory Clinic within the Veterans Affairs, Martinez, CA, researches how measures of oral fluency reflect potential decline trajectories in Alzheimer's patients. This research is disseminated to the public via a website, and is intended to make its way into the clinical diagnostic loop. Clift has collaborated with Channel 4 with a view to making a programme on the intersection of verbal and non-verbal interaction, based on an analysis of unedited Channel 4 footage of 'The Family'. ▪ The psycholinguistics research cluster works closely with local nursery schools and parents/carers, as well as the Toy Library (Eisenbeiss; Skoruppa). They have developed language games, whose primary purpose is the elicitation of linguistic structures which are rare in spontaneous child speech, for research purposes. But because these games are highly successful in getting young children to talk, they have been very popular with nurseries and parents of children with language delays. The <i>Little Language Learners' Lab</i>, equipped for research with infants and toddlers, was opened in July 2013. Information and outputs will be shared with parents/carers via a dedicated interactive website and a series of activities (e.g. talks, demonstrations).
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>The department employs three main approaches to impact:</p>

1. Informing practice

Informing practitioners about the findings of research and its implications is central to the work at Essex. This is achieved through conferences for teachers; talks for teacher trainers, trainee teachers and language therapists (in the UK; Cyprus; Greece; New Dehli); and participation in national curriculum and educational debates (UK - Myles; consultancy to the German Federal Ministry of Education - Eisenbeiss). An ESRC-funded seminar series organised around the LADO theme enabled academics, judges and human rights lawyers to exchange ideas. A particularly successful example of this approach is the annual *Essex Language Conference for Teachers*. Evaluation questionnaires have been highly positive, and have enabled a dialogue with teachers to target areas of research in which they are interested. Feedback from the questionnaire has shown the impact on teachers' understanding of learning processes and on their classroom practice. The Unit has built excellent relationships with local schools that are keen to be kept up to date with current research and have invited University staff to talk at their schools.

2. Making research accessible

The willingness of the Department to support researchers in producing high quality research-informed textbooks has led to the publication of market-leading textbooks (e.g. Hawkins' French grammar books and Radford's syntax books). Additionally, researchers have used a wide range of media to publicise their work: vodcasts, radio interviews, and a range of public events (open days; *Language Learning Café*; *Café Scientifique*). The *Language Learning Café* is an annual event, organised in collaboration with Colchester Library, where first- and second-language acquisitionists from the Department present their research to the public, with a focus on *inter alia* how parents and educators can help children with language development, reading, and foreign-language learning.

3. Collaboration with research users

The Department has consistently been responsive to approaches from external partners to collaborate in projects. This has led to fruitful collaborations, for example with BAE Systems or with media outlets such as BBC Radio Essex or Channel 4. One particular example is Roehr's work with the Esperanto Association of Britain (EAB), which has involved document review, advice on project design and research methodology, and preparation of commissioned reports. She has also been contracted by the EAB to carry out empirical work to investigate the effectiveness and usefulness of teaching Esperanto to young children in order to inform best practice, showing for example that the teaching of Esperanto to primary school children helps them grasp grammatical concepts (see, for example, *Esperanto as a Starter Language for Child Second-Language Learners in the Primary School*, 2012).

The Department has drawn on University-level support in various ways. The University's HEIF grant has been used by the Department to fund projects: the 2013 Language Conference for Teachers was part-funded by a Building Partnerships Award, whilst the *Language Learning Café* and Cliff's work on material from 'The Family' both received funding from the University's Knowledge Transfer Innovation Fund. The Department has also drawn on the expertise of the Faculty Communication Officer, who has been instrumental in establishing its relationship with BBC Radio Essex and led to a series of interviews. Since January 2013, two frontrunners (students paid by the University to work on projects that develop their employability skills) have been employed with the specific aim of promoting the Department's research outside academia, as well as developing and strengthening links with relevant partners (for example, finding out what research local schools are interested in, or making a video of language games which can be played with very young children).

The ***Little Language Learners Lab*** demonstrates the Department's commitment to investing in facilities that will produce impact-rich research. The lab is purpose-designed for research on infant and toddler language development and will involve local families (see section c). Engagement activities are encouraged and supported by the Department through a time allowance of 200 hours per year to each member of staff engaged in impact activities, and through a small allocation of funding for expenses.

c. Strategy and plans

The Department aims to continue to develop its impact activities in the areas which have been successful:

- Further textbooks are being produced and those currently under contract include Kula and Johnson *Key terms in Phonology* (Continuum); Cliff *Conversation Analysis* (CUP); Radford new

editions of syntax textbooks (CUP); Sadler (with Börjars and Nordlinger) *Lexical Functional Grammar* (under review, CUP).

- Courts are increasingly drawing on LADO expertise, and we therefore expect this area of work to grow; the appointment of Schmid, a specialist in language attrition, will contribute to this strand of work. Patrick continues to work with legal teams on high-profile LADO cases.
- The Department's relationship with BAE Systems continues to develop and further proposals for collaborative projects are under discussion, e.g. working on the semantics of modal conditions.
- Language games will be developed for speech and language therapists in India, in collaboration with Jawaharlal-Nehru University. Language games will also be used locally, e.g. Toy Library. Additionally, the *Little Language Learner Lab* and its interactive website will enable the acquisitionists to engage with local parents, nursery school teachers and language therapists, drawing on Skoruppa and Eisenbeiss' expertise.
- Collaboration with EAB (Esperanto Association of Britain) (ongoing consultancy work which examines the potentially facilitative role of Esperanto in language education; see section b3)
- Strong local presence in the language teaching community: the *Essex Language Conference for Teachers* is now an annual event, and further links with local teachers are constantly developed.

Additionally, recent research developments are leading to impact activities in new areas:

- The new languages curriculum, and in particular the introduction of foreign languages in primary schools from 2014 is providing opportunities for Myles to have an input into policy making, following her recent ESRC project (2009-11) comparing foreign language learning in children aged 5, 7 and 11. The ongoing analysis and dissemination of findings from this project is attracting much interest nationally and internationally.
- Chand's work on language use in Alzheimer patients has direct implications for clinical practice in diagnosis and management of the illness. By better understanding the nature of the linguistic difficulties experienced, more targeted therapies can be used to help with communication.
- In addition to her work with Channel 4, Cliff is also currently in discussion with the executive producer of the BBC series *Child of our Time*, to explore using the language data from the children for an interdisciplinary conversation-analytic project which would lead to a further television programme.

The Department also aims to put in place a more systematic approach to maximising impact, for example by making it a central concern in staff appraisals, and by dedicating some of its resources to facilitating its success, both in terms of staff workloads and financial/administrative resources, and in making Impact and engagement activities an important part of the recruitment of new staff. Recent appointments all have strong research links outside academia: Chand and Alzheimer's research; Skoruppa and speech and language therapists; Schmid and attrition in displaced communities (including LADO); Myles and language teachers and educators.

d. Relationship to case studies

The LADO case study exemplifies Essex research being used to **inform practice**. Peter Patrick's work has informed practice in three distinct ways: (i) he is legally qualified to provide expert reports to asylum tribunals in the UK – his work has informed the practice of QCs and his reports have been cited by judges in case determinations; (ii) he has disseminated his research findings to various non-academic practitioners involved in asylum cases, including doctors, immigration lawyers, human rights practitioners, and geneticists; (iii) he was instrumental in developing best-practice guidelines for the use of LADO, which included meeting with the asylum bureaux of twelve European countries. The case study shows how research in the Unit can aid government and other agencies in implementing current policy, while at the same time providing evidence-based guidance aimed at ensuring that those policies are applied equitably and without prejudice to vulnerable people.

The Natural Language Processing case study shows how research within the Unit has been able to provide specialist expertise to a commercial organisation. Doug Arnold's work with BAE Systems demonstrates not only a successful **collaboration with industry**, but also the responsive approach that researchers in the Unit adopt when collaborating with users. The company approached Arnold because of his research background, but were also able to make extensive use of his practical expertise and experience. As a result of the collaboration, two feasibility-of-concept systems were built; equally significantly, Arnold was able to deter the company from undertaking overly ambitious projects and informed them of the limitations of tools.