AHRC-funded Research Network:
‘Towards a History of Modern Foreign Language Teaching and Learning (MFLTL)’

Funded by the AHRC Translating Cultures research network scheme, two workshops and an international conference will bring together researchers in the UK with an interest in the history of Modern Foreign Language education - historians, applied linguists, and MLE specialists - with colleagues already active in the field in Continental Europe, to chart the history of MFLTL in the UK and Europe, in order to inform future modern languages education policy and capacity development:

Workshop 1 – Modern Language Education Histories in Europe: English, French, German and Spanish across Borders (7-8 December 2012, University of Nottingham)

Workshop 2 – Modern Language Education Histories in Europe: How National Traditions Differ and Correspond (6-7 July 2013, University of Warwick)

A four-day international conference is also planned for July 2014.

Why is research needed into the history of modern language education in the UK?

Modern language education (MLE) - the basis for building the UK's capacity in translation and interpreting at the highest levels of international cooperation - has, over the last century, never matched the UK's need to represent its interests in European and global communication. The number of pupils taking German at 16 is now lower than in 1985, and for French as low as in 1965. Spanish, predicted since the 1918 Leathes Report to take off because of its economic importance, has begun to do so only in the last decade. Russian - introduced into some schools during the Cold War - has remained a niche subject, despite the fact that it has 150 million speakers. Chinese - with over a billion speakers - is still merely listed under 'other modern languages' in GCSE statistics.

Modern language educators, who bear a heavy responsibility in developing the needed capacity, are experiencing a sense of crisis in the face of this mismatch between strategic needs and the realities of modern languages provision and take-up. In the face of this crisis, history can provide useful lessons and a valuable sense of perspective - policy, curricula and methods/techniques all need to be developed with an awareness of the history of modern language education in mind, which can tell us what measures have been tried, and with what success, to promote particular languages or particular approaches to language learning in primary, secondary, tertiary and lifelong educational settings.

Please contact Dr Nicola McLelland nicola.mclelland@nottingham.ac.uk or Dr Richard Smith R.C.Smith@warwick.ac.uk if you are interested in taking part in any of the activities of this research network. We will be happy to add you to our mailing list.

Visit our website at: historyofmfl.weebly.com
Innovation and Reform in 19th – Early 20th Century Modern Foreign Language Teaching

Some of Richard Smith's research in this area has been published in the following two sets of volumes:


Short biographies of some of the leading Reform Movement protagonists are available on the Warwick ELT Archive website:

www.warwick.ac.uk/go/elt_archive/halloffame

Richard Smith and Nicola McLelland are currently engaged in a collaborative project to chart the progress of the Reform Movement in England and further afield.

German Through English Eyes

Nicola McLelland's AHRC-funded project German Through English Eyes investigates the changes in how the German language and its culture(s) have been represented to British learners through textbooks of German since 1600.

For example, Dr McLelland examines by what steps the representation of German and its speakers in language textbooks moved from hailing our fellow-Germanic imperialists in the 19th century, to sympathetic chapters on the Hitler Youth and the SS in 1930s textbooks, to the later 20th century with programmatic titles that deliberately make a break with the past, like *Unsere Freunde* 'Our Friends' and *Deutschland hier und jetzt* 'Germany here and now'.

For more information about German Through English Eyes see:
http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/german/research/researchclusters/translation-cultures/translation-of-cultures.aspx

For more information about any of our activities, please contact Dr Richard Smith R.C.Smith@warwick.ac.uk or Dr Nicola McLelland nicola.mclelland@nottingham.ac.uk

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