

**Foreign language learning and Ireland's 'Languages Connect' strategy:
a symposium on perspectives for higher education**

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Abstracts

Professor Michael Brophy

University College Dublin

On the opportunities and challenges of implementation: Connecting with 'Languages Connect' in Higher Education

This paper focuses on the process of implementation of 'Languages Connect' in Higher Education, considering the key topics of cooperation, funding and the current state of modern languages disciplines in the sector. It examines how modern languages might draw leverage from the national government strategy to strengthen their visibility and deepen their role in a university setting.

Dr Jennifer Bruen

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Languages Connect: What does Ireland's first strategy for foreign languages in education mean for the Higher Education sector?

Following extensive consultation between those directly involved in foreign language education in Ireland, business and enterprise, and policy makers, the Department of Education and Skills recently launched 'Languages Connect' together with its associated Implementation Plan. 'Languages Connect' sets out an ambitious range of objectives and targets associated with the teaching and learning of foreign languages in Ireland. This paper considers five of these measures which are likely to impact on the Higher Education Sector, in particular. The areas explored are:

- An increase in the numbers studying a foreign language at third level
- The external certification of prospective second level language teachers
- An increase in student mobility (Erasmus+)
- The incentivisation of the study of languages for the Leaving Certificate using bonus points, and
- The development of university language strategies.

The paper concludes with a description of three university-level initiatives implemented by one Irish HEI which are potentially capable of contributing to the achievement of some of the core goals of 'Languages Connect'.

Professor Lorna Carson

Trinity College Dublin

Shifting language policy into the 21st century: How to innovate, diversify and thrive

The terms '21st century learning' and '21st century skills' have assumed the status of buzzwords in the educational sphere: referring to the demands of lives, activities and jobs that are fast-paced, technology-led, individualised and ever-changing. P21 (Partnership for 21st Century Learning) describes "a world where change is constant and learning never stops". In such an ever shape-shifting environment, policy-makers face considerable challenges in the creation of their projections, targets and interventions. They operate within a digital, hyper-personalized and multilingual world where many constants of the former century no longer hold sway. However, we must acknowledge that many of our classrooms – perhaps especially in higher education – continue to reflect 20th century approaches (or earlier) to teaching, learning and assessment. This presentation addresses the case of ab initio and non-specialist language learning in universities in the context of this policy challenge. It suggests some theoretical principles and methodological tools for responsive, even proactive (rather than reactive) third level language policy, with a particular focus on the case of Asian languages.

Professor Mary Gallagher*University College Dublin**A modest proposal: directing ambition in modern language learning at university*

What should be our ambition now for languages in Irish universities and colleges? Where should our ambition for our students and graduates be directed? What are the shifts and challenges associated with fulfilling those ambitions? My paper is a reflection on recent experience at the coalface.

Professor Celeste Kinginger*Pennsylvania State University**Thoughts on advocacy for modern languages and international education*

Following a brief overview of applied linguistics research on language learning in study abroad, in this talk I will describe recent efforts to highlight modern languages in the United States at the policy level and outline large-scale survey research demonstrating the benefits of international education. This research shows, for example, that study abroad enhances academic focus, intercultural competence, and global engagement. However, to date few studies examine the destinies of committed language learners after graduation, when they move on to further study or professional pursuits. I will then discuss the design of a nationwide survey and life history study examining the careers of language study abroad alumni. The emic dimension of the survey is based on a small corpus of 89 online testimonials showing that alumni enjoy an employment advantage, attach importance to their international social networks, and value particular skills attributable to prior language learning experiences.

Professor Leigh Oakes*Queen Mary University of London**Foreign language motivation in a globalised world: The case of languages other than English (LOTEs)*

Against the backdrop of the mistaken belief that ‘English is enough’ (Department of Education and Skills 2017: 17), this paper explores the role of motivation in the learning of languages other than English (LOTEs) in today’s globalised world. While previous conceptualisations of motivation were dominated by a distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation (Gardner & Lambert 1959, 1972), to which was later added a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (e.g. Noels 2001; Noels et al. 2000), more recent research shifts the focus to learners’ own self-conceptions of their second-language (L2) competence in the future with the notions of the ‘ideal L2’ and ‘ought-to L2’ selves (Dörnyei 2005, 2009). In particular, the ideal L2 self is said to be more suitable than integrative motivation regarding the learning of a language like English, associated increasingly less with its first-language (L1) speakers and more with new cosmopolitan identities. But what of the case of learners of LOTEs? The paper presents some results from a quantitative study of motivation amongst 527 university learners of French in four European countries: the UK, Ireland, Sweden and Poland. The study compared the significance for the learners of the motivational constructs theorised in the literature, and examined whether their motivation was impacted by the dominance of English, both in terms of the status enjoyed by this language in the various countries examined (L1, L1 in addition to another language, L2 and foreign language) and whether it was the learners’ L1. The findings are considered in terms of their implications for efforts to motivate more students to take up foreign languages in English-dominant countries.

Dr Éamon Ó Cofaigh*National University of Ireland, Galway**Learning French through Irish, advantages, disadvantages, challenges*

In this paper, I will consider a number of issues relating to teaching French through Irish. I will firstly examine the course’s advantages and disadvantages as perceived by the students themselves and also as perceived from the teacher’s point of view. I will discuss difficulties encountered along the way, from teething problems in First Year to transition problems in both Second and Third Years. Finally, I will critically analyse the results obtained by students through Irish in comparison with those of their peers who are taught through English.

To this end, I will compare and contrast results obtained by students in all three years over a fifteen-year period and trace any relevant trends. I will explore any discrepancies between these streams of learning and will attempt to suggest reasons for these, should they arise. To conclude, I will examine both streams of teaching and suggest how improvements can be incorporated into either stream.