

### Languages uptake in education: Obstacles and interventions

It is now well-established that there has been a marked and continued decline in the numbers of pupils studying languages in UK Secondary and Further Education, with clear knock-on effects for university uptake: departments continue to close; cold-spots in access to languages provision in Higher Education are now emerging, resulting in fewer would-be teachers undertaking teacher training in the discipline (see British Academy 2020, Muradás-Taylor & Taylor 2023). While this “languages crisis” is well documented (Bowler 2020), the perspectives of pupils and teachers themselves have not been adequately explored, and are rarely considered, (but see Collen et al. 2023, Henderson and Carruthers 2022). This special session of the LAGB brings together teachers and academics to address two aims. First, we seek to better understand the obstacles to uptake of languages in schools and Higher Education. Second, we will consider what practical interventions could be developed by working collaboratively across the sector (see Sheehan et al. 2023). The below presentations will be followed by an open discussion.

#### Presentations:

Rowena Kasprowicz (University of Reading) & Hannah Davidson (Cambridge University)  
*Motivational differences among young language learners*  
[Chair: Janet Lloyd – Primary Languages Network]

Leanne Henderson (Queen’s University, Belfast)  
*Revisiting ‘choice’ in secondary language learning from the perspectives of young people*  
[Chair: Janette Swainston – Longsands Academy]

Alice Corr (Birmingham University), Anna Havinga (University of Bristol), Jonathan Kasstan (University of Westminster), Norma Schifano (Birmingham University), Sascha Stollhans (University of Leeds) & Michelle Sheehan (Newcastle University)  
*A Manifesto for change: how linguistics can help with the languages crisis*  
[Chair: Sally Conroy – Cardinal Newman]

#### References:

- Bowler, Megan. “A Languages Crisis? HEPI Report 123.” Higher Education Policy Institute, [https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HEPI\\_A-Languages-Crisis\\_Report-123-FINAL.pdf](https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HEPI_A-Languages-Crisis_Report-123-FINAL.pdf) [accessed 10/01/2024].
- Collen, Ian, Henderson, Leanne, Liu, Minchen, O’Boyle, Aisling & Jennifer Roberts. 2023. Languages provision in Further Education. British Academy, [https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/4540/Languages\\_Provision\\_in\\_UK\\_Final\\_v2.pdf](https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/4540/Languages_Provision_in_UK_Final_v2.pdf) [accessed 10/01/2024].
- Henderson, Leanne and Janice Carruthers. 2022. Socio-economic factors, school type and the uptake of languages: Northern Ireland in the wider UK context. *The Language Learning Journal* 20(6): 712-731.
- Languages in the UK: A Call for Action.” British Academy, Academy of Medical Sciences, the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Royal Society, 2019, [www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/languages-uk-academies-statement/](http://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/languages-uk-academies-statement/) [accessed 10/01/2024].
- Muradás-Taylor, Becky & Philip Taylor. 2023. ‘Cold spots’ in language degree provision in England. *The Language Learning Journal*. OnlineFirst <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09571736.2023.2257705>
- Sheehan, M., Corr, A., Having, A., Kasstan, J., Schifano, N. & Stollhans, S. (2023): A manifesto for linguistics in language teaching in the UK context. <https://linguisticsinmfl.co.uk/a-manifesto-for-linguistics-in-language-teaching-in-the-uk-context>