

Committee for Language Awareness in Scottish Schools (CLASS)

Friday 14 October 2005, 1 – 3 pm

Minutes of the second meeting held at the University of Edinburgh

DRAFT

Present: Graeme Trousdale (Chair), Ailsa Templeton, Monica Godley, Mary Kiddie, Vanessa Salmon, Barbara Fennell, Joan Beal, Andrew Philp, Pauline Sangster, Helen Gillard, John Corbett, Jim McGonigal, Chris Robinson, Richard Easton, April McMahon.

1. Welcome and apologies

GT welcomed new members of the committee, and noted that apologies for absence had been received from James Robertson, Matthew Fitt, Anne Gifford, Heinz Giegerich, Adrian Beard, Linda Craig, David Johnston, Bob Ladd, Patrick Honeybone, and Nik Gisborne.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as an accurate record. Jim McGonigal noted that in point 3, it would perhaps be useful to include the fact that there was a general recognition within the committee of the problems teachers face in terms of timetabling and general pressure associated with the introduction of new material. GT informed the committee members that he had still to contact some associations (e.g. Scottish NATE), inviting them to nominate a member to join CLASS. [**Action GT**]

3. Matters arising

- a. Membership of the committee. GT informed the committee of new members (e.g. James Robertson and Matthew Fitt) who were unable to attend the meeting, and asked for further suggestions (particularly teachers). Barbara Fennell reiterated the need to involve a Gaelic speaker (via Bord na Gaidhlig). GT agreed to meet the proposed representatives before the next meeting to brief them on the aims and objectives of CLASS. [**Action GT**]
- b. Information Day (2 September 2005). GT provided a brief report on the day, noting that the day had been very successful on the whole. There had been some feedback from teachers, which was generally, though not exclusively, positive. Andrew Philp suggested that a follow-up session might be useful, to allow more feedback and input from teachers. GT suggested that a Yahoo list be set up, which could be a forum for discussion, and allow teachers and other interested individuals to post to the site. Helen Gillard noted that she had spoken to colleagues after the

event, and that the feedback had been very positive, with the day stimulating helpful discussions.

4. Chair's reports

- a. SEED meeting (1 July 2005): GT reported that April McMahon and he had met Gill Robinson, Peter Donachie and Charlie Penman (SQA). The meeting consisted of a brief presentation regarding the work of CLASS and the plan for the Information Day. There had been a cautiously positive reception: it was clear that the work of CLASS in the promotion of knowledge about language (KAL) was timely, and that proposals from the committee would be welcome. The meeting at the Executive led to Anton Colella's involvement in the Information Day. Jim McGonigal noted that it would be important to bear in mind the lessons learned from the Higher Still process. It was suggested that the work of the Curriculum for Excellence group, which brought together issues in both English and foreign language teaching, would be of interest and importance to CLASS. Jim McGonigal suggested that GT might contact Brian Templeton to discuss the visibility of language in any new curriculum for English. The link between English and FL in schools in different parts of Scotland: the discussion showed that such a link seemed to exist in some area, but not all. Barbara Fennell then drew the committee's attention to recent political initiatives concerning language teaching and electronic media, suggesting that CLASS could consider work involving virtual learning environments that could provide a link between school and university teaching. Helen Gillard noted that such VLEs had been established at St. George's, and had seemed to work well there. John Corbett advised that such provision would need to be well integrated into the school curriculum. Richard Easton drew the committee's attention to the SEED-supported SCOLAR project, hosted at Heriot Watt University, which is primarily associated with science subjects at Advanced Higher, but which MFL teachers would like to see further developed for teaching in their subjects. Barbara Fennell suggested that the committee could consider making an application to the Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (LLAS) Subject Centre of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) for funding for a small project grant to review what provision exists in this area, and to develop specific links between schools and universities [**Action GT**]. Jim McGonigal suggested that a 'language' version of the ICT European Driving License could be considered, as part of personal development planning for both students and teachers. He also informed the committee that Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) may be interested in developing aspects of the Language Into Languages Teaching (LILT) project as part of its plans for a virtual classroom.

- b. LAGB conference (1 September 2005). GT reported that at a meeting primarily to discuss the LLAS working party's progress in developing an A-level in Linguistics, he had also discussed aspects of the work done by CLASS and others regarding KAL in Scotland. April McMahon noted that delegates present at the LAGB meeting had suggested that the situation in Scotland presented a good opportunity for developing a Higher qualification in Language which avoided some of the problems of overlap inherent in the English system, where efforts are being made to develop an A-level in Linguistics when an A-level in English Language already exists.
- c. SCIS English Professional Development Group conference (27 September 2005): GT reported that he had given a presentation on KAL, with a particular emphasis on publicising available resources for teachers. Members of the committee who had been present at the SCIS conference reported that the presentation had been valuable and well-received.
- d. LLAS Subject Centre event on A-level Linguistics, Institute of Education, London (26 October 2005): GT reported that he will be attending, partly in his role as member of the working party for an A-level Linguistics, but also in order to report on CLASS and other work associated with KAL in the Scottish curriculum.

5. The LILT project

A discussion on the LILT project was led by Andrew Philp, John Corbett and Jim McGonigal. It was noted that copies of the LILT CD and booklets were available for teachers from GT. Jim McGonigal noted that the distribution of the CDs and booklets – sufficient copies of which were made available for every secondary school in Scotland – had been patchy. HMIs in the 1990s had found anxiety among teachers (particularly young teachers) regarding KAL, so a resource was commissioned, and the team charged with producing that resource had been drawn from linguists and educationalists at Glasgow University and Jordanhill. The resource was aimed at teachers; the team were not expected to produce classroom materials. LILT is concerned primarily with strategies for furthering KAL, and provides an outline of grammatical terminology with discussions of genre and other kinds of linguistic variation, as well as language games and activities, methods for textual analysis and staff development resources. The CD contains the booklets along with 20 position papers concerning KAL in the classroom. The glossary which was developed was intended as a resource not only for English teachers, but also for those teaching the major modern European languages: it aimed to develop a metalanguage for teachers to enable them to discuss language. LILT launches were held at Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness, and the CD was subsequently developed by Christian Kay, to make it more interactive, and to allow teachers to contribute lesson and texts. As noted previously, the resource may be made available on the LTS website, and is now

on the Glasgow University website. John Corbett noted that at the launch, it was very encouraging to see the possibilities which might emerge from collaboration between English and MFL teachers.

6. CPD work

GT reported that discussions had taken place between Heinz Giegerich, Pauline Sangster and Pamela Munn concerning CPD provision at Edinburgh. It was reported that Scottish Executive funding was available for a top-up course for trainee teachers who were not specialists in English to allow them to enrol for the PGDE in English. Such a course could also function as an elective for those already enrolled on the PGDE (English) qualification at Moray House, and as a CPD course for current teachers. An initial proposal (which requires further discussion) outlined a possible module involving 36 contact hours on Language in Texts, and providing resources for teachers. The aim of the module would be to develop KAL through an analysis of texts of various kinds. Pauline Sangster noted that there were further issues concerning literature courses, pedagogy and credit weighting that had still to be discussed. John Corbett advised that experience in Glasgow had shown that it could be difficult for teachers to commit to a regular weekly meeting, and that one day events had been more successful. He also noted that a CPD VLE had been established.

7. Future work for the committee

It was agreed that future work had been established as part of the previous discussion.

8. AOB

There was no other business, and the meeting closed at 3pm