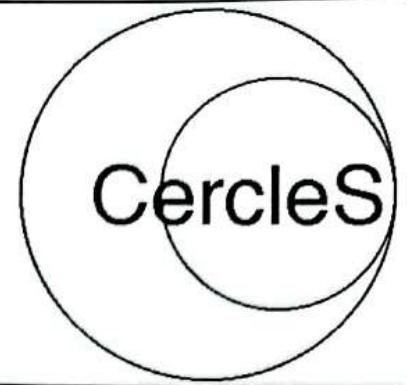


Bulletin

Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur
European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education
Europäische Konföderation der Hochschulsprachenzentren



Going for Gold! Language Centres and the Commercial Challenge

Sandra Kremer
University of Surrey

Comment les Centres de Langues universitaires organisent-ils les services commerciaux? Ici, dans le premier d'une courte série d'articles de différents pays européens, Sandra Kremer décrit, à travers son expérience personnelle, comment une université britannique a relevé le défi d'entrer dans "le monde réel" et de créer une entreprise. Elle explique comment le Centre de Langues Européennes de l'Université du Surrey a défini son produit, commencé à le commercialiser, a pu surmonter le problème d'opérer dans un environnement universitaire, et développer son propre style commercial. Ceci a impliqué l'adoption de règles strictes sur la façon de contacter les clients, d'organiser les finances, le personnel et la description du produit. Mais surtout ils ont fait de la qualité leur USP (leur seul critère de vente).

How do University Language Centres manage commercial services? In this, the first of a short series of articles from different European countries, Sandra Kremer describes her experience of how one UK University has risen to the challenge of entering the "real world" and running a business.

A Business opportunity?

I was appointed to co-ordinate Business Language operations at the University of Surrey in 1992. Preliminary research findings had indicated a definite, if low-key need for business language training, and the priorities were given were to:

- generate revenue
- maximise the use of University resources
- build bridges into the community

In 1992 language training seemed likely to be in demand as never before! In actual fact, most of the predicted sources of demand failed to materialise. Politically and economically, learning a foreign language was not a priority for most businesses as they

Wie geht es den Sprachzentren mit den kommerziellen Aspekten ihrer Dienstleistungen? In diesem Artikel, dem ersten einer Beitragsreihe, die von mehreren europäischen Ländern gestaltet wird, beschreibt Sandra Kremer, wie eine britische Universität die Herausforderung, den Schritt in die "rauhe Wirklichkeit" zu wagen und ein Wirtschaftsunternehmen zu werden, bestanden hat. Sie beschreibt, wie das European Language Teaching Centre (Sprachzentrum) an der Universität von Surrey ihr Produkt definiert und mit seiner Vermarktung begonnen hat, wie man es geschafft hat in einem universitären Umfeld zu arbeiten und einen eigenen Unternehmensstil zu finden. Dazu gehörte die Anwendung von klaren Strategien für die Kundenakquisition, die Finanzierungsregelung, das Personal Management und die Gestaltung des Product-Portfolios. Dabei machte das Sprachzentrum die Qualität zu seinem USP.

moved towards the recession of 1993-4. There appeared to be a business *need*, if not real *demand*, and we needed more thorough market research to establish our position and determine the strength of the competition. This we did ourselves, and in this way the business community became aware of our existence as a commercial unit, even if we did not immediately convert all initial leads into contracts.

This article will describe how we defined our product, began to market it, met the challenges posed by operating in a University environment, and developed our own business style. This involved adopting firm policies on ways of approaching clients and of managing finance, staff and the product portfolio. Finally I shall show how we made quality our USP.

A Unique product?

A cursory glance at any local business directory will reveal that there are a large number of agencies offering language training. It is not difficult to discover what they charge and the extent of their expertise. ▶

Editorial

David Bickerton

The choice of *Quality* as the theme of the CercleS International Conference in Antwerp next year (14-16 September 2000 - see the Call for Papers on p. 10) is timely indeed. The work of our members from 18 countries of Europe, much of which is reflected in this issue, demonstrates a widespread awareness of how vital is the 'quality banner' for University Language Centres. They have a unique role given their independence, expertise, commitment to knowledge and record of innovation, and are thus well placed to sustain and improve the quality of their delivery, assessment and their services to society.

But what, at a practical level, should CercleS be doing? Initiatives debated since the Bergamo conference have resulted in an agreement to set up a Working Group to look at how assessment schemes for the non-specialist language learner can enable members to achieve common, high standards without paying the price of uniformity and centralised compulsion. Carol Taylor Torsello (Taytors@ux1.unipd.it) has agreed to co-ordinate expressions of interest in this work. It will complement the analysis of needs and surveys of provision (see Brigitte Forster Vosicki's report on the work of TNP-8, p. 7, and David Little's survey for the Council of Europe's Portfolio/Passport scheme (see Template information, p. 17). And it will help us identify ways of highlighting and harmonising language teaching in European Higher Education: measures considered by CercleS include accreditation, materials exchange, international and trans-national co-operation, and the publication of guidelines. Our initial investigations show that provision for non-specialist language learners is patchy between countries, and we know that assessment is irregular. As the largest organisation representing university Language Teaching in Europe, CercleS is in a position to make things change. ▶

In this way we identified our competitors and realised that to make a success of Business Language Services we had to become a strong contender with a distinctive product. We needed a USP (Unique Selling Proposition).

We had an excellent resource to exploit – the Language Centre. This had several advantages. First, none of our competitors had access to such superb resources, and it therefore gave us a real edge. Clients liked our 'learning environment', and found the modern facilities quite different from what they remembered from their schooldays. Furthermore, our prices could be made very competitive by integrating the use of the Centre into the training programme. Learners needed less tutorial time, as they would spend time in the Centre consolidating and practising, something they would normally miss out because of time pressures. A training programme which would normally require some 60 hours of tutor time could be delivered by us in, say, 20 hours but with the client working in the Language Centre under tutor guidance for 40 hours. This represented considerable savings to the client – and of course it is linguistically sound, as clients are thus persuaded to do 'homework' which would otherwise be skipped because of time pressures.

As a university, we were already easily distinguishable from other private language schools. What distinguished us in most people's minds may, however, have counted against us when selling our product – a university is associated with higher level study and the acquisition of advanced knowledge. What we wanted to offer at Surrey was practical, hands-on language training, from beginners level upwards. The public perception was therefore not helpful in this respect, as we were not thought of as a place where people could go for this kind of basic language learning. On the other hand, universities also imply high standards, quality teaching, excellent resources, and real expertise. This perception can be helpful. Our belief was that we should, where possible, maximise this natural perception and make quality the hallmark of our product.

There were also some decisions to be made regarding the nature of our product. There is huge diversity in language training, ranging from small group, 1:1, on campus, and in-Company formats and involving courses with as few as 20 or as many as 700 hours. Should we operate on and off campus? Would we deal only with specific languages? Were there to be any rules regarding the number of hours we were prepared to teach? We decided, for example, generally not to exceed more than three hours in 1:1 training per day. What were our rates? Were they to be non-negotiable? Between what hours would we offer training? How flexible should we be? Who were our tutors and what were their credentials? How would we guarantee the quality of the training?

We found answers to all these questions which suited our circumstances and capabilities, and this shaped our product. The next step was to find our customers.

Reaching the clients

To begin with, we explored all the openings offered us through the local Chamber of Commerce and Training and Enterprise Council (a Government-backed access point for SMEs). We sought publicity through exposure in the local press and radio. We established contacts with people in prominent positions in the local business world and invited them in to see the facilities; we discussed how we could market ourselves through them.

It became apparent that the SMEs that were represented by institutions like the Chamber of Commerce were a difficult market to crack. Although often needing language skills to break into a foreign market, they have little cash to spare and virtually no time for training. We had also not taken into account the amount of re-education necessary: most business people had little idea how to go about learning a language, or indeed how to choose a language

Continued from page 1:

Le thème de la Qualité qui a été choisi pour la Conférence Internationale de CercleS à Anvers l'an prochain (14-16 septembre 2000 - voir Appel aux Communications, p.10) est tout à fait opportun. Le travail de nos membres de 18 pays européens, dont une grande partie est représentée dans ce numéro, révèle un clair consensus sur l'importance de "la bannière de la qualité" pour les Centres de Langues Universitaires. Ils ont un rôle unique, étant donné leur indépendance, leur compétence, leur attachement à la connaissance et leur contribution prouvée à l'innovation. Ils ont ainsi une place privilégiée pour poursuivre et améliorer la qualité de leur enseignement, de leur système d'évaluation et leurs services à la société.

Mais, sur un plan pratique, que devrait faire CercleS? Des initiatives discutées depuis la conférence de Bergame, ont abouti à la création d'un Groupe de Travail dont la mission est d'établir comment les procédés d'évaluations pour l'étudiant de langues non-spécialiste peuvent permettre aux membres d'atteindre un niveau commun et élevé de qualité sans pour autant tomber dans l'uniformité et une centralisation contraignante. Carol Taylor Torsello (Taytors@ux1.unipd.it) a offert de coordonner les efforts de ceux qui manifesteront leur intérêt dans ce travail - travail qui complètera l'analyse des besoins et les études sur les services fournis (voir le rapport de Brigitte Forster Vosicki et le travail de TNP-8, p. 7 et celui de David Little pour le Conseil de l'Europe). Ceci apportera une aide pratique au projet Portfolio/Passport du Conseil de l'Europe (voir Template information p. 17). Ceci nous aidera aussi à identifier des façons de mettre en lumière et d'harmoniser l'enseignement des langues vivantes dans les universités européennes. Les mesures prises en considération par CercleS incluent la reconnaissance officielle des qualifications, l'échange de matériel, la coopération internationale et transnationale et la publication de directives.

Nos recherches initiales montrent que les facilités offertes aux étudiants de langues non-spécialistes sont de qualité inégale selon les pays, et nous savons que l'évaluation aussi est irrégulière. CercleS, la plus importante organisation représentant l'Enseignement des Langues au niveau universitaire en Europe, est en mesure d'initier d'importants changements

Das Thema Qualität, das für die nächste Internationale CercleS-Konferenz in Antwerpen (vom 14.-16. September 2000 - siehe den Aufruf zur Einsendung von Beiträgen auf S. 10) gewählt wurde, ist sicherlich sehr aktuell. Die Arbeit unserer aus 18 Ländern Europas stammenden Mitglieder, von der ein großer Teil in dieser Ausgabe zum Ausdruck kommt, zeigt, wie sehr man sich der Bedeutung der "Qualität" als "Aushängeschild" für die Tätigkeit der universitären Sprachzentren bewußt ist. In Anbetracht ihrer Unabhängigkeit, ihres Fachwissens und ihrer Verpflichtung gegenüber dem Wissen und der Innovation sind diese Sprachzentren dazu bestimmt, die Qualität ihrer Wissensvermittlung, ihrer Leistungsbeurteilung und ihrer der Gesellschaft zugute kommenden Dienstleistungen zu erhalten und zu verbessern.

Was bedeutet das für die Tätigkeit von CercleS? Die nach der Bergamo-Konferenz erörterten Vorschläge führten zum Entschluß, eine Arbeitsgruppe zu bilden, mit der Aufgabe, festzustellen, inwiefern es den Mitgliedern möglich ist, bei den Bewertungsmethoden für nicht-philologische Sprachlerner einen gemeinsamen hohen Standard zu erreichen, ohne daß dies zu Uniformität und zentralisierter Zwangsausübung führt. Carol Taylor Torsello (Taytors@ux1.unipd.it) hat die Aufgabe übernommen, Anfragen zu diesem Thema zu koordinieren. Durch diese Tätigkeit werden die Angebots- und Bedarfsanalysen ergänzt (siehe Brigitte Forster Vosickis Bericht über die Arbeit von TNP-8, S. 7 und David Littles Bericht für den Europa-Rat). Auf diese Weise wird das Portfolio/Passport-System des Europa-Rates (Näheres auf S. 17) tatkräftig unterstützt. Uns soll es dadurch möglich werden, Strategien für die Bekanntmachung und Vereinheitlichung des Sprachunterrichts an den Europäischen Hochschulen zu schaffen: Zu den von CercleS geplanten Maßnahmen gehören die Regelung der Zulassung, Austausch von Materialien, internationale und transnationale Zusammenarbeit und die Herausgabe von Richtlinien.

Unsere ersten Untersuchungen zeigen, daß das Angebot für nicht-philologische Sprachlerner von Land zu Land verschieden ist und daß auch die Bewertungsmethoden uneinheitlich sind. Als Europas größte Organisation zur Vertretung des universitären Sprachunterrichts ist CercleS in der Lage, hier eine Veränderung zu bewirken.

d.bickerton@pbs.plym.ac.uk

trainer. Many simply opted for the cheapest, with the result that they made unwise choices, and the training was not successful. This in turn confirmed previously-held prejudices, and made them even less likely to embark on any future training.

The people who were most ready to use our services were often ex-graduates (easily contactable through Alumni associations). Whilst these people were now in senior positions in business, and understood the university culture, older graduates proved less aware of how much universities have changed and become vocational. They too needed some re-education.

To overcome such ignorance we publicised the Language Centre as widely as possible and made opportunities for people to come onto campus and see for themselves what it is like. We made time for Open Days and Evenings, took the opportunity to invite local dignitaries to special events (and of course the press follows the Mayor everywhere!), and began including use of the Centre in the evening classes we were running for adults.

The Internal challenges

As already indicated, selling a university service can be either a help or a hindrance. Some of the problem areas which I encountered at Surrey are typical of a university environment not used to competing in the commercial world.

First, there is the question of the excellent facilities. The facilities are provided by the University as tangible evidence of its commitment to language training for all students. These had never been offered for use outside the University, and there were questions to resolve regarding access, security, guidance, cost, supervision...and so on. Then, there is the fact that, although universities have a reputation for quality, there is generally less emphasis upon service. 'Service' covers a whole range of issues to do with dealing with the public: answering the phone, the need for courtesy and patience at all times, proper arrangements for car parking, high quality surroundings with good signs and directions. At Surrey, the university presented a generally unfriendly face: a bleak and windswept campus policed by heavy-handed security guards, no proper information desk, and a car-parking policy designed to deter all but the bravest. Not a helpful state of affairs, given people's natural reluctance to come there in the first place if they could get what they wanted closer to home.

These problems were largely university problems, and had to be tackled on a university-wide scale; on your own you can only hope to minimise their impact by personally taking responsibility for many aspects of clients' visits, such as arranging for parking vouchers, giving detailed and helpful directions, providing welcoming cups of coffee, etc. Now that all UK students are fee-paying and therefore to be regarded more as clients, the idea of service is no longer an alien concept in British universities.

There is also the problem of the university culture itself; historically, departments are not in the habit of pooling knowledge or expertise. I searched in vain for a central source of information on business contacts or mailing lists. Although there seemed to be any amount of activity going on, there was no attempt at cross-marketing or indeed any awareness that benefit could be derived from the sharing of information. This leads at best to costly duplication and at worst public embarrassment, as when we rented space at a local business exhibition in order to sell 'university' language training, only to find someone from another department doing exactly the same further down the aisle.

Finally, university accounting procedures are geared towards long student courses and require the input of lengthy and tedious details. Business training courses, in my experience, can be any length, and frequently change as clients run out of time or decide they liked them so much they want to do more. In other words, flexibility plays little part in some university accounting procedures, and, what is more, they yield little relevant management information.

Our Recipe for success

We discovered that we must do several things at once, namely:

- overcome people's fear of language-learning generally (in the UK anyway!)
- overcome their reluctance to come to the university because they think it's too advanced for them (at the same time, of course, retaining our natural claim to be a centre of excellence)
- re-educate people (especially Training Officers in large companies) as to the nature of language training today
- persuade companies of the benefits to be gained from investing in language training
- achieve a real identity in the market and find ways of promoting this

In addition, we gradually set in place systems to support our business activity. These involved developing:

- proper Terms and Conditions
- techniques for contacting customers
- managerial, administrative and staff practices
- clear focus on those services we could deliver best



Above: Students at work in the language self study centre

Terms and Conditions

I found little to help me in the university when trying to put our service on a legal basis, but it is essential to be clear about certain aspects of the service you are offering. You may, for example, need to replace a tutor on a contract, or increase charges; you will want to lay down certain conditions regarding the cancellation of lessons, and of course you will not want your tutors to undercut you by going direct to the client. All of this and more can be spelled out in Standard Terms and Conditions, so that the client is aware of them from the outset. After one client had claimed a refund on lessons not taken from 8 months earlier, we subsequently amended our terms to ensure this did not happen again.

Along with the Terms and Conditions, we have also found it useful to ask the client to return a so-called Acceptance Form. In the early days, I wasted time contacting tutors and organising rooms, only to find the client did not go ahead with the training after all. Now, I make it a rule (albeit a flexible one!) to first receive the client's acceptance in writing before I look for tutors. Clearly it also helps to have an idea of tutors' availability when speaking to clients.

First Contacts

We decided on the image we wished to convey ('professional', 'high quality') and employed a professional designer to

interpret this for us. There are many occasions when one needs to have literature to send or distribute, so it needs to make an impact. It also needs to be informative, and it helps to have a range of materials to match the enquiry; we have found a simple, triplefold leaflet which slips easily into the pocket is good for distributing freely through libraries or shops, but, for a substantial business enquiry, a fuller, more comprehensive package is necessary.

At Surrey we have learned the hard lesson that our ability to 'convert' a caller into a client may well depend on how the enquiry is dealt with in the first few minutes. It is important that telephone enquiries are dealt with by somebody who recognises the nature of the enquiry; typically, a university office will be staffed by people primarily concerned with student matters of one sort or another, and not used to dealing with outside enquiries. It is therefore very important to acquaint all staff who may take calls with the procedure. To this end, we devised simple 'Training Enquiry' forms (in a noticeable colour) so that anyone staffing the phones would know what details to write down. This has ensured that we get the information we need to be able to call back effectively.

Of course, the person you first speak to may not be the person to be trained. It may be a secretary tasked with 'finding out about language training'. Most managers or heads of Human Resources departments do not make this kind of initial phone call. The call to you will be only one of many made that day, so you need to make it count. Mostly you will be asked to send literature. While literature is useful in letting people know you are there, selling needs to be done face to face. It is therefore always my aim to meet the prospective client as soon as possible, either on campus or in-company.

Listening to the client is the most important precursor to providing what the client wants. As well as covering obvious details such as the language and level, it is useful to know about the business the company is engaged in, what roles the learners fulfil – are they in sales, personnel? Have they learnt other languages? What about time? Have they thought through the questions of staff commitment and budget? Most important, what do they need the language for? Often companies will not be aware of the complex nature of language training, so there is a certain amount of gentle re-education which needs to be done.

Management

Account management techniques for dealing with large, in-company training schemes are deserving of special attention. First, the sheer volume and complexity of our contracts make significant demands on time. There is need to keep track of several different classes and several different tutors, so that, when required, the training can be reviewed. Attendance sheets for each class will help in monitoring attendance – something which will be of importance to the training officer – and pick up on any problems. Regular visits to the company are important not only for the client, but also for the tutors, who may otherwise feel they are working in isolation. What needs constantly to be borne in mind is that it is the company who is the client, not the individual learner or learners, so it is vital to forge a good relationship with the human resources officer, and be understanding of the company's changing needs. If problems do arise, you have to be able to tackle them effectively in order to retain the client's confidence. All the extra time and trouble spent on nurturing such a client has proved to be well worth it, as contracts are renewed and links strengthened. After all, if clients are happy with what they are getting, why should they go elsewhere?

Manpower

The role of the tutor in the training is of course of vital importance. It is crucial that the tutors used in corporate training programmes should not only be competent and flexible teachers, but also understand their role in this somewhat complex relationship between the Language Centre, the learner(s) and the

client. They should be in no doubt that the client is not *their's* but the *Language Centre's*. This is sometimes a difficult distinction for them to make, especially when they may well be working for themselves as well. Most tutors working as corporate language trainers will probably be working freelance, so may be doing several different types of work. By maintaining a high presence and constantly requesting feedback, we have prevented our clients transferring to the tutor – but it is not uncommon for tutors to arrange, for example, the suspension of classes while they are on holiday – when the class should really be offered a substitute teacher. Of course, the latter can have its dangers; on one occasion the substitute teacher was liked so much that the client did not wish to have the other one back! Awkward situations like this test one's true loyalty – and, of course, it has to be to the client.

Product Portfolio

Having taken into account our market, our geographical location, our competition and our own particular strengths, there were still decisions to take which ultimately shaped the services offered. We decided not to stick to one or two specialist areas but to branch out and respond to requests for unusual languages. The fact is that university providers are as likely to be approached for the bizarre as for the run-of-the-mill, which can be accessed more or less anywhere. We decided to 'go' with our strengths and not refuse unusual requests simply because we were not at that time equipped to deal with them. This has resulted in contracts for Hebrew, Turkish, Malay and Mandarin, none of which we teach 'in-house'. The fact is, once you have your standards and procedures set, you can deal with any language to the same degree of satisfaction because your evaluation, quality control and guidance procedures remain fixed. Of course, finding resources and tutors becomes a challenge, but we have found this motivating: it stretches us beyond the normal bounds and challenges us to improve our resources and capability.

By-products of the language training service are *consultancy* and *language audits*. While a certain amount of time would be spent on consultation at the start of any negotiation with a new company, and you would not expect to charge for this, in some cases a company may need specific and substantial advice about how to develop a global language training strategy. Other related but different branches of activity include *cultural briefing* and *translation*. We took the decision not to respond to requests in these two areas, a decision we review periodically. It may prove appropriate for us to offer these in future, or for others to do so if they have special expertise or there is a strong demand for them.

A quality service

To summarise, I see the main initial requirements for a quality service as follows:

- deal effectively with enquiries
- write good, clear, costed proposals: these form the basis of the contract
- get the legal dimension right (Terms and Conditions)
- develop sound 'account management' techniques.

Then, if quality is to be your hallmark, developing quality control mechanisms for all aspects of one's business is vital; these should be embedded in the service through proper documentation and procedures. You can't ignore unwieldy university procedures, but you can learn to circumvent some. Finally, once you've won a client, take good care of them, and they won't be inclined to look elsewhere!

s.kremer@surrey.ac.uk

Minutes of the CercleS Co-ordinating Committee Meeting Held in Prague on Thursday 16th September and Friday 17th September

Present: Prof David Little, President (TC Dublin)
Prof Michel Perrin, Vice President (Bordeaux)
Prof David Bickerton, Secretary General (Plymouth)
Prof Maurizio Gotti, Deputy Secretary (Bergamo)
Prof Paola Evangelisti, representative from AICLU
Prof Bernd Voss, Treasurer (Dresden)
Ms Jolanta Urbanikowa, Deputy Treasurer (Warsaw)
Mr Ray Satchell, Chairperson of AULC (Bristol)
Prof Pol Cuvclier, Chairperson of NUT (Antwerp)

Attending: Katherine Minns, Administrator (Plymouth)

DL opened the meeting at 11.00 a.m.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the CercleS Executive meeting held in Dublin on 2 July 1999 were approved subject to minor amendments.

3. Matters Arising

a) CercleS Statutes

It was evident that there were a few anomalies between the English, French and German statutes and it was agreed that the revised English statutes would need to be checked sentence by sentence against the French and German versions to allow them to be amended accordingly. The Swiss statutes had been secured in Neuchâtel by David Bickerton and, subject to a small adjustment, were agreed to be appropriate and GI-ELHE (Groupe d'Intérêt "Enseignement des Langues dans les Hautes Ecoles en Suisse") was confirmed as a new Full Member of CercleS.

Action: DB, MP, BV to check statutes for any discrepancies.

Action: KM to register statutes at the Préfecture du Bas-Rhin, Strasbourg after having received confirmation of accuracy between the French, German and English versions.

Action: DB to liaise with the new Swiss Association (GI-ELHE).

b) WWW Development

It was announced by KM that the DML Webmaster, Eddie Climo would be remaining in post for a further 3 months. This would allow the Secretary time to find someone to take over responsibility for supporting the CercleS website.

4. Financial Report

After the financial report had been given, it was noted that CercleS would be in profit at the end of the financial year, but only marginally (by approx £1000.00). It was hoped that there may be extra revenue from the CercleS 6 conference in Antwerp in September 2000. DB agreed with MG about the number of Proceedings CercleS predicted to sell. After complimentary copies had been sent to delegates to the Bergamo Conference (120) and bulk sales to Full Members (100), only an additional 100 may be required. It was agreed to publish with a print-run of 300, as for the Dresden volume. When discussing how to cut costs, it was suggested that we make enquiries as to alternative printers, contact university libraries by email suggesting they buy the Proceedings and make all volumes published to date available at a price of £30.00, saving £6.00 on the full price. DL spoke of raising subscriptions and putting a charge of £10.00 per annum for the Bulletin as a separate subscription to CercleS. DL reminded the committee that the General Meeting in Bergamo had been advised that subscription rates would be raised, the finer details of which would be discussed at the CCC meeting in Antwerp. BV pointed out that the advertising revenue was counted twice as income and KM undertook to correct the figures.

Action: KM to contact the national libraries to ask whether they wish to buy the Bergamo Proceedings.

Action: DB to co-ordinate publication.

5. Publications

a) Bulletin 11

KM stated that the Bulletin was not finalised yet but that it was due out mid October and would include a column stating that subscription to the Bulletin alone would be £10.00 per annum. It was suggested that we approach Marta Chroma of Prague University to write an article/short piece on the LSP Forum for the Bulletin.

Action: KM to ask Marta Chroma if she would write this article for us.

Action: KM to get alternative printing quotations in order to reduce costs.

b) Proceedings

DB reported that there were approximately 22 papers to go in the Bergamo Proceedings and that most of these papers were now with their respective authors for proof reading.

Action: KM/DB to secure printed copy by 15 October 1999.

Action: DB and MG to hold an editorial meeting before leaving Prague.

6 Public Relations, publicity and new developments

a) LSP Forum '99, Prague

DB observed that the programme at the LSP Forum was rather narrow in focus and essentially of local interest. DL indicated that he had been under the impression that those who wanted to be set up as a Czech Full Member of CercleS would have accomplished this at the LSP Forum; this proved not to be the case. The committee welcomed the level of participation evidenced in the participation of some 450 delegates.

b) National Associations

Switzerland

DB reported that he had attended a national meeting in Neuchâtel, Switzerland on 10 September 1999. Approximately 60 people attended. Discussion in July of the statutes proposed for the formation of a Full Member for Switzerland had identified individual membership as the only outstanding issue to full approval, and revisions had been received. It was agreed that the proposal by GI-ELHE to admit individual and institutional members was in order, since Switzerland has few universities with LCs, so long as only the persons attached to the latter are admitted to become office holders in CercleS.

Action: MP to proof read Swiss statutes, and DB to advise GI-ELHE of the outcome.

Spain

KM reported that, despite further contact to elicit dates from Barcelona for a meeting to be held in Spain, she had, as yet, received no response. It was agreed by all that there was enthusiasm from Barcelona but that we

should be alive to political sensitivities in the rest of Spain. It was deemed more practical to hold the meeting in Salamanca, through MP's contact. DL stated that we would have to find neutral territory and invite as many people from different regions as possible as well as involving our existing 4 associate members in Spain.

Action: DB to get in touch with the 4 associate members and try to elicit their advice and involve them.

Action: DB/DL to set up a meeting for early February in Spain to correspond with the next Executive Committee meeting. This could provide one day for CercleS business and one day's open forum.

Hungary.

KM reported that she had had no response to her emails to Helen Noble.

Action: KM to re-contact Helen Noble of the British Council.

c) Council of Europe/Language Portfolio

DL stated that after delays due to the illness of a colleague, the web version of the Language Portfolio had now been approved and there was an html version and downloadable file to go on the CLCS website, the Council of Europe website and the CercleS website. PE spoke of the parallel study in Italy which had had quite encouraging results so far. There was discussion of CercleS's role in developing the Language Portfolio and the possibility of producing a template for Higher Education was deemed worthy of consideration. PE suggested that the language portfolio could be used in different areas with differing specifications with a view to identifying needs. DB identified the potential involvement of CercleS in the realm of distributing information and providing a template, and felt it was important to get involved much more.

Action: DB to invite members to form a working group to discuss CercleS involvement and proposals.

7. CercleS 6, Antwerp (item held over from Thursday)

PC made a presentation on the proposals for the conference established by NUT. The date suggested was 14-16th September 2000 in UFSIA University, Antwerp. The theme proposed for the conference was Quality Management in LCs with the following sub-themes:

- i) improving the quality of language training
- ii) LSP
- iii) focus on the less widely taught languages, especially those from the new Member states
- iv) co-operation and exchanges
- v) autonomous learning and new technologies

vi) management of LCs themselves (eg distance learning)

In addition there would be receptions hosted by the University and a cultural programme.

BV proposed that the times be extended to give extra slots - this could be achieved by starting earlier on Thursday. PE agreed that this was important and added that one day of parallel sessions was not enough. MP proposed arriving on Thursday morning to register, that the conference should commence with 2 parallel sessions and workshops on the Thursday afternoon. DB suggested that it may not be a good idea to make autonomy and technology compete; we could let new technology appear throughout the conference rather than have it as a sub-section. Distance learning was also discussed and DL suggested that it may also be possible to incorporate this throughout. MP suggested that we issue the call for papers in Bulletin 11 (October 1999) and make a final call for them in Bulletin 12 (February 2000). The deadline for the papers would be the end of April and approximately 40 could be chosen. The papers should be published in September/October 2001. On the financial front, £1000.00 had been put aside from the Bergamo profits to act as pump-priming funds for Antwerp. These moneys would be expected to be returned and, hopefully, increased. The conference fee was discussed and a basic fee of 50 Euros was decided. Sponsors were discussed as also an early bird registration (MP). When discussing plenary speakers, it was suggested that we have just one, and a number of names were put forward.

DL summed up the discussion as having agreed the following: the theme of the conference, 'Quality issues in European Language Centres', was welcomed by all as being of current concern to CercleS members. The programme would be extended to make an earlier start on the Thursday and the dates were confirmed as 14-16 September 2000. There would only be one plenary at the end of Thursday, and the CercleS General Meeting would take place at the end of Friday's programme. The CCC meeting would take place at 09.00 on the Thursday morning.

8. New Initiatives/Language Certification

In the first instance, DL felt it to be of paramount importance that we establish some kind of a working group. DL explained that there would be increasing interest in agreeing international standards and, in the long term, it would be good for CercleS to be able to oversee this process and act as an advisory body. MG supported the idea of sharing information and guaranteeing that standards are met. DB commented on the UNICERT idea and the willingness to exchange materials, and

added that it was important to secure some funding - perhaps from LINGUA. DL concluded that the language portfolio and language certification could bring CercleS members together. After discussion, it was proposed that CercleS should launch an appeal for people with an interest in getting involved and start up a working group.

Action: DB to put in application form for funding from LINGUA.

Action: members of the CCC to consider who might be invited to coordinate the work group.

9. Applications for Membership.

KM: none

10. Date of the next Executive Committee Meeting

February (date to be confirmed) in Spain.

11 AOB

None

There being no further business, the meeting closed at noon Friday 17th September.

Articles and reports for publication

Items for publication should conform to the established style of the *Bulletin*. In particular contributors are asked to observe the following guidelines:

- Publications will be accepted in English, French or German; items over 350 words are to be accompanied by a brief résumé in the two official languages which are additional to the language in which items are written.
- One-page reports should not exceed 1000 word in length.
- Short articles should not normally exceed 3500 words in length.
- Publication is at the discretion of the editor; items are not normally subject to other forms of external vetting.
- Copy must be submitted 4 weeks before publication in a common electronic format.
- Graphics should be camera ready.

Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages

Sub-group 8: Language Studies for Students of Other Disciplines

Brigitte Forster Vosicki
Université de Lausanne

Le travail du sous-groupe 8 : 'L'enseignement des langues aux étudiants non-spécialistes', du Projet de réseau thématique dans le domaine de langues, a pour but d'assurer la qualité de l'enseignement des langues dans les hautes écoles et de promouvoir l'innovation dans ce domaine. Il s'est concentré pendant ses trois années d'activité sur les aspects suivants :

- Définir des objectifs qui correspondent aux véritables besoins en langues des étudiants d'autres disciplines, aussi bien à court terme dans le contexte académique qu'à long terme pour leur vie professionnelle;
- Etablir un rapport qui décrit et analyse la situation actuelle de ce type d'enseignement à travers l'Europe;
- Examiner le statut de la recherche et le genre de recherche effectué dans ce domaine;
- Formuler des recommandations, identifier des exemples de bonne pratique et lancer des projets pilotes conjoints visant à développer de nouveaux programmes pour répondre aux besoins identifiés.

The three-year Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages is part of the vast Thematic Network Project each concerning different disciplines in the field of higher education. The overall aim is to contribute to the development and maintenance of quality in higher education at a European level. The Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages is the first major initiative of the European Language Council (ELC/CEL, <http://www.fu-berlin.de/elc>) within the SOCRATES/ERASMUS programme. Its specific aim is to prepare the way for innovations and improvements in language teaching in higher education by formulating concrete suggestions and setting up pilot projects. The Project itself is divided into 9 sub-projects each with its specific scientific committee composed of around 12 specialists drawn from each of the CE member countries, plus Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland.

During the first year, Sub-group 8, which is concerned with "Language Studies for Students of Other Disciplines", concentrated on 3 main objectives:

- 1) To define the main objectives corresponding to the real language needs of students of other disciplines;
- 2) To produce a status quo report describing and analysing the situation of languages studies for students of other disciplines throughout Europe;
- 3) To examine the status and type of research carried out in this field.

In connection with the first objective, the three main objectives for language studies for students of other disciplines consist of:

- a) cultural and linguistic training for students taking part in exchange programmes;
- b) the development of language competence specific to the academic context (e.g. learning study skills, or specialised language associated with particular fields of study);
- c) the acquisition of linguistic skills required in professional life.

The results of the second objective clearly revealed that language teaching for students of other disciplines is not consistently included in curricula for tertiary studies. In fact, in the EU context there are considerable variations from one country to another; at one extreme the teaching of numerous languages is completely integrated into study programmes for all students, and their achievements are recognised and certified, while at the other extreme there is an almost total absence of any such instruction. Similar contrasts also exist on a national level between one higher institution and another.

The status of research in this domain is closely linked to the status of the teachers concerned. Most of the instruction is undertaken in Language Centres by teachers who are employed on an hourly basis, working for a high number of hours a week, with little time available for other activities such as in-service training, preparation of teaching

Die Arbeit der Untergruppe 8: "Language Studies for Students of other Disciplines" des Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages hat die Qualitätssicherung des Sprachunterrichts an Hochschulen und die Stimulierung von Innovation auf diesem Gebiet zum Ziel. Während der dreijährigen Laufzeit befasste sich die Gruppe mit folgenden Themen:

- Definition von Zielsetzungen, die den tatsächlichen Sprachbedürfnissen von Studierenden aller Fakultäten entsprechen, und dies sowohl auf kurze Sicht im akademischen Bereich als auch auf lange Sicht für das Berufsleben;
- Erstellung eines Status-Quo-Berichts über die Organisation des nicht-philologischen Sprachunterrichts an Hochschulen in Europa;
- Ermittlung des Stellenwerts und der Art von Forschungsarbeiten auf diesem Gebiet;
- Formulierung von Empfehlungen, Auflistung guter Anwendungsbeispiele und Lancierung gemeinsamer Pilotprojekte, mit dem Ziel, innovative Programme zu entwickeln, die den realen Bedürfnissen entsprechen.

materials or professional research. Under these conditions it is difficult to develop a coherent research programme, even though this is obviously essential in order to improve teaching methods, and to upgrade the academic status of this discipline.

During its second year, Sub-group 8 examined in greater detail the exact language requirements of students from other disciplines, both in a short-term academic context, and over a longer term, taking into account their future professional life. It also developed the concept of a comprehensive database recording all research topics that have been completed, with the dual aim of making such research more visible, and of avoiding duplication.

Information relevant to the language needs was obtained from two questionnaires, which were formulated and circulated in the course of this second year. One was sent out to European universities with the aim of identifying the precise degree of preparation available for mobility students; the second was addressed to selected employers, chambers of commerce, regional authorities, and former higher education students in order to ascertain post-university language requirements.

Concurrently, the Sub-group organised an experimental workshop in Madrid in October 1998 bringing together members of the scientific committee, delegates from various higher education institutions, and representatives from employers and embassies, with the aim of establishing a dialogue among the different parties concerning the linguistic needs of future graduates, and the objectives for their linguistic preparation. The final objective is to set up a permanent forum of representatives from universities, employers, and governments which will deal with problems and projects linked to the linguistic and cultural education of students.

During its third year, Sub-group 8 is concentrating on drawing up recommendations, identifying examples of good practice, and launching pilot projects which will develop new language programmes in response to clearly defined needs. The overall aim is to promote and maintain a high quality of language teaching in universities and related institutions, and to encourage innovation in this domain.

Recommendations, now being drawn up, are based on information provided by questionnaires, reports, and comments received in the course of the last three years, and the results of the four workshops held. They are guided by the assumption that all students should have the opportunity of learning or perfecting languages.

The aim of these recommendations is to establish standards and guidelines connected with various aspects of language instruction. These include the organization of language teaching in higher education institutions, the choice of languages proposed (with the

continued on page 9...

GI-EHLE - A New Full Member for Switzerland

Following detailed discussions with colleagues in Swiss University Language Centres over the past two years, the Co-ordinating Committee was delighted to confirm its approval of the French version of a set of statutes proposed for the Groupe d'Intérêt - Enseignement des Langues dans les Hautes Ecoles en Suisse" (GI-ELHE) on 16 September 1999 (see Minutes on page 5, sections 3 and 6b). One week earlier the SIG which constitutes this new Association had brought together in Neuchâtel some 60 delegates from the whole of Switzerland under the auspices of its national parent association ASLA/VALS (Association suisse de linguistique appliquée / Vereinigung für angewandte Linguistik in der Schweiz). Keynote addresses by David Bickerton (Plymouth) and Dieter Wolf (Wuppertal) were followed by Workshop sessions led by Brigitte Forster Vosicki (Lausanne), Anton Lachner (Bern), Christian Graf (Bern), Laurent Tschumi (Moudon) and Peter Klee (Speicher).

Discussions with CercleS officers focussed upon the individual (non-institutional) nature of much teaching activity for non-language specialists in Switzerland. As a consequence, the small number of Swiss Associate Members admitted previously to CercleS (Bern, Freiburg, Lausanne, St Gallen) had disguised the real levels of involvement and interest throughout the country. This was brought into sharp focus at Neuchâtel.

The French-language Statutes published here reflect this important feature of Language Centre activities in Switzerland. It is intended that the Statutes should be approved speedily by the new membership, and that GI-ELHE should be in full operation from the start of the new millennium.

GI-EHLE (ENSEIGNEMENT DES LANGUES DANS LES HAUTES ECOLES EN SUISSE (GI-ELHE)

Groupe d'intérêt dans le cadre de l'Association suisse de linguistique appliquée (VALS/ASLA)

FREMDSPRACHENUNTERRICHT AN HOCHSCHULEN IN DER SCHWEIZ (IG-FHS)

Interessengruppe der Vereinigung für angewandte Linguistik in der Schweiz (VALS/ASLA) Statuts

1 Statut juridique et siège

Le groupe d'intérêt "Enseignement des langues dans les Hautes Ecoles en Suisse" (GI-ELHE) est une association au sens de l'article 60ff. du Code civil suisse.

Le siège de l'association est la haute école dans laquelle travaille le président/la présidente. Les archives de l'association sont déposées dans cette haute école.

L'association est en même temps un groupe d'intérêt (GI) de l'Association suisse de linguistique appliquée (VALS/ASLA) au sens de l'article 4.6 des statuts de la VALS/ASLA.

2 But

Le GI-ELHE a pour but de promouvoir l'enseignement des langues dans les hautes écoles en Suisse. Il traite des sujets qui sont importants pour le développement dans les hautes écoles suisses de l'enseignement des langues général et spécialisé et de sa didactique. Le GI collabore avec d'autres milieux et organisations intéressés au niveau national, européen et international.

À cette fin:

- il fait circuler des informations relatives à ce domaine;

- il organise au moins une fois par année une assemblée;
- il encourage la participation aux congrès suisses de linguistique appliquée de la VALS/ASLA;
- il encourage la collaboration entre les diverses personnes et institutions qui exercent une activité dans les hautes écoles suisses dans le domaine de l'enseignement des langues et de sa didactique;
- il représente les intérêts de ces derniers dans des organisations internationales, en particulier auprès de la Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur (CERCLES);
- il est membre à part entière de CERCLES pour la Suisse.

3 Membres

3.1 Le GI-ELHE se compose de membres institutionnels, de membres individuels et de membres honoraires.

L'admission de tout membre au sein du GI-ELHE se fait à la suite d'une demande écrite adressée au président/à la présidente, sous réserve d'une approbation de l'assemblée des membres. Une présentation des domaines d'activité et des motivations doit être jointe à cette requête.

Chaque membre institutionnel dispose d'une voix à l'Assemblée générale de CERCLES et il est représenté au Comité de co-ordination et au Comité exécutif selon les statuts de la Confédération. Seuls les membres individuels qui font également partie d'un membre institutionnel peuvent se présenter aux élections pour le comité de CERCLES. Les autres membres ne sont pas représentés dans la Confédération Européenne.

3.2 Membres institutionnels

Peut être membre institutionnel tout institut, centre de langues ou médiathèque d'une haute école suisse qui soutient les buts du GI-ELHE.

3.3 Membres individuels

Peut devenir membre individuel du GI toute personne exerçant une activité dans le domaine de l'enseignement des langues et sa didactique dans un institut, centre de langues ou médiathèque d'une haute école suisse et qui soutient les buts du GI.

3.4 Membres honoraires

Sur proposition du comité, l'assemblée des membres peut conférer le statut de membre honoraire à toute personne qui s'est particulièrement distinguée pour la cause du GI.

3.5 Cotisations

Le montant des cotisations annuelles de l'Association est fixé par l'assemblée des membres pour tout membre individuel (et honoraire), et par l'Assemblée générale de CERCLES pour tout membre institutionnel.

Les membres qui même après rappel ne s'acquittent pas de leurs cotisations sont rayés de la liste des abonnés (informations et séances) et peuvent être exclus de l'association sur décision de l'assemblée générale.

3.6 Démission

La démission du GI-ELHE peut être présentée de tout temps sous forme de justification écrite adressée au président/à la présidente, avec effet à la fin de l'année civile.

4 Organes du GI -ELHE

4.1 Les organes du GI-ELHE sont les suivants :

- l'assemblée des membres
- le comité
- les groupes de projets
- deux vérificateurs/vérificatrices des comptes

4.2 L'Assemblée des membres

4.2.1 L'assemblée des membres est l'organe suprême du GI: elle se réunit au moins une fois par année pour une assemblée ordinaire. Des assemblées supplémentaires peuvent être convoquées par le président/la présidente ou à la demande de 20% des membres.

Les convocations aux assemblées doivent comporter un ordre du jour et être adressées aux membres au moins 14 jours à l'avance.

Tous les membres du GI (institutionnels, individuels et honoraires) ont le droit de vote à l'assemblée générale.

4.2.2 L'assemblée des membres traite toutes les affaires qui ne relèvent pas des domaines spécifiques des autres organes. En particulier, elle élit :

- le président / la présidente
- les autres membres du comité
- le vérificateur / la vérificatrice des comptes
- au besoin, les membres des groupes de projets.

Les décisions et les élections sont prises à la majorité simple des membres présents, à l'exception des points mentionnés dans l'article 5 des présents statuts.

4.3 Le Comité

4.3.1 Le comité se compose d'un président/d'une présidente, d'un vice-président/d'une vice-présidente, d'un trésorier/d'une trésorière et des responsables des groupes de projets.

Tous sont élus par l'assemblée pour une / durée de 2 ans. Une réélection est possible pour deux termes successifs.

4.3.2 Le président/la présidente et le comité conduisent les affaires de l'association entre les assemblées, et représentent les intérêts du GI auprès de CERCLES et au sein de la VALS/ASLA.

4.4 Groupes de projets

Les membres du GI peuvent former des groupes de projets portant sur des domaines particuliers de l'enseignement des langues, en informant si possible le comité à l'avance. Les groupes de projets doivent recevoir l'approbation de l'assemblée des membres. Les groupes de projets élisent un/une responsable.

5 Changements de statuts et dissolution du GI

Une modification des statuts peut être proposée par le comité, par un groupe de

projets ou par 10% des membres. L'assemblée générale décide des changements de statuts à la majorité des deux tiers des membres présents.

Pour la dissolution du GI, l'accord de deux tiers des membres doit être réuni. Au cas où l'assemblée des membres n'atteindrait pas cette proportion, on procéderait à une consultation écrite (conformément à l'article 66 du code civil).

En cas de dissolution du GI, ses actifs seront transférés à la VALS/ASLA ou une association ayant les mêmes buts.

6 Divers

L'année comptable correspond à l'année civile. L'année administrative est déterminée par la période entre deux assemblées des membres ordinaires.

d.bickerton@pbs.plym.ac.uk

Continued from page 7:

accent on multilingualism), ascertaining the desired level of competence to be attained, defining the type of knowledge to be acquired (general notions, specific skills, study skills, the conclusion of a cultural element), regulating certification and accreditation, defining linguistic and intercultural needs in the framework of exchange programmes, and the implementation of new technologies.

They will also be concerned with the status of teachers, their initial qualifications and on-going training, conditions of employment, as well as the need for cooperation among institutions of higher education.

Examples of good practice are cited to illustrate how these requirements can be satisfied.

The sub-group is also taking part in a pilot project for creating a modulated training course, covering both initial and on-going training for language teachers in institutes of higher education. It will eventually participate in creating a European Masters degree in this field.

The group is planning to publish the results of its work in printed and electronic form in order to ensure the widest possible dissemination of the information it has gathered relative to the teaching of languages to students of other disciplines in higher education.

brigitte.forstervosicki@cdl.unil.ch

AICLU (Italy)
Maurizio Gotti
Università di Bergamo
Tel: +39 35 27 72 16
Fax: +39 35 27 72 27
E-mail m.gotti@mediacom.it

AKS (Germany)
Thomas Vogel
Europa Universität Viadrina
Tel +49 (0) 335 553 4710
Fax +49 (0) 335 553 4719
E-mail vogel@euvi-frankfurt-o.de

APOCLES (Portugal)
Maria José Sa Correia
Instituto Superior Politécnico de Viseu
Tel +351 32 422 180
Fax +351 32 428 461
E-mail ingles@cielv.ipv.pt

AULC (UK and Ireland)
Ray Satchell
Bristol University
Tel +44 (0)117 974 1311
Fax +44 (0)117 974 1377
E-mail ray.satchell@bristol.ac.uk

GI - EHLE (Switzerland)
Anton Lachner
Universität Bern
Tel: +41 31 631 83 91
Fax: +41 31 631 36 03
Email lachner@aal.unibe.ch

LINGAL (Poland)
Jolanta Urbanikowa
Warsaw University
Tel +48 (0) 22 826 5859
Fax +48 (0) 22 826 5859
E-mail szjourb@plearn.edu.pl

NUT (Dutch-speaking Belgium and the Netherlands)
Pol Cuvelier
UFSIA, Antwerp
Tel +32 (0)3 220 4803
Fax +32 (0)3 220 4259
E-mail cuvelier@uia.ua.ac.be

RANACLES (France)
Michel Perrin
Université de Bordeaux II
Tel +33 (0)5 56 94 09 47
Fax +33 (0)5 56 31 86 17
E-mail michel.perrin@lv.u-bordeaux2.fr

Quality Issues for European Language Centres 6th CercleS International Conference Antwerp, 14-16 September 2000

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT AND CALL FOR PAPERS

Members will recall that previous biennial conferences were held in Bordeaux (RANACLES, 1992), Hull (DULC, 1994), Dresden (AKS, 1996) and Bergamo (AICLU, 1998). The 6th CercleS International Conference will be hosted by NUT (Nederlandstalige Universitaire Talencentra) at the University of Antwerp/UFSA in central Antwerp. The chosen theme promises to produce a quality event, and the conference will be held in what is a superb venue. The theme will enable CercleS members to consider how best to build quality into their provision.

Antwerp is particularly easy to reach by road, rail and air, and its proximity to Brussels means that international flights are both frequent and relatively cheap. Antwerp was European City of Culture in 1993, and is a popular and historic Dutch-speaking Belgian city.

A more detailed programme will be published in the next *Bulletin* (February/March 2000), together with registration forms and additional guidance for those wishing to read papers.

Conference Committee: Pol Cuvelier, Valère Meus, Guust Meijers, Annie van Avermaet, Charles van Leeuwen, Kris Vandepoel, Bert Weltens.

Whilst the Conference will adhere to the established format for CercleS international conferences, arrangements have been slightly modified in the light of past experience. The key features are as follows:

- Themes** Papers are invited which address quality issues in the following priority areas:
- Incorporating Intercultural Communicative Competence
 - Languages for Special Purposes
 - Less Widely Spoken Languages/Languages of New Member States
 - New Challenges for Language Centre Management (new technologies, distance learning, ...)
 - Quality and the European Framework/European Language Portfolio
 - The Changing Role of Language Trainers
- Members of NUT will convene the six sections once papers have been selected in March.
- Sessions** There will be one invited plenary address and approximately forty 20-minute slots in several parallel sessions. Any person may propose a paper, but preference will be given to speakers from member institutions, and to papers of high quality and suitability.
- Proposals for Papers** Papers are invited which relate to one of the themes of the conference. Proposals should consist of an abstract, preferably written in English, some 200 words in length on a single side of A4 paper, and including full contact details. Abstracts may be submitted by mail, email or fax. They must be of a standard appropriate for publication in the Conference Programme.
- Deadline for Abstracts** Abstracts will not be considered after 29 February 2000. The organising committee and CercleS will examine proposals for papers. Those proposing papers will be contacted by convenors at the end of March.
- Proceedings** Authors will be invited to submit their papers for publication by 31 October 2000. All papers will be refereed, and selected papers will be edited and published by CercleS in September/October 2001. They will follow the style established in previous published Proceedings (see the announcement on p.17)
- Conference fee**
- 75 Euros for delegates from 'soft currency' countries, early-bird registration (by 1 May) of members of CercleS's national and transnational affiliates and for Associate Members
 - 50 Euros for students
 - 100 Euros for all other participants
- The fee will cover admission to the conference, lunches and refreshments, coffee breaks, and a copy of the published Proceedings. Additional charges will be made for the conference dinner and the cultural programme.
- Conference Secretariat** From 15 April onwards, a conference office will help delegates book their accommodation and plan their journeys, and will maintain information on a conference web site.
- CercleS CC** The Co-ordinating Committee will meet before the start of the conference on Thursday 14 September. One of its main tasks will be the election of Officers for the period from 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2002.
- CercleS General Meeting** The General Meeting will take place on Friday afternoon, 15 September 2000.

CERCLES SECRETARIAT
Department of Modern Languages
University of Plymouth
Drake Circus
Plymouth PL8 4AA, UK
tel & fax: +44 (0) 1752 232249
e-mail: cercles@plymouth.ac.uk

Universiteit Antwerpen - EUFSIA
Prinsstraat 13
2000 Antwerpen
e-mail: pol.cuvelier@ufsia.ac.be

NUT ORGANISING COMMITTEE
c/o Talencentrum RUG
Sint - Pietersnieuwstraat 136
B - 9000 Gent (Belgium)
e-mail: talencentrum@rug.ac.be

Language Centre Profiles

SPIRAL-Universität de Strasbourg

Elisabeth Rogy

Pôle Universitaire Européen de Strasbourg

Vor sechs Jahren gründeten die drei Strassburger Universitäten eine gemeinsame Zentraleinrichtung für Beratung, Weiterbildung und Bereitstellung von Lehrmaterial im Bereich des von Fachlehrern gelenkten, autonomen Erwerbs von Fremdsprachen: SPIRAL. Innerhalb dieses Zentrums wurde ein methodologisches Konzept für ein individuelles, den unterschiedlichen Niveaus und fachspezifischen Bedürfnissen der Studenten angepasstes Selbststudium von Fremdsprachen entwickelt und der Aufbau von fünf multimedialen Sprachzentren an verschiedenen Fakultäten begleitet. Heute besuchen durchschnittlich 3000 Studenten pro Woche die Sprachzentren und SPIRAL koordiniert und betreut inzwischen ein Netz von ca. 90 für den autonomen Spracherwerb ausgebildeten Sprachdozenten. Der folgende Bericht informiert im weiteren im Detail über die Funktionsweise der multimedialen Sprachzentren.

1. Historique

Le Pôle Universitaire Européen de Strasbourg est né en 1991. Il a pour mission d'impulser des projets communs aux trois universités du site strasbourgeois. La mobilité des étudiants figurant dans les axes prioritaires de développement, la question de la maîtrise des langues étrangères, notamment par les étudiants spécialistes d'autres disciplines, s'est trouvée à l'ordre du jour. Les universités possédaient déjà à l'époque un certain nombre de laboratoires et de centres de langues mais ces dispositifs étaient loin d'être suffisants étant donné les objectifs que les présidents d'université s'étaient fixés. Ils souhaitaient en effet qu'à terme, tous les étudiants de second cycle quittent l'université en maîtrisant une première langue étrangère et en ayant de solides notions dans une seconde langue. Ce faisant, ils entendaient également favoriser le développement des échanges internationaux, tant au niveau universitaire, par exemple par la participation à des programmes d'échanges européens et des colloques internationaux, qu'au niveau professionnel, en augmentant la mobilité des étudiants et en améliorant donc leurs perspectives d'emploi.

Le Pôle Universitaire Européen a été chargé de mettre en œuvre ces objectifs pour les trois universités de Strasbourg dans le cadre d'un Centre de Ressources à l'auto-apprentissage des langues dénommé depuis SPIRAL (Service Pédagogique Interuniversitaire de Ressources pour l'Autoformation en Langues).

La mission de SPIRAL telle qu'elle vient d'être définie s'est organisée autour de deux choix méthodologiques principaux :

- l'importance accordée à la langue de spécialité des différentes filières de manière à tenir compte de la spécificité et de l'hétérogénéité des publics.
- la pratique de la langue dans des dispositifs d'autoformation encadrée, afin d'offrir les meilleures conditions de travail au plus grand nombre d'étudiants.

De ces deux choix méthodologiques est né le concept de Centre de Ressources de Langues qui a d'abord été pensé, puis expérimenté et enfin mis en place par l'équipe de SPIRAL.

2. Qu'est-ce qu'un Centre de Ressources de Langues (CRL) ?

Le CRL constitue le lieu où s'effectuent l'apprentissage et la pratique des langues en autoformation encadrée.

Les langues concernées ont été initialement l'anglais et l'allemand, puis le français langue étrangère. L'intégration d'autres langues au dispositif, notamment l'espagnol et l'italien, est envisagée dans l'avenir.

Organisation

Le CRL a été conçu comme un lieu de travail convivial où les ressources mises à la disposition des étudiants sont à la fois

The Pôle Universitaire Européen de Strasbourg was founded in 1991. Its task was to manage projects that were similar for the three Universities of Strasbourg. The main objectives were the following: first, at the end of a four-year curriculum, each student should have good knowledge of a foreign language, and basic working knowledge of another; second, European and international exchanges were to be developed to improve student mobility, and employment prospects. In order to fulfill these objectives, five Language Centres were created, which are now in daily use by an average of 3000 students. A network of branches was established to make the Centres operational. This service called S.P.I.R.A.L. puts pedagogical material in a central database which is used by all the teachers. It also gives information about new material, CD-ROMs and methods, to the Language Centres. Moreover, the service coordinates the work of about 90 teachers and organises seminars and conferences about self-studying in Language Centres.

nombreuses, variées, organisées et accessibles. Cinq espaces de travail s'y côtoient :

- un espace vidéo et télévision proposant des films et documentaires dont certains sont didactisés, le système VIFAX et des programmes télévisés diffusés par satellites,
- un espace pour l'écoute et le travail à partir de cassettes audio,
- un espace de travail écrit avec des dossiers conçus pour l'autoformation (textes et articles scientifiques, exercices de vocabulaire, de grammaire, d'expression et de compréhension par exemple),
- un espace multimédia avec des ordinateurs, des CD-Roms, des logiciels et l'accès à l'Internet,
- et enfin un espace réservé à des ateliers de conversation animés par des enseignants ou des étudiants étrangers formés à cet effet.

Fonctionnement

Le fonctionnement d'un CRL, basé sur l'individualisation de l'apprentissage, constitue une réponse possible au problème de l'hétérogénéité des étudiants. L'autoformation permet en effet de prendre en compte à la fois la diversité des publics (langues de spécialité, des niveaux, et des stratégies d'apprentissage mises en œuvre par les apprenants. Chaque étudiant trouve ainsi dans un CRL les ressources nécessaires et adaptées à ses propres besoins.

Un tel type de fonctionnement a également l'avantage de responsabiliser les étudiants. En effet, bien que les objectifs d'apprentissage soient en partie définis par l'institution, c'est l'étudiant qui organise son apprentissage par le choix des supports, des rythmes ou des activités, ce qui lui permet de développer son autonomie et le prépare ainsi à sa future vie professionnelle.

Concrètement, l'utilisation d'un CRL peut varier de manière à correspondre à la spécificité de chaque groupe d'utilisateurs. Différents cas de figure se présentent.

- Dans certaines filières les cours de langues assurés dans un cadre extérieur sont complétés par du travail libre au CRL.
- Dans d'autres cursus, les étudiants n'ont plus de cours de langues au sens traditionnel du terme. Ils se rendent au Centre de Ressources avec leur groupe et leur enseignant à heures fixes chaque semaine et peuvent, en outre, fréquenter le centre autant de fois qu'ils le souhaitent dans les créneaux d'ouverture libre mis à leur disposition.
- Certains cursus comprennent un enseignement de langue obligatoire qui est validé par un examen. L'évaluation se fait sous forme de contrôles continus ou d'un contrôle terminal, ou d'une combinaison des deux.
- D'autres cursus, en nombre minoritaire, n'exigent pas de contrôle du niveau de langue mais les étudiants intéressés peuvent travailler au centre de langues et présenter des certifications internationales

comme le T.O.E.F.L., le T.O.E.I.C., ou les examens du Goethe-Institut.

Le temps que les étudiants passent au CRL varie également en fonction et des filières, et de la disponibilité des étudiants. Les étudiants pour lesquels la totalité de l'apprentissage se fait au Centre de Ressources ont de manière générale un quota d'heures obligatoires à effectuer, dont une partie encadrés par un enseignant. Ils ont, en outre, la possibilité de venir au centre autant qu'ils le souhaitent, soit pour se remettre à niveau, soit pour travailler à l'approfondissement de telle ou telle compétence.

Ressources

Un CRL est un lieu où sont réunies des ressources d'apprentissage. Par ressources, il faut entendre non seulement les dossiers d'autoformation construits à partir de supports variés, dont ceux offerts par les techniques de l'information et de la communication, mais aussi les ressources humaines que constituent les personnes chargées de l'encadrement, dont le rôle sera décrit plus loin.

À titre d'exemple, voici une description des ressources pédagogiques et technologiques mises à disposition dans certaines filières. Une partie des dossiers d'autoformation met l'accent sur les contenus spécifiques à la filière. Ces dossiers sont construits à partir de supports didactiques authentiques. Il s'agit, par exemple, d'articles de la presse spécialisée, de conférences en langue vivante étrangère dans le domaine considéré, d'émissions télévisées, ou encore de documentaires. Ces supports sont accompagnés de dossiers qui donnent des indications sur la manière d'en tirer profit et qui proposent des aides lexicales, des exercices corrigés et éventuellement des documents complémentaires ou des transcriptions lorsqu'il s'agit de documents sonores.

Les étudiants disposent également de toute une panoplie de dossiers didactiques non liés aux contenus spécialisés. Il s'agit, par exemple, d'articles de presse, de films long-métrage en version originale,

d'informations télévisées captées par antenne parabolique, de cassettes (audio et vidéo) d'apprentissage de la langue, de logiciels (notamment multimédia), de CD-ROMs, d'ouvrages de références, d'exercices de grammaire ou de vocabulaire (sur papier ou sur machine) ou de dossiers d'aide méthodologique proposant des méthodes d'apprentissage ponctuelles (comment faire un résumé, comment se servir d'un dictionnaire), ou générales (comment organiser son apprentissage en vue de tel ou tel objectif).

Tous ces dossiers sont référencés dans une base de données et leurs pages de garde, une fois imprimées, sont regroupées par thème et présentées dans des classeurs. Ceci permet une consultation rapide du contenu des dossiers par les étudiants et rend donc plus aisée la recherche des supports sur lesquels ils souhaitent travailler.

Rôle de l'encadrement

L'encadrement dans un CRL est essentiel. En effet, travailler dans un centre de ressources ne signifie en aucun cas rester seul face à des machines ou à des livres et il ne saurait y avoir d'apprentissage individualisé sans suivi pédagogique. Assurer le suivi des étudiants constitue donc l'une des fonctions de l'enseignant. Ce suivi se fait de diverses manières. Chaque étudiant possède une feuille à son nom, gardée au centre, sur laquelle il inscrit tout ce qu'il fait, le temps qu'il y passe ainsi que ses commentaires personnels. Cette feuille de suivi peut être consultée par les enseignants qui peuvent ainsi suivre les étudiants dans la progression de leur apprentissage et élaborer des statistiques concernant le taux de fréquentation du centre, le type de ressource utilisé, etc. L'étudiant peut également, quand il le souhaite, demander un entretien individuel à l'enseignant. La rentrée 1998 a d'ailleurs vu la mise en place d'entretiens-conseils systématiques. Dans ce cadre, l'enseignant aide l'étudiant à mettre à jour ses besoins en fonction des objectifs qu'il veut atteindre et lui donne des conseils méthodologiques. Ces premiers entretiens sont toujours complétés par une deuxième entrevue qui vise à établir un bilan intermédiaire avant une éventuelle évaluation.



The Spiral team

left to right: Anja Streiter, Catherine Schiellein, Marie Anne Tan, Annie Petermann, Mireille Leyendecker, Elisabeth Rogy, Nicole Poteaux Bucher, Klaus Gillessen

On constate que, dans ce type de dispositif, l'enseignant devient une personne ressource qui organise l'apprentissage et qui accompagne l'étudiant dans son cheminement. Il est également fortement impliqué dans la réflexion pédagogique et le travail en équipe. Il ne s'agit plus ici d'une logique de l'enseignement mais d'une logique de l'apprentissage.

Ces professeurs de langues chargés de l'organisation et du suivi de l'apprentissage ne constituent pas les seules "ressources humaines" dont disposent les étudiants. Leur travail d'encadrement est complété par celui de moniteurs-étudiants qui s'occupent des flux de matériel, des auteurs de langue qui apportent un soutien linguistique, ainsi que d'étudiants étrangers (ERASMUS) qui animent des séances de conversation.

Localisation

Le CRL a été pensé comme un lieu proche des étudiants. Le campus de Strasbourg étant très dispersé, il n'aurait pas été pratique de ne mettre en place qu'un seul et grand centre de ressources. Cinq CRL d'une capacité d'accueil de 40 personnes ont donc été créés à ce jour et d'autres sont en projet, ceci en des lieux proches des facultés et instituts fréquentés par les étudiants concernés. Ces centres accueillent en moyenne 3000 étudiants par semaine.

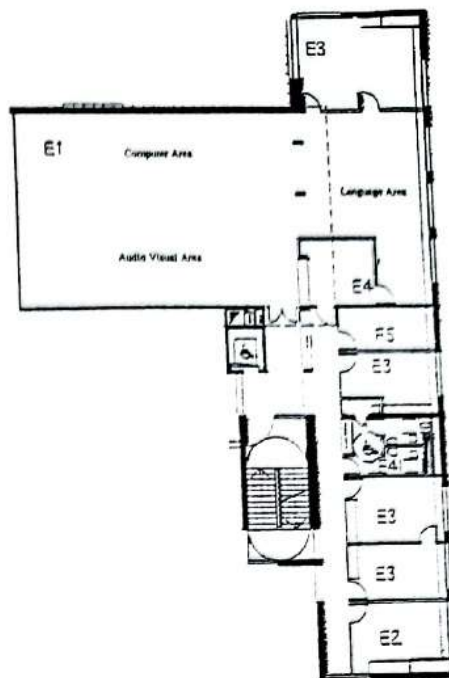
3. La fonction de SPIRAL et son évolution

SPIRAL a pour fonction actuellement de coordonner les différents CRL. Historiquement, la première fonction de SPIRAL a été, comme nous l'avons vu, de mettre en place les différents CRL, de créer ou d'acquérir les ressources d'apprentissage et de les gérer grâce à une base de données, de mettre au point des méthodes d'apprentissage en autonomie et de suivi des étudiants, et de former les enseignants à leur nouveau rôle. Par la suite, une fois les CRL créés et mis en route, SPIRAL est devenu davantage un organisme de coordination et de veille pédagogique. Sept enseignants de langues y travaillent à plein temps sous la responsabilité d'une chargée de mission. Cette équipe assure la production et l'acquisition de matériel pédagogique et elle poursuit la formation des enseignants à l'autoformation et aux nouvelles technologies éducatives. Un réseau des enseignants de langues des trois universités a aussi été mis en place, essentiellement pour mutualiser les ressources, les énergies, les idées et les productions. SPIRAL maintient le lien entre les membres du réseau (90 environ) par des séminaires de rentrée (2 jours), l'organisation régulière de conférences et de formations, la publication d'un bulletin de liaison bimestriel, le Journal de SPIRAL, et depuis peu, un site Internet à l'adresse <http://www-atrium.u-strasbg.fr/spiral/home.html>

Depuis le 1er janvier 1999, SPIRAL ne dépend plus du Pôle Universitaire Européen de Strasbourg. Il est rattaché administrativement à l'Université Marc BLOCH. En effet, le Pôle Universitaire Européen a pour mission d'initier des actions qui, une fois lancées et généralisées, se développent au sein des universités. En outre, un déménagement du service est prévu pour janvier 2000. Les nouveaux locaux qui accueilleront SPIRAL comprendront notamment un centre de ressources spécialement conçu pour les enseignants. Les étudiants y auront également accès pour participer à des actions ponctuelles. Dans ce nouveau cadre, il reste un service interuniversitaire et ses missions continuent de favoriser la mutualisation des compétences et des ressources.

4. Conclusion

D'après les bilans qui sont effectués régulièrement auprès des utilisateurs, seulement 20% des étudiants préfèrent les cours traditionnels qu'ils estiment plus sécurisants car l'enseignant y indique ce qu'il faut faire, effectue tous les choix et dirige le travail. Le fait que ces étudiants éprouvent des difficultés à gérer la liberté s'explique en partie parce qu'ils n'y ont pas été préparés dans leur scolarité antérieure. Les autres étudiants, soit l'écrasante majorité, apprécient la liberté qui



E1 Language Centre
E2 - E4 Staff Offices
F5 Technician Office

leur est offerte dans le choix des supports pédagogiques, la souplesse des rythmes de travail ainsi que la qualité et la richesse des ressources qui leur sont proposées.

spiral@poleuropeen.u-strasbg.fr

Some features of foreign language provision for "non-specialist" students in European universities

David Little

Trinity College, Dublin

Cet article résume les résultats de deux travaux de recherche entrepris par des membres de CercleS à l'automne 1998 pour une étude préliminaire commissionnée par le Conseil de l'Europe. Il fournit des renseignements sur le nombre d'étudiants "non-spécialistes" apprenant des langues étrangères, les disciplines académiques auxquelles ils appartiennent, le caractère facultatif ou obligatoire de leurs cours de langues, les langues qui sont offertes, le choix des méthodes pédagogiques, les procédés d'évaluation des compétences de l'apprenant, et les types de recherches et d'applications entrepris dans les centres de langues.

Dieser Beitrag faßt die Ergebnisse zweier Untersuchungen zusammen, die im Herbst 1998 von CercleS-Mitgliedern für eine vom Europa-Rat in Auftrag gegebene Voruntersuchung durchgeführt wurden. Der Beitrag informiert über die Anzahl von "nicht-fachlichen" Fremdsprachenlernern, welchen universitären Fachrichtungen diese angehören und ob sie den Sprachkurs freiwillig besuchen oder nicht. Weiters wird über die unterrichteten Sprachen, die bevorzugten Unterrichts- und Bewertungsmethoden sowie über die Forschungstätigkeit und die allgemeine Entwicklung an den Sprachzentren berichtet.

In the autumn of 1998 the Council of Europe invited me to prepare a preliminary study of foreign language provision for "non-specialist" students in European universities. The study was mostly based on a survey of CERCLES members that was conducted in two phases. First, a questionnaire was distributed to all participants at the 5th CERCLES International Conference, hosted by the University of Bergamo in September 1998; and secondly, a revised questionnaire was sent to CERCLES members by e-mail. The following extract from the study is reproduced by kind permission of the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Section.

The infinite variety of the European university sector

Countless Council of Europe documents insist on the value of European cultural diversity. One aspect of this diversity is revealed in the educational systems of member states, and especially in the university sector. Whereas schools are usually subject to a national or regional curriculum, which ensures at least a minimum of common aspiration and pedagogical practice, universities are for the most part entirely independent of one another. Indeed, the principle of university autonomy more than anything else is held to guarantee academic freedom. This means that it is by no means unusual for universities to feel that they have more in common with universities in other member states than with their immediate neighbours, and for this reason an international organization like CERCLES may be more effective than local networks in promoting communication between those responsible for foreign language provision in universities.

The great variety that exists within the university sector of each Council of Europe member state helps to explain an equally great variety in the way in which university language centres are established, governed, and funded, the status they enjoy, and the contribution they make to the curriculum. This variety is compounded by the fact that different member states have different foreign language needs, which generate different attitudes to the learning of foreign languages. Compare, for example, the situation in the United Kingdom and Ireland on the one hand with that in the Nordic countries on the other. In the former case, concern to provide as many students as possible with an opportunity to develop their foreign language proficiency is a relatively recent phenomenon and one that still fails to command universal support. In the latter case, by contrast, in many disciplines it has long been assumed that students will come to university with sufficient proficiency to deal with foreign sources. In some instances academic courses are based on textbooks in a foreign language (usually English).

Although the responses to the survey revealed a number of common concerns and clear indications of common practice, they also testified to the great diversity of the European university sector. In reading the following summary of the survey findings, it is important to keep this diversity in mind. No two completed questionnaires revealed an exactly identical situation, and in many cases what are apparently minor differences – in class size, forms of assessment, access to new technologies, and so on – can have far-reaching consequences.

Rates of response to the two questionnaires

The purpose of the Bergamo questionnaire was to identify broad areas of similarity, difference and common concern. Thirty-six responses were received from a total conference registration somewhat in excess of 150. Some participants felt themselves unqualified or insufficiently informed to fill in the questionnaire; most of those who did were in charge of the language centre in which they worked. Inevitably, given that the conference was held in Italy, the majority of responses came from language centres in that country. The e-mail

questionnaire sought more general information and included questions concerning issues of particular interest to the Council of Europe. Thirty responses were received from language centres in thirteen different countries; this time the majority of responses came from the United Kingdom. The distribution of responses by country is shown in Table 1.

How many students learn foreign languages?

The numerical responses to our survey must be treated with caution for at least three reasons. First, the survey lays no claim to statistical validity, and there is no way of knowing how typical the responses provided are. Secondly, the institutions represented in the survey differ greatly in size. Thirdly, respondents were not all working in the same kind of environment. For example, some were in a language centre serving a whole university, others were in a language centre serving a single faculty or subject grouping in a university, while others again were in a language centre serving a specialist university-level institution such as a business school. Language centres in the latter two categories are on the whole likely to provide courses for a greater proportion of the students they are designed to serve than those in the first category.

Having entered these caveats, two things emerge clearly from the responses to the two questionnaires. First, in various parts of Europe very large numbers of students are required to learn a foreign language as an integral part of their study. For example, the Language Centre of the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University, Prague, provides language courses for 2,000 students each year; the Département de Langues Vivantes Pratiques, Université Victor Ségalen, Bordeaux 2, caters for 8,500 students each year; and the language centres at Helsinki University and Tampere University each register at least 10,000 students each year. Secondly, although there is variation in the provision within particular countries, it is impossible to draw clear distinctions between countries. Thus while the percentage of the total student population served by language centres at British universities is often quite small (between 1% and 5%), in several cases the figure is much higher (20% at Oxford and Warwick, 12% at City University and Sussex, 10% at Bristol).

To which disciplines do these students belong?

In the responses to the two questionnaires mention is made of all the major university disciplines: it seems that none of them totally rejects the idea that students should develop proficiency in one or more foreign languages. However, the disciplines that are most frequently mentioned are those associated with professions in which lack of foreign language proficiency may be a handicap: law, economics/business, medicine, sociology, politics, science, agriculture, engineering. Again it should be stressed, however, that the survey lays no claim to statistical validity: other respondents might have emphasized other disciplines.

Are language courses compulsory or optional?

Many of the respondents to both questionnaires reported that they provide both compulsory and optional foreign language courses. However, "optional" does not always mean "extracurricular": in some universities students are free not to attend language courses, but must nevertheless demonstrate adequate foreign language proficiency in order to graduate. Where courses are compulsory they are by definition an integral part of the university curriculum; where they are optional and extracurricular, they may still carry some form of accreditation. The responses to the questionnaires make it clear that large-scale foreign language provision is usually compulsory for the students at which it is aimed.

Which languages are taught?

Table 2 shows the total number of times different languages were mentioned in the responses to the Bergamo and the e-mail questionnaire respectively. Interestingly, the same languages occupy the first six places in each column, though not in quite the same order. Of course, the fact that a language is mentioned says nothing about the number of learners it attracts. Although the numbers of learners reported for French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian are by no means negligible, many more students learn English than any other language. At the other end of the scale, the numbers of students learning the languages least frequently mentioned are usually tiny.

How are languages taught and assessed?

Classes and self-access learning

In many cases university language centres have self-access facilities and resources at their core. It is thus quite usual for the language courses they offer to combine classes with self-access learning. The responses to the Bergamo questionnaire, for example, mentioned 23 courses that entailed a combination of classes and self-access, one that was entirely self-access, and 15 that consisted of classes only (in some cases as a matter of choice, but in others because no self-access facilities were available).

Use of technologies

Self-access centres are usually founded on configurations of technology. Most respondents to the Bergamo questionnaire (29/36; 81%) reported that they were using technology to support language learning. Table 3 shows the frequency with which different technologies and media were mentioned. It is possible that some specifications of "video" were intended to include satellite television, and that in some cases "audio" was used to refer to the language laboratory. Nevertheless, it is clear that among these respondents computer-based learning is much more widespread than the use of analogue video and audio.

Length of courses and size of classes

Predictably, the courses reported in the responses to the two questionnaires varied in length and intensity. Class size also varied, though about two thirds of the respondents to the Bergamo questionnaire reported an average class size between 20 and 30. Four respondents reported class sizes significantly larger than this: the University of Helsinki has classes of 50 for languages other than English and Swedish; the Département de Langues Vivantes Pratiques at Université Victor Ségalen, Bordeaux 2 has some classes of 60; the Faculty of Economics at the University of Cagliari has as many as 80 students in compulsory language classes; and the University of Catania has classes of 100. The limited scope of the two questionnaires does not allow us to draw conclusions about the pedagogical approaches employed, though the amount of interaction possible in very large classes must be strictly limited. Predictably, all respondents reporting very large class sizes found them unsatisfactory. Among those reporting average class sizes between 20 and 30 opinion was divided, with several respondents declaring that such classes were too large.

Assessment

Table 4 shows the number of mentions given to different types of assessment in the responses to the Bergamo and e-mail questionnaires respectively. Many respondents reported that they used more than one combination of these assessment types. Several described their assessment procedures as "usual" or "traditional"; only one respondent (to the e-mail questionnaire) mentioned that his centre was specially proud of the procedures it had developed for assessing oral proficiency.

Who teaches foreign language courses at university level?

The Bergamo questionnaire asked whether foreign language courses were given by permanent or part-time staff. Thirty-four respondents mentioned permanent staff, whereas only 16 mentioned part-time staff. However, it must be borne in mind that 44% of the respondents (16/36) were based in the same country (Italy). Respondents from Germany and the United Kingdom noted that the employment of large numbers of part-time staff was a means of keeping costs as low as possible.

Research and development

The Bergamo questionnaire included two questions designed to measure the extent to which the providers of language courses at university were themselves involved in the production of language learning materials and research into the language learning process. Twenty-three of the 36 respondents reported that they produce their own language learning materials. Table 5 shows the number of respondents producing learning materials in different media. Twenty-three of the 36 respondents to the Bergamo questionnaire reported that their centres were involved in research connected with language teaching and learning. Table 6 shows the research topics that were mentioned more than once. Topics mentioned only once were: learners'

perception of language teaching methodologies; curriculum design; international business communication; psycholinguistics; motivation; institutional interaction; self-access learning; tandem language learning; corpus linguistics; grammar; lexicology.

The next issue of the *CERCLES Bulletin* will contain a further extract from the study summarizing responses to four questions of particular interest to the Council of Europe:

- What happens to foreign language proficiency in the transition from school to university?
- To what extent are universities committed to the teaching/learning of less widely used languages?
- To what extent do universities seek to develop partial competences in their students?
- How do universities respond to the role of new technologies in international communication as well as in language teaching/learning?

Table 1
Responses by country:

| | Berg. Q. | Email Q. |
|----------------|----------|----------|
| Belgium | | 3 |
| Czech Republic | 2 | |
| Finland | 3 | 1 |
| France | 2 | 2 |
| Germany | 4 | 2 |
| Greece | 1 | |
| Hungary | | 2 |
| Italy | 16 | |
| Netherlands | | 2 |
| Poland | 1 | 1 |
| Russia | 1 | 1 |
| Spain | | 1 |
| Slovakia | | 1 |
| Sweden | | 1 |
| Switzerland | | 1 |
| United Kingdom | 6 | 12 |

Table 2
References to Languages:

| | Berg. Q. | Email Q. |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|
| English | 33 | 20 |
| French | 30 | 22 |
| German | 29 | 20 |
| Spanish | 25 | 20 |
| Italian | 17 | 15 |
| Russian | 13 | 12 |
| Japanese | 8 | 7 |
| Chinese | 5 | 6 |
| Arabic | 4 | 4 |
| Finnish | 4 | |
| Greek | 4 | 6 |
| Dutch | 3 | 9 |
| Portuguese | 3 | 7 |
| Swedish | 3 | 3 |
| Czech | 2 | |
| Estonian | 2 | |
| Latin | 2 | |
| Polish | 2 | 2 |
| Catalan | 1 | 1 |
| Danish | 1 | 1 |
| Hungarian | 1 | |
| Indonesian | 1 | |
| Serbo-Croat | 1 | |
| Thai | 1 | |
| Vietnamese | 1 | |
| Norwegian | | 2 |
| British Sign Language | | 1 |
| Georgian | | 1 |
| Hebrew (modern) | | 1 |
| Korean | | 1 |
| Latin | | 1 |
| Swahili | | 1 |
| Turkish | | 1 |

Table 3

Number of times different technologies and media were mentioned in responses to the Bergamo questionnaire:

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| CD-ROM | 23 |
| E-mail | 14 |
| Internet | 12 |
| CALL programs | 12 |
| Video | 12 |
| Audio | 7 |
| Language laboratory | 4 |
| Satellite television | 3 |
| Video conferencing | 1 |

Table 4

Types of Assessment:

| | Berg. Q. | Email Q. |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|
| Written tests/examinations | 30 | 15 |
| Oral tests/examinations | 27 | 13 |
| Task-based assessment | 11 | |
| Standardized tests | 8 | 1 |
| Continuous Assessment | | 10 |
| Self-assessment | 1 | |

Table 5

Numbers of respondents to the Bergamo questionnaire producing language learning materials in different media:

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| Print | 20 |
| CALL software | 14 |
| Multimedia | 11 |
| Audio | 7 |
| Virtual reality | 1 |
| ViFAX | 1 |

Table 6

Research topics mentioned by more than one respondent to the Bergamo questionnaire:

| | |
|--|---|
| Testing | 6 |
| Learner autonomy | 6 |
| The use of new technologies | 5 |
| Languages for specific purposes | 4 |
| The language teaching-learning process | 4 |
| Computer-assisted language learning | 3 |
| Learner strategies | 3 |
| Learner advising | 3 |
| Intercultural communication | 3 |
| Phonetics/pronunciation | 2 |
| Contrastive pragmatics | 2 |
| Discourse analysis | 2 |
| Language teaching materials | 2 |

dlittle@tcd.ie

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To join CercleS contact either your national association or

CercleS Secretariat

Department of Modern Languages
University of Plymouth
Drake Circus
Plymouth PL4 8AA UK
Tel/Fax +44 (0)1752 232249
Email cercles@plymouth.ac.uk
URL <http://www.cercles.org>

CercleS national affiliates are listed on page 9.

Book reviews

Books, conference papers or reports in any area of language education of concern to institutions of higher education may be submitted for review. Items for review may be written in any of the main languages of national associations affiliated to CercleS. Reviews will appear in either English, French or German

What can be obtained from the Secretariat

- Membership list (centres and people)
- Confederation publicity leaflets
- *Actes* for Bordeaux conference (on disc or down loadable)
- Constitution (at the moment in English only)
- Minutes of latest executive meetings
- *Proceedings* of Dresden conference (£12.00)
- *Proceedings* of Hull conference (£15.00)
- *Proceedings* of Bergamo conference (£12.00)

CercleS Secretariat, Department of Modern Languages, University of Plymouth,
Drake Circus, Plymouth, PL4 8AA UK
Tel/Fax +44 (0)1752 232249 Email cercles@plymouth.ac.uk

The use of The European Language Portfolio in university-level language learning

Barbara Lazenby Simpson

Centre for Language and Communication Studies, Trinity College,
Dublin

Le Portfolio de Langues Européennes (LELP) est actuellement mis à l'essai à Trinity College à Dublin avec des étudiants de langues au Centre d'Etudes de Langues et de Communication (le CLCS). Le Portfolio comprend trois parties, un Passeport, une Biographie et un Dossier. Son objectif est de servir à la fois de témoin et d'instrument pédagogique. Un des buts du projet pour l'année académique en cours est de développer l'aptitude des étudiants à s'auto-évaluer. Ce processus d'auto-évaluation aura lieu tout au long de l'année. Il sera basé sur le Modèle Européen Commun, dont une version est incluse dans le Portfolio de Langues Européennes. L'auto-évaluation se fera dans des classes consacrées aux contrôles ou aux commentaires de résultats ainsi que dans des travaux dirigés. Il a été décidé que l'auto-évaluation représenterait 10% de la note finale.

Introduction

The Centre for Language and Communication Studies, Trinity College Dublin, has produced a version of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) for university-level language learners, and is currently involved in the pilot phase of this Council of Europe project (see Little, *Cercles Bulletin* 10:1-2). The ELP is a document in three parts which fulfils both a reporting and a pedagogical role. It consists of a Language Passport in which learners record details of their competence in foreign languages; a Language Biography in which the learner can articulate his/her personal language learning experiences. The Biography section, in addition to providing a means of recording current language learning also allows for recording cross-cultural experiences which were not primarily intended to result in language learning (for example, work abroad, foreign visits, penpals etc.). The final section is a Dossier in which learners can file and keep samples of their work, personal glossaries, study plans and so forth.

The European Language Portfolio in CLCS, Trinity College Dublin

The ELP was first introduced to students of Language Modules in Trinity College Dublin at the beginning of 1999. This two-year language learning programme is available to 500 non-specialist students as an extra-curricular activity, and to 250 students as a fully integrated part of a degree in Information and Communications Technology. Students were first asked to carry out the self-assessment and objective-setting process. Self-assessment is based on the levels and descriptors identified in the Common European Framework. As the Language Modules programme is organised on a series of project cycles which carry specifications for written as well as oral work, students were required to produce personal glossaries, written text and bibliographies relating to each project. These were collected in the Dossier. Subsequently the Biography, with its records of self-assessment and individual learning objectives, and the Dossier, with the assembled samples of a student's output, were used as a basis for individual tutorial sessions.

Observation of how both teachers and students used the ELP between January and May 1999 has informed the planning process for the forthcoming academic year. The need for more detailed teacher induction was noted, particularly in relation to the self-assessment process. It was apparent that learners required informed guidance in order to make effective use of their self-assessment and this entails allocating appropriate time for learner/teacher discussion. For example, it was clear that learners were relatively accurate in their self-assessment but demonstrated considerable lack of awareness of their learning abilities. It was not

Das European Language Portfolio (ELP) wird derzeit am Trinity College Dublin mit Sprachlernern des Centre for Language and Communication Studies (CLCS) als Pilotprojekt durchgeführt. Das ELP besteht aus drei Teilen: *Passport, Biographie und Dossier*. Als didaktisches Instrument soll es auch der Leistungsmessung dienen. Im laufenden Studienjahr konzentriert sich das Projekt unter anderem darauf, bei den Lernern die Fähigkeit der Beurteilung der eigenen Leistung zu fördern. Dieser Prozess der Selbstbeurteilung zieht sich durch das ganze Studienjahr und basiert auf dem Common European Framework (Gemeinsamer Europäischer Rahmen), von dem eine Version im CLCS European Language Portfolio enthalten ist. Die Selbstbeurteilung wird in speziellen Feedback- und Beurteilungseinheiten und auch in Proseminaren durchgeführt. Laut Beschluß soll die Selbstbeurteilung 10% zur Jahresgesamtnote beitragen.

unusual for learners to indicate that they expected to move from Threshold (B1) to Mastery (C2) over a period of six weeks. It should be noted that classes consist of two contact hours per week.

Academic Year 1999-00

There can be no doubt that the process of self-assessment, and the activities which it entails - in particular reflection, articulation, planning and self-monitoring - is of great significance to the outcome of language learning. In order to endow the process with the necessary importance and to give learners credit for self-assessment it is intended, in the coming year, to allocate 10% of total end of year marks to self-assessment in negotiation with the teacher. Students will carry out self-assessment at intervals during the year and, at the end of every project cycle, will discuss their assessment with the teacher. For the learner, the outcome of this process should be greater awareness of the learning process and of his/her engagement with it. For the teacher, the opportunity is provided to discuss a learner's strengths and weaknesses in a positive environment and to focus on aspects of the learning process. The ELP provides an appropriate tool for learner/teacher discussion by the use of the Common European Framework and the contents of the Dossier as the basis for negotiation.

The ELP template may be downloaded free of charge from :
<http://www.tcd.ie/CLCS>

bsimpson@tcd.ie

Bergamo Proceedings

Copies of the Bergamo Proceedings may now be ordered. If you wish to buy it please send a cheque for £12.00 pounds sterling payable to The University of Plymouth and your details to the Secretariat. See insert for further details

31 A New Network for Languages in UK Universities

The vitality of government-funded measures to improve language learning at University level in the UK can easily be judged by visiting the FIDL site (Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning) at <http://lang.fidl.ac.uk> maintained by CILT (the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research). Following a large-scale review of well-known initiatives (notably of the CTI - Computers in Teaching Initiative - see Bulletin 10:1-4 for an overview of the Modern Languages CTI based at the University of Hull), the UK university funding body (HEFCE) invited bids for their broader replacement by 'Subject Centres' for cognate groups of disciplines. These are expected to receive funding of the order of £240,000 each and will operate from 2000 onwards.

A response was put forward by the University Council for Modern Languages - a non-governmental body - over the summer. It proposes to establish a Network of practitioners in the three specialist areas of Modern Languages, Area Studies, and Linguistics. It has gained the wide support of subject associations such as AULC. The bid appears to have met with HEFCE's approval, and a final contract will be awarded soon. The text of the proposal highlights the major importance in the UK today of language programmes for non-specialists, and indicates that data on these is imperfect, despite the preponderance of their learning population.

The Network's responsibilities will be extensive, covering, amongst many things, support for the application of new technologies to language learning, L2 acquisition methodology, benchmarking of standards, cultural and literary studies, and applied language work. The range of proposed activities is extremely impressive. UCML has nominated Prof. M. Kelly (Southampton) as first Director of the Network for an initial period of three years, and Chairs for each of the three specialist areas will be nominated very soon. Infrastructural services will be provided by CILT and the University of Hull. An advisory board, with certain managerial functions, is soon to be nominated by UCML.

It is to be hoped that the Network will add real value to the work of existing organisations in its field. It promises to engage in a most diverse range of activities, some of which will be of direct interest to CercleS members throughout Europe.

d.bickerton@pbs.plym.ac.uk

Czech and Slovak Full Member in the Making

The first transnational meeting of colleagues from Czech and Slovak Language Centres took place on 17 September 1999 in Prague during the recent International Conference on Teaching Languages for Specific Purposes. Tentatively named CASALS, the new association elected Marie Hanzlíková and Hana Hruzová (respectively from Charles University, Prague, and Masaryk University, Brno, and currently Associate Members) together with Zdenka Šimková (Ceske Budejovice) and Alžběta Moravčíková and Eva Seherová (of the Slovak Republic) to form a steering committee. This group is mandated with the task of achieving CercleS full membership in the year 2000. National Czech and Slovak committees were elected on the same occasion. The group met under auspicious circumstances, for the Conference - entitled LSP Forum '99 - had attracted a very large international audience, with 190 presenters and 290 other delegates. The opening plenary addresses were given by Prof David Little (Dublin), President of CercleS, and Prof Michel Perrin (Bordeaux), Vice-President. This event demonstrates how the potential for growth in CercleS membership has begun to be realised since the Dresden conference in 1996, and enables existing members to discover the vitality and energy of newcomers to the Confederation.

IALL '99: A European Perspective

David Bickerton
Secretary General

The International Association for Language Learning Technology (called IALL for what are now historical reasons) held its 6th biennial conference at the University of Maryland, near Washington DC, on 22-26 June 1999. IALL is the leading organisation in North America with a specific 'Language Centre' focus, and it has long been felt appropriate by the CercleS Executive that we should co-operate more closely in the exchange of information and ideas, and effectively move towards a form of mutual recognition.

With this in mind I responded positively to the suggestion by Read Gilgen (president elect, Wisconsin) to share a platform with himself, Nina Garret (immediate past president, Yale) and Yutaka Kitamura (Language Laboratory Association of Japan, Kansai) in order to establish an 'international perspective' on what many still refer to as 'language laboratories'.

The conference registered almost 300 delegates and delivered a rich programme of pre-conference workshops, 3 plenaries, some 80 papers (up to 6 parallel sessions ran at any one time), meals in abundance (largely paid for by a small number of commercial sponsors) and ample opportunity for people to meet and exchange ideas. The Maryland campus proved to be a magnificent venue, notwithstanding the heat and humidity of high summer, and its size kept delegates alert and on the move.

IALL is organised around 10 "regional groups" which, in European terms, would constitute separate national affiliates. Thus, whilst only a handful of delegates came, like myself, from outside North America, the conference could rightly claim to resemble an international venue. If truth be told, I heard no foreign language spoken, but that will not be the case when, next year, IALL joins forces with the LLA of Japan in running the Fourth International Conference on Foreign Language Education and Technology at Kobe.

Most papers at Maryland revealed a strong technological and non-theoretical perspective on the issues facing language teaching to non-linguists. This is in some contrast with the emphasis found at CercleS International conferences. However, the challenges facing IALL members would be very familiar to our members: how exactly can we best meet the practical ambitions of many of our students (given what we know about language acquisition and using the learning environment in modern universities)? How do we adapt our courses and teaching skills to make best use of rapid developments in technology? What are the organisational implications for Language Centres, tutors and managers? There is clearly a strong community of interest between IALL and CercleS members, and this provides a sound basis for greater co-operation and contact.

d.bickerton@pbs.plym.ac.uk



Professor David Little

News from national associations

AICLU



1st AICLU Conference: *Quale apprendimento/insegnamento linguistico nell'Università italiana del 2000?* Udine, 20-22 May 1999

Roberta Facchinetti and
Cesare Gagliardi

The elegant city of Udine is situated in a land of borders, a meeting point of different cultures and ethnic groups. The peculiar status of this city aptly framed a big academic meeting on 20-22 May, when representatives from numerous Italian universities gathered for the first National Conference of Italian University Language Centres (AICLU). The event was tangible evidence of a growing academic community, established in 1997, ready to share experiences, issues, and suggestions on staff, software, and facilities, as testified by the following four sessions featured in the conference:

- 1) cultures, markets and special languages,
- 2) methods and tools for effective language teaching,
- 3) learning assessment and evaluation,
- 4) methods and tools for autonomous language learning.

After the welcoming address by the Rector of the University of Udine and the Dean of the Faculty of Foreign Languages (and former Head of the local Language Centre, Andrea Csillaghy) and the introductory address of the President of AICLU (Maurizio Gotti), the first wide issue discussed by the delegates was the compelling need to integrate language teaching-learning within the European context of increasing multiculturalism. The basic factors favouring such integration were highlighted (Roberto Gusmani – Udine), with regard to both English and non-English contexts – specifically to Ural languages (Laszlo Honti – Udine). Indeed, effective, task-oriented teaching strategies cannot be developed unless they are based on the specific needs of Italian university students within a European context (Carmen Argondizzo – Calabria), particularly with regard to the acquisition of special languages (Lionello Fabris – Udine), like the language of advertisement (Nicoletta Vasta – Trieste), of economics (Giuliana Garzone – Milan Bocconi; Bruna Di Sabato – Naples) and of the humanities (Roberta Facchinetti – Verona). Suggestions for the exploitation of English as the 'European language', on the basis of socio-pragmatic grounds, as a free-language for communication beyond national borders (Maria Grazia Guido – Lecce) were provided, together with the analysis of rhetorical-stylistic textual features of English texts, so as to prompt the students' creative writing (Silvia Bruti – Pisa).

The student's needs were at the centre of the

second session as well, against the background of the methods and tools to be implemented for effective language teaching. Technological improvements must always be learner-centred, aimed at stimulating collaboration rather than isolation (Patricia Sours – Padua) and particular attention must also be given to motivational, psycho-affective needs (Gianfranco Porcelli – Catholic University, Milan). It is also crucial to increase students' ability to work autonomously with the software and tools offered by language centres (Johann Druml – Modena and Reggio Emilia), including voice recognition software (Cesare Gagliardi – Verona) and 'virtual conversation' programs via computer (Maria Cecilia Picchi – Florence). Indeed, to become autonomous, students must also be shown how to develop an adequate competence in making use of the resources available at Language Centres (Roberta Altin and Paolo Parmeggiani – Udine). During the third session, devoted to learning assessment and evaluation, Prof. David Little, president of the European association of Language Centres, addressed the issue of testing foreign language proficiency. Testing may be qualified as the most vulnerable aspect of university language teaching. Indeed, most universities devise their own language tests, which are difficult to compare with one another and in many cases yield uninformative results. Prof. Little suggested the ideal solution should be that universities develop transparent assessment procedures which are nationally and internationally agreed. Against the background of Prof. Little's talk, interesting testing procedures implemented in different Italian Language Centres were presented, including a multimedial test to prompt student's autonomy in self-evaluating their English language competence (Amanda Murphy – Catholic University, Milan), a test to ascertain Italian students' written competence of their native language (Monica Piantoni – Bergamo), and an adaptive-relational test leading to language teaching improvement (Anna Zanfei – Verona). Testing and self-assessment were also dealt with in a pilot experimentation, involving the use of the 'European Language Portfolio' (Andrea Bilotto – Calabria), in a project integrating technology into the language classroom (Katia Carraro and Charlotte Whigham – Padua), and in the discussion of linguistic interference in teaching Italian to foreign students (Scilla Abbiati – Udine).

In the fourth and final session, discussion was centred on methods and tools for autonomous learning in a variety of contexts; more specifically, it focused on the experimentation of paths for autonomous learning for first and second year university students of foreign languages (Maria Cecilia Rizzardi – Milan), on applications for integrating communicative teaching techniques, technology and autonomous learning at the faculties of Political Science (John Douthwaite – Turin), and on the technical feasibility of integrating Internet in the ESP classroom (Maureen Lister and Deborah Des Jardins –

Bologna), using e-mail and web sites as teaching methods (Giles Watson – Udine). Attention was also given to the development of a teaching package for interactive, tutored learning paths (Franca Poppi – Bologna).

The rich discussion arising from the above mentioned subjects covered pivotal issues and allowed the sharing of information concerning common needs of Italian Language Centres. At the heart of all the discussions was the conviction that how students approach their subject is as important as what they end up knowing and acquiring. Consequently, discussion on theoretical educational principles was constantly followed and counterbalanced by practical teaching implications. Realising that teaching must be based upon how learners learn, the discussion focused upon teacher/learner interaction. Language Centres stem from different situations, but they all share similar issues and needs. The final aim of the 1st AICLU conference has been to trigger off the generation of a commonly shared teaching strategy to tackle these issues and needs. Such an aim has been successfully met, thanks to fruitful confrontation on the scientific, teaching, and organisational level.

faro@chiostro.univer.it
gagliard@chiostro.univer.it



Professor Maurizio Gotti and Professor Paola Evangelisti at the 1st AICLU Conference, Udine 22 May 1999

AULC



Inaugural Meeting of AULC Strength through Diversity

The inaugural meeting of AULC was held at the University of Bristol on 16-17 April 1999. The meeting was well attended by representatives from over 60 institutions from the United Kingdom and Ireland. The plenary speakers were David Bickerton, the Secretary General of CERCLES and David Holkham, Manager of the UK National Languages for Export Campaign. There were practical demonstrations promoting the use of new technologies for language learning from Satellite companies including Paragon UK, Shiva and BCI. There were two workshops - one entitled "The Web-based Learning System at the University of Lincolnshire and Humberside", organised by Andy Hagyard, and the other "Language Learning and the Internet" organised by Gilles Couzin and Vita Falbo-Ellis from the University of Bristol. New Special Interest Groups were created under the broad areas of Research, Structures and Organisations, Teaching/Advising and Technical Resources. The next AULC meeting will be hosted by the Languages and Humanities Centre of the University of Edinburgh on 17 and 18 December 1999. For further information on all AULC activities you are welcome to visit our new website at <http://www.aulc.org>.

ray.satchell@bristol.ac.uk

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AKS



103rd Meeting of Standing Commission of AKS, 18th June 1999.

The 103rd meeting of the Standing Commission of AKS (i.e. the co-ordinating committee, in CercleS terms) at Chemnitz Technical University, on 18 June 1999, was attended by 20 members. The meeting was introduced by a presentation and discussion of the new orientation of the former VHS-Certificates, now run by Weiterbildungs- und Testsysteme GmbH, Frankfurt, and its new head, Dr Camerer. It was agreed to explore ways of cooperation and mutual support, e.g. in profile raising. A major issue of the meeting proper was the question of status and staff teaching loads in language centres, based on a national survey conducted by Dr Katzorke. The results are due to be published as a separate report. Reports were received of a regional UNICert workshop (at Münster University) focussing on quality assurance. The UNICert information material has been updated, UNICert newsletter No 2 has appeared, UNICert accreditations have risen to 28 institutions, and the need was seen to raise UNICert's international profile. Within the information on Cercles Dr Nehm reported on CercleS activities helping with the reconstitution of the University of Mostar. The next AKS-conference will be held at Saarbrücken University 9-11 March 2000. The topic will be "New Media - New Teaching - New Learning" with working groups on the potential of the new media, autonomous learning, distance learning, new roles for teachers, new kinds of teaching materials, new kinds of assessment and testing. Prof Little (Dublin) and Prof Wolff (Wuppertal) are to be asked to give keynote lectures. A panel discussion focusing on the implications of the buzz-word "internationalisation" is planned with representatives of DAAD, HRK, a European institution and others. The AKS has become a member of the European Language Council (ELC). A discussion about ECTS-credits for language courses is to be continued at the next meeting. Reports were received on the workshops "Management in Language Centres" at Heidelberg University (documentation in preparation, to be continued at the Sarrbrücken conference as a round table and at Weimar University, in 2001) and "English for Lawyers" at Münster University. The resolution passed at the Braunschweig conference has been reprinted in a number of periodicals. Closer cooperation is to be sought with other organisations concerned with foreign language teaching. In this context, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Fremdsprachenforschung will hold its next conference in Dresden on 4-6 October 2001. As far as publications are concerned, two manuscripts have been received for publication in the AKS book series, and the proceedings of the Braunschweig conference are also due to come out in 1999. Finally, on 12-13 Nov 1999 there will be a colloquium at Duisburg University in memory of the late Christine Klein-Brale, with a commemorative volume planned to collect the papers given on the occasion. A busy meeting, indeed.

voss-b@rcs.urz.tu-dresden.de