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Language Acts and Worldmaking Debates



Traversing Traditions, Opening Opportunities

The *Language Acts and Worldmaking* round-table *Debates Series* has been conceived by Cristina Ros i Solé (Goldsmiths, University of London) for *Language Acts and Worldmaking*, an Arts and Humanities Research Council Open World Research Initiative project, to foster a dialogue on the connections, divergences and identities of well-established traditions in Modern Languages and Language Education. As a major element of the *Language Transitions* strand led by Debra Kelly (Westminster) and Ana de Medeiros (King's College London), the series focuses in particular on the synergies and fissures between Language Education across educational sectors and the humanities, as well as seeking to investigate new openings and possibilities for the future. This is a three-year programme of debates beginning in the academic year 2017/18, culminating in a collective publication, and takes place at King's College Modern Language Centre and at other *Language Acts and Worldmaking* partner and collaborating institutions.

We have defined these 'Language Transitions' as 'border zones of learning' between stages that often become more of an hindrance than a stepping stone for so many language learners, whatever their level. The aim in the *Debates* is therefore to establish connections and create new directions for existing provision and for educational sectors in order to discuss how to foster dialogue, create smoother transitions and re-energise the field by examining current concerns and pedagogies in the field. Each *Debate* will address a different aspect of these transitions and will emphasise the benefits and challenges of traversing educational terrains and traditions to enrich and widen the experience of Modern, Community and World Languages.

Each *Debate* consists of position papers and responses to these papers from prominent experts, policy makers, academics and teachers.

All papers and responses are recorded and posted on-line on the *Language Acts and Worldmaking* website and blog: www.languageacts.org. This is the virtual home for posting information on the latest news and developments in the Debates Series, and the place where all the information about this series is archived.

There are 5 debates this academic year 2017/2018:

Debate 1: 4 Oct 17, Language Education Activism (King's College London)

Debate 2: 15 Nov 17, Modern Languages—A Discipline (still) in Search of an Identity? (University of Westminster)

Debate 3: 14 Feb 18, SLA & Teacher Development (King's College London)

Debate 4: 15 Mar 18, Modern Languages and the Digital World (King's College London)

Debate 5: 26 Apr 18, Emotions & Subjectivity in Modern Language Education (King's College London)

Language Acts and Worldmaking Debates



Debate 2: Modern Languages—A Discipline (still) in Search of an Identity?

15 November 2017, 6–7.30pm, UG.04 (upper ground floor), 309 Regent Street;
University of Westminster, W1B 2HW

Chair: Professor Debra Kelly, *Language Acts and Worldmaking*, Co-Investigator of the
Language Transitions Strand

Introduction: Cristina Ros i Sole, Convenor of '*Traversing Traditions: Opening Opportunities Debates*' (Goldsmiths, University of London)

As Michael Worton (2009) argued almost a decade ago in his *Review of Foreign Modern Language Provision in Higher Education in England*, and Phipps and Gonzalez (2004) had done five years earlier, Language Education was in dire need of a new identity, and it can be argued that it still is. Whereas English Language Teaching is firmly embedded in disciplines such as Applied Linguistics, Language Learning and Language Education seem to be suffering from a permanent marginalisation and exile from its most natural partner in Higher Education: the discipline of Modern Languages. Language Learning and Language Pedagogy research and practice often still remains 'isolated' and has so far not found a permanent home in Departments of Education, PGCE programmes or Applied Linguistics Departments.

One of the organisms and think-tanks that has provided Language Education coherence and direction is the Council of Europe which, with its European Framework of Reference documents, has become a reference point for language pedagogy by defining the aims and objectives for language learning and creating widely-followed benchmarking statements. However useful this document is, it still falls short of putting Language Education on the map and identifying a discipline that connects with students' personal, academic and vocational concerns and ambitions. It is time to question again what it means to learn languages and to learn and live multilingually. This debate addresses three key issues:

- Are current definitions of language competence adequate for today's multilingual populations and social encounters?
- What role should the teaching of Culture and Intercultural Communication have in Language Education?
- Is the increase in learning more recent 'World Languages' such as Chinese and Arabic changing the nature of Language Learning more widely?

Guest speakers: Dr. Simon Coffey (Senior Lecturer in Language Education, King's College London), Dr. Peter Skrandies (Language Coordinator, German, LSE), Dr. Derek Hird (Senior Lecturer in Chinese, Modern Languages and Culture, University of Westminster).

Discussants: Dr. Matilde Gallardo (Associate Lecturer in Languages and Intercultural Communication, King's College London), Christine Pleines (Head of German, Open University), Christine Sas (Senior Teaching Fellow, Department of Dutch, UCL).

A drinks reception will take place in the Modern Languages and Cultures Social Space, upper fourth floor 7:30–8pm

Sign up for this event here: <https://modernlanguagesidentity.eventbrite.co.uk>