

INTERVIEWER: Welcome back to The Student Hub Live. Well, unfortunately, this is our last session of the day from this Freshers event for the faculty of well-being, education, and language studies. We've had a spotlight on all of the schools.

And this spotlight is going to focus on LAL, languages and applied linguistics, a topic that we've been talking about throughout the whole day, in fact. And I have Korina and Sylvia with me today. Welcome both of you.

SYLVIA WARNECKE: Hello.

KORINA GIAXOGLU: Hello.

INTERVIEWER: Hello. I wonder if we can talk about what's special? We've been asking everybody what's special about your school? And [INAUDIBLE] came along and said her school was the best. But we said that wasn't a valid answer. So I wonder if you can, in a more sensible tone, tell us about what is special about the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics, Korina?

KORINA GIAXOGLU: Thank you. Well, of course, I'll say that our school, LAL, is the best. And as you can tell from the school's name, there are two strands running through our teaching and research. The first one is modern languages. And the second one is applied linguistics, which basically refers to language in use.

Both strands are, of course interconnected, in their focus on language, both as a system and as a resource for creativity and communication. And what's really special about our programmes is that we are committed to the promotion of linguistic diversity, to the promotion of intercultural communication, and social justice. And this comes through both in the content of our modules and the inclusive way that we teach.

In our school and across the different programmes, the study of language is not just limited to the study of grammar or the history of words or attaining fluency in a particular language. Of course, that is an integral part of what you'll be studying with us. But what you'll also be getting into is that you'll be using that knowledge to appreciate language as a window to other cultures, as a window to society, and as a window to your own self.

So we have a range of programmes that me and Sylvia will very quickly talk you through. So in our English language undergraduate programme, you'll be investigating how language with a special focus on English works, and how it's used across different types of genres, so from personal experience stories, conversations, written texts, including ads, poems, and digital communication. And you'll use that knowledge to appreciate how language varies and all the fascinating ways in which speakers and writers in different contexts adapt their style to communicate with others.

We also teach English skills for academic study, both for UK-based and international students. And our modules have won many, many awards from you, from students. And I know that many of you are just starting, so maybe you don't really want to hear about postgraduate. But maybe it's still good to start by thinking ahead and knowing that there is a postgraduate level.

You can take applied linguistics as a pathway as part of the MA in education. And there, you can develop further your knowledge of language in use in line with any practical interest you have in, for example, health communication or education. So I will pass on to Sylvia to talk a bit more about the languages aspect of the school. Yeah, Sylvia?

SYLVIA WARNECKE: OK, well, thank you.

INTERVIEWER: That would be great. Sylvia?

SYLVIA WARNECKE: And just to add, why are you studying a language in the first place? I hear you've all been talking a lot about food today. And you could do that. And that's one of the first things you learn, how to get exciting food from other places in the world.

But like what Korina was saying, I think what makes us special is also, as she said, we are supporting linguistic diversity. And when it comes to the United Kingdom, I think we offer things that no other university does in this way. For example, we've launched a course in the Scots language that is one of the four official languages of Scotland.

It's a non-standard language, and you cannot study that anywhere else in the UK as a course at a university. That's very new. We launched that in December.

We are also working on a course in British sign language. In Scotland again, this is the fourth official language we have. And it is a language that is accepted throughout the United Kingdom. So that will be another thing that makes us stand out.

But coming back to our degrees, we are offering flexible degrees so you can choose between studying two languages as part of your degree, or a language plus English. And we offer French, German, and Spanish to degree level. You can also combine your language study with business management or law. And you might have heard that especially in the post-Brexit world, we do need specialists with language skills.

And we also offer a wide range of non-accredited language courses. For example, you want to top up whatever you do with language skills in French, German, Spanish, Chinese, but also looking at intercultural communication, languages in the workplace, languages for special purposes. And Korina was talking about English, the provision of English. And there, we also look at using languages and spatial context, for example, in our module, English for academic purposes and how you use the English language for academic study.

INTERVIEWER: And some people are using it to gain an appreciation of football, I hear, Stacy.

STACY: Yeah. So there has been a segue into football, although there is a language link. Some were saying that they've learned German from their love of German football, which I think is quite handy. And now, we've moved on to people saying it's been a great day. Yeah, I think that they've enjoyed themselves.

[LAUGHING]

INTERVIEWER: Oh, brilliant. Thank you so much, Stacy. That's lovely. So yeah, some people are studying language for those very reasons, to enrich a quality of life. And that's

something we've talked about. So what does it take to study language at a distance? What can students expect the experience to be like?

SYLVIA WARNECKE: Maybe if I come in here?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

SYLVIA WARNECKE: We've had quite a few people who phoned us to say, I'm thinking about studying a language with you, but can you actually learn a language at a distance, self-study? How does it work? And I think the key to success is engaging with others. And we offer a lot of opportunities for you, even though you're studying at a distance, to speak the language you're learning with others.

We offer tutorials, online, face to face-- not at the moment, but we do offer face-to-face provision. But we also have lots of groups where students get together independent of timetables. We have the online tools to do so.

And then, you can meet up with others who are in the same boat and practise the language. That's been a really successful thing. And we have student buddies who are leading on this. So there's always someone you can ask for help and how to join groups like that.

But apart from studying the actual module materials, I think what is really useful is that you find a way that works for you. We just heard, I learned the language because of my love for German football. So why don't you find what really excites you about the other culture, about the language you're learning, and then focus on that as well, on top of what you learn in our module materials, and also find tools and ways of learning that suit you.

There are lots of free tools available online. And we give you hints and tips about things that are available. Try them out and see what is the best way that works for you.

And remember, you don't have to be perfect. A little language takes you a long way. Give yourself time.

And something that we often tell our students is learning a language is not a steady progress. You find yourself and think, I'm not progressing. I'm on the same level. And suddenly, you make this huge leap to the next level. So be patient.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. No, absolutely. Absolutely.

Korina, I wonder if I can pull you in here, as well, because I know that one of your students has said that when they studied German, they learned so much more than German. So I wonder if you could sort of talk a little bit about the value of studying languages, and in particular, degree languages? And what's the purpose in today's world?

KORINA GIAXOGLU: Well, studying languages and/or applied linguistics-- they are, as I said, interconnected-- means that not only you'll be a better communicator, not only you'll be much better equipped to deal with a complex culture in an interconnected world, but you will also be a lot more aware of difference, of inequalities that are expressed through language. And you will feel empowered to take a critical look at what's happening around you, and if needed, take action to change it.

The study of language as a resource of communication will open your eyes to the everyday creativity of yourself and others as writers and speakers. Only just understanding and tapping into the fascinating variety of all languages and cultures helps you to gain a well-rounded understanding of the tensions around language use and also politics, social issues, issues and questions around digital communication-- to what extent do social media change the way we communicate, and how can we make the most out of social media without kind of overriding its risks? So it's really all of those things in addition to, of course, improving your writing and speaking style and adjusting to different audiences. That's all actually that everyone needs as both a citizen and as a professional.

INTERVIEWER: Now--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

KORINA GIAXOGLU: Sylvia would like to add something.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, Sylvia, could we end with some points for you about some of the other aspects about the values of studying applied linguistics?

SYLVIA WARNECKE: Well, you know what? We've actually seen that with other students, we can have a real impact in the wider world. While people are still studying with us, we're running a lot of projects with external partners.

For example, through COVID-19, we've been working with care homes in Scotland and delivering languages sessions for well-being, where our OU students were taking part in helping people in care homes engage with language. And we got amazing feedback from that. We have students who, for example, go abroad in residential schools, do some mentoring with schools here in the UK, and promote the language learning in schools, and hopefully have an impact on people studying languages more widely in the UK. So I think even while you're studying, you can already have an impact on the outside world as well.

INTERVIEWER: That's wonderful. And these are threads that have run through so many of our conversations today. But unfortunately, that's all we've got time for, Sylvia and Korina, so thank you so much for coming and speaking to us today.

It's been a jam-packed day. I don't know about you at home, but some of you, I know, have been here since 9:00 this morning. So well done staying with us.

It's been a really, really interesting event. And I hope that you've got something out of it. Do let us know if you've enjoyed the discussion and if you'd like to come to another event.

Tomorrow, actually, we have another one. We are doing an induction for the faculty of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. So do check out the programme. You're more than welcome to come if you aren't with the faculty.

We also have an Adobe Connect session tonight, and of course, our OU-wide freshers orientation on the 28th of September. That's from 8:00 till 4:00, another whole day of information that's essential if you haven't studied with the Open University. But if you have and you've enjoyed today, come along and share your tips and advice with other students,

because I hope, as you can see, it's so reassuring to meet other friendly faces. And it's lots of fun, too.

Then, on Tuesday the 29th of September, we have an event for the Faculty of Business and Law. And on module start day, we have some Adobe Connect workshops that you can book onto, also. And we're running a whole series of events. You can sign up to those on our Student Hub Live website and also join our mailing list so that when we've got new events, which we'll be running throughout the year, you can be the first to find out about them and book your space. Because in many cases, spaces are limited.

Well, I don't know about you, but I'm off to have some peanut butter and toast now. Thank you so much, Stacy, for being in the chat. I hope everyone's OK and had a fabulous day. Can we have some final words from you with your microphone on?

STACY: I didn't turn it off. I was just very, very quiet.

[LAUGHING]

Everybody's had a fantastic day. Everyone is just saying how wonderful it's been. It's been lovely to chat to everybody. And they're just about hanging on in there till the last, but they've had a great day.

INTERVIEWER: Brilliant. Well thank you so much. And all of the other people on our hot list. Thank you at home so much for contributing. I hope you've enjoyed it. I hope you're feeling a bit happier.

We do have a wonderful bunch of people at the Open University. And the thing that I love most is talking to students, because we've all got something to contribute. And it's all part of an absolutely wonderful, life-changing journey.

So thank you so much for participating today. Hope to see you again soon. I hope you've enjoyed the events and that you've learned something new, and that you feel more connected to our wonderful university. Bye for now. And thank you so much for watching.

[MUSIC PLAYING]