

KAREN FOLEY: Welcome back to Student Hub Live. Well, we have two spotlight sessions now. And the first is on the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics, or LAL, as we like to call them. So I have Rosina here to talk to us about what's going on at the school. Rosina, can you tell us briefly about what's so special about the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics?

ROSINA MARQUEZ-REITER: Hello, Karen. Thank you. Thanks for that. Well, the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics is a diverse knowledge community. It brings together students and staff that are interested in the power of language to shape people's identities in multilingual, multicultural, and in an interconnected world, and how people construct and negotiate cultural, political, and social meanings.

And our research and teaching is grounded on an understanding of diversity, not just as a value, not only as a value or as a narrative, but also as a social reality and a creative force.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, we've been looking a lot at reflecting on experiences of the pandemic throughout today's programme. And I wonder if you could tell us, looking back over the last year, what some of the highlights have been for the school.

ROSINA MARQUEZ-REITER: Thanks, Karen. The pandemic has certainly been a huge challenge for students and staff. And we've done our best to support each other during that time. You've heard earlier about the multilingual [AUDIO OUT] initiative that brought together stories from students written down during lockdown. Then we've also set up a new space the LAL Student Events Room, where students meet up socially to chat with other students or to attend events by our staff, or student bodies host their own events there.

We recently held a research festival in the month of May, and this was very well attended with participants from all parts of the world. We continue our conversations to house the first online Chinese Confucius Institute. Then we have also recently been awarded our first business-to-business contract with Lavazza, who will support the employees doing short courses at the school's Open Centre for Languages and Cultures.

And recently, we've also set up a new research hub in the Centre for Global Development, on Technology and Culture and have also been very successful in receiving external research funding for a number of projects. One is Caroline Tagg's that received an award by the British Academy to explore, to examine, how networked individuals move between multiple online and offline spaces. And Kristina Hultgren, who has recently launched an interdisciplinary and intersectorial team of linguists, political scientists, and policy actors to investigate why English is so commonly used as a medium for teaching across Europe. But let's hear what she has to say about her project.

KAREN FOLEY: OK, I'm not sure if we've got a video on this, so let's just-- see, I think this might be one that we're playing in the break or that we can put in the chat as well. Oh gosh, Martin's typing in Japanese again. So we've got some school students here from LAL. And also, we have a word card which we'd like to fill in. So if you're a LAL student, tell us one of the things that you have been enjoying about your studies. But we have that video now. So let's take a look, as Rosina says, and hear more about it.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- My name is Anna Kristina Hultgren, and I am a Sociolinguist. My fellowship aims to find out why European universities are increasingly teaching their courses in English rather than in the local language, whether this is French, Dutch, or Swedish. Intriguingly, there is evidence to suggest that the switch to English happens unintentionally as an unforeseen consequence of the implementation of specific forms of governance that centre on competition and metrics.

So what we'll be doing is to bring together conceptual tools from linguistics and political science in new ways that will enable us to understand how specific forms of academic governance might have unintended linguistic consequences. On a more practical note, we'll also be developing a best practise framework to ensure that teaching and learning in English does not have adverse effects on individuals, institutions, and nations. By doing so, we'll be engaging in knowledge exchange between the UK and the EU, thus strengthening post-Brexit collaboration.

[END PLAYBACK]

KAREN FOLEY: So thanks for that, Rosina. Now, next year, looking ahead, then, what are some of the things that you've got planned for the school in the forthcoming year?

ROSINA MARQUEZ-REITER: Right. Thanks, Karen. Well, you know, this year, we've been very busy because we launched the Open Centre for Languages and Cultures, which is a new home for non-accredited language and intercultural paid short courses that provide students with digital badges that are easily accessible by employers from around the world. We're also delighted to announce a new version of Worlds of English, a new module, which traces the history and spread of English across the globe and the diversity that characterises present-day English in a range of settings.

And we also have a number of courses in the pipeline, such as emotional intelligence for translators and emotional management, a Tamil taster course on OpenLearn, a course on artificial intelligence in the workplace, intercultural competence in the workplace, British sign language, an exciting course on pre-sessional English for academic purposes in preparation. So it's all very exciting.

KAREN FOLEY: That sounds amazing. Now, we've been asking people at home what's exciting for them. So the students who are here-- we've got lots of students from various different sorts of backgrounds, but specifically students who are studying languages and applied linguistics-- we've asked them what they've most enjoyed about studying in LAL. So let's see, Rosina, what they have to say. And you might like to pick up on a couple of points here.

Some of them are talking about conversations. And I think this has been so important in terms of community, which has been what we've been really focusing on today. But also things like storytelling, LAL events, it's awesome, the food, the engagement, watching media, cultural content, code-switching, connections, and communication. So would you like to feedback on any of those aspects in terms of the positives?

ROSINA MARQUEZ-REITER: Well, I think that's really good because this is the role of languages. This is what we see. But, you know, as school specialises in languages, in multiple languages, and in applied linguistics broadly understood-- to understand the role that languages [AUDIO OUT] play in society.

And we see how language is the source, an essential resource, by which we maintain our links in an interconnected world. So it's nice to know that some of the key points that stand out for the students is communication, storytelling, interconnectedness. It's nice to know that that message is there. Then they can also cascade this message onto those they're in touch with.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. Martin says, "For me, I would say that the digital voice and sociolinguistics has been the most interesting aspect." Eric, are there any other points that you'd like to share from students in the chat?

ERIC ADDAE-KYEREMEH: Yes, the manga video went down really, really well, and as we've seen, Martin talking a lot about it and his engagement in Japan. And more broadly, what's kind of come through the chat is the relationship between culture and language. And students are already exchanging their love for history and their love for culture. And we're seeing recommendations of places to visit when you're in Japan. So we're being told to make sure that we visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki any time we're in Japan for cultural, intercultural purposes. There's a lot to learn from there.

But we've got colleagues who have been-- who have explored Japan quite a lot, into Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Hiroshima, you name it. So I think it's all influences from the manga video. But also people are building the relationship between culture and language and the relationships there and why it's good to explore other cultures and understand our history, really.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. And language is such a powerful way of doing that. We've spoken before about how some of those nuances associated with words just give different meanings that we couldn't explore elsewhere. Rosina, any final thoughts before we end today's session?

ROSINA MARQUEZ-REITER: Well, just to highlight what has been said so far is that our understanding of languages, be it English, whether it be one of the languages that people speak, whether it's your language, your main language or not, offers us a direct window into the culture of the people we study and we communicate with.

So just to highlight that point what has been made throughout the sessions and therefore the importance of learning languages as a window into different cultures, different ways of understanding the world, and constructing understandings and sharing those with others, whether interpersonally at a group level or in mass communication or in digital forms, as has been mentioned.

KAREN FOLEY: And you've spoken about some of the ways in which learning those languages can be so much more accessible to people. Beverly has recently done the OpenLearn Chinese and would like to study some more. So that's really good. We've got some links also in the chat as well. So if you'd like to take a look at the Open Centre for Languages and any of those other links, then please do do that.

Rosina, thank you. That's been absolutely fantastic. We're going to show--

ROSINA MARQUEZ-REITER: Thank you.

KAREN FOLEY: --the video to end this session. And that we're also going to be talking about some of Eric's work, actually, so you can find out more about Project 17 and Sustainable Development Goals. We'll be back to focus on our last session today, unfortunately, which is going to be on the School of Education Childhood Youth and Sports. So we're back in just a moment for that, but enjoy this video, and I'll see you soon.

[MUSIC PLAYING]