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***Modern Languages:
Which Identities? Which Selves?***

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Abstract

Modern Languages: Which Identities? Which Selves?

Academic identities in modern languages in the British higher education system may be understood as an interaction between three domains: the institutional, the epistemological and the ontological.

This model, initially developed at the beginning stages of the research, was refined through subsequent field work. It comprised both the ways in which respondents construct the institutions and disciplinary field in which they operate (which I call, in turn, institutional and field identities) *and* the sense of the self that academics create by positioning themselves within institutional and field structures and discourses in relation to their personal histories, values and beliefs.

Staff of the languages departments of three English universities were interviewed in the process of data collection. The outcome is a pattern which reflects the complex interplay between institutional identities, field identities and selves. It is through the interaction between identities and selves that the academic identity is built in each of the universities perused.

Using concepts taken from constructivist-realism, the personal dimension emerges as paramount in two senses. Firstly, it represents the lens through which the institutional and field domains are both understood and constructed by the respondents. Secondly, it offers a heuristic research device that assists in capturing the kind of personal and professional self individual academics develop as they position themselves within institutional and field discourses, and identify (or not) with some of these.

It emerges that the more institutional structures are stable, yet supple enough to accommodate academics' values, the more academics' selves acquire a creative force that benefits, ultimately, both the institution and the disciplinary field at large.

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PART 1 – LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Before starting to illustrate the main features of this thesis, I wish to signal that there is a strong autobiographical element in the topic chosen. In fact, I worked in the domain of English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) and modern languages for fifteen years (at different levels and in different countries) before moving to an educational department two years ago. Over all the years I spent in the realm of language education, I accumulated both different study and working experiences that made me increasingly wonder about the nature, scope and aims of modern languages, and the roles my colleagues and I played within them. These questions acquired particular importance especially when posited against the cultural background of a country (the UK) where monolingualism is encouraged by the status of English as the international language of communication.

In May 1998, about ten years after the successful completion of my PGCE and seven after the conclusion of my master's degree in ESOL/modern languages at the Institute of Education, in London, I decided to register for a PhD on a topic that would allow me to reflect on and bring together all the experience I had gathered in my field. Having all my life mostly dealt with language teaching at tertiary level, I had the opportunity to observe how the world of modern languages was patterned in terms of its epistemological and institutional frameworks. I therefore became interested in making sense of the various fault lines traversing the field (mainly language vs. contentⁱ, research vs. teaching and theoretical vs. practical knowledge) and how the communities working around these fault

lines would define themselves in relation to their colleagues, within and outside their particular institutional settings.

This ignited in me a curiosity for investigating the field of languages in the English higher education system in a more systematic way that would bring both the theoretical and empirical dimensions together. Normally, I would have applied to conduct the research within the department of Culture, Language and Communication at the Institute, where I had previously studied. However, at the time of applying for doctoral research, I felt the need to embed discourses and reflections in and around modern languages within the wider changes the UK higher educational system was undergoing. I was interested in the ‘bigger’ picture, so to speak. I therefore decided to apply to have Professor Barnett as my supervisor. As I was hoping, his supervision has helped me to frame more ‘local’ disciplinary preoccupations within their wider contexts.

The opportunity of researching and writing the thesis gave me a chance to rekindle the interest for sociological, anthropological and cultural analysis that I had developed during my first degree in Italy. I have always been keen on dissecting questions relating to identity construction at the interface between the personal and the structural. Consequently, I decided to take this interest further through this thesis. This has been a fruitful exercise, as it has made me reflect on the importance of the personal dimension in the construction of disciplinary and institutional structures and, in turn, the impact of such structures on the way academics make sense of their personal and professional self.

Coming now to issues relating directly to the world of modern languages in the British higher education system, this world is said to be in evolution (Phipps, 2001), in the sense that the field of modern languages is being 're-invented' in response to new social and market demands. The overall aim of this thesis is both to investigate and reflect upon the shifts and changes affecting this field.

At the epistemological level, this work sits on the boundary between the field of languages in education and the wider one of studies in higher education. While attempting to unravel some of the intricacies of the world of modern languages, I also try to relate it to the changes in the wider context of the current UK higher education system at large. This has been a necessary move, as it is impossible to understand any disciplinary area or fieldⁱⁱ as a stand-alone element. Trends and changes in higher education have implications for modern languages. Thus, while the main thrust of this work concerns modern languages, there is also an attempt to reflect on the wider context in which the field is situated. This link will be underlined throughout the thesis but will become more explicit in its concluding part.

As the title suggests, there is a starting assumption that the world of modern languages is a complex field, with many identities, domains and layers (Evans, 1988; Becher and Trowler, 2001). Its multifaceted nature is traditionally derived both from the many language subjects that make it (French, German, Italian, Spanish and so on) along with the disciplinary areas that traverse them (like literary criticism, history, applied linguistics and so on). However, its complexity does not stop here, as it further revolves around a

number of faultlines that have traditionally been the hallmark of the modern languages. Among these, one faultline stands out: language teaching and research vs. content teaching and research.

All these different disciplinary patterns find their realisations in a host of institutional arrangements (departments, sections, programmes and the like). One of the purposes of this thesis is to chart the institutional and field patterns, as they are constructed and interpreted by the modern languages lecturing staff of three different English universities. It is possible to find a commonality of discourses in and around the field of modern languages across the three universities. Although modern languages remain highly heterogeneous (hence we should rather call it a field than a discipline), common themes and trends can be identified. These both point to the field's traditional patterns and register its evolution towards new clusters and arrangements.

This thesis is built around a tripartite model that was constructed before the empirical research and was consequently refined through the data analysis. As stipulative definitions, with the word 'identities' I refer to the ways in which modern languages academics interpret and construct both the institutional and epistemological arrangements of the field. Identities represent the ways in which the academic staff *cognitively* construct and interpret both the field and its institutional arrangements. The term 'self' points towards the personal and professional sense modern languages scholars develop about themselves over time, in relation both to their field and the institutional structures in which they operate. This is a complex self that derives from the interlacing of

institutional and epistemological patterns with individuals' life histories, values and beliefs. In this sense, it constitutes the *affective* factor that academics inject into their professional life. I argue that 'academic identity' is a composite cluster that is dynamically formed at the interface between institutional and field identities, *and* the self. In other words, academic identity is the all embracing, supple concept that defines the interplay between cognitive constructs (identities) and affective ones (selves). The challenge of this thesis is to untangle these constructs, while, at the same time, illustrate the richness deriving from their intertwining.

The personal dimension is of fundamental importance in this work in two senses: first of all, generally, it represents the interpretive lens through which institutional and epistemological structures are constructed by academics (what I call institutional and field identities); secondly, in a more specific sense, it embodies the self, that is the complex affective construct that academics build over time by relating their personal values, beliefs and histories to the institutional and epistemological structures in which they work and that they contribute to create. The main questions to be asked (and answered) are: what kind of institutional and epistemological identities do modern languages academics construct? What sense of self do these scholars develop in relation to the field and the institutional settings in which they operate? Under what conditions do academics manage to construct a sense of self that affords them the opportunity to contribute to the development of both those disciplinary structures and institutional roles in which they find themselves? Conversely, under what conditions do selves become non-agentic and passive?

Bearing these considerations and questions in mind, one can say that this thesis revolves around the level between the macro and the micro-level. In fact, while I do not attempt to define only the general structural patterns (be they epistemological or institutional) of the world of modern languages, I also avoid focusing solely at the individual level. Its main thrust lies at the *meso-level*, that is to say the point at which the individual meets the structural. While dealing with the way in which the academics interviewed construct the field of modern languages and its institutional realizations, it also investigates the manner in which academics position themselves within institutional and epistemological constructs in developing their personal selves.

The work utilises concepts taken from constructivist-realism (Delanty, 1997), the aim of which is to analyse the interface between structures and individuals. While conceding that structures are important in determining individuals' lives, it is only through individuals that structures come to life. The separation of them is an academic exercise that is useful only for the sake of analysis. However, if one wants to understand the nature and functioning of disciplinary and institutional structures within which academics work, one must study the sense individuals make of these and, at the same time, of themselves.

The thesis is divided into four parts. In the first one, the foundations are laid. These include a literature review of the field of modern languages. This is followed by the contextualisation of the disciplinary field within current social and educational trends. The second part deals with methodological issues, including an illustration of the

empirical research framework. The third part is dedicated to the illustration of the ensuing data. The fourth and last part deals with an interpretative analysis of the data and draws the conclusions from the whole work.

1 - Modern languages, multiple boundaries: epistemological frameworks

Introduction

The aim of this first part (which contains this chapter and the next one) is to provide the general background for the rest of the thesis. The current overall configuration of the world of modern languages in the UK higher education system is illustrated, along with an analysis of those socio-cultural trends that are affecting this world today.

Even if, as I shall discuss later in this chapter, I prefer talking of modern languages as a field, rather than a discipline, I attempt to investigate such a field in accordance with a conceptual model that postulates that disciplines are not simply conceptual structures, but also social ones, in that they are both made by those academic communities that support them and are affected by wider socio-cultural trends. In adopting such a view, analysing the field of modern languages is not just an epistemological exercise. It becomes both an investigation of the academic communities adhering to it and of those wider social and educational forces with which such communities interact.

Defining disciplinary knowledge

The difficulty in defining the nature of a discipline has been well illustrated by a number of authors like Geerts (1976), Evans (1988), Becher (1989), Huber (1990), Lepennies, 1992, Messer-Davidow, Shumway and Sylvan (1993), Barnett (1994), Moscati (1997), Peters (1999), Becher and Trowler (2001), Chambers (2001), Di Napoli, Polezzi and King (2001), and Moran (2002). Disciplines are complex entities: they define the boundaries of a given portion of knowledge by establishing its main content, methodologies and perspectives in various and untidy ways (Barnett, 1994; Parker, 2001). The patterns they impose on knowledge are fuzzy (Di Napoli, Polezzi and King, *ibidem*). This is due to the fact that disciplines are not just conceptual structures. Rather, they are sites of complex, interactive forces. They embody both conceptual properties and a whole set of values, beliefs and communication systems of those academic communities (embodied by departments, national and international associations and networks) that shape disciplinary boundaries. In other words, disciplines are both epistemological and social constructs at the same time.

It is the interaction between the cognitive elements and the wider social factors (both in terms of the community underlying a given disciplinary area and the wider social forces that impinge on it) that makes academic territories difficult to locate. Cognitive and social factors continuously interact in discipline formation, and it is around this interaction that a discipline realizes itself. Social factors impact on the conceptual patterns of a discipline (Young, 1971 and 1998; Burke, 2000). This is the case of classics, for instance. In response to the fresh demands from a newer and wider student population, the discipline

has been going through a period of self-appraisal, particularly in terms of its methodological apparatus. The adoption of computer technology has especially brought changes to the discipline. As Hardwick (2001) puts it:

...critical awareness of texts and artefacts of Greek and Roman culture has been extended to people who are no longer disqualified by lack of specialised school education, or by age, disability, or place of residence or work. To achieve this, the technology of distance education has delivered to people's homes a wide variety of source materials and has helped them to develop the critical skills to use it. TV, video, CD-ROM and the Internet have brought archaeological sites, art and architecture within reach of all. (p. 46)

However, if it is true that disciplines can change in relation to social pressures, they may also resist them. This is because disciplines have their own internal 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1988), what constitutes, according to Parker (2001):

...the disciplinary paradigm's ideas, methodologies, discourse and perspective. (p. 29)

This habitus is constructed at the interface between the traditions historically embedded in a discipline over time and the discourses that a given section of the academic community currently construct around such traditions, in accordance with its own needs and interests. This creates a fuzzy framework that often opposes modifications and may explain why disciplines are often hard to change (Fournier, 2001).

If one embraces the argument that disciplines are socio-conceptual entities, studying them can no longer be a simple question of straightforward epistemological perusal. Both conceptual and social factors must be considered. Conceptual factors must be brought, as far as possible, into alignment against the background of those wider social-cultural changes in which a discipline and its communities are embedded

(Nowotny, Gibbons and Scott, 2001). It is with these considerations in mind that I now start looking at the field of modern languages in an attempt to catch its complexities.

Defining modern languages: issues and angles of analysis

In analysing current trends in modern languages, Parry (1998) raises some fundamental questions about its disciplinary nature:

...do Languages stand on their own as a discipline with their own intrinsic rules and integrity, or are they still, essentially, a function of something other (perhaps greater) than themselves? Are linguists condemned to remain travellers, without a fixed home and roots and, therefore, a sense of identity? Or does this mobility, in the present environment, not signal their strength, placing them in the vanguard of progress towards a new 'university' in which boundaries are fluid, and in which those disciplines destined to endure and to prosper are left free to follow their interdisciplinary promptings? (p. vi)

Parry's questions are important because they touch on the nature, functions and status of modern languages within and beyond higher education. Given the importance of these questions, it is essential to unpack the notion of modern languages from different perspectives.

As we know Becher and Trowler (2001), defining any disciplinary area in any unitary and univocal way is an almost impossible endeavour. This is because disciplines are untidy and messy epistemological frameworks. This is especially true of modern languages, given that it is divided into several language subjects (like German, Italian and the like). According to Evans (1988), it is to these rather than the overall field that academics attach importance. Because of its immediate plural nature, he finds it

difficult to talk of modern languages as a discipline, at least in conventional terms. It would be perhaps more correct to talk of modern languages as a field.

Typically, such a field is traversed by many faultlines, beyond its division into language subjects. The most recent one is that between programmes: on the one hand, those for students specialising in modern languages; on the other, those which belong to the category of ‘languages for all’ⁱ. These programmes are recent institutional arrangements that aim at providing language tuition for all students in a university, regardless of their discipline of specialisation, but without any specific study of content. According to Kelly and Jones (2003), the term ‘content’ is a shorthand adopted by modern languages academics to indicate the:

...non-language... part of [a modern languages] degree. (p. 24)

It indicates the study of the literary, historical, artistic and sociological aspects of a given culture, as in the case of the specialist courses. In other words, content can be considered a complex of epistemological structures and sets of practices that are embedded in the field of modern languages and which is usually absent from ‘languages for all’ programmes and courses. Differences between specialist and ‘languages for all’ programmes in terms of student population status, academic priorities and orientation have contributed to create an important split within the world of modern languages.

Within the specialist programmes, a second major faultline is noticeable: the one between language teaching and content studies. Thirdly, each language-subject presents inner lines of fragmentations into specialisms. This phenomenon results in a vast array of constellations in different British universities, according to the way each institution organises the field. Each department usually influences the aims, scope and shape of the field. Ultimately, departmental histories, traditions, management choices and educational beliefs play a major part in the way the field is organised. In turn, these factors are influenced by larger, intertwining social, cultural, economic and political issues. However, there is no immediately direct, one-to-one relationship between wider social forces and any disciplinary field or configuration. As I have already mentioned, disciplines and their institutional realisations have their own traditions and practices that are usually resistant to change. As I argue in the final part of this thesis, time and negotiation are usually necessary for changes to occur. Also, change is never homogeneous but follows complicated patterns of acceptance and resistance on the part of the staff involved in the process (Trowler, 1998; Martin, 1999; Taylor, 1999; Trowler, 2002).

Modern languages are no exception to this. As a field, it is part of the British higher education system, which, in turn, is responsive to wider economic, political and social influences. In this sense, in arguing about the field, a number of questions are in place: what is the place of languages in contemporary Britain (and, more specifically, in England)? What use is studying foreign languages in a globalising world dominated by the influence of English as the international language of communication (Phillipson,

1992; Pennycook, 1994; Block and Cameron, 2002)? In this kind of world are languages to be studied for a better understanding of cultural diversity in all its forms? Or should they be viewed as a specifically vocational asset in a world dominated by international business? Or is it a mixture of the two? At a more specifically institutional level, should modern languages departments put more emphasis on language teaching and learning? Or should the emphasis remain on content studies? Or is a more harmonious link between language and content studies desirable? If so, what should the nature of such a link be? It is arguable that the answers given to these questions shape the nature of the field as a whole and its particular institutional realisations. The manner in which lecturers, managers and administrators filter social, cultural and political demands (in terms, for instance, of wider participation policies) inevitably influences the way modern languages are configured.

In line with what I have argued so far, I would like to suggest that a useful way to conceptualise modern languages is to look at them from different angles, through the perceptions of academics working within the field. It is important to see how this is constructed by them in general terms and, more specifically, within given institutional arrangements. Concurrently, it is also paramount to investigate how academics build their sense of self within the disciplinary and institutional parameters in which they operate. I deem it important to analyse how academics' personal value and belief systems interact with the institutional and disciplinary structures. Lecturers' thoughts and perceptions are central in this thesis. Given the limited number of subjects

interviewed, I can only arrive at a limited, partial, though fairly detailed view of the world of modern languages.

However, before turning to the details of the empirical side of the thesis, it is necessary to identify and unpack the discourses in and around the field, as they appear in the relevant literature. First and foremost, these will act as background information to the rest of the thesis. As importantly, they constitute the ‘stick’ against which the results of the empirical research are measured in the last part of the thesis.

In the remainder of this chapter, I shall attempt to unpack the different conceptual lines along which modern languages are currently built. Some reference will be made to wider educational and socio-cultural forces shaping the field, though these are dealt with more fully in chapter 2.

From Evans’ *Language People* to more recent studies on modern languages in higher education

As I have already mentioned, defining the conceptual framework and epistemological boundaries of modern languages is a complex endeavour. The notion of plurality implicit in the term languages alerts us immediately to the difficulty of the task. It is a field that essentially lacks unity, while still having a supple core of aims, interests and practices. Its complexity is due, first and foremost, to the fact that it encompasses a series of language subjects, like French, German, Italian and so on, each with its own traditions, histories and practices that converge, in an untidy way, under the umbrella

of the field in general. Because of this, it is arguable, in Bernstein's terms (1996), that modern languages are a case of 'weak classification', given that they embody a variety of entities and elements. It is a general term that covers many subjects. It is a field that speaks many tongues (one for each of the national cultures it represents) and has many voices (many for each of the several specialisations contained within each subject, such as French literature or German history). In this sense, it is arguable that, conceptually, the field of modern languages has many identities. This is confirmed by the literature that has been produced in and around it.

A great number of books and articles have been written on modern languages, especially for the secondary sector. However, only a relatively small numbers of scholars have dedicated themselves to the scrutiny of the world of modern languages in higher education, with a growth in the number of specialised publications in the last few years. Apart from Healey's work (1967), some of the most interesting and updated overviews that have been published since the end of the eighties are those offered by Evans (1988), Scott and Rigby (1992) and Wakely, Barker, Frier, Graves and Suleiman (1995), Hawkins (1996), Quatermaine (1996), Giovanazzi (1997), Coleman, Ferney, Head and Rix (2000), Fay and Ferney (2000) Guillot and Kenning (2000), King (2000), Di Napoli, Polezzi and King (2001), Klapper (2001), McBride and Seago (2000), Mozzon-McPherson and Vismans (2001), Kelly and Jones (2003). In different ways, all these authors have tried to chart a very complex territory, conceptually divided and subdivided several times into subjects and subject specialisms, all rapidly changing under market and social forces.

However, to date, the most comprehensive study of the field remains Evans' (ibidem).

In fact, while, overall, other publications concentrate on more specific aspects of modern languages, Evans tries to chart the whole field in terms of its conceptual structures, as these are constructed by both lecturers and students alike. The end result is a portrait of a world whose identity is several times divided conceptually, organisationally and professionally. Evans' work is social-constructionist in character.

He conceives knowledge as the result of social forces:

... knowledge is not given, but socially constructed, as are all the boundaries which classify it. Basically, 'disciplines' only have abstract existence. What exists in reality are 'subjects', that is to say institutionalised, operational territories inhabited by communities of people who defend their boundaries and compete with other communities. (p. 162)

As any other discipline, modern languages are a field in which territories are established to defend academic and professional interests: language teachers competing with content studies lecturers; literary specialists with historians; the latter with sociologists and so on. To add to this complexity, in the final chapter of the book, Evans discusses those forces which he thought would make the world of modern languages an even more composite and manifold one in the future. Among these he mentions the allure of European integration, with its inevitable call to multilingualism; the importance of languages for work and the consequent emphasis on vocationalism; the beneficial cultural and formative value of languages in the development of a more flexible and receptive mind; the integrative and interdisciplinary pull of cultural studies against the centrifugal forces of discrete content studies areas. Evans was forecasting, already fifteen years ago, some of the core elements in the current educational debates typical of modern languages today. What this thesis attempts to do is to examine the realizations of such debates in

concrete institutional and epistemological forms over the last ten years or so, during which time the field of modern languages has changed much. Similarly to Evans, I analyse those patterns of meanings that modern languages academics construct around the epistemological and institutional frameworks of this field. However, the scope of this work is narrower than Evans'. In fact, while the latter aims at giving an overall picture of the field, including its student population, my purpose is to concentrate only on a determinate segment of the academic staff, that is those scholars working exclusively on specialist degrees in French, German, Italian and Spanish, across three English universities. In relation to *Language People*, what my work loses in breadth, it gains in depth, as I specifically examine the ways in which modern languages academics perceive and construct their world, within specific institutional settings. Moreover, the innovative thrust of this thesis is in the refinement of the concept of 'academic identity'. This is here conceived to be a construct that embraces both cognitive and affective elements (see chapter 3).

However, before entering any discussion on the concept of academic identity, I wish to unpack a series of core, intertwined concepts (like knowledge, skills, product and process) and activities (teaching, research and administration) that are at the heart of the field of modern languages within the British higher education system today. A closer scrutiny of each of these can be useful in making sense of the current epistemological organisation of the field.

Modern languages, many knowledges

As I have indicated above, beyond its fragmentation into different language subjects, modern languages is traversed by a major dividing line, the one traditionally separating language from content studies. Arguably, modern languages embody different kinds of knowledge, both of a practical and theoretical nature.

The existence of different types of knowledge in Western societies has been postulated by many contemporary social theorists and educationalists (Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott and Trow, 1994; Stehr, 1994; Readings, 1996; Barnett, 1997 and 2000; Symes and McIntyre, 2000; Delanty, 2001; Nowotny, Gibbons and Scott, 2001). Rather than being conceived as simply the product of disinterested and often arcane research (what Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott and Trow call Mode 1 Knowledge), knowledge has been redefined in the postmodern era in relation to the needs of and requests by society at large. As such, its nature has changed becoming more practical in nature and more accountable to social imperatives (Mode 2 Knowledge, in Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott and Trow's parlance).

Such diverse definitions now pervade the epistemological debates of the Western world universities. In the words of Symes and McIntyre (ibidem):

...in the current era, the epistemological preoccupations of the university have ... begun to pervade many areas of economic endeavour. Knowledge is no longer the fruit of idle curiosity, pursued in the spirit of open and disinterested enquiry, but is something which now invokes use value and application. (p. 3)

In general terms, it is arguable that modern languages embrace conceptions of both theoretical and practical knowledge (along with many others like experiential and tacit, for instance, and so on). In fact, in broad terms, language learning/teaching can be considered to be part of that kind of applied, procedural ('knowing how') knowledge, whose utilitarian value is increasingly being sought after by those people who want to learn languages as tools for practical, often work-oriented reasons (Allford, 1997; Pachler, 1999; Williams, 2000 and 2001). This kind of knowledge is especially promoted in 'languages for all' courses (like those run by institution-wide programmes and language centres) where the study of the language is often separated from the study of cultural artefacts (of a literary, historical and artistic nature, for instance) that is embedded in content studies. On the other hand, the latter seem to fulfil the requirements of a more traditional type of knowledge that is more declarative (knowing that), propositional and disinterested.

It is to an analysis of the kinds of knowledge that are embodied in the field that I now turn. I shall start at the applied end of the spectrum, that is to say the one concerning language learning/teaching.

Language learning, many skills

The term 'skills' is used in modern languages with different meanings. Skills range from those which are strictly related to the specialist discourses of language educators to those describing the vocational aim of and need for languages in contemporary society. In its strictly technical sense, as applied to language teaching, the word 'skills' is usually taken

to mean 'language skills'. The latter indicate the way in which (a) language is employed in its everyday contexts of use, that is to say the learner's ability to use (a) language not only correctly but appropriately, depending on the situation, aim and scope of communication (Richards, Platt and Weber, 1985; Bygate, 1987). In spite of the fact that it is not infrequent to hear phrases like 'grammar skills' or 'pronunciation skills', the word 'skills' has been especially used to indicate a more 'communicative' view of language and language teaching whose tenets are based on pragmatic, context-bound communication rather than the traditional grammatical taxonomies and structures typical of the traditional 'grammar translation' method.

However, language teachers have often made a narrower use of the term to indicate, systematically and discretely, the four major functions to which language is put, that is to say listening, speaking, reading and writing. With either or both the connotations described above, the phrase 'language skills' has firmly belonged to the discourse of language teaching and learning for at least three decades now, that is since when language teachers started sharpening their own professional baggage of specialised concepts, definitions and academic preoccupations (like those concerning teaching methodologies, second language acquisition and syllabus design, to list only a few examples) (Mesumeci, 1997).

Nevertheless, the word 'skills' has increasingly acquired a vocational ring that goes beyond the technical meanings outlined above. In fact, over the last ten years or so the word has been adopted to indicate the ability to use a foreign language, especially in

work-related contexts. In this sense, modern languages definitely have entered vocational discourses. Under the pressures of globalisation and European unification, modern languages have acquired a new importance, especially in the world of business. They have become increasingly important for the employment market and are often perceived as one of the components of the knowledge a British graduate should have at the end of his/her study. Agencies like the DTI (Department for Trade and Industry) and the DfEE (Department for Education and Employment) have strongly emphasised the relationship between language skills, employability and success in business in their literature. Similar claims have been made by the Nuffield Report (2000). As a result, many specialised vocational courses have mushroomed which target specific professional groups (like German for the media, French for business and so on).

The growth, over the past ten years or so, within the university sector, of institution-wide language programmes and language centres can also be explained as part of this trend. They represent a response to the current requests for 'languages for all'. Moreover, the development of 'languages for all' programmes has often been accompanied by the growing use of increasingly sophisticated technology for language teaching. Beyond the traditional use of the language laboratory, this avails now of a vast and varied array of instruments like, for instance, CD ROM, satellite TV and interactive software. These are meant to assist teachers in their pedagogical endeavours and students in becoming independent (language) learners (Mozzon-McPherson and Vismans, 2001)ⁱⁱ.

It is at this level that wider social forces have made a major impact on the debate on languages. They do so by underlining the necessity of a work-related view of languages as instruments to be used in very specific, usually vocational contexts. In this sense language learning becomes a service to other sectors of society and reflects Lyotard's idea of 'performativity' (1984). This refers to the view that knowledge in Western, post-industrial societies is dominated by exchange principles that make results to be achieved paramount. The concept of 'performativity' reflects an operational, usable conceptualisation of knowledge.

However, if the discourse of skills gives modern languages a performative, applied colour, many scholars claim that language learning is not simply a question of discrete skills acquisition and the piecemeal mastering of chunks of language. It both requires and assists in the development of sophisticated mental processes. Thus, for instance, in a multiple language task, transposing information gathered through a listening exercise to a written report calls for the use of high order cognitive processes like analysis (of the listening material) and synthesis (of the information heard into written form). Performing such a task helps students not only learn the language but also develop analytical and synthetic abilities that can be transposed into other realms of their academic and professional life. This process usually goes under the name of 'transferable skills' (King, 2000). In this sense, it is claimed that, while language learning is, on the one hand, product-oriented (that is aiming at the acquisition and manipulation of usable chunks of language), on the other, it is also process-based in that it helps in the refinement of sophisticated, transferable skills that are essential at an academic, professional and,

ultimately, personal level. Many skills associated with language learning can, in the first instance, be transferred to content studies, especially those subtle abilities of synthesis and analysis that characterise the study of cultural artefacts.

Moreover, as I shall argue later in this chapter, many culturalists (Valdes, 1986; Kramsh, 1993; Byram, 1994; Byram and Fleming, 1998) claim that learning a foreign language not only involves the technical appropriation of linguistic functions and notions but also an appreciation of the cultural meanings and values in which linguistic items are embedded and of which they are vehicular. Coleman argues (2001) that the establishment of the 'year abroad' for BA students in the country (countries) of the language(s) they study, has precisely two objectives: on the one hand, the improvement of the students' linguistic skills; on the other, to acquaint learners with the subtleties of the culture(s) they are hosts of. Both linguistic and intercultural competence (in Coleman's words: "...*an amalgam of knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours which together allow an individual to derive maximum benefit from an extended year abroad*" [ibidem: p.137]) are the two main interrelated aims of the 'year abroad' through schemes like Socrates and the like.

However, in spite of the growing importance being attributed to the cultural aspects of language learning, the overall perception remains that language learning constitutes the operational part of modern languages. This, according to Balboni (2001), is one of the main factors contributing to its lesser status *vis à vis* content studies. He terms this 'cinderellity', a state of inferiority that both language teaching and teachers suffer from

within language departments. The tensions between ‘knowledge as product’ or ‘knowledge as process’ also pervades the debates surrounding content studiesⁱⁱⁱ.

Content studies: between product and process

The tacit aim behind content studies is that students will not only learn pieces of literary or historical information (for instance) but also process them and relate them to each other. The knowledge acquired is often of a specialist nature (like in the case of the study of specific aspects of contemporary German history, for instance). Arguably, this approach, while giving the students a certain degree of specialisation, fails to assist the learners in capturing the wider implications and connections of given cultural artefacts or events. In order to achieve this, special pedagogical assistance is needed, without which the end result can only be the achievement of product (a mass of badly digested information in terms of dates, events, names and the like) and not process (in terms of both deep understanding of texts and knowledge transferral and transformation) (Giordan, 1998; Chambers, 2001). In discussing the main teaching approaches to the humanities, Parker (*ibidem*) is in favour of a kind of pedagogy that supports the integration of process and product. By this, she means a type of pedagogy that, while being especially interested in the processes of knowing, does not isolate such processes from the products. This is because knowledge processing goes hand in hand with an accumulation of the knowledge base.

This kind of approach counteracts more traditional ones that privilege product over process. It also jettisons those trends that privilege process over product, thus neglecting

the importance of the knowledge base that constitutes the vital part of any disciplinary area. It is advocated that process and product should be strictly intertwined, in that process should facilitate the expansion and refinement of the knowledge base. In talking specifically about the humanities, Parker invites us not to pursue simply a knowledge basis in any 'objective' way. For her it is important not:

... the 'what' is studied but 'how' – how classic texts are read, are discussed, are taught. (p. 34)

Chambers (2001) calls this 'critical pedagogy'^{iv}. According to her, this kind of pedagogy focuses on:

... the interconnected processes of textual analysis-interpretation-evaluation, and communication. These processes are critical in character. (pp. xviii and xix)

What Chambers is arguing for is a kind of pedagogy that is critical in the sense of embracing approaches that are both hermeneutical and reflective in relation to a given knowledge base.

In a similar vein, talking about modern languages specifically, Parry (1997) stresses the need for a fresher pedagogical approach to content studies. In considering emerging interdisciplinary and intercultural paradigms, she urges modern languages academics to abandon traditional frames of reference to concentrate on a type of pedagogy that integrates process and product:

...the discipline of 'modern languages', which after years of dealing with relatively stable frames of reference, sees itself forced into uncharted and sometimes shifting terrains, where knowledge and certainty give way to the pedagogy of unlearning and relearning in ever-changing human and cultural contexts. As the intercultural paradigm replaces the cultural one, the pedagogy itself thus becomes a problematic

issue, for it is essentially a pedagogy of learning by doing, one grounded in transformation and process rather than in fixed knowledge domains, thus lacking the firm theoretical foundations, of a clear set of ground rules to guide the process towards the desired goals. (p. v)

The emergence of an increasing number of cultural, intercultural and translation courses within (and beyond) modern languages departments is making the need for a restructuring of modern languages a much needed project.

The agendas of cultural studies call for several changes within each language subject (Forgacs, 2001). First of all, its political import requires that the canon of each language subject be enlarged beyond the ‘great’ cultural artefacts of a people. These should be studied along with other forms of cultural expression (like fringe theatre and popular music), in an effort to give academic dignity to cultural expressions that, because they are the products of underprivileged groups, have been traditionally ignored. Secondly, the traditional chronological approach to the teaching of literature, linearly from past to present, should be abandoned. This has often resulted in cultural studies placing a heavier emphasis on the contemporary as a point of departure for the discovery and analysis of the historical lineages of cultural artefacts. Thirdly, a thematic approach is to be encouraged (like in courses dealing with ‘the city in contemporary Italy’). This approach calls for multi/interdisciplinarity and thus encourages collaboration among different groups of academics (like literature specialists, historians and so on) on common research and teaching projects. The growing array of publications on cultural studies bears testimony to these trends^v.

However, as these publications themselves testify, there is a varied understanding of what cultural studies actually are (Bennett, 1998). The lack of a univocal definition of their nature, aims and scope is reflected in the different ways in which cultural studies are understood and implemented within modern languages departments. Syllabi are organised around one or more of the perceived characteristics of cultural studies, not always according to all of them. Nevertheless, even at a minimum level, such implementations are regarded as a departure from the traditional conceptual framework of modern languages.

Even more innovatively, the recent growing field of intercultural (or cross-cultural) studies^{vi} brings together specialists from different language-subjects in order to explore, both at a cognitive and emotional level, the spaces that are created (or not) when people from different cultures meet. Rather than on a single, national culture (as it is traditionally the case in modern languages and cultural studies), the emphasis is on cognitive and emotional issues that emerge when two or more cultures come into contact, in an attempt to arrive at some understanding of the actions and reactions individuals have when dealing with cultures different from their own. The focus of intercultural studies is therefore the study of the interrelationship between cultures (Kramsch, 1993; Killick and Parry, 1996, 1997, 1998; Killick, Parry and Phipps, 1999; Bassnett, 1997; Byram and Fleming, 1998; Phipps, 1998 and 2001).

Interculturality is also central in the new kinds of translation studies that, over the last twenty years or so, have been advocated by scholars like Clifford (1997), Bassnett and

Lefevere (1998), Cronin (2000) and Polecchi (2001). Here too the idea of interculturality, as expressed through the metaphor of translation as travel between cultures, is fundamental. As Clifford (ibidem) puts it:

... 'travel' has an inextinguishable taint of location by class, gender, race, and a certain literariness. It offers a good reminder that all translation terms used in global comparisons – terms like 'culture', 'art', 'society', 'peasant', 'mode of production', 'man', 'woman', 'modernity', 'ethnography' – get us some distance and fall apart. Traditore, traduttore. In the kind of translation that interests me most, you learn a lot about peoples, cultures, and histories different from your own, enough to begin to know what you are missing. (p. 39)

In this kind of translation studies, intercultural communication becomes important. It supersedes any essentialist notion of culture and text towards a notion of comparability among different value and belief systems as they emerge in the process of translation from a language/culture into another.

It is arguable that these new disciplinary formations (cultural, intercultural and translation studies) counterbalance the traditional framework of modern languages alongside which they increasingly tend to appear. Moreover, cultural and, especially, intercultural and translation studies promote a rapprochement between language and content studies. All three disciplinary formations recognise the cultural import of language and put it at the centre of their enterprise. Language is seen as a key factor with and through which cultural artefacts and value systems are constructed, understood and transmitted. Within this framework, language learning is no longer conceived as a simple tool of transparent communication among people of different cultures or the means through which the study of the cultural products of a foreign culture can be realised. It becomes one of the pivotal elements in the unlocking of those cultural meanings that are central to different cultures.

However, the growing centrality of cultural and intercultural studies in the debates in and about modern languages should not be overemphasised. A look at the websites of many modern language departments across Britain testifies to the existence, often within the same institutional settings, of both traditional language-subject based offerings and the newer interdisciplinary formations. It is arguable that efforts are being made to 're-invent' modern languages along different lines, also under market pressures, as I shall illustrate in chapter 2. Such efforts are reflected in the varied panoply of scholarship and research that is typical of modern languages today. This ranges from an interest in aspects of the work and life of single authors (like Diderot or Thomas Mann, for instance) to multi and interdisciplinary approaches to thematic areas (like research dedicated to one aspect of a culture, such as gender issues in contemporary France), to an interest in theoretical issues of a linguistic kind (the uses of the articles in French) or of an applied nature (like the teaching of Spanish prepositions to beginners of this language). Moreover, one can currently register a growing volume of scholarship of an intercultural type (like the comparative study of how different languages express emotions, for instance [Wierzbicka, 1999]). I shall return to analyse current disciplinary changes in different parts of this thesis.

However, having now illustrated issues concerning the product-process split in modern languages and having exemplified, albeit briefly, some of the new trends in the field, it is important to mention another major fault line that traverses this: the one between teaching and research.

Teaching and research within a fragmented field

The traditional division between language and content studies traditionally subsumes the one between teaching and research. Traditionally, in higher education teaching has enjoyed less status than research. As Di Napoli, Polezzi and King (2001) put it:

...[teaching and research] carry differential status and kudos, with teaching, the 'practical' side of academia, still being perceived, on the whole, as ancillary to researching... the 'theoretical' dimension. This... is the result of our Western cultural tradition which, from Plato and Aristotle, down to our times, considers the 'practical' as inferior or ancillary to the 'theoretical', and research as more prestigious than teaching. (p. 14)

The situation is further complicated in modern languages where a distinction is made between language teaching and content teaching. Each of these carries different status. Towell (1998) claims that in the field of modern languages language teaching tends to be perceived as something of a chore and separate from the prestige activity of teaching content with which research is primarily associated. In a similar vein, Kelly (2001) argues that:

... 'content' ... is perceived to carry more intellectual prestige, and staff working in these areas find it easier to gain recognition for their research. (p. 46)

This confirms Balboni's (2001) hypothesis about the 'cinderellity' of language teaching. He sees this as mainly the result of its applied nature in relation to what has been historically conceived to be the cognitive nature of the field, that is to say content studies. As Kelly (ibidem) puts it:

...the early attempts to assert cognitive distinction for modern languages tended to focus on the common characteristics of a particular language group (e.g. Romance philology, Germanic languages), and then on a corpus of texts written in a specific language (e.g. French literature, German literature). This eventually led to the

emergence of single language departments and degrees, which could define their field as the language and literature of a particular country... the combination of a country and a methodology (literary criticism) provided a coherence of focus, which marked the apogee of languages as a cognitively oriented discipline. (p. 47)

According to Kelly (ibidem), this has created tensions within universities between research and teaching, with language teaching enjoying less kudos than content teaching:

...research carries prestige, while teaching, especially language teaching, responds to social and educational demands. The tension is generally visible in the negotiation of individual workloads within a department. However, it is also reflected in the establishment of different organisational structures to cater for 'language', such as language centres and institution-wide language programmes, in units or departments separate from those catering for 'content'. (p. 48)

The quote above highlights the fact that modern languages thus make complex 'prestige' distinctions, as Bourdieu (1986) would put it, between what is practical, therefore less 'noble', that is to say teaching (especially language teaching to students on institution-wide language programmes and in language centres), and what is 'high' and desirable, that is to say research into content areas (rather than the production of teaching materials and research into teaching methodology). The status distinctions just outlined highlight the fact that the world of modern languages is often at odds with the contemporary society's value system that increasingly places greater emphasis on more operational and practical kinds of knowledge. As we shall see in the analysis of the empirical data, this gives rise to uncertainty among those working within traditional language departments.

Conceptualising identities in modern languages

If we accept the idea that disciplines are socio-epistemological constructs, the complexity of modern languages inevitably mirrors and is mirrored by the varied array of academic identities that 'inhabit' the field and the institutional structures in which they operate.

Defining, with any degree of precision, who a modern language academic is today is a complex task. As we know, Evans (1988) attempted to carry out this exercise about fifteen years ago. This resulted in a complex picture that portrayed modern language academics as bearers of multiple identities and allegiances that went from the field in its entirety to (more often) individual language subjects and their specialisations (literature, history and so on) around which whole communities of people with similar interests gather. The picture is further complicated by other types of loyalty academics may nurture towards activities like teaching or researching language and/or content studies. Modern languages academics have traditionally formed their identities around such language-subject aggregations and sub-aggregations. These have been supported and reinforced by a number of associations (like, for instance, *The Society for French Studies* and *The Society for Italian Studies*) and specialised journals (like *German History* and the *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*). At the same time, the overall field has been promoted and catered for by organisations like the Centre for Information on Language Teaching (CILT) and, even more importantly, the University Council of Modern Languages (UCLM). The latter two have traditionally acted as both information and lobbying organisations for modern languages and have attempted to give a more unitary voice and identity to the field^{vii}.

However, as I shall detail in the next chapter and in other parts of this thesis, changes have occurred in the British higher education system over the last fifteen years that have altered the picture depicted by Evans. Phenomena like the changing status of polytechnics into universities, the increase in audit regimes through the Research

Assessment Exercise (RAE), the Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) and epistemological shifts have helped to modify the field of modern languages and its institutional organisation. These phenomena have often changed the way in which modern languages academics relate to the overall field and its different language subjects. This will become apparent in the course of the thesis.

Concurrently, following the publication of the Dearing Report (1997), newer national agencies, like the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE) and the national Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies at Southampton University, were created in the late nineties. The aim of the former is to support those academics interested in types of scholarship relating to pedagogical issues in general, while the latter was especially created to cater for supporting teaching projects and co-ordinate resources for modern languages, linguistics and area studies specialists (academics, students and managers alike)^{viii}. The existence of such centres may help to re-dress power relationships within the field between teaching and research in favour of the former. They may also act as new points of identity formation and aggregation for academics. Although there is very little evidence in the empirical part of this research of the impact of these new structures on the identity frameworks of the academics interviewed, it is possible that, as time goes by, such centres may become increasingly important in re-defining the traditional configuration of the field and the sense of identity of the people belonging to it.

Nevertheless, as Evans (1988) reminds us, identities of modern languages academics are complex configurations which do not stop at the institutional and disciplinary level. They are intricate constructs that are formed, over time, in the interaction between personal histories and value systems, and the institutional groups, roles and activities that are a part of an individual academic's everyday working life. The aim of this thesis is to uncover the structure and dynamics of such identities. For this reason, as I have pointed out in the introduction, this work posits itself at the meso-level, that is to say at the interface where people's histories, beliefs and value systems encounter institutional and disciplinary structures.

Conclusions

After having illustrated the theoretical view that disciplines are socio-cultural constructs, I have attempted to unpack the conceptual structures of modern languages. This is complex. As we have seen, the field is a 'plural' in that it is structured around a number of language subjects (French, German and so on). These are in turn organised around three major faultlines that intertwine: the first between language learning and content studies; the second between research and teaching; the third, between programmes for degree specialists and those for 'languages for all' students.

However, the field's structures are changing under wider educational and social pressures. Against a socio-cultural background that places emphasis on the usability of knowledge, language learning is becoming increasingly important in relation to content studies, thus tipping the traditional status imbalance between research and teaching in

favour of the latter. The immediate consequence of this is that 'languages for all' centres and programmes have been acquiring financial (if not yet academic) status *vis à vis* traditional language departments. This has been causing tensions between language learning and content studies, which has been traditionally conceived of as the real 'intellectual core' of modern languages (Kelly, 2001).

Similarly, traditional language departments are often being reorganised into bigger units (like language schools). These tend to subtract financial and decisional power from individual language subjects and departments in favour of these larger organisational units (like language schools) and multi/interdisciplinarity projects. Institutional and epistemological factors often go hand in hand determining changes within modern languages.

It is to wider social and educational changes (and the forces that induce them) that I now turn. This is paramount, as the evolving nature of the field's traditional identity into new configurations has important implications for the academic and professional identities of those working within the field.

2 - Modern languages, many influences: the field within current social and educational changes

Introduction

So far I have sketched the complex epistemological panoply that makes up the field of modern languages today. In the course of this chapter I wish to examine the current state and status of the field in relation to intertwining social and educational factors that are affecting the British higher education system in its entirety. These have consequences for individual disciplinary areas including modern languages. Among such forces, the most important ones are the globalization along with the marketization and massification of higher education. As I have already hinted at in chapter one, all these have been contributing to the changing nature of knowledge in today's society and have greatly influenced the world of modern languages. Understanding such phenomena is important since these constitute the essential background for comprehending the ways in which academics construct their identities and selves in the three institutions which are the object of this research.

However, before examining the wider social and educational forces that are affecting modern languages in detail, I shall start by illustrating the nature of the perceived sense of crisis that the field is experiencing.

Modern languages: a field in crisis?

Since the mid-nineties an increasing number of voices have indicated a sense of crisis that the world of modern languages is experiencing today. This perceived crisis is highlighted, for instance, by the final report of the Nuffield Languages Inquiry, *Languages: The Next Generation* (2000). The document was commissioned by the Nuffield Foundation in order to obtain a snapshot of the world of languages at all levels and, consequently, to make appropriate recommendations for improvement. The report points towards the sense of *débat* of the field at tertiary level in recent years:

...most university language departments are regarded as operating in deficit, and an increasing number are under threat of closure or reduction. (p. 54)

According to Kelly and Jones (2003: p. 11), the total number of modern languages applicants dropped from 10,370 in 1997 to 8,042 in 2001. In percentage terms, this means a decrease of - 22.45% within the timespan indicated.

The reason for this change is to be found mainly in a drastic reduction in the numbers of students undertaking languages degrees. This is confirmed both by the HESAⁱ (Higher Education Statistics Agency) and UCASⁱⁱ (Universities and Colleges Admission Agencies) statistics. As Robey (2002)ⁱⁱⁱ reports:

...the decline in modern languages applications has continued in 2001, except in Spanish, which has increased slightly.

The UCLM (University Council of Modern Languages) news documents, *UCLM Mapping Languages Snapshot Survey* (2001)^{iv}, states:

...77% (23) of the universities (72% of the 'old' and 83% of the 'new') reported that one or more of the languages or/and courses they offered pre-1999 had already been cut or were likely to be cut after September 2001. Subsequently, the text reports on the impact that these trends have had on staff numbers:

...93% of the universities (28) reported major staffing changes since September 1999. 16 recorded a figure of non-replacement of staff 'under 3', 5 'between 3 and 6' and 2 'between 6 and 10'. 9 universities had cut staff through voluntary means ('15 are to go between now and 2006'), and 1 compulsory redundancy.

Such a decline concerns both more and less widely taught languages. For instance, in French, traditionally the most studied language in the UK, the total number of applicants went from 3,130 in 1997 to 2,221 in 2001 (Kelly and Jones: *ibidem*). The Nuffield Report (2000) highlights particular concerns for languages like German and Russian:

...a decline in Russian has led to several universities withdrawing degree courses; there are also fears of course closures in German. The declining national capability in German and Russian is a matter of serious concern, given the strategic importance of these languages for the UK. (p. 55)

Similar preoccupations are expressed in relation to other less studied languages:

...national capability in many African, Asian and East European languages is now extremely fragile, even in the small number of specialist institutes which have historically been the national centres of expertise. (ibidem)

However, statistics indicate that the sharp decrease in the number of students specializing in modern languages is accompanied by the growing number of 'languages for all' programmes. These are courses that offer students majoring in fields other than languages the opportunity to study one or more languages as a minor option (Kelly and Jones, 2003). This is clearly indicated by another UCLM members' news document^v:

...the pattern of language studies is changing, particularly with a decline in numbers following specialist language degrees, and an increase in demand from students of all fields to develop their language skills.

European languages are the most studied on 'languages for all' courses. As the UCLM Survey of Less Specialist Learning in UK Universities (1998-99) reports:

...overall, European languages account for 92% of the take up. As in specialist language degrees, more students choose French than any other language, but not by the same margin. Spanish, closer to French than it is the case with the specialist learners, has overtaken German decisively. (p. 2)

The majority of students learning a language on 'languages for all' courses come from both business and humanities disciplinary fields:

...the largest single block of students combined a less specialist language with business and administrative studies (32.3%), with the next popular, humanities (16.1%), on half that figure...The majority (68.3%) are doing degrees in arts type subjects and only 21.2% science type degrees. (p. 7)

In most cases, languages are taught in generic classes, that is to say those courses that are not tailor-made around the requirements of specific fields (like a course in Italian for fashion could be). Such courses are offered either by language centres or by IWLPs (institution-wide language programmes). The flexible formula of these offerings has been perceived as being at the heart of their success:

...the flexibility of generic language courses, which are easier and more economical to provide in multi-subject institutions, seems to be matched by a readiness on the part of the students across a wide range of subjects. (p. 9)

The Nuffield Report (2000) commends the 'languages for all' initiatives for their innovative attitude in relation to language teaching/learning. However, it identifies in their flexible nature the main cause of their lower status:

['languages for all' courses]... have been at the forefront of innovation: they exploit information technology, pioneer open learning approaches and develop transferable skills. But the free-standing and flexible nature of such courses often leads to their having low status and being under-resourced. Typically,

language centres and IWLPs comprise a small core of full-time staff and an extensive cadre of part-time temporary staff, usually employed on an hourly basis. They are vulnerable to annual fluctuations in funding and may have difficulties in maintaining a stable level of high quality provision. (p. 55)

From what I have said so far, it is evident that, in numerical terms, the perceived sense of crisis of modern languages mainly concerns the traditional degree courses.

However, the current specialist trends are having a major impact on the overall state and status of the field, arguably threatening its very existence. First of all, the decrease in the number of specialist students translates itself into the closure of language departments and the consequent job losses for the academic staff. This generates a shrinking of that part of the academic community that is concerned with the teaching and research of content studies. Such a phenomenon implies an impoverishment of the field in terms of both its aims and scope. Secondly, declining specialist numbers nurture the current crisis in the training and recruitment of language teachers at secondary school level. According to Kelly (2002), current developments may become more evident in the near future as a result of the government's decision, at the beginning of 2002, to make languages optional for the age band 14-16:

...from the point of view of higher education, leaving the market to regulate school language learning at 14-16 will accelerate the existing decline in student applications to study languages degrees, it will increase the rate at which language departments are being closed, and further reduce the numbers of UK students going into school teaching in languages. Languages degrees may be confined to a handful of the more prestigious universities, and foreign language competence could become even more identified as an élite accomplishment.

Thirdly, the current shift in numbers has created a double 'culture' within modern languages. On the one hand, there are traditional languages departments that carry out the kind of content-related research that is deemed to be necessary for funding

purposes. On the other, there are growing numbers of 'languages for all' courses the academic interest of which revolves essentially on language teaching methodologies. However, such courses are usually thought to have little, if any, research kudos^{vi} and this often reduces their status to vocational training. The differences between specialist and 'languages for all' offerings have, therefore, created a further, deep hiatus within the world of modern languages. This has contributed to the divisive formation of two more big tribes, each with their own interests, strengths and status: research-based, in the case of traditional modern languages departments/schools, and financial and pedagogically-based in the case of 'languages for all' centres and programmes (Polezzi, 1996).

Having identified, albeit briefly, the nature of current trends in the world of modern languages, it is now important to examine the wider social background against which such trends can be posited.

Globalization and higher education

In examining the social and educational factors that have a major influence on the current disciplinary and institutional patterns of higher education, globalization is arguably one of the most important ones.

Since the beginning of the nineties, there has been a growing literature that has attempted to define and make sense of the phenomenon (Giddens, 1990; Robertson, 1992; Featherstone, Lash and Robertson, 1995; Waters, 1995; Hirst and Thompson, 1996; Giaccardi and Magatti, 2001). Given the many different definitions that scholars have given of globalization, it is possible to argue that it is a contested

concept. However, the common thread that runs throughout the various definitions of it is the idea that globalization is about the growing (economic) international interconnectedness among different and far away places on the globe, *and* the awareness that people have of such phenomena. Robertson (ibidem) argues that:

...[globalization] is a concept that refers to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole. (p. 8)

Urry (1998) describes the nature of the interconnectedness typical of globalization :

...the development of various global flows [that]... locates people and objects in novel networks. These appear to shift from being those of 'national societies' based upon a given social structure to globalising flows or networks of signs, money, information, technologies, machines, waste products as well as people. (p. 4)

Beyond these basic definitions, there are ongoing discussions among scholars about the extent to which the phenomenon is complete and the way in which it is experienced in different cultural realities.

From whichever angle one chooses to look at globalization , the latter phenomenon has had a definite impact on university life (Etzkowitz and Leydersdoff, 1997; Currie and Newson, 1998; Scott, 1998; Barnett, 2000; Block and Cameron, 2002; Ka-ho, Mok and Kin-heung, 2002; Kempner and Loureiro Jurema, 2002; Mollis and Marginson, 2002; Marginson and Rhoades, 2002). As its name implies, the university has always had an international vocation, especially in medieval times when national borders did not exist and scholars wandered freely across Europe (de Ridder-Symoens, 1996). However, as authors like Readings (1996) and Scott (1998) argue, more recently universities have been linked to the formation and development of the nation state whose specific needs it has increasingly served.

However, universities, while maintaining their national identity, have encouraged internationalism, especially in the form of research co-operation. What is new with globalization, according to Delanty (2001), is the accelerated homogenisation of university systems across the globe. This is marked by a series of phenomena like:

...increased student mobility, the internationalisation of the curriculum and educational policy, and international research cooperation (p. 118).

To these, I would like to add the development of quality regimes, the marketization of higher education and the emergence of skills-based curricula. Concurrently, the university has moved beyond its privileged link with the nation state to establish a significant relationship with industry, especially within the research domain. This is particularly evident in the realm of technoscience. According to Delanty (ibidem), this means that:

...utility is the principal objective of research. (p. 123)

The new link with industry has severed the traditional relationship between university and state, thus creating what authors like Clark (1983) and Etzkowitz and Leydersdoff (1997) call the 'triple helix'. This image suggests an increasing relationship between industry, state and the academia in the production of knowledge. It signals a gradual move of the university into the global economy. As Marginson (2000) argues:

...education is one of the social sectors in which a global market has formed, in which more people movement of a market and non-market kind is taking place. (p. 25)

In other words, universities no longer operate in sealed national zones but are traversed by global trends.

Changes produced by globalization have been accompanied by other phenomena that have been altering the British higher education system: these are massification, marketization and evaluationism. It is to these that I now turn.

The impact of massification, marketization, and evaluationism on higher education

The landscape of British higher education has greatly changed over the last fifteen years or so. The most evident shift has been in the number of people now having access to tertiary education (Trow, 1994). This phenomenon goes under the name of massification. Its quantitative trends have been summarised by Wolf (2002):

...in the past 15 years Britain has acquired a full-blown system of mass higher education. There are now as many 25 year-olds with degrees as there were 18 years old with A Levels in 1965. Over 40 per cent of 18 year olds are set to enter higher education and the government's target is for 50 per cent to do so by 2015.
(p. 37)

Changes, however, have not been only quantitative. The character of the student population has also changed: more women, ethnic minorities and older students enter universities today than ever before (Silver and Silver, 1997; Becher and Trowler, 2001). International student exchange schemes (like the Socrates one for European students, for instance) have contributed to increase the variety of students present in the British university system.

Scott (1998) sees in massification a democratic move that may help to combine exchanges between local and international experiences in the name of pluralism.

With massification:

...there may be powerful synergies between democratisation (or transformation) agendas within nations and (hopefully) the emergence of a more democratic world order, and between the new attention given to 'local' knowledge traditions at home and renewed respect for the diversity of human experience, and so the pluralism of global culture. (p. 126)

However, along with variety and pluralism, massification has been accompanied by two important phenomena: marketization and evaluationism (a term used by Bassnett [2001] to indicate current audit trends in terms of teaching, research and administration in the British higher education system).

Authors like Delanty (2001), Readings (1996), Reid (1996) and Slaughter and Leslie (1997) see in marketization and evaluationism the birth of academic capitalism. With the government cutting funds for the university system in the 1980s and 1990s (the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and, to a lesser extent, Canada), universities had to start promoting themselves on the global academic market. This was achieved both by ensuring student enrolments at a lower national cost and, as we have seen, by building links with industry. Apart from industry-led research, other instances of marketization are consultancy activities and the leasing of university properties. These interrelated activities and phenomena have markedly changed the traditional nature and role of universities from being centres of disinterested knowledge to hubs of knowledge providers for social needs.

The Dearing Report (1997) signalled a steady increase in social expenditure for higher education in the twenty years leading up to 1996. This meant growing state funding and growing concern for the 'quality' of higher education. As Wolf (ibidem) argues, given that £8 billion a year of taxpayers money goes into higher education, there are expectations of a return, be it in terms of:

...faster economic growth, a fairer society or more cultural citizens. (p. 36)

Students are also contributing, with the re-introduction of fees in 1998, to the costs of higher education (ibidem, p. 38). Because of this, they have been given the status of 'customers' or 'consumers' with pressure being put on institutions to meet their expectations in terms of the quality of the 'product' they buy (Coffield and Williamson, 1997).

The pull is towards evaluationism (Bassnett, 2001). This is the belief that everything can be evaluated, with the result that the most trivial aspects of the higher education system are implicitly valued for it is that they can be evaluated. This phenomenon has made people's work increasingly calculable, comparable and assessable.

According to Exworthy and Halford (1999), there are three major consequences of evaluationism. First of all, there is a loss, on the part of professionals, of their *cultural authority in terms of prestige and trust* (p. 15). This is what Freidson (1994) calls 'deprofessionalisation'. This is accompanied, secondly, by their 'proletarianization'. This means that:

...professional labour is being transformed as it becomes increasingly dependent on employment in bureaucracies. (ibidem)

In the world of the British higher education system, audit cultures (Strathern, (2000), that is to say the current pervasive practices of accountability in the form of research and teaching assessments, impact both on institutional structures and the academics who work within them. Strathern argues that such a culture has inevitable consequences on the professional identity of academics. Shore and Wright (2000), in a foucauldian fashion, consider such regulative mechanisms:

...as 'political technologies' which seek to bring persons, organisations and objectives into alignment. (p. 61)

According to the authors, the consequences of such regulative processes are eminently ontological in that they do much to contribute to the changes in the professional identity of academics by aligning their conduct to the government's idea of social order.

The development of a higher education system that is more permeable to auditing internal and external forces has therefore meant a number of changes in the traditional parameters of academic life. The Research Assessment Exercises and Teaching Quality Assessments, to take two examples, have reduced the power of academics and have led to the decline of the 'donnish dominion' (Halsey, 1992). This phenomenon is the result of evaluative attitudes on the part of the state, the pull towards performativity (Lyotard, 1984) and the need for universities to become increasingly competitive on the market. The policies that have been put in place to realise these aims have inevitably reduced the agentic space that, in the past, had

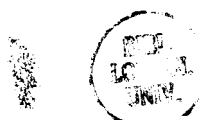
traditionally been the hallmark of academia (Russell, 1993; Menand, 1996). While such audit regimes have the potential to contribute, at least in principle, to the advancement of values that are dear to academics (like responsibility, openness of enquiry and widening access) (Strathern, *ibidem*), in reality, they can impact negatively on academic life, if they become perniciously overwhelming (Barnett, 2003). In fact, they may stifle, with rules and regulations, the sense of creativity and intellectual enjoyment that have been traditionally at the heart of academia, thus acting as de-motivating factors in academic life (Evans, 2002).

Some scholars see in these shifts the growing phenomenon of the proletarianisation of academics, in the sense of a loss of control over their work (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Ramsden, 1998). As Becher and Trowler (*ibidem*) put it, in a climate of efficiency and effectiveness:

...academics are expected to work longer, on a greater variety of tasks with fewer resources. There has, in short, been an intensification and degradation of academic work. (p. 13)

There has been what the authors call an *extension, intensification and fragmentation of the job role* (p. 17). As Henkel (1997) points out, academics must now not only generate new courses but also cost them, understand and stimulate the market and create new delivery methods. This has had, as a matter of course, an important impact on the life of academics by making them do more with fewer resources.

According to Marginson (2000), such trends are troublesome for many academics as they flatten the rich traditions of the various fields under overwhelming discourses about performance and distribution of funds. In the author's words:



...as many contemporary executive managers make clear, the fields are not so much a medium through which the university fashions its success, but an obstacle to be broken down. The fields block the flexible movement of resources, and the sudden changes in priority that the markets and managers require; and as a power heterogeneous to the new university systems, they are a potential rallying point for the disaffected academics. (pp. 30 and 31)

The quote above illustrates well the sense of unease felt by many academics in relation to their own disciplinary areas today, as these are increasingly being defined and constricted by managers and quality officers. The quote is also a good pointer towards the sense of disorientation that many academics seem to feel towards their profession today. As Morley (2003) argues:

...the academic 'habitus' has been challenged. Academics have to be simultaneously self-managing and manageable workers who are able to make themselves auditable within prescribed taxonomies of effectiveness... Anxieties, aspirations and fears invade people's interior spaces, as every individual working in academia is made aware that their performance, productivity and professional conduct is constantly under scrutiny within non-negotiable frameworks... Academics are being asked to reinvent themselves, their courses, their cultural capital, and their research as marketable commodities. (p. 67)

What Morley is clearly indicating here is the growing sense of professional uncertainty felt by many academics within current policy regimes embedded in ideas of performance and productivity (Walker, 2001).

Naturally, the changes stimulated by massification, marketization and the evaluationism created by audit cultures are not all negative. As Clark (1993) indicates, such forces have widened academic interests and commitments in creating new ideas, networks, synergies and a wider set of academic ontologies. For instance, teaching has become increasingly professionalized and has become more consciously central to the preoccupations of academics (Prosser and Trigwell, 1999; Hannan and Silver, 2000).

As much as in other disciplinary areas, globalization, massification, marketization and evaluationism have determined new, emerging institutional and disciplinary patterns in the world of modern languages. It is to these patterns that I am now going to turn my attention.

Globalization, international English and modern languages

Globalization has been linked to the rise of English as the language of international communication. As Graddol (1998) puts it in the Consultative Report of the Nuffield Languages Inquiry entitled *Where are we going with Languages*:

...the emergence of English as the de facto world language is one of the most striking phenomena of the 20th century. Learned by an ever-increasing number of children, students and adults around the world, it seems that soon it will be scarcely necessary for anyone to learn other languages. (p. 24)

Gray (2002) reminds us that the main reason for this is the rise of transnational corporations:

...the rise of transnational corporations does much to promote the spread of English... Graddol (1998) explains how English is usually adopted as a lingua franca when transnational corporations enter into joint ventures with local companies in non-English speaking countries. This can imply business and legal documents being produced in English, oral and written communication skills training in English for staff, possible spinoffs for the local hotel and tourist industries, and more English being taught in local schools. (pp. 153 and 154)

English is also the main linguistic medium used by world organisations and international bodies. Its importance is also evident in publishing, banking, tourism and a number of other areas, including the Internet. In this sense, commentators, like Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1994) have seen in English the linguistic arm of cultural imperialism. Such scholars argue that English intrudes on all the

languages it comes in contact with and has contributed to the demise of many local languages around the planet (de Swaan, 2001; Hagège, 2002). It is also increasingly leading to a situation in which many people use their native tongue for local interactions and English for professional activities of some prestige. Inevitably, the weight of English as the language of international communication has been increasingly felt in the world of modern languages. The educational aims and values of this field have been largely damaged by assumptions about the lack of usefulness of knowledge of other languages for a people, like the British, who can communicate in their own mother tongue with pretty much the rest of the world today (Graddol, *ibidem*).

The importance of English as the language of international communication has been perceived by many as a handicap for native English speakers. It is argued that, in a globalising market, people with good language and cultural skills are increasingly needed for better and more effective trading. Although English has the instrumental advantage of being a global language, it is felt that British people are unable to conduct business properly with other cultures, through lack of linguistic and cultural 'know-how'. This often results in loss of business *tout court*. As Hagen (1998) points out in the *Consultative Report of the Nuffield Languages Inquiry*:

...the available evidence suggests that UK companies are more deficient in linguistic and cultural competence than their major European competitors. Approximately one company in five faces a cultural barrier; between one in four and five has experienced a language barrier; about one in eight has lost business as a result. (p. 22)

In order to address this situation, many business agencies have launched a series of initiatives. For instance, with the support of the DfEE (the Department for Education and Employment), the DTI (the Department for Trade and Industry) is

trying to encourage better language learning and cultural understanding for the business world^{vii}.

For many commentators, the major problem lies in the fact that English has generated a sense of complacency towards language learning/teaching. As Brumfit (2001) puts it:

...attitudes to language learning cannot be separated from broader social attitudes, and motivation for learning languages is strikingly part of a definition of the kind of future individuals want to make for themselves... in British culture there are strong (and often xenophobic) forces defending the notion of international English rather than multilingualism as the route to international communication. (p. 87)

The Nuffield Report (2000) confirms the arguments made by Brumfit:

...in the face of... widespread acceptance and use of English, the UK's complacent view of its limited capability in other languages is understandable. It is also dangerous. In a world where bilingualism and plurilingualism are commonplace, monolingualism implies inflexibility, insensitivity and arrogance. Much that is essential to our society, its health and its interests – including effective choice in policy, realisation of citizenship, effective overseas links and openness to the invention of other cultures – will not be achieved in a language alone. (p. 12)

According to the report, the complacent and negative attitude towards languages in the UK translates itself into patchwork and insufficient language policies throughout the educational spectrum. At primary school level, for instance, there is a need for a national strategy in support of language teaching and learning which includes the training and support for new teachers. At secondary level, at the beginning of 2002, the government made languages optional after 14, as opposed to 16^{viii}. This, in conjunction with other factors, like the existence of a curriculum that does not give enough importance to grammar skills (thus not allowing students to move comfortably to more advanced language learning at university level or later in

life), has been perceived as marking negatively the world of modern languages at secondary school level (Grenfell, 2000).

The dysfunctions at primary and secondary levels have had an impact on the study of modern languages at university level. Here, as I have said, the dropping numbers of specialist students has meant the closing down of a number of language departments/schools, with the consequent depletion of the field both in terms of research and teaching. As Kelly and Jones (2003) argue, the world of modern languages has been increasingly subjected to mergers:

...the search for economic viability has generated a number of responses... The most common response has been the combination of several language departments to form a larger unit, either in a confederation or in a single merged department or school. This may expect to generate academic or managerial synergies, rationalise cross-subsidies between languages, and/or realise economies of scale. A second common response has been to merge all languages into a large unit, such as a business school or a humanities department. This may be expected to provide a secure economic environment in which languages play a supporting role alongside another stronger field, such as business studies or English. (pp. 24 and 25)

Other less common responses mentioned by the authors include the disbanding of language units and the redeployment of their staff in interdisciplinary ventures focusing on literature, history, politics and so on, and/or in language centres where only language teaching (and no content in terms of literature, history and so on) is taught. The latter option is usually regarded by the academics undergoing it in negative terms, as a kind of *internal exile*, as the authors put it (ibidem). This phenomenon is indicative of the fact that the identity of modern languages academics is perceived to be flexible enough to undergo redeployment in a fashion that would perhaps be unthinkable in other disciplinary areas. Finally, a more palatable but less common response is to encourage inter-institutional co-operation

in order to combine the resources of two or more units in a financially viable way. However, whatever the response to the current trends at tertiary level, the depletion in terms of modern languages teaching and research feeds back into the primary and secondary sectors in terms of lack of language teachers. It is a vicious circle that the national negative attitudes towards languages strengthen.

Finally, as MacLeod (2003) argues, the recent proposal in the *White Paper* (2003) to stop the funding of research for departments rated 3a in the latest research assessment exercise, along with the decision to concentrate research in a smaller numbers of bigger units, is going to deepen the sense of crisis in the world of modern languages. This is because modern languages departments tend to be small and, therefore, even those who meet the quality criteria, risk being financially penalised because of the size of languages departments.

However, although British universities have been experiencing a shrinking of modern languages specialist courses, a growth of 'languages for all' offerings has counterbalanced the negative trends over the last few years. These courses are of a service nature and mostly generic in kind. They also lack much cultural input in terms of the study of any historical, artistic, literary or political aspects of the language studied. This rarely goes beyond cursory discussions of those cultural aspects that emerge in the course of language classes (like food and pastimes at the more elementary level, and current issues at the more advanced ones^{ix}). Syllabuses for these courses mainly revolve around the improvement of communicative skills, according to the wider parameters of the communicative methodology^x. In spite of the indisputable innovations brought about by communicative methods (like

authentic and contextualised language use rather than the exclusive focus on abstract grammar systems), the emphasis on a type of language learning/teaching that is detached from its cultural aspects and concentrates mainly on communicative functions^{xi} is confirmed by both Grenfell (2000) and Cameron (2002).

From what I have said so far, globalization seems to have had a double impact on the world of modern languages at tertiary level. On the one hand, through the perceived importance of English as an international language, it has created complacent attitudes towards the study of foreign languages. On the other, it has encouraged a new view of language teaching and learning that is practical, culturally 'neutral' and applied. As we shall see in part two, it is with these trends that many modern languages academics are contending today. They are attempting to claim back the cultural and more widely educational functions of languages, that is to say a view of them as instruments for cultural and intercultural understanding, and not simply as business and work-related tools. Indeed, the cultural import of language studies is seen by Williams (2001) as the only real appeal and justification for modern languages in Britain, given that English tends to dominate in the business and commercial environments.

However, in spite of the negative import of globalization for modern languages, it is arguable that it has also opened new possibilities, at least potentially, for the field. While, on the one hand, globalization has been marked by the increasing importance of English as the international language *par excellence*, on the other, as Urry (1998) argues:

[it increases]...*cosmopolitan openness towards other environments and other cultures.* (p. 13)

Through popular tourism, the Internet and satellite television people are increasingly being put in touch with a vast array of cultural diversity. Arguably, this can have a positive impact on the demand for languages. This is evident in the trends in favour of language learning and teaching that are encouraged by the most culturally-aware part of the business community. For this reason Balboni (2001) sees in globalization the fairy godmother to overcome the ‘cinderellity’ of language teaching/learning:

...globalization means that languages are increasingly required and, as a consequence, it means that good methodologists receive grants and opportunities if they provide good language teaching methodologies that can help to meet the new needs for language instruction brought about by the globalization process. (p. 115)

The benefits of globalization for modern languages, as we have seen, have been felt in the growing numbers of students on ‘languages for all’ programmes^{xii}. Concurrently, as I have mentioned in chapter one, there has been a fast growing development of cross/intercultural studies. Globalization, with its emphasis on interconnectness among different cultures and the concurrent demise of the importance of national cultures is the main factor in the growth of this new disciplinary field.

Having started, as we have mentioned earlier in this chapter, in the business world, cross/intercultural studies are now a growing field in themselves. As Balboni (ibidem) puts it:

...the 'explosion' of bibliographies, conferences, courses and so on in this field is strictly linked to the need for cross-cultural communication in international management and business. (pp. 115 and 116)

Having explored the influence of globalization on the world of modern languages, I would now like to turn to the examination of the impact of another related phenomenon that has contributed in changing the field: the massification of higher education, with the related issues of marketization and evaluationism on the world of modern languages. These phenomena have been obliquely hinted at in the course of this chapter when talking about the importance of student choice in giving the field a practical, work-related slant. However, a more detailed analysis is needed, when talking about the British higher education system today, as their influence is more than ever an important factor in determining the life cycle of all disciplinary fields, including modern languages (Becher and Trowler, 2001).

The impact of massification, marketization and evaluationism on modern languages

Most of the changes that massification, marketization and evaluationism have brought into the field of modern languages have already been mentioned in the course of the current and the previous chapter. However, before ending this first part of the thesis, it is useful to summarise these changes, albeit briefly, in order to clear the ground for the empirical part of the thesis.

As we have seen, the world of languages has registered a marked trend towards a view of languages that is practical and work-oriented. This has brought about the professionalisation and growing centrality of language teaching/learning within specialist degrees. Paradoxically, though, this has been accompanied by the loss of

one of the main resources for language learning and the process of acculturation into a foreign culture: the year abroad (Coleman, 2001). As Towell (1998) reminds us, this was the result of the government's decision to make students pay a fee for their residence abroad, thus discouraging many underprivileged students from undertaking traditional degrees in modern languages. As a consequence, many institutions have started offering three-year degrees in place of the traditional four-year long ones, with the necessary repercussions on curriculum and syllabus design, and the overall expectations of academics with regards to language graduates. The re-structuring (and often demise) of languages degrees has been accompanied by a growing demand for 'languages for all' courses. These are flexible enough to allow students to incorporate one or more languages within any degree. They, therefore, attract a considerable part of the demand for language learning.

The push towards vocational language teaching has often gone in parallel with a growing fragmentation in higher education of syllabuses around attainable aims and objectives that can be easily assessed and certified to make language competence sellable on the job market (in secondary and further education this has been realised through several schemes like the NVQs [National Vocational Qualifications], FLAW [Foreign Languages at Work] and Advanced Subsidiary [AS] level [Lawes, 1999]). Brumfit (2001) identifies some main problems in this vocational approach:

...the tension between education and assessment is particularly acute in language learning. This is partly because our understanding of processes of language learning/acquisition makes it clear that it is not incremental, item by item, but rather is an accumulation of gradually more competently used linguistic systems (phonological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, lexical) which develop simultaneously but erratically... For this reason alone, constant measurement, with its necessary negative feedback, may be dysfunctional for many learners. They need space to take risks, and a strongly assessment-oriented culture discourages risk-taking. (p. 88)

However, according to Jordan (2001), the trend towards an audit culture has invested the whole of the field, thus stifling the more creative forces that may bring about real renewal:

...the problem is that so many interest groups and constituencies are engaged in trying to define what the 'field' should be: teachers and students, but also administrators, managers, Quality Assurance officers, inspectors, funding bodies, government departments and a long etcetera. The clear danger is that, in continually redefining the field in order to take account of such interests, we make a fetish out of demands for logic and coherence. We fall into the trap of overemphasising 'key skills' and 'benchmarking' assumptions and outcomes, to the detriment of enriching the subject from other fields and sets of ideas. (p. 163)

Such trends are slowly but steadfastly giving the field of modern languages the flavour of a service one.

Not only have language learning and teaching (of a vocational nature) become more important but content studies have often undergone re-organisation in a culturalist sense. This is the result of two factors: firstly, the epistemological debates around the concept of culture over the last fifty years which have brought about a re-thinking of the canons typical of each language subject; and, secondly, the popularity that, due to their innovative flavour, cultural studies have among students to the point that, as Forgacs (2001) states:

...it has become common in Britain to talk of modern languages syllabuses 'moving over' to cultural studies. (p. 57)

This move can be seen as an enriching element for modern languages. It represents a novel, interdisciplinary way of looking at content and at the relationship between this and language as the major vehicle of cultural values and beliefs. However, it has often been regarded as its 'dumbing down' by those who support more

traditional types of syllabi, precisely because it generates an erosion of the canons on which the different language subjects pertaining to the realm of modern languages were traditionally built.

The growth of intercultural studies has also been contributing to the change in specialist language degrees. Intercultural studies originally developed in the business world. This is because of their original emphasis on the study of habits and behaviours of foreign cultures, knowledge of which was deemed to be important for improving business relations. However, intercultural studies have recently migrated from their original business realm to become increasingly part of the humanities and language studies by adopting a wider interdisciplinary approach to the study of the encounters between cultures (Cormeraie, 1996). As in the case of cultural studies, intercultural studies can arguably be considered to be an enrichment of the field of modern languages. This is because intercultural studies shift the focus from individual languages/cultures to the liminal spaces where different cultures meet (Phipps, 1998; Cohen, 2000). However, precisely because of their intrinsic interest in the encounters between cultures rather than in one or more aspects of a single culture, intercultural studies may also be perceived to be a threat to the traditional patterns of modern languages, a field that, as we know, has traditionally been organized around individual language subjects.

Conclusions

Modern languages form a complex field which is in state of flux. This field revolves around a series of long-established faultlines (like those between language pedagogy and content, and research and pedagogy) and new ones (like those

between offerings for degree specialists and those for ‘languages for all’ students). Concurrently, it also spreads, amoeba-like, into new spaces and configurations. These trends can be seen as the result of a number of wider socio-cultural forces. Among these, globalization features very highly. As we have seen, on the one hand, this phenomenon has had a negative impact on the world of modern languages through the dominance of English as the language of the new globalized world order. On the other, globalization has stimulated an interest in foreign languages and cultures through increasing travelling, the Internet and so on. This has encouraged a demand for language tuition. Concomitantly, other forces like marketization and evaluationism, have been generating institutional pressures which have been pulling modern languages in different directions. The decline of traditional degrees and a pull towards a conception of modern languages as a service field has sharpened the sense of crisis felt in and around it.

Arguably, the complex and fluctuating institutional and disciplinary identities of modern languages have an impact on the professional sense of those working in the field. Many questions arise with regards to the complex relationships between field patterns, their institutional realisations and the academics that are part of all of this. First of all, is there a field identity typical of modern languages today? If so, what are its components? What are the institutional structures within which the field finds its place? How are current field and institutional shifts being perceived and lived by the lecturing staff? Do they passively absorb them or resist them? Around what elements do modern languages academics construct their sense of self? What type of self is this? These are the questions the rest of this thesis is going to attempt

to answer. However, before doing this, it is necessary to illustrate the research model through which the empirical data has been collected and analysed.

***PART 2 – METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES: TOWARDS
THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH***

3 - Constructing a tripartite research model: the institutional, the field and the self domains

Introduction

This chapter opens the second part of the thesis. In this part I lay the theoretical foundations that underpin the empirical part of the research.

In this chapter I shall endeavour to build a framework of analysis that aims at tying together three different analytical domains: the institutional, the field and the self. The institutional domain (which I call ‘institutional identity’) refers to the interpretations academics give to a number of endogenous and exogenous factors. These include the organisational structures (departments, sections, schools and so on) in which they operate; the main activities in which academics are involved in their professional life (that is to say, teaching, research and administration); and those external socio-cultural forces (like market ones and general educational trends and policies) that influence the shape, aims and scope of institutional arrangements. The second domain (which I call ‘field identity’) is of an epistemological nature and pertains to the ways academics construct the current configurations of modern languages and the different language subjects of which the field is made. Finally, the self domain represents the ontological dimension. It concerns the way in which academics position themselves within institutional and epistemological discourses (that they themselves contribute to create) by identifying (or not) with parts of these discourses in relation to their personal histories, values and beliefs.

The interplay between these three domains constitutes the overall concept of academic identity. Academic identity is, therefore, an inclusive term that embodies the three dimensions above (the institutional and field identities, and the self). While, for the sake of analysis, I consider the different domains separately, in reality they can be seen as intertwining strands that impact on each other. Given the meso-level nature of the research, I consider the concept of academic identity as a group construct within a given institution, not as an individual one (even if the model I propose can be used to investigate an individual's sense of academic identity). In other words, in the concluding part of the thesis, I shall illustrate the overall sense of academic identity which emerges in each of the institutions perused, as the result of the interpretations, thoughts and feelings expressed by the respondents in each university.

Finally, I shall argue for the validity of the research model and its applicability to the empirical side of the research. The personal dimension is paramount in this model in two senses. In a first sense, as it constitutes the lens through which both institutional and field configurations are built. In line with the tenets of constructivist-realism (Delanty, 1997) that I embrace, I argue that institutional and field structures, while pre-existing and influencing individuals, only come alive through the interpretations that individuals give to them. In a second sense, as I have indicated, the personal dimension strictly pertains to the ways in which academics build their sense of self in positioning themselves in a set of institutional and field discourses (that they themselves contribute to create) in relation to their personal trajectories, values and beliefs. In sum, the personal dimension has a double significance in this thesis (one general, one more specific) and it constitutes the overall framework through which academic identities are constructed.

Defining identity: from postmodernism to constructivist-realism

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1995) defines identity, first and foremost, as:

...the quality or condition of being a specified person or thing.

As Outhwaite and Bottomore (1993) put it:

...derived from the Latin root idem, implying sameness and continuity, the term has a long history which examines permanence amid change and unity amid diversity. (pp. 270 and 271)

Both definitions emphasise the essentialist flavour of the word identity, as they point towards a core dimension of what we are in the flow of change (Dallari, 2000; della Porta, Greco and Szakolczai, 2000; Giaccardi and Magatti, 2001). According to Melucci (2000), identity consists in the ability of an actor to recognise him/herself and the possibility of being recognised by others. As such, it is both about self-recognition and recognition by others.

The concept of identity has been much debated over history and this is not the place to discuss the changes the concept has undergone in time. Suffice it to say that, overall, today social theory tends to reject, even if in different degrees and shades, any essentialist model of it (Hall and du Gay, 1996; du Gay, Evans and Redman, 2000). Over the last twenty years or so, some extreme forms of this rejection have found their embodiment in some of the strongest versions of postmodernism. As Delanty (1999) pointedly argues, postmodernism:

...has shown how identities are multiple, unstable and interlocking. (p.114)

This has brought about, with its total denial of agency, *an empty anti-humanism*. (ibidem: p.113). At best, the word 'identity', in its strongest sense, has lost much of its significance, as it relates to conditions of permanency that no longer exist in a world where the points of reference have multiplied (Melucci, 1991). Moreover, once traditional social roles have been eroded, identities become a project to be fulfilled through making choices among the different possibilities that are put in front of us. This makes any sense of identity totally provisional and changeable (Baumann, 1993; Giaccardi and Magatti, ibidem).

Bearing in mind the views that have been sketched above, it is arguable that, positively, postmodernism has encouraged a multi-faceted notion of identity. No longer a homogenous entity, identity can be conceived as the result of the several points of reference with which each of us has to measure him/herself in an increasingly complex world where traditional certainties no longer exist. Such an identity is multiple. It is made up of intertwined layers that relate to the diversified sense of belonging and multifarious roles that each of us embodies. In this sense, it would be impossible to talk about an identity at all, as this would be made of fragments that lack any sense of permanency, coherence, purpose and agency (Mouzelis, 1995; O' Neill, 1995; Delanty, ibidem).

In the course of this thesis, I wish to reject such postmodernist arguments, in favour of a more 'constructivist-realist' model of identity (Delanty, 1997), that is to say a model that derives from the interplay between social realism (Bhaskar, 1975; Alexander, Giesen, Münch and Smelser, 1987; Colomy, 1992; Mouzelis, ibidem; Byrne, 1998;

Archer, 1995, 1996, 2000; Sayer, 2000), and constructivism (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

According to Taylor, Barr and Steele (2002), social realism implies that:

...there is a material world beyond intellectual theorisation... such theorisation only has relevance and meaning if it is related to this material reality. (p. 11)

Sayer (ibidem) points out that social realism is usually mistaken for a 'foundationalist' theory that makes claims to Truth, as it is thought to revolve around the idea that there is a world 'out there' that is independent of our act of knowing it. Contextualised explanation is perceived to be the hallmark of social realism. As in postmodernism, reality remains multiple. There is not one 'reality', but many of them. However, such 'realities' are not simply the result of mental or linguistic constructions. They are traversed by and embedded in specific socio-historical contexts. Such contexts are understood and *constructed* through acts of interpretations. These acts are a part of these contexts, while, at the same time, becoming constitutive of them. In a sense, contexts frame interpretations, but interpretations contribute to construct, in turn, contexts.

Hermeneutics is, therefore, at the heart of the constructivist-realist project (Bhaskar, Archer, Collier, Lawson and Norrie, 1998; Sayer, 2000; Lopez and Potter, 2001). As Sayer puts it:

...social phenomena are intrinsically meaningful, and hence that meaning is not only externally descriptive of them but constitutive of them... Meaning has to be understood, it cannot be measured or counted, and hence there is always an interpretive or hermeneutic element in social science. (p.17)

Basing their theories on a view of a contextualised, interpretive knowledge, social realists argue in favour of a model of identity that is dependent on its positioning within specific social frameworks.

In line with the above, I wish to embrace, in the course of the thesis, a notion of identity that is made up of different domains that result from the interpretations of the roles and activities people play within the various social contexts in which they operate. Such a multi-layered model takes into account the theoretical frameworks proposed by authors like Giddens (1991), De Leonardis (1990), Elias (1987), Taylor, 1989; Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), Archer (1995, 1996, 2000), Weick (1995), Jenkins (1996), Jervis (1997), Delanty (1997), Dubar (1998), Harré and van Lagenhove (1999); Midgely (2001); Bodei (2002). These scholars, building on the work of Mead (1967), distinguish between different intertwined levels of identity that reflect the interaction between social structures and individual forces. Such a process usually goes under the name of ‘structuration’ (even if not all the authors cited above would identify themselves with this term).

Without going into the intricacies of the concept of structuration, in the course of the thesis, I shall engage with the view that identities are formed in the continuous, mutually influencing interplay between individuals and social structures. The latter are perceived as entities ‘out there’ with which people have to contend continuously in the construction of their identity, in a kind of spiralling movement that goes from society to the individual, back to society and so on (Melucci, *ibidem*). This model, rather than suggesting the supremacy of structures over people, or vice versa, calls for some finer distinctions in theoretical and empirical thinking that make the search for a

balance between structures and individuals a task possible to perform. Structures and individuals continuously impact on each other and, in doing so, create the possibility for the continuous, evolving re-creation of individuals' sense of identity.

Having established the main tenets of constructivist-realism, and before illustrating the theoretical model that underpins the empirical side of the research, I wish to examine, however briefly, Archer's ideas on structuration. These are important in that they give conceptual depth to the model supporting the empirical part of the research.

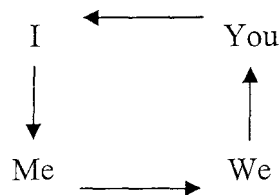
Between structures and individuals: Archer's model of identity

Archer (1995, 1996 and 2000) is one of the major proponents of 'social realism' of which she has given a highly sophisticated version. She takes the 'structuration theory' (Giddens, 1991) as her point of departure but pushes it to make some further theoretical distinctions. In an attempt to overcome both the traps of directionality (from society to subject) of much of classical sociology and the postmodern dissolution of the subject, she adopts what she calls a 'morphogenetic' approach to the problem of the interrelationship between 'structure' and 'subject'. In her own words (2000):

...morphogenesis works by employing analytical dualism to delineate cycles of structural conditioning, social interaction and structural elaboration over time.
(p. 306)

The word 'cycles' is very important in her scheme of things. She argues for evolving forms of human beings and social structures, as they continuously influence each other. In calling for this complex relationship, she makes distinctions in an attempt to overcome all forms of dualism. She thus proposes a patterning of personal identity

that consists of distinctive but interrelated strata: the ‘I’ (the basic continuous sense of self-consciousness that one nourishes throughout one’s life), the ‘Me’ (what the ‘I’ discovers through reflecting on itself as an entity that is involuntarily positioned within certain given social structures), the ‘We’ (that is the sense of corporate agency the individual longs for in its attempt to overcome, with the help of other human beings, the limitations of the ‘Me’), and, finally the ‘You’ (the projective self, so to speak, ‘the maker of the future [that] is constantly subject to inner deliberation about the continuity of its commitment’ in its inner conversations with the ‘I’). Visually, Archer’s (2000) theory can be represented in the following way:



Personal identity, therefore, becomes something an individual strives for both in talking with him/herself and in engaging in action with other individuals who share the same life chances, and are willing to overcome these. Agency is conceived of as a collective enterprise that is achieved through an individual’s continuous acts of reflection on him/herself as part of a social order that s/he intends to overcome. Being human, for Archer, lies in the ability to move from *role-taking* (an almost passive absorption of those roles society assigns us) to *role-making* (the active construction of our selves through active engagement with society) (ibidem).

In spite of some of the inevitable rigidity of any scheme that attempts to capture the complex relationship between society and the individual, it is in the distinctions that

Archer makes that the philosophical and, arguably, methodological value of her work lies. Philosophically, Archer's work helps us to relate the ever-floating self of much of postmodernism to social structures. In this sense, it contributes to current debates around identity by those who want to both escape the chaotic whirlwinds of much postmodernism and the determinism of much classical sociology. Methodologically, it gives us some solid tools for analysing the relationship we entertain with the world that surrounds us.

As Parker (2000) points out, in commenting about Archer's work:

...Archer puts the elements of social theory through a process of 'decompression' to isolate the relatively autonomous elements of social reality. 'Autonomy' means that they can exercise an independent influence on the process of structuration, but 'relativity' means that this influence operates through relations of dependence upon the other relatively autonomous elements. So, given time, each is conditioned and conditions. Subjects are re-centred and structures re-instated; but it is precisely because very strong claims are made for each that sole responsibility for outcomes cannot be attributed to either. (p. 84)

What we are dealing with here is a theoretical model that, in the first instance, conceives of subjects not as free-floating, autonomous elements but rather as firmly rooted within structures. It is in their reciprocal, continuous interaction that people and structures evolve and change. However, change has limitations. As Parker (ibidem) further puts it:

...this social theoretical principle means, at any given moment, change is possible but not completely random. (p.121)

This is not in line with some extreme forms of postmodernism that tend to abstract the individual from the social forces around him/her. Structures do have an impact on individual action.

In agreement with the theoretical thought of sociologists like Giddens (ibidem), Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), and Archer (2000), I wish to embrace a constructivist-realist model (Delanty, 1997) that takes into account the influence of structural patterns onto identity formation. According to this, there are structural limitations to people's task of identity construction. These are inescapable but can be resisted and, to a point, changed through people's actions. Identities are, therefore, no longer limitless, as some extreme forms of postmodernism suggest, but are bound, to a significant extent, by the social structures surrounding us. As we interact with these, it is through our continuous process of attaching meaning (or not) to structures that we build our sense of identity and possibly contribute to changing 'reality'.

Given the usefulness of Archer's (2000) model, I wish to adopt it in my attempt to construct a theoretical framework for the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data gathered during the field research. This framework aims at being flexible enough to allow for many levels of analysis, while trying to link these in different ways. However, before turning to this, I would like to illustrate, however briefly, the ways the question of academic identity have been dealt with in the literature on the English higher education system. This will help in framing my arguments within a historical framework.

The treatment of academic identity in the literature on higher education

In a climate of continuous change in the British higher education system (and well beyond it), there is a growing literature on the concept of academic identity, that is to say the ways in which academic roles are changing within the current shifts in political and cultural climate, and how such shifts are viewed by the academics

themselves. Some scholars (Halsey, 1992; Smyth, 1995; Altbach, 1996; Välimaa, 1998; Marginson, 2000; McNay, 2000; Strathern, 2000; Allard, Haarscher and Puig de la Bellacasa, 2001; Robertson and Bond, 2001; Barnett, 1994, 2003; Trowler, 2002) have directed their attention towards the increasing fragmentation of the academic roles beyond researching and teaching, as the result of the managerial and audit regimes that have been affecting the university systems around the world (Strathern, *ibidem*). The focus is mainly on the growing bureaucratic tasks that lecturers have to carry out daily.

Recently, there has been a remarkable interest in the way academics view and construct their academic life. Many scholars have tried to understand how people make sense of the academic reality surrounding them. The focus and scope of this kind of research is varied. It ranges from a whole national university system (Bourdieu, 1988; Clark, 1997; Moscati, 1997; Adams, 1998; Kogan, Bauer, Bleiklie and Henkel, 2000; Henkel, 2000; Rowland, 2000; Newton, 2000; Wyn, Acker and Richards, 2000; Samuelowicz and Bain, 2001), to that of disciplinary fields (Evans, 1988, 1993; Becher and Trowler, 2001), to single institutions (Trowler, 1998, Walker, 2001) and/or current changes in education (Cuthbert, 1996; Nixon, 1996; Frost and Taylor, 1996; Adams, 1998; Taylor, Gough, Bundrock and Winter, 1998; Trowler, 1998; Martin, 1999; Taylor, 1999; Henkel, 2000; Becher and Trowler, 2001). Broadly speaking, all these works share a methodological preference for a qualitative approach. This is especially evident in the large use that is made of interviews. The emerging picture is one that reflects the lecturers' interpretations of their own professional experiences within academia. However, often the research results cannot be immediately generalised, as they are limited to localised settings or disciplinary

areas. Nevertheless, their value lies in the fact that the authors try to capture the meanings people attach to structural contexts and events.

It is to this kind of tradition that the work by Evans (1988) on modern languages belongs. And it is to this type of tradition that this piece of research belongs too. I attempt to revisit the whole field of modern languages at both the epistemological and ontological levels. Like Evans (*ibidem*), I am interested in shapes, views and perceptions rather than quantities. The main questions that lie at the basis of this thesis are: what are people's thoughts and reactions to the crisis of traditional BAs in modern languages and the formation of new degrees based on the principles of cultural studies, for instance? How much adjustment, professional and personal, do they have to make in having to work with people of other disciplines? Do they see this as a threat to or an enhancement of their professional and personal identities? How do people interpret the mushrooming of language centres and institution-wide language programmes? Do they perceive them as a symptom of disciplinary growth or as its demise in the sense of it becoming a simple add-on service to other departments? Questions of this kind need to be asked and answered if we want to make sense of the direction (if any) in which the field and its scholars are going. It is through these questions and the theoretical model that I construct in my attempt to answer them that I am aiming at adding to Evans' research, while contributing to the debate about the nature and scope of academic identity in general.

Academic identities and selves

Taking inspiration from the model proposed by Välimaa (1998), I wish to argue that there are different though intertwining domains that make up lecturers' academic

identity: the institutional, the field and the self. These domains tell a story about the place people occupy as individuals within given educational contexts, and the meanings they attach to such positions. However, each domain is not isolated from the others but is influenced by and, in turn, influences them.

Coming to the model I have adopted, the institutional domain is the outermost one in that it represents the wider socio-historical forces affecting the life of individual academics. As I have mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, this domain is made up of both endogenous and exogenous factors. First of all, it includes the interpretations people give of the array of institutional arrangements within which they operate. These consist of wider institutional patterns, departmental cultures, and the sense of 'professionalism' lecturers have *vis à vis* their own concept of what their work is, and those definitions of professionalism that other agencies (like quality assurance ones) give it. Concurrently, the institutional domain comprises the sense lecturers make of the main professional roles that they carry out within their own institution. These are teaching, research and administration.

The notion of 'roles' is an important one in arguing about institutional identities. As De Leonardis (1990) puts it, the role of an individual acts as a

...synthesis between social normativity and individual subjectivity, between the social actor and the imperatives of a given system¹. (p. 32)

In other words, roles act as points of junction between an individual and society at large. Role-identities are institutionalised and institutionalising, in the sense that they represent the socially recognised masks, to put it in Goffman's terms (1974 and 1990), through which individuals interact in and with the world. Role-identities can thus be

considered patterned sets of expectations that individuals share within a given socio-cultural context. They give form to people's experience and allow for some predictability in social encounters.

However, it is arguable that roles are effectively only names, labels that we give to our experience in order to give it order. When they are 'lived', they become social ones. They acquire a unique life of their own through the interpretations that people give of them and the actions that these, in turn, engender. In this sense, roles can be defined as the interface between the way we see ourselves acting in a given institutional context and the perceptions others have of us. Roles are both about external expectations and the meanings we ascribe to these (Lahire, 1998).

The second domain in our model is the field one. This is constructed on the borderline between the notions of a disciplinary field as it has been historically constructed, its realisation within a particular institutional setting (departments, sections, programmes and so on) and the interpretation that individual academics give to it (Clark, 1997; Becher, 1989; Becher and Trowler, 2001). In our case, field identity refers to the various sets of discourses defining modern languages. Within this category, a distinction is made between the overall 'field' of modern languages and its 'language subjects' (French, German, Italian and so on). The field can therefore be considered the general disciplinary framework that covers all of these. Thus, in dealing with the 'field identity' domain, I shall tackle the nature, aims and scope of modern languages as a whole, and those of the individual language subjects. The category also includes issues concerning interdisciplinarity and the dichotomy which exists between language and content teaching.

Finally, the third domain is the self one. This is of an ontological nature, as it embodies the biographical elements of an individual. As such, the self dimension encloses but goes beyond both the particular socially ascribed role-identities and the immediate interpretations people give of these. It refers to the inner self of an individual, that is to say the dynamically changing repository of the sense s/he makes of his/her experiences throughout life. The notion of self adds a personal and historical dimension to the meanings people ascribe to things and events (Elster, 1986; Taylor 1989; Rose, 1996; Smorti, 1997; Shrag, 1997; Baumeister, 1999). It represents their sense-making capacity in terms of the way in which they perceive their selves within certain structures. As such, it refers to people's ability to personalise social expectations embodied in roles and relate these to their whole experience as human beings. In other words, it points to the sense academics make of *themselves*, as both professionals and people, as they interact with the reality 'out there' that imposes certain restrictions on them.

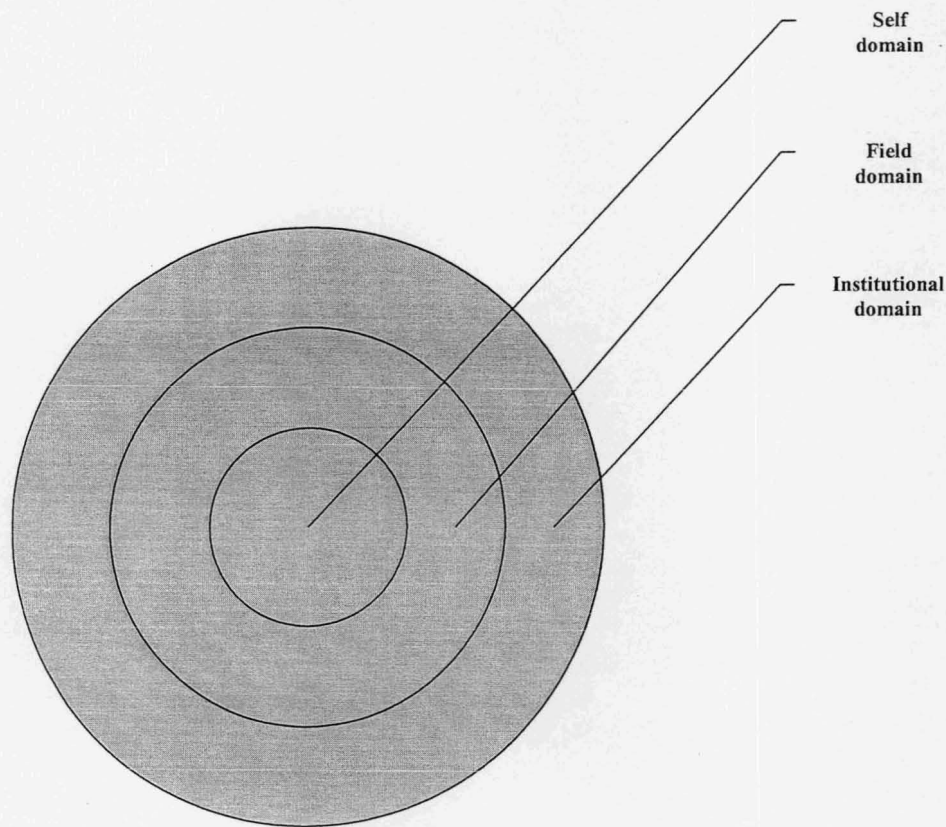
The self is a complex concept and is made up of several elements. In the first place, it represents the ways in which academics position themselves within and identify (or not) with certain elements of both the institutional and field structures. The self also embodies the dimension of 'voice'. This refers to the sense people have of their perceived ability (or inability) to have a say in institutional and disciplinary matters along with a sense of agentic self in terms of possible changes. Moreover, it indicates the possible compensatory strategies that they may adopt in the case of a felt lack of 'voice'. It also includes the way lecturers look at their possible future developments in the light of their current institutional and disciplinary position and the route they have gone through in their careers.

The importance of the concept of self in any discussion of and about academic identities resides in the opportunity it affords us to understand the historically-formed personal dimensions that we, as individuals, inject into our professional lives. It brings individuality, in all its facets, into the arena. It signals the individual's potential sense of creativity (or depletion of it) hidden behind both institutional and disciplinary structures. It also assists in making sense of the more personal meanings modern languages lecturers assign to their professional lives in relation to their personal histories, values and beliefs.

The three-dimensional pattern I have sketched above allows for a view of identity that is individual and collective, subjective and objective, biographical and structural (Dubar, *ibidem*). This notion acquires a multiple nature and becomes both reflective and projective.

Building the analytical model

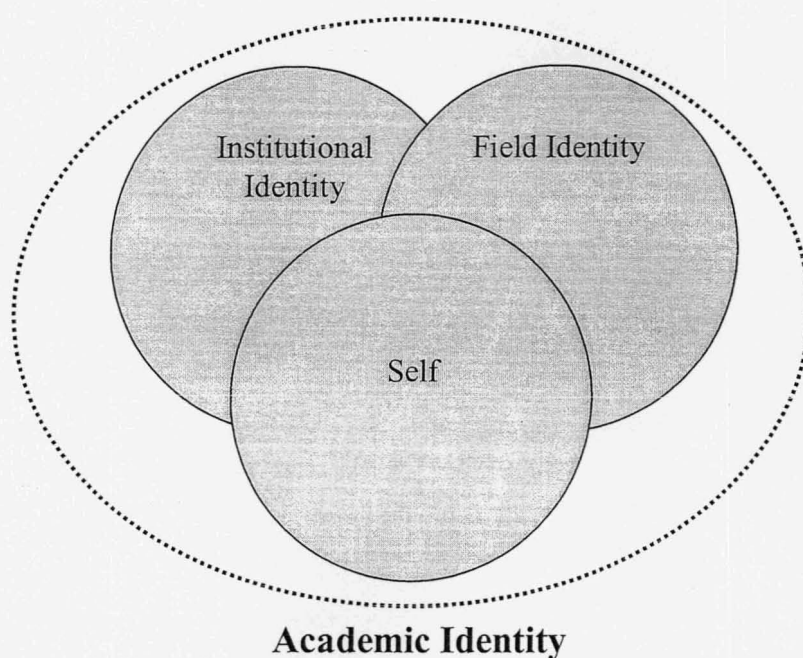
In line with the theoretical assumption above, the model of analysis will have a basic tripartite structure. It includes, as we have seen, the institutional, the field and the self domains. It represents both the framework through which the empirical research is organised and the analytical structure of the data gathered. It can be represented visually in the following way:



Such a distribution of the different layers is not casual but reflects the theoretical assumptions underpinning the empirical research. As can be seen, the institutional domain is the outer one, the disciplinary the middle and the self the central one.

The centrality of the self domain is representative of the importance of lecturers' personal interpretations and ideas throughout the whole thesis. As I have indicated, it is only through these interpretations that institutional and epistemological structures come to life. Moreover, the centrality of the self domain also points towards the relatively stable and resistant nature of the self in relation to the structures that surround it. The self domain realises itself at two levels. First of all, it represents the understanding and re-creation lecturers give of current discourses typical of modern

languages, in relation (but not exclusively) to given institutional and disciplinary settings. At the same time, at a deeper level, it points to the way in which the respondents position themselves within such discourses in constructing their sense of self with regards to their personal values, perceptions and projected wishes. Bearing this in mind, the model above can thus be re-worked:



In line with this, the following distinctions can be made. For a start, the difference is drawn between institutional and field identity. These refer, in turn, to the way in which the lecturers make sense and re-create discourses in and around the institutional settings in which they work and the sense they make of the field itself. The word *identity* therefore signals the interpretations academics assign to the structural frameworks within which they operate. It represents the 'objective' 'Me' in Archer's (2000) terms, the cognitive aspect of things. At the interface between these two domains, one finds the self. This indicates the way in which individuals position themselves within institutional and disciplinary discourses in relation to their personal history, their projected futures. It represents the affective side that people inject into

their professional life. These three dimensions (institutional identity, field identity and self) constitute, in their interplay, the overall academic identity of an institution. Of course, as I shall argue in chapter 10, this model is not static. Its three dimensions vary flexibly according to the three different institutional contexts under perusal and is, therefore, a useful visual devise to understand the interplay between the self and the different institutional and disciplinary forces in the construction of an overall academic identity. In the shape and form I have just illustrated, this theoretical model guided the field research in all its stages: from data collection to data interpretation and reporting.

Conclusions

In the course of this chapter, I have, first of all, illustrated current debates about the concept of identity. In line with the tenets of constructivist-realism, I have argued for a tripartite model of academic identity that is firmly grounded within structures. This model consists of both institutional and field identities, and the self.

In the next chapter, I make use of the model in order to illustrate the empirical research in detail. In other words, I attempt to illustrate the methodological tools I used for the gathering and analysis of the data.

4 - Building up the empirical research: from the theoretical model to the interviewing act

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to link the speculative part of the research with the empirical part. Starting from the notion of identity and self that I argued for in chapter 3, I illustrate how the theoretical model that I sketched out was 'translated' into a series of interview questions. Consequently, I endeavour to exemplify how these questions were ordered both in a profiling document and an interview checklist. The relative structure, merits and advantages of each of these is assessed. Additionally, I give some brief information about the institutions that are the object of analysis, the interviewees and the process of interviewing. Some ethical questions about the field research are also raised, along with proposed solutions. All this constitutes the background against which to read the data analysis and interpretation in the third part of the thesis.

From the theoretical model to the profiling document

In chapter 3, I argued for a composite model of academic identity that is based on three domains: the institutional identity, the field identity and the self. Academic identities are both cognitive *and* affective constructs that derive from an individual academic's interpretation of, positioning within, and identification (or lack of it) with institutional and field structures. The meanings that academics build around structures are, therefore, paramount in this thesis.

Any research that, like the present one, attempts to deal with meanings is by definition qualitative in character. If one wants to get access to patterns of meanings through which academics construct the institutional and field identities within which they operate, the interviewing tool is arguably one of the most apt.

With the aim in mind of generating interview questions for the research, these, rather than being haphazardly created, were the result of a process of elaboration of the research model. This can be visualised in the following way:



The model played a major role in generating and ordering interview questions. Thus, for instance, some of these were related to the institutional layer and were the result of reflecting on the different academic identities (like teaching, researching, administration, management). Such questions were of the closed kind, in that they aimed at obtaining factual background information. Taking teaching as an example, this type of question would aim at uncovering the time an academic spends on this particular activity in an average week and/or charting the areas s/he would cover in his/her teaching. However, more complex, open questions were also generated around the interplay between the structural and the personal. Thus, still using teaching as an example, questions would attempt to examine the sense people make of their teaching in terms of personal satisfaction and reward.

This way of generating questions seemed initially to be trouble-free until the questions were put to the test with two academics who acted as samplers. Two problems then became immediately apparent. Firstly, the model would engender far too many questions to make any interview interaction manageable with busy academics. Secondly, questions were an untidy mixture of both closed and open ones. It was therefore deemed important both to reduce their number and tidy them up in an effective way. Thus, in the first instance, following the principles of economy and effectiveness, questions that were considered to be repetitive and/or not in line with the core research questions were eliminated. The remaining ones were consequently ordered into two different categories: closed-factual and open-interpretive. Finally, I decided that the closed-factual ones would be organised into a profiling document, thus leaving those of an interpretive kind to the interview act.

The profiling document

The aim of the profiling document (see Appendix 2) was to collect all those factual pieces of information about an individual's academic life. The rationale behind the formulation of the categories and questions in the profiling document was to gain as much information as possible about an individual's academic practices. The categories derived from a number of sources: consulting colleagues at different degrees of seniority about the tasks in which they have normally been involved in their work routines and their careers; the literature about the changing roles of academics in today's society (like, for instance, Henkel [2000] and Becher and Trowler [2001]); and, finally, from my own experience. In general, most interviewees answered most questions. Only a couple of them were puzzled by the category 'networking' (section 2, category 8), as they were not sure about the meaning of it.

However, this was clarified either via e-mail or in the course of the interview. Generally speaking, people were positive about the document, in spite of its length. Some of them commented that filling it in had been a sobering exercise in that it clarified for them the wide scope of activities in which academics are engaged today.

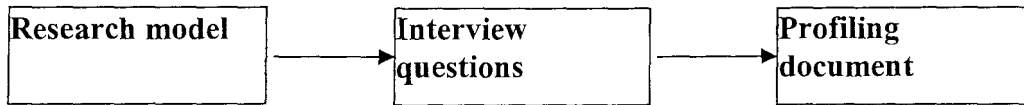
The profiling document consists of eight pages and is divided into two sections containing twenty-seven questions in total. Some questions simply asked the respondent to fill in some details about their personal and/or academic life. Some others required a 'yes/no' reply. In this case the subjects are asked to qualify their response, when replying positively. Thus, section A is made up of six questions and deals with the interviewee's biographical details such as name, job title, number of years spent in his/her current institution, along with the individual's educational career and past work experience. The intention behind this section was to learn both about academics' biographical data and their study and career paths. Information of this kind was deemed to be useful when trying to capture general patterns in terms of similarities among people working in the same professional environment. Also, I thought such data would help in assessing possible points of harmony (or friction) between people's past professional growth and their current working practices, when this was not clear from the interviewees.

Section B is organised into two sub-sections. In the first one the prospective interviewee is asked to rank the different activities in which academics are typically engaged in decreasing order (from the one in which s/he is engaged most to the one in which s/he spends the least of his/her time). The second sub-section is made up of five categories, each dedicated to one of the activity areas outlined above. The questions

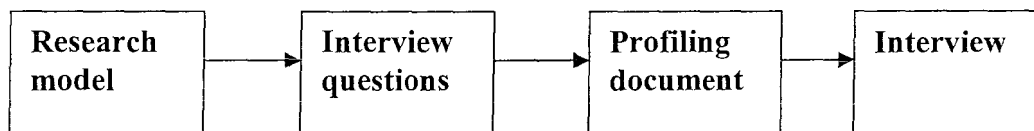
in this section aimed at taking a snapshot of individuals' current working practices. This information was deemed to be useful in two ways: firstly, when coming to assess, with a certain degree of precision, the activities people carry out daily; secondly, when perusing whether their teaching and research interests have changed over time and what forms of co-operation (if any) people engage in with colleagues within their immediate working environment and beyond. This kind of data was important for understanding potential links between people's past and present activities, and the opportunities academics are given (or not) to further their interests and needs, with the possible institutional support, both on their own and in collaboration with their colleagues. Data of this kind are important when evaluating people's sense of self in relation to their work.

Even if the profiling document eventually had none of the roles and status of a questionnaire, its advantages were multiple. In the first instance, as has already been mentioned, it was a very effective and economic way of gathering valuable data of a factual nature, thus leaving space for the elicitation of meaning during the interview stage. The information gathered was of the greatest assistance when preparing for the interview proper. Secondly, whenever needed, the replies to the profiling document acted as a checking device during the data analysis stage. However, the data in the interview profiles were never the major basis for any argument put forward in the thesis. Interviews were. This is why there is no specific analysis of the profiling documents in the course of this work. The information contained in the profiling document in some way performed the role of a kind of mildly quantitative support to the less structured replies given during the interviews.

Visually, the introduction of the profiling document adds an extra dimension in the chart outlined:



Having established how the profiling document enriched the research process, it is important to remember that the main aim of this research is to capture meanings and contours. For this reason, the use of semi-structured interviews was adopted. By adding the interview element to the chart, it assumes the following form:



It is now to the philosophical underpinnings of these that I briefly want to turn. I shall consequently illustrate the typical interview structure that was used in the course of the field research.

Choosing the interview type: the semi-structured interview

Most of the literature on research methods tends to place interviews at the junction point between quantitative and qualitative research. Different kinds of interviews embody these two traditional methods in different forms and shades. It is the level of formality of an interview that positions it, by and large, at a certain point on the quantitative/qualitative continuum. Cohen and Manion (1994) implicitly support this

by classifying the different kinds of interviews according to their level of formality. In the authors' view, there is a whole gamut of interview types:

[a] ...*formal interview* [is one] in which a set of questions are asked and the answers recorded on a standardised schedule; ...*less formal interviews* in which the interviewer is free to modify the sequence of questions, change the wording, explain them or add to them; ...*the completely informal interview* where the interviewer may have a number of key issues which she raises in conversational style instead of having a set questionnaire. Beyond this point is located the *non-directive interview* in which the interviewer takes on a subordinate role. (p. 271)

As was previously stated, this piece of research deals with clusters of meanings. Therefore, this inevitably calls for a type of interview that is more oriented towards the unstructured end of the spectrum. Looking for meanings always requires interpretation. In this sense it is arguable that, in giving shape to the interview process, a model that is dialogic in character is desirable.

It is for this reason that semi-structured interviews were used. As the name suggests, these fall between the two major interview types: the structured and the unstructured.

As Fontana and Frey (2000) put it:

...*in structured interviewing, the interviewer asks all respondents the same series of pre-established questions with a limited set of response categories. There is generally little room for variation in responses, except where open-ended questions (which are infrequent) may be used. The interviewer records the responses according to a coding scheme that has already been established by the project director or research supervisor.* (p. 649)

Strict control over the interviewing process, homogeneity in the kinds of questions asked for all the interviewees and little flexibility are the main characteristics of this kind of interview. On the other hand, always according to the authors above, the unstructured ones are qualitative in nature in that they:

...can provide a greater breadth of data than the other types... [Moreover, they require]... the establishment of a human-to-human relation with the respondent and the desire to understand rather than to explain. (p. 652, 653)

However, as Scheurich (1997) says, given their open-ended nature, qualitative questions can be:

...persistently slippery, unstable, and ambiguous from person to person, from situation to situation, from time to time. (p. 62)

As mentioned above, the kind of interview that was chosen for the present research falls in between these two extremes and, therefore, qualifies as 'semi-structured'. Because it aims at uncovering meanings, it has a quality of openness about it that is typical of unstructured interviews. Interviewees are allowed to elaborate on their thoughts almost freely. However, I say 'almost' because, unlike unstructured interviews, the semi-structured type has some patterns to it. This, to a point, limits the total free-floating thoughts of the interviewees. In this empirical research, the first pattern was determined by establishing the broad areas that the interviewer deemed should be covered during the interview. It was important that all interviewees expressed their thoughts within the three domains represented in the theoretical model (institutional, field and personal). Time constitutes a second pattern. Unlike the case of many unstructured interviews, a time limit was allocated to each interview. This was of approximately thirty to sixty minutes. Although, during the interaction, respondents were left free to elaborate on themes which were of more importance or relevance to them, they were stopped, if it was felt that too much time was being dedicated to a single issue at the expenses of others. An element of guidance was therefore present.

However, it is important to stress that the structure present in all interviews did not, overall, interfere with the expression of thoughts and feelings on the part of the interviewees. This, combined with the fact the interviewer (the researcher) was himself a modern languages specialist, transformed, in a way, the interviews into inter-views. It is to this concept that we are now going to turn our attention.

Interviews as inter-views

One of the most interesting interview models that have been proposed over the last ten years is the one constructed by Kvale (1996). He suggests that one should look at interviews as *inter-views*. In the words of the author:

...the qualitative research interview is a construction site of knowledge. An interview is literally an inter-view, an inter change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest. (p. 2).

Kvale links inter-views to the traveller metaphor:

...[this] understands the interviewer as a traveller on a journey that leads to a tale to be told upon returning home. The traveller wanders through the landscape and enters into conversation with the people encountered... The journey may not only lead to new knowledge; the travel may change as well. The journey might instigate a process of reflection that leads the interviewer to new ways of self-understanding... Through conversations, the traveller can also lead others to new understanding and insight as they, through their own story-telling may come to reflect on previously natural-seeming matters of course in their culture. (p. 4).

There are clear philosophical assumptions underlying all this. These loosely relate to the paradigm that informs different schools of thought such as 'transformative conversation' (Rorty, 1992), 'hermeneutics' (Ricouer, 1971; Gadamer, 1975), 'knowledge as narrative' (Lyotard, 1984), 'knowledge as context' (Mishler, 1986), 'phenomenology' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), 'social constructionism' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), 'dialogism' (Bakhtin, 1996), 'sense-making' (Weick, 1995)

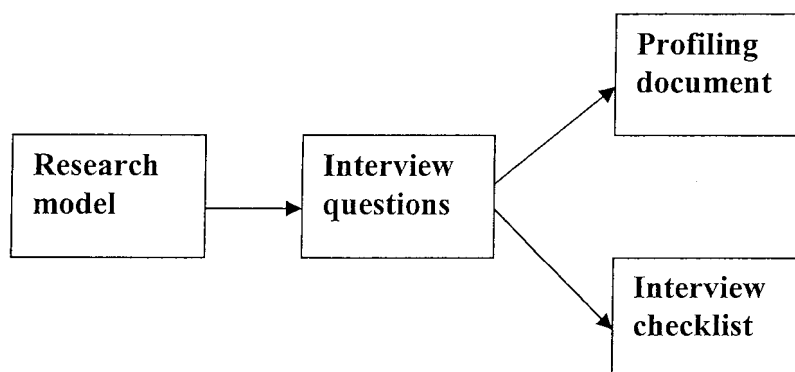
'positioning theory' (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999) and, finally, 'knowledge as travel' (Clifford, 1997). All these authors, in spite of the great variety in terms of methods and approaches they propose, stress the necessity for a shift from a view of 'reality' as an objective phenomenon to the social construction of it as the result of the interaction of subjects with and within given contexts. In this perspective, the notion of 'objective' knowledge loses strength to make space for 'dialogic knowledge', that is knowledge that is built in the inter-space between interactants. Here description and interpretation are the two major tools of examining and constructing the world at one and the same time. Moreover, because of their dialogic nature, inter-views become means of self-understanding for both parties involved (interviewer and interviewee). Through conversation and dialogue, inter-views develop into a pedagogical tool that not only helps to enrich the understanding of the issues under perusal, but, as importantly, allows the participants to arrive at a better understanding of themselves both as professionals and people. As I say in the concluding chapter of this thesis, for me this process of self-understanding has certainly been one of the most valuable aspects of this doctoral work.

In spite of the semi-structured nature of the interviews adopted for the field research, it is arguable that such interviews may be conceived of as 'inter-views'. This is, first and foremost, because both the interviewer and interviewees were peers, in the sense they all belonged to the world of modern languages. It is arguable that the interview encounter was a conversation among peers. Even if I abstained from making personal comments on the issues that were being discussed in order not to influence the respondents' opinions, there was a shared sense of intimacy with the matters at hand. As the interviews unfolded, this generated an increasing understanding of the problems tackled for all parties involved. The sense of knowledge intimacy with

regard to the subject matter also produced a sense of trust between interviewer and interviewees. This shared sense of purpose allowed for the interviewees to be in a fairly relaxed frame of mind during the interview act. In turn, this resulted in the replies having a quality of openness and a strong personal touch about them that, eventually, increased the quality of responses in terms of meaning generation and interpretation.

The interviewing document

The original notion of inter-views, as advocated by Kvale (1996), requires that these should be only minimally pre-arranged in order to give as much space as possible to the flow of thoughts occurring in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. Nevertheless, in line with the aims and scope of the research, the need for structure, however minimally conceived, was deemed necessary for the interviewing act. However, instead of a tightly structured sequence of questions, a simple interview checklist was produced. This can be visually represented as follows:



The use of a checklist has at least three main advantages. For a start, it does not pin either the interviewer or the interviewee down to a set of pre-defined questions. This consequently allows for thoughts, feelings and associations to emerge freely and spontaneously. Secondly, it has the practical advantage of acting as a reminder for the interviewer of the areas to be covered during the interaction. Moreover, if applied to

all interviews flexibly, it can help, to a point, in making all these comparable at the analysis stage. This can be achieved only if certain key topics and issues are touched on in all cases. The interview checklist adopted (see Appendix 2) resulted from a process of careful screening, refining and ordering of those qualitative questions that had resulted from the research model. The questions were translated into bullet-points and then structured into a proper interview document. This consists of three parts: briefing, interview proper and de-briefing.

The briefing section covers a set of instructions and information to be given to the interviewee prior to the interview. The function of briefing is twofold: in the first place, it helps to put the interviewees 'in the picture', so to speak, by giving them the opportunity to ask for further clarifications about the research project, in case they still harbour doubts or are confused about it. Secondly, it allows the interviewer to inform the interviewee of the overall structure of the interviewing encounter. The interviewer's aims are briefly outlined, along with practicalities such as taping, length of the interview, issues of anonymity, and the possibility of the interviewee checking the interview typescript prior to its analysis. The briefing part is followed by the interview proper.

The interview is divided into four sections. The first deals with the historical relationship the interviewee entertains with his/her subject (French, German and so on). The second concentrates on the interviewee's definition of his/her subject, both within and without his/her own institutional boundaries. The third tackles his/her relationship to the field of modern languages as a whole. Finally, the fourth relates mainly to issues concerning the interviewee's perception of his/her institutional

roles. Each of these four parts consists of a number of 'pegs' around which the interview takes shape. As it has been pointed out, no precise question is pre-set in order to give both the interviewer and the interviewee considerable space for thought and manoeuvre. The interviewer's task is simply to build gently on the responses given by his interlocutors in order to help them clarify meanings and thoughts, and steer the interview through the different stages.

Re-adapting Kvale's typology (*ibidem*), these are the main types of questions adopted: a) introducing questions, whose aim is to introduce a topic; b) follow up, probing and interpreting ones, whose purpose is to obtain clarification from the interviewee through a persistent, curious attitude on the part of the interviewer; c) direct and indirect ones, in which the interviewer attempts to obtain more precise pieces of information in a direct or more oblique way; d) finally, structuring ones, whose aim is to signal when a topic has been exhausted and it is time to change to a new one. However, as it has already been indicated, the type and sequence of questions used in the different parts of the interview is not pre-planned but emerges through the interview interaction.

The interview ends with a de-briefing section. The aim of this is manifold. In the first instance, it allows the interviewer to re-cap, in the presence of the interviewee, the main ideas that emerged during the interview, thus giving the respondent the possibility of clarifying certain points and/or add further ones. Secondly, it gives the interviewee the opportunity to ask further questions on the research project that had been withheld up until that moment in order not to influence the interview process too much. Thirdly, it serves the purpose of obtaining feed-back on the interview process

itself. This is important in that it usually helps the interviewer to improve the quality of upcoming interviews.

Having now dealt with the nature and type of interviews chosen, the next step is to tackle issues relating to the choice of both institutions and interviewees, along with the practicalities involved in obtaining the respondents' co-operation.

Choosing the institutions and respondents

In pursuing the task of choosing the institutions for the empirical research, three typically urban English universities that belong to the same catchment area were chosen. This was done both for practical and methodological reasons. At the practical level, travelling around one place in England to conduct the interviews was certainly easier than going round the whole country, given the researcher's limited time and financial resources. The choice was also determined by the possibility of access to interviewees. Therefore, institutions were chosen where I had some possibility of gaining easy access to the staff through personal contacts. However, such practical considerations also presented some immediate advantages from the methodological point of view. I thought that dealing with three institutions from the same catchment area would make comparisons more apt and interesting. In fact, interviewees themselves often made reference to the other neighbouring institutions.

A second principle which was followed was to choose at least one 'traditional' and one 'new' university. This was deemed to be important in terms of variety, in order to assess how similar (or dissimilar) discourses are produced in and around modern languages within different types of institutions. Likewise, it was thought that different

types of institutions might produce different kinds of ‘anchorage’ points in terms of the way people position themselves within such discourses in their identity construction. Thus, for instance, it may be that the people working in one institution develop a sense of self that is more strongly anchored in a particular activity (like research) than in the other two universities. Consequently, two out of the three institutions chosen belong to the pre-92 sector, while the third is a post-92 university. The former two are both especially renowned for their research activity. Conversely, the post-92 university has a particularly good reputation in terms of teaching. Interestingly, two out of three universities recently underwent restructuring moves. These have been fully implemented in one of the two pre-92 universities and in the post-92 one, while they have been ‘resisted’ in the other pre-92 one.

As I have mentioned, one of the reasons for choosing the three institutions that are the object of this research was the relative ease of access to their staff. In all of them, I was helped in this by academics known to me. The latter smoothed the process of making the first contact with the various language departments or sections. Finding the assistance of ‘helpers’ in the three universities was a relatively easy task, given the fact that they are all colleagues with whom I had professional links. The contact exercise went through the following stages. First of all, I contacted the helpers in order to obtain their co-operation. In turn, these e-mailed all the relevant heads of department, asking them to get in touch with me for further details on the research. Upon contact with the heads of department, a circular letter (see Appendix 2) was sent to them. This contained information about the aims, scope and modalities of the research. At this stage, heads of department chose two possible routes: either they nominated two or three colleagues who they thought would be immediately

forthcoming in giving assistance or they put the request to the whole staff via a circular e-mail, leaving it to individual academics to contact me directly, if interested. When nominations occurred, I made sure that these were made in accordance with the principle of variety and representation. Thus, in most cases, a mixture of senior and junior staff was sought and eventually found. As soon as names were put forward, I immediately sent the information letter to the parties in question and made sure that an appointment was made either via e-mail or telephone. In most cases, I accepted unconditionally all the nominations, except in a couple of cases where it was felt that some or more varied representation was needed. When this occurred, referring back either to the helpers or the heads of department achieved the desired effect.

Through this recruitment exercise an overall number of twenty-eight people took active part in the research. Before giving further details on them, it is necessary to mention some ethical issues that became apparent in the course of the preparation of and during the field research. Solutions are also illustrated.

The institutions and ethical issues

In establishing contact with the respondents, the issue of confidentiality was raised upfront in the introductory letter that was sent to all of them. People were reassured that their thoughts would be protected, as far as possible, against any possible disclosure. The re-assurance was reiterated at the beginning and at the end of the interview. I also attempted to ensure the anonymity of the institutions¹. The solution adopted was to rename these with fictional names: Redbridge, Bluebridge and Greenbridge. Also, in the course of the data analysis, the information about each of

these was kept at a very general level so that immediate recognition would not be possible.

Redbridgeⁱⁱ is a pre-92 university that serves a population of mature students for which it has traditionally fulfilled a special role in the British higher education system. Its roots go back to the beginnings of the 19th century and its mission has traditionally been to help people (re-)access higher education at an adult age, regardless of their religion, gender or class. Today, Redbridge counts nearly 6,000 degree students at any one time with a further 16,500 students who are enrolled on courses offered by the faculty of continuing education. The university offers courses that embrace the physical, social, political and economic sciences as well as the arts and humanities. A recent structural review has resulted in the creation of four faculties - the faculty of continuing education, the faculty of arts, the faculty of science and the faculty of social sciences - each managed by a dean. Departments, now grouped into schools, were allocated to a specific faculty according to their core teaching and research activities. Each faculty also has a new research school. The university has a thriving reputation as an international centre for research. Two thirds of Redbridge's schools are rated as carrying out research at national or international levels of excellence. The total income from Funding Council (FC) grants in 2001 was £21.928m, with an increase of 3% compared to the previous yearⁱⁱⁱ. Research grants and contracts increased by 51% in the same timespan, reaching the sum of £4.873m. As one can see, a net increase in terms of research grants is accompanied by only a slight raise in terms of FC funds.

In terms of the institutional organisation of modern languages, four languages are represented at Redbridge: French, German, and Spanish, and, more recently, Japanese (this did not feature at the time when the empirical research was carried out). Over the last five years, for financial reasons, the strong departmental structure based around the different language subjects was transformed into a single school. This also includes applied linguistics. While, nominally, departments were left free to maintain their identity, in fact they lost most of their financial and political power. As will be evinced from the interviews, the whole process was painful and caused much controversy among the staff. However, it has also started creating new synergies among individual language subjects and beyond, something that a number of interviewees comment favourably on. It should also be added that, beyond the graduate and postgraduate programmes, Redbridge has no 'languages for all' programme. However, it boasts a self-access centre for self study. In terms of research, in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)^{iv} of 2001, Spanish obtained a 5*, German a 5 and French a 4. As for the Teaching Quality Assessment of the mid-nineties, the three departments all scored between 19 and 20^v.

As for Bluebridge, it too is a pre-92 university. Like Redbridge, it was founded at the beginning of the 19th century and it boasts a tradition of broadening access to higher education especially for women and religious minorities. It currently has a student population of above 20,000. This is served by 3,800 academic and research staff who work in a total of seventy-two departments that are spread over ten faculties and schools. In terms of research it boasts top ratings of 5 and 5* for 60 departments – as well as the next-highest rating, 4, for nine other departments. FC grants reached £125.250m, registering an increase of 7% in July 2001, compared to the previous

year. Research grants and contracts increased by 14% in the same timespan, reaching the sum of £141.100m. In this case, while there is a fairly modest increase in terms of research grants, Bluebridge registers the highest score as far as FC funding is concerned.

At Bluebridge, languages are organised into individual departments. Languages are also taught in a growing language centre. This offers both an institution-wide language programme (that is a programme that gives every student in the university the opportunity to study a language as a minor option in addition to the subject(s) in which they specialise) and a number of commercial courses for the external public. While, traditionally, the centre has been separated from the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, it has now started acquiring more prominence in Bluebridge managerial plans. Links are being sought between the centre and the different language departments. A number of languages (including Eastern European ones) are taught in this institution and they are all part of the faculty of arts and humanities which also includes subjects like linguistics and arts. The departmental structure at Bluebridge has traditionally been very strong and has managed to withstand recent managerial pushes towards the integration of all languages into a single administrative unit, as at Redbridge. However, as we shall see, this does not mean that synergies between departments are non-existent. On the contrary, lines of formal and informal links have been established within the institution (and between this and external bodies) around a number of interdisciplinary activities that project individual language subjects well beyond their departmental structure. In terms of research ratings, of the four language-subjects that are the object of this study, only one (Spanish) obtained a 4, while the other three all scored between 5 and 5*, thus

indicating how highly research is considered at Bluebridge. As for the TQA exercise, the lowest score of 19 went to the Spanish department, while the highest (23) went to the German.

Finally, Greenbridge is a post-92 university, having been a polytechnic before that. As in the case of the other two institutions, it boasts a long history and its tradition has been in professional and vocational education. The latter still features very highly in the university's mission statement. The university serves a population of over 20,000 students by availing itself of over 1,200 academic full-time staff and over 400 part-timers. Administratively, the university is divided into four campuses and counts eleven schools around which different disciplinary groups are clustered. Research is organised around forty-five interest groups, some of which had good results in the latest RAE, with psychology, for instance, reaching excellent ratings. The total of FC grants registered an increase of 2% in July 2001, compared to the previous year, reaching the sum of £46.904m. Research grants and contracts decreased by 17% in the same timespan, amounting to £4.292m. As can be seen, among the three universities under examination, Greenbridge registers the least growth in terms of FC funding and an actual, substantial decrease in terms of research.

At Greenbridge, the provision of languages has traditionally been strong and varied. As in the case of Redbridge, modern languages have undergone major restructuring moves over the last five years. Originally organised within a school of languages (which also included subjects like English and linguistics), nowadays modern languages are part of a bigger structure that includes social and psychology studies too. Thus, while in the past individual language sections enjoyed some financial and

political status, today they have lost these altogether. They were merged into a department of languages from which linguistics and English were cut off. The latter went on to form a different department altogether. In terms of research, Greenbridge language sections did not fare as well as in the other two universities. While German was not entered, French obtained a 3b and Italian a 4. As for the TQA, ratings ranged from 18 (Spanish) to 23 (French).

However, the language provision at Greenbridge is much more complicated than the departmental structure that has been just described. In fact, languages are offered in different programmes, many of which have a strong professional slant to them. Thus, apart from the normal BA in languages (French, German, Italian and Spanish), there is a large institution-wide language programme and a professional programme that offers language tuition (in both Western and Oriental languages) to non-BA students, along with more specialised postgraduate provision in translating and interpreting. While the BA and institution-wide programmes are considered to be part of the undergraduate provision and belong to the modern languages department, other professional programmes (like translation and interpreting) belong to the applied languages department. This does not mean that bridges are not in place at more than one level between the different language programmes. For instance, some lecturers teach in different programmes and also have started joining forces with other disciplines like history and sociology. However, as will become evident later in the thesis, the aim of developing synergies is still far from being achieved.

In the preparatory stages of the field research, I decided to concentrate only on lecturers in traditional modern languages departments, thus excluding other

programmes, like the 'languages for all' and commercial ones (except in one case where a lecturer contractually teaches on both the BA and the institution-wide programme at Greenbridge). Such a decision was not the result of any lack of respect for the non-BA programmes. However, it was deemed to be the most appropriate one mainly because traditional degree programmes normally embrace different strands, both linguistic and content-based (in terms of literary, historical studies and the like). In this sense, the information given by the respondents would span a number of areas, the examination of which could better assist in working out the current disciplinary patterns. Additionally, unlike, for instance, institution-wide programmes that have really proliferated only from the beginning of the nineties (Fay and Ferney, 2000), degree programmes rely on a longer historical tradition. This historical background is an important element, if one wishes to gauge the changes in the nature and status of the field over time. Similarly, I consciously decided to concentrate on the four most taught European languages: French, German, Italian and Spanish, as these have, overall, traditionally represented modern languages and attract most of its students.

Having given some basic information on each of the three institutions under analysis, I now wish to turn to details about the interviewees.

The interviewees

In terms of the interviewees, almost the full range from senior to junior academics is represented in each institution. This was thought to be important, as it would give a range of views on both the institutions and the field. Obviously, the name of each individual respondent is concealed, even if his/her affiliation to a specific language and institution is not. It was in fact deemed to be necessary to indicate the latter in

order to assess how individuals would ‘construct’ their field/language subjects and their institution. Finally, also for ethical reasons, when quoting people, I decided to conceal the individuals’ professional status, thus referring to the interviewees with terms such as ‘lecturer’, ‘scholar’, ‘respondent’, ‘interviewee’ and the like.

In quantitative terms, twenty-nine academics were interviewed in all. The breakdown by institution is as follows: seven at Redbridge (four in French, two in German and one in Spanish – no respondents for Italian as this subject is not taught in this institution), of which two were professors, one was a reader and four were lecturers; ten at Bluebridge (two in French, three in German, three in Italian and two in Spanish), of which three were professors, one was a reader and the rest lecturers at different stages of their career; finally, twelve at Greenbridge (of which six in French, two in Italian and four in Spanish – no German is represented, as, at the time of the research, the university was appointing some new lecturers in this subject, given that all the German staff had just retired). Of these, three were professors, one a reader and all the rest lecturers. Heads of departments or sections put themselves forward, in almost all cases, for the research. Finally, in terms of qualifications, while at Bluebridge all the interviewees are PhD holders and at Redbridge six out of seven, at Greenbridge five out of thirteen had one. Conversely, while at Greenbridge five out of twelve interviewees held teaching qualifications, three had them at Redbridge and one at Bluebridge. In this sense, the data gathered about the academics confirms the overall profile of each university, with Bluebridge being the most research-oriented of the three institutions and Greenbridge the most teaching-led one. Redbridge figures in the middle of this cline that has Bluebridge and Greenbridge at its poles, so to speak.

Tabulated information about the academics in the three universities analysed can be found in Appendix 1.

The disparity in numbers among the different institutions was not calculated but was merely the result of the people who eventually decided to participate in the research. As previously stated, no attempt was made to alter this, except, for instance, when there was a risk of having no respondents for a certain subject on board (as in the case of Spanish at Redbridge). In similar cases, helpers were contacted again in order for them to assist in finding the vital co-operation of relevant members of staff.

Finally, in terms of gender, across the three institutions, sixteen out of the twenty-nine respondents were male, thirteen female. Again, this slight imbalance is totally incidental, as it was simply the result of the response from people taking part in the research. It is worth mentioning at this point that this piece of research does not take gender issues fully into consideration, however important these may be. As can be gathered from some quotes in the analysis stage, gender does feature occasionally. However, the decision was taken not to make this dimension a major analytical strand. Such an analysis would have diverted attention from the overall theme of academic identities and led the research into other areas that deserve full attention in a self-standing piece of research. The same considerations apply to the dimensions of race and class, even if the dimension of cultural belonging (in terms of some respondents' cultural origins) is occasionally touched on but not dealt with systematically. As I mention in the conclusions to this thesis, these are obviously areas in need of perusal in further research on academic identities (in modern languages). However, given the limited scope of the present research and its meso-

level, I decided to exclude them in order to give space to the issues I cover in this work.

The interviewing process and the data analysis process

As previously mentioned, interviews were semi-structured and, in order to prepare people for the interview, both an introductory letter and a profiling document were sent out. Once the latter had been returned, interviewees were contacted and an appointment made for the interview. These took place at a convenient time both for the respondent and the interviewer. Interviews took place at different parts of the day (including the evening). They were all taped (something which had been explained to the participants prior to the interview) and all of them were carried out within the interviewee's environment. This was done in order to make the respondents feel at ease in expressing their ideas and feelings as much as possible. In fact, in most cases, the atmosphere was relaxed and one of mutual trust, which helped in gathering some significantly important data.

At the start of the interview, respondents were once again reminded of the purpose of the research and of the anonymity of their responses. They were also given the chance to ask any question or air any worries in relation to the research. At the end of the interview, interviewees were told that they could look at the transcript of what they had said, once this was ready. Interviews were typed by a professional typist and the quality of it was checked by me by listening selectively to a few tapes. This also helped to remind me of the interview dynamics. Additionally, it contributed to disambiguate certain statements that might have appeared opaque on paper.

All respondents were sent their own transcript in any case. However, only about half of them returned it with comments and/or alterations. The rest never replied. For the latter group, a further e-mail went out at the end of the interviewing stage. In this, once again, they were offered the opportunity to have a say on the thoughts and opinions they had expressed in the interview. The warning was also given that this would be their last opportunity to do so. If no reply was given, no further action was taken. A final e-mail went out to everybody, including those who helped to make first contact with the respondents, thanking them for their co-operation and offering them the opportunity to read the whole work once this was ready. Redbridge responded at an institutional level by asking the researcher to give a seminar about the provisional results the field work had generated. This was an opportunity to obtain further feedback from some of the respondents.

No special software was used for the organisation and analysis of the data. However, the latter was arranged under institutional files first (so three main files were created, one for each university under perusal). Consequently, the information contained in each of these was further sub-divided (through cut-and paste word processing techniques) into the three main domains of the empirical model (institutional, field and personal). Finally, common themes that had emerged through common questions asked in all three universities were identified. This allowed for the needed comparative analysis. However, those themes that had only been briefly touched on by too few respondents were generally ignored in the reporting phase, as I thought they would not have sufficient comparative power. At the writing up stage, I often listened selectively to some tapes again, in case there was any doubt about my interpretation of the data (tone, intonation, pauses are often very revealing). Similarly,

as I have already mentioned, I made use of the profiling documents, whenever I felt the need to disambiguate statements made by the interviewees. At the reporting stage, I attempted to enter into a kind ‘discreet’ dialogue with the data, in order to reflect on it without stifling the respondents’ voices with my own voice. As I say, my more personal interpretation of the data is to be found in the last section of this thesis.

Conclusions

In the course of this chapter, I have attempted to make links between the speculative and empirical side of the research. The different stages of the field research have been illustrated, including information about the choice of both institutions and respondents, and the interviewing process. Ethical issues have also been outlined, along with the possible solutions that might be adopted in order to solve some problematic areas like anonymity.

Having illustrated the background to the research, in the next part I both systematise and analyse the data according to the philosophical and methodological assumptions outlined so far.

PART 3 – PATTERNING IDENTITIES AND SELVES

5 - The institutional domain: patterns and constructs

Introduction

This chapter starts the third part of the thesis. This part is divided into four chapters. The first of these (chapter 5) is dedicated to the ‘institutional identities’, with particular emphasis on departmental structures and the main activities in which modern languages academics are engaged, that is teaching, research and administration. The following two chapters are dedicated to field identities. The decision to have two chapters dedicated to field identities grew out of the necessity to do justice of the plentiful data gathered around the overall field and its components. This has required a more extensive treatment than any other aspect dealt with in the thesis. Finally, in the last chapters of the section (chapters 8 and 9), I deal with the notion of self, that is the more personal and inner part of the respondents’ academic sense of themselves, as it is constructed at the intersection between institutional and field identities, and the set of personal values and beliefs lecturers have developed throughout their lives.

In line with the premise in part 2, in this chapter I shall start analysing the first of the three domains that make up the research model: the institutional. My aim is to capture how interviewees view and construct the institutional frameworks in which they operate¹. In reporting the relevant parts of the various interviews, I have chosen to do this thematically (and not by institution) in order to give the reader the opportunity of capturing similarities and differences among the three institutions at first glance and see

the general patterns and trends. It is in the last part of the thesis that comments and reflections inherent to individual institutions are made more coherently and extensively.

As I indicated in chapter 3, there are two main sub-thematic sets running through this chapter. The first set refers, *in primis*, to the ways in which the respondents perceive the role of those external and internal forces (like market demands and managerialism) that are changing (or not) the manner in which modern languages are organised in each university; secondly, it deals with the ways in which academics construct departmental identities in terms of group allegiances within individual language departments; and, finally, it concerns the conceptions academics have of the different language offerings, in terms of both specialist and 'languages for all' programmes, within their own university. The second sub-thematic set revolves around the respondents' perceptions of those activities in which they are mainly engaged today: teaching, research and administration. As I pointed out in chapter 3, while the organisation of data in thematic sets helps in making sense of the data, different sub-thematic areas obviously overlap. For instance, issues concerning teaching and research cannot really be understood without reference to the relative status attributed to each of these two activities within the different language programmes in the three institutions under perusal and in relation to wider socio-cultural forces that bear on them. The intricacies among the different strands are partially made sense of in the concluding paragraph of this chapter, and more fully in the last part of the thesis.

External and internal pressures: the restructuring moves

In adopting a bird's eye view in looking at the data concerning institutional identities, the most striking factor is the re-structuring moves that have affected the languages departments at Redbridge (one of the two pre-92 universities) and the language sections at Greenbridge (the only post-92 university) over the last few years. In the case of Redbridge, such moves have entailed the amalgamation of the three language departments (French, German and Spanish) into a school of languages that acts as both an administrative and academic unit. As for Greenbridge, the original school of languages was merged into a school of social sciences, humanities and languages. In the new structure, modern languages are one of the four departments within the school (these being social sciences, psychology, English and linguistics, and modern languages, with English, linguistics and modern languages being part of the original school of languages). At Bluebridge there was an attempt, on the part of the management, at the end of the nineties, to amalgamate the language departments into a school of languages. However, this failed because of resistance to it by the strong language departments in relation to relatively weaker management forces.

These three different institutional arrangements obviously colour the sense of institutional allegiance people may or may not have towards the older and/or newer structures. The restructuring move has been viewed by many lecturers, both at Redbridge and Greenbridge, as being dictated by purely financial and managerial considerations, in response to considerable difficulties faced by some language departments (at Redbridge)

and sections (at Greenbridge) (Hannan and Silver, 2000; Warner and Palfreyman, 2001).

This is clearly explained by a French respondent at *Redbridge*ⁱⁱ:

...well, it's administrative, isn't it? And probably for saving money in the end.....we have normally four departments: French, Spanish, German and applied linguistics. Spanish, German and applied linguistics are smaller departments, certainly German and applied linguistics are not attracting many students – they are ailing departments – and, therefore, it was within their interest clearly to join up as a single unit, with twenty-five members of staff as opposed to four smaller units.

Her views concerning the merger are echoed both by one of her French colleagues and by a lecturer in German alike, also at *Redbridge*:

...the college was in a mess, some people were in a mess. Essentially, linguistics was in a mess, German was in a mess.

...if we did not re-structure, we would be finished. Language departments would be picked off one by one. We also have applied linguistics upstairs which is as precarious as German is, whereas across the square, in Bluebridge, there is a huge linguistics department.

The germanist explains the necessity of the move by referring to external pressures that are being put by the government on the British higher education system at large:

...there is the problem that the smaller your unit, the more difficult things become nowadays because, in order to get access to so many of the items of government funding, you have to bid for, and the bigger you are, the easier it is.

Decreasing student numbers are seen by a second germanist as the main cause of the merger (Kelly and Jones, 2003). Following the business logic, as departments become smaller through lack of students (and, consequently, lack of profit), the dangers of mergers increases:

...essentially we have lost various members of staff for various reasons. I have been here six years and in that time we have lost two full-time members of staff who have not been replaced; we have two colleagues approaching retirement who we have been told will probably be not replaced. So, yes, we are shrinking rapidly. We are told the only way we can survive is by keeping our student numbers... we are under the constant threat of being a subject that simply doesn't pay...you bring the business instinct in: we can't afford to keep you, we are not going to underpin you.

A *Bluebridge* germanist also points towards the current utilitarian educational philosophies surrounding higher education in Britain today:

...the difficulty is to be found in all the pressures from the government - especially the current regime which is numbers at any cost and market a product at any cost...The whole government philosophy of higher education is totally utilitarian at the moment.

Similar thoughts and preoccupations are aired by a number of respondents at *Greenbridge*. For instance, a French specialist says:

...I do not think we were merged for anything other than financial reasons... I think it was purely driven by financial reasons.

This feeling that the restructuring move was not carried out with academic considerations in mind and, overall, was a top-down exercise, is shared by a number of informants in both *Redbridge* and *Greenbridge*. For instance, a French lecturer at *Greenbridge* points out that there is no correspondence between managerial discourses about merging and co-operation among different fields, and reality, which seems to go in another direction:

...there is a discourse that is that we all have to interrelate and interact an blah blah... the discourse is there; we are all one department, one school, we have got to interrelate and share resources. So the first thing they do is remove our photocopier. No, it is very serious.

Similarly, a *Greenbridge* French lecturer considers the merger a top-down imposition, an ‘ingestion’, as she calls it, of modern languages within a wider department of humanities, with no apparent sign of assimilation. There are no real synergetic processes in the merger. The rhetoric of co-operation does not find its realisation in actual university life:

...there was never any integration: we were taken over, we were absorbed, or not even absorbed... absorbed implies a dissolution of boundaries. We were ingested and are there as an undigested lump in the middle of an existing school, we have not been digested, we have not broken down any boundaries. They'll either carry on having chronic indigestion or they are going to have us pass out, if you pursue a rather nice, or not nice, medical analogy.

Dangers of a top-down approach are also sounded by an Italian lecturer at *Bluebridge*, an institution where, as it has been pointed out, a strong departmental culture is still alive and kicking against a background of relatively weak managerial structures. She also voices the worry that a merger between language departments may change the nature of the modern languages field itself. It may also enforce collaboration between languages departments at the expense of more informal but fruitful links that each department may have nurtured with other disciplinary areas over the years:

...I think that the university likes to promote itself as very much as an interdisciplinary institution... there are lots of very interesting aspects of interdisciplinary work but I think Bluebridge is going about it the wrong way. One way it is wanting to promote interdisciplinary activities is by trying to create an institute of languages or a school of languages... Some of us have more in common with the department of English than we have with the department of Spanish or the department of history of art, it so depends on the kind of interests that members of staff have. It seems to me that reducing the interdisciplinarity element to what the institution thinks would fit well together is a completely stupid move... But here I think what they are also wanting to do is transform it [languages] into a vocational kind of thing.

This fear of seeing modern languages change into a vocational field (Allford, 1997; Pachler, 2002; Williams, 2000) is shared by a number of interviewees (and this is

confirmed by a number of reflections about the field of modern languages as such (as we shall see in the next chapter). For instance, a hispanist at *Greenbridge* expresses his worries that modern languages could be perceived as a vocational field by other disciplinary communities:

...other disciplines probably assume that it is a kind of second class field and, therefore, it is a kind of surface for other, more important purposes... It is not a service, it is... a proper field, but I don't know how we are going to maintain that situation.

However, in spite of general criticism, some positive thoughts were also expressed about the merger. A Spanish lecturer at *Redbridge*, for instance, argues that, with time, she has started to see the good side of the merger in that this is allowing for fruitful co-operation across the different language-subjects as never before:

...at the beginning I had reservations about it, and thought this is really awful, we are going to lose our identity. But then I didn't think so, I actually quite like it: it has allowed us to work with other members of staff from the other ex-departments. For instance, I just met a member from French who is an expert in film and we decided to put a course together between the two of us just doing visual analysis, completely regardless of nationalities... Some of my colleagues in linguistics are putting together two new MAs at school level, which is quite good.

In a similar fashion, a French lecturer at *Greenbridge* sees in the merger a means of breaking traditional disciplinary boundaries between modern languages and other humanities fields (Di Napoli, Polezzi and King, 2001). Additionally, she argues that the merger could possibly improve both the nature and the image of modern languages as not simply a vocational field by bringing it into productive contact with many other disciplinary areas. However, the problem is that such a synergetic process is not being encouraged at the moment:

...I know that a lot of people lament the particular identity the school of languages had and I can see that. However, I personally think that we have an opportunity, if we are allowed to pursue it for some very interesting , truly interdisciplinary teaching to go on. It makes perfect sense to me we should be with historians, political scientists, people who teach sociology... What I have been always uncomfortable with is the language studies as the mechanical learning a language. If you have got something called school of languages, unfortunately it plays into that perception: it is seen as somewhere you go and learn a language and what people who are not linguists are usually aware of is this whole cultural element that it isn't about the mechanics of the language, that there is a whole culture. I think there is a misperception of what modern languages as a field is, that is a problem, we have to retain that separate identity. But there is an opportunity to explore the similarities with the other fields. It is not being facilitated, that is the problem.

Comments like the ones above help to counterbalance the overall negative feelings that people have generally expressed in both institutions towards the re-structuring moves. They also reveal important pointers to how such large structural change can succeed, if managers not only thought about 'what' to change but also 'why' and 'how' this is done. Additionally, they emphasise how any structural process cuts deeply into issues that go beyond the purely administrative ones, touching on, above all, the sense of identity that smaller administrative and disciplinary units have of themselves. This is a clear illustration of the complex issues any institutional change brings. In the following section, I analyse the way in which units, like departments and sections look at their internal organisation and life and how this self-perception varies in relation to the larger changes in which such units have or have not been involved in their recent history.

Departmental identities

In giving an overall reading to the data gathered for each institution, it becomes evident how departments with a stronger sense of identity, operating within an institutional

framework characterised by weaker managerial forces, are those which have been left relatively untouched by any restructuring move.

At Bluebridge, in spite of the variety of individuals, approaches and ideas, the *esprit de corps* of each department seems to be strong enough to guarantee an open attitude toward any interdepartmental research or teaching activity. At the other end of the spectrum, the loss of identity generated by the re-structuring of the school of languages at Greenbridge is reflected in the sense of insecurity that is felt in the individual language sections. As for Redbridge, the situation is an intermediate one. The only department that seems to experience a strong sense of identity is the French one. However, this is accompanied by a somewhat isolationist attitude towards any interdepartmental activity on the part of some members of staff. Larger numbers of students and successful performance have traditionally encouraged the French department isolationism, even if individual members of the team are opening up boundaries in joining collective interdepartmental and interdisciplinary efforts. This attitude does not seem to be shared by the German and Spanish departments which seem to be much more open to external forms of co-operation.

The strong departmental nature of *Bluebridge* is emphasised by an Italian lecturer who concurrently notes the ability of many departments to come together around interdisciplinary projects, some of which even expand beyond Bluebridge itself:

...Bluebridge is strikingly strongly departmentalised with a degree of autonomy and control of your own budget – you can design courses and examine them. It obviously has to be scrutinised by the faculty at a university-wide level but you do have quite a lot of control...On the other hand, departments I think do network

together in certain areas... we are strongly departmentalised and we have sort of ad-hoc links with other departments and institutions outside. I think this is probably true not just of research areas but in other areas as well...

Generally speaking, all departments at Bluebridge are viewed by the interviewees as characterised by a strong departmental identity that acts as a cementing factor between a vast array of interests, approaches and viewpoints. This is well illustrated by an Italianist and a Germanist alike. Both academics argue that, beyond the strong differentiation at departmental level in terms of the academic interests of the staff, all members of staff share a common departmental ethos:

...I think that at Bluebridge, perhaps with other larger departments of Italian...there are certainly strong differences of what the best view of what the things to do are and what the value of the things to teach are. But I do not think they conflict, I think that a department like this has evolved over the years a kind of ethos.

...I think we have a very strong departmental identity which is fostered by the fact that we all get on very well and we like our students. So I think there is an ethos of commonality which is important. In terms of theoretical ethos or intellectual ethos, I think we may have fairly disparate views as to what German studies ought to be. They probably would agree more with each other than I would agree with them. I think that there is a belief in teaching, there is a belief in critical thinking, that is very important but then that takes different forms.

This situation is not mirrored in the other two institutions, where each individual department seems to have lost its strong sense of identity as a result of the re-structuring moves. As previously mentioned, at Redbridge, for instance, the French department has tried to maintain a spiritual sense of unity, in the face of the re- structuring move. As a French lecturer puts it:

...[the merger] wasn't in the French department's interest one bit; we are quite happy, thank you very much – we've got good student intake, we operate

extremely well... So, on a purely cynical level, political level my answer to you is I couldn't give a damn whether we are a school or not. But, from the point of view of reality, yes, we are part of a school.

The last comment underlines the fact the sense of departmental identity is supported both by the successful performance of a department and by its financial viability. Where the latter is missing, the necessity is felt to let go of a strong sense of identity, in favour of new structures. External pressures can indeed have an influence on institutional identities. For instance, a German lecturer forecasts that, in case of further shrinking of the German department, there is a possibility of German becoming part of combined humanities degrees. In this case, the teaching would be carried out in English and not in the foreign language. In her own words:

[in case of any further shrinking of the German department, we would go]... onto combined degrees in a more BA humanities format, where everything is taught in translation essentially... the language would tend to get lost, so we would end up doing our cultural studies but in a different context.

As for *Greenbridge*, the recent amalgamation of what was originally a dedicated school of languages into a school of humanities, has created an even deeper sense of loss in the different language sections than at *Redbridge*. *Greenbridge* interviewees generally describe the language sections as troubled, embattled, atomistic places, with no real point of reference. The sense of disorientation is particularly felt in the French section, traditionally the biggest and most successful one. The reason behind the sense of a missing identity is twofold: the recent departure of the long-serving head of section coinciding with the re-structuring move. To my question on whether there is a common set of concerns within the French section, a French lecturer answered in the following way:

...I think we have a problem at the moment... This has happened through a number of circumstances. The French department used to be in the school and this gave a lot of coherence to the department and credibility [and] there was presence there that went and, as you know, the section co-ordinator retired last Easter... Let's say we are, not collectively embattled, but we are all trying to hold the fort individually and keep it together mentally, emotionally and physically and we all falling ill... To me, there is a very strong sense that there is a void in the centre: there is no core, that is the way that I feel.

It appears that at Greenbridge the old institutional setting acted as a significant structuring dimension in terms of people's sense of institutional belonging and identity. This has now been superseded by a feeling of loss of direction and purpose.

The sense of lack of a common sense of purpose within the department of modern languages is emphasised by a Spanish lecturer. According to the interviewee, the institutional agenda was focussed more on financial and bureaucratic matters than the well being of those working within the university:

...there are many conflicts. First of all, there is an institutional agenda about performance and performance indicators and one has to comply with them. So, whatever you do it is geared more towards fulfilling those criteria rather than improving the seriousness of what you do... For the last three years the whole thing has become more and more anarchical as senior management or managers are interested in showing that what they do is good... then the only possibility for change in the institution does not come from inside... Yes, it is very much insular.

Taken collectively, all the comments above seem to point towards two interrelated problems at Greenbridge: on the one hand, the lack of a centre within each individual language section; on the other, a general institutional background that does not encourage a sense of empowerment, belonging and ownership among the academic staff. This generates a weak sense of departmental identity.

Beyond internal relationships within individual departments/sections, two of the three universities under perusal, Greenbridge and Bluebridge, register a split between the specialist and 'languages for all' programmes. As we saw in the first part of this thesis, this split signals an emergent faultline that has developed within modern languages over the last ten years or so (Kelly and Jones, 2003). This is an important phenomenon to explore in order to understand the state of the field and its possible future developments. The discussion of this will however be limited, since this research is explicitly based on traditional language departments. Nevertheless, I still deem it important to illustrate, albeit briefly, people's views about the relationship between traditional and newer language programmes, like those dedicated to 'languages for all' teaching. This gives us a sense of the status which is attributed to the new 'languages for all' institutional arrangements by those working within more traditional environments. What follows is simply a preliminary discussion that can shed light on some of the different institutional arrangements around which the field of modern languages is organised today. As I say in the concluding part of this work, 'languages for all' programmes deserve a more thorough investigation in a separate research project. This would permit a deeper and wider understanding of the overall field today.

The different language offerings

Beyond a weak sense of common purpose and identity within its individual language sections, Greenbridge also registers a division between the different language programmes. The most evident is the one affecting the (lack of) relationship between the BA and the institution-wide language programme (as we know, this is the programme

that gives students the option to learn a language in conjunction with the field in which they major). The programme, while still officially belonging to the undergraduate provision, is generally perceived by the BA staff as a separate entity from the language sections on the BA programme. The separation is put down to a number of factors: status, purpose and working ethos of the programmes. This emerges in the comments made by a number of interviewees from the two different programmes.

The sense of fragmentation among programmes is commented on by one of the French lecturers at *Greenbridge*. According to her, the French section has always perceived the institution-wide programme (IWLP) as a satellite that has little to do with the main activities of the section:

...I think it is quite fragmented. The evening programme and the IWLP are now exclusively taught by people outside the spine of the section, in the sense that none of the full-timers I work with teaches evening classes or the IWLP...It is true that in the past the IWLP French co-ordinator has done some teaching on the undergraduate degree, although not very much, obviously her main thing is the IWLP. But my view is that she has never been a member of the French section in a kind of emotional sense, which is not a criticism of her, it's more a criticism of the section... the school and certainly the section – the French section – has seen the IWLP not being part of what it does.

A Spanish informant at *Greenbridge* implies that the cause of the split lies in the perceived service and vocational nature attributed to the IWLP. She argues that this nature of the programme gives it a lesser intellectual status *vis à vis* the degree courses:

...I think there should be more of a relationship. It is kind of seen that the IWLP is the beggar of the school, because the BA has this kind of cultural connotation. So we should find a way where the IWLP should be more integrated... Perhaps the IWLP should have a more intellectual approach, that would help, instead of being just service.

Another French lecturer at *Greenbridge* identifies the source of disharmony in the different working ethos characteristic of each programme. She is particularly critical of the heavy managerial approaches adopted in the running of the IWLP, in contrast with the more collegial attitude typical of the French section. The different management styles in the two programmes is seen by the respondent as a clear sign of demarcation and separation between the BA and the IWLP:

...what I dread personally about the IWLP is of never ending meetings, extremely heavy scrutiny and of this idea of all walking in step. And that sort of sergeant-major approach I gather takes place... Looking at the future, if we don't have enough BA students doing French... we'll complement our teaching by teaching on the IWLP. If you mention this in the French section, the reaction is rather violent and I don't think it is the idea of teaching beginners. But I think it is the idea of being trapped in that sort of straightjacket.

Beyond the question of managerial styles, another division between the two programmes is perceived to be in the different kinds of student constituencies each of them addresses.

As a *Greenbridge* hispanist puts it:

...the clientele is very different...On the BA we are training students for an award in that particular field, in Spanish... In the IWLP we are training students in Spanish with a tremendous variety of backgrounds and not with the depth we have to do it on the BA, so I think it is quite different.

The factors mentioned above (different managerial styles, academic status and different student populations) make co-operation between the two programmes a difficult endeavour.

Coming to *Bluebridge*, a division exists between the language departments and the language centre. This split is generally perceived by *Bluebridge* academics as resulting

from the dissimilar functions these structures have in relation to the type of students they serve. This is emphasised by a *Bluebridge* italianist:

[the department and the language centre]... have two very different functions. When the language centre at Bluebridge was created, it was created in order to take on what we used to call service teaching – in other words teaching Italian to those students who are not linguists. The purpose of why these people are wanting to study Italian is very different from having a degree course in Italian. I have nothing that I can criticise the language centre on, because I think they do a very good job. We are not involved in the sense that we would very much like to use their facilities... There is a structural split which is very bad and we are very unhappy about it. Bluebridge doesn't want to hear about it because the language centre makes money and brings in a lot of revenue for the college but the truth is it should be for students of modern languages who benefit from there.

According to another germanist at *Bluebridge*, the different kinds of student constituencies and purposes embodied by the language departments and the language centre require different teaching methodologies. While in the language centre students are exposed to fast, intensive tuition with the assistance of technological means (like computers, video and the like) that help learners to master the major functions of the language(s) studied, degree courses are based on a more reflective and time-consuming approach to language learning. It is in this different approach to language learning that another germanist at *Bluebridge* envisages the split between the language departments and the language centre:

...what we have always tried to insist on ... is that, when we teach German – and we must do it, we mustn't farm them out to the language centre – it is done in a quite particular way, it has to do with what might sound a little pompous, one might call it reflexivity. That we are inviting the students of course to learn the language but also to reflect on it... And that kind of dimension is a greater degree of discursivity and that, therefore, it is not fully met by a fairly intensive and media-intensive exposure to bombardment by the language. It needs a bit of space to sit round and talk about it.

This comment echoes again the preoccupation, usually shared among many modern language academics who work in traditional language departments, that ‘languages for all’ programmes and centres, because of their intrinsic vocational nature, lack the intellectual edge that specialist courses have. Such arguments are rejected by ‘languages for all’ lecturers who claim that language learning is *per se* a highly complex endeavour that requires higher order skills (King, 2000). This kind of disagreement illustrates well the division currently marring modern languages between academics teaching on degree courses and those teaching on ‘languages for all’ ones. This is seen as a dangerous situation precisely because it creates confrontation rather than harmony in a field that is in a state of crisis in the British higher education system (Polezzi, 1996).

However, in spite of all the dissimilarities underlined, forms of collaboration between the two types of institutional arrangements at Bluebridge are still deemed to be possible, even if, at present, they are fairly superficial. They mainly consist of departments functioning as validating bodies for the work of the language centre. Moreover, both its teachers and the technology are occasionally used by some of the departments for their specialist teaching. As a Spanish lecturer at *Bluebridge* points out:

... two of the language centre teachers do quite a lot of language teaching [in the Spanish department] – one Spaniard and one Mexican, they do about sixteen hours a week language teaching for us. So we use two language centre teachers for about forty per cent of our language classes.

However, as another *Bluebridge* French informant reports, there are indications that these patchy forms of collaboration may become stronger in the future:

...the relationship we have at the moment is too implicit for my liking in the sense that [our] part-timers are exclusively drawn from there, which has

worked in our favour in the sense that we have been able to involve them in the design of the new courses. So we have the best of both worlds: people who are aware of the software of the Language centre plus also aware of the needs of this department... So that has been very useful for us and I think that institutionally we aren't encouraged to develop links between departments and the Language centre, although I am in the process of chairing a few meetings to try and develop that.

The need for more integration is totally shared by some Greenbridge lecturers in talking about the relationship between the BA and the IWLP. For instance, a French specialist at Greenbridge says:

...in some ways in an institution like this, it would be good to see continuity of provision and, therefore, bridges between the various provisions rather than strict barriers.

The last comment unveils the desire to overcome divisions and work towards more cooperation among all modern language academics.

However, in spite of the good intentions, the division between the different institutional arrangements for language teaching may not be so easily reconciled. This is because two more fundamental divisions within the world of modern languages lurk behind it: the one between language and content and the one between teaching and research.

Teaching and research

In this section, I shall try, as far as possible, to disentangle these two activities and simply take into consideration teaching in general, regardless of whether it is language or content related. The purpose of this exercise is to illustrate how the teaching and research are viewed by the informants in the three institutionsⁱⁱⁱ in general, in order to ascertain the status ascribed to each activity within the different institutional settings. Any comment

directly relating to language or content teaching specifically will find its place in the next two chapters where I shall deal with the disciplinary configurations of modern languages.

In terms of the relationship between teaching and research, and their relative status, the replies given by the Bluebridge respondents resembled each other, both in content and in tone, much more than at Greenbridge and Redbridge. *Bluebridge* lecturers seem to agree on the equal importance of both activities, even if many respondents admit that in the past some parties attempted to foreground research at the expense of teaching. However, this situation was eventually stopped from becoming endemic. In the words of a germanist, it is important to resist tendencies that aim at separating research from teaching, as the two activities are necessarily intertwined. One has to know where the subject 'is' before any attempt to convey it to the students.

...I do not know what the position is in the physical sciences or medicine but I have the feeling that in the art subjects it is something that we can still do and should try to do... the dimension of research has got to be there in the teachers, it is not an option: they have got to know where the subject is and be conveying it to the students. This is where the subject is and if one nudged it a bit further, it might go in this or that direction.

A finer distinction is made by another germanist at *Bluebridge* who points out that, in her department, respect is given to both activities but it manifests itself in different ways: while teaching is foregrounded in terms of the time people have to dedicate to it, research seems to enjoy more status, as people are often rated in terms of their research outputs:

...it is a very supportive department in which to be a teacher and a researcher, and I think that both things are respected. Having said that, it is more contradictory than it sounds because, on the one hand, in practice, much more of our time goes on doing things around teaching – preparing, marking reading books, designing courses – that really takes up the lion's share of our time as opposed to research. So I think that, in fact, structurally, teaching is privileged more in terms of the amount of time it takes. We all teach so much that teaching is our

major concern for a large part of the year and there certainly isn't the kind of departmental culture whereas, if you are a high-powered researcher – some universities do this – you can get remission and let-off and go and do research...That isn't an option here, which I think it's very good... there is no sense of hierarchy of some part of teaching being more important or more basic...On the other hand, what is valued very heavily is research, of course... it is very respected...there is massive respect for research as well and that is how people are rated, how good they are at doing research.

The fact that real kudos is brought about by research, and that teaching enjoys less status, is hinted at by two French specialists at Redbridge:

...if you are able to be promoted, it will depend more on the theories than the quality of your teaching.

...a lot of academics are resistant to, and contemptuous of pedagogical training. I am a member of the Institute for Learning and Teaching, very few people are because there is resistance to it.

In the view of one Greenbridge French informant, the dichotomy between research and teaching is a lived reality in her section to the point that it has led to the creation of two different layers of citizens:

...there is now a very clear split between two or three people who do a lot of teaching – virtually all teaching – and three people who do very little teaching, mingling teaching and administration or teaching, research and administration, there are three constellations and people have different constellations but there is now a teaching culture and a non-teaching culture.

This comment supports the view that the teaching and research cultures are still separate in the British higher education system and tend to enjoy different status (Taylor, 1999; Barnett, 2003).

However, there are status differentials not only between research and teaching but also between the different kinds of teaching. The Greenbridge French lecturer quoted above

illustrates this by highlighting the divisive effect that status differentials between different types of teaching may have:

...there is teaching and teaching. And my feeling is that it is a sort of carving out the best bits for yourself, that teaching evening classes or grade 1 IWLP is not viewed as being attractive as teaching final year undergraduates or postgraduates. So there is a hierarchy which perhaps wasn't there before because there were more students and there was a lot of money so that the lower stuff could be farmed out to visiting lecturers and that left the plum teaching for the full-timers and I'm afraid that is how it has been seen and I am partly guilty of that myself.

Another French respondent at *Greenbridge* sees the status dichotomy between teaching and research within the French section as the result of the research assessment exercise (RAE). Nevertheless, its deleterious effects are perceived as a passing phase:

...I think it is temporary... I think that at the moment the status of the researchers is based on those results of the RAE or the idea that the results can be good or better than what they are. To me I see the RAE as a rationing exercise; that is why it was invented, therefore, you need losers... but I don't think it is permanent, because it is one of the tricks that has been found to divide people at the moment, but we will move on to something else.

Possible status differentials between researchers and non-researchers are played down at *Greenbridge*, according to a research-active member of the French section. She claims that in her institution research does not enjoy much status:

...there is no promotion or extra status or anything that's been offered to me and yet I have got... currently, if you look at the people in French, I have got the best research track record, but that is not seen as something to be developed by the university, as far as I can see.

She carries on by signalling the difficulties in articulating teaching and research in a constructive way:

...it is a disappointment to me that there are not more opportunities to teach things that are related to my research because I do not believe at all – I am very very against – research that is divorced from the teaching environment, I don't see the point of it. I don't like the image of the heroic researcher – the lone researcher in the library struggling on with the thing he never communicates – I don't see the point of that. I don't like the way there is sometime a mystique created around that, it is very distasteful to me. I find it divisive and phoney.

Nevertheless, according to a hispanist at Greenbridge, with the institution acquiring university status in 1992, more emphasis has been placed on research than ever before. Consequently, teaching and research have attained equal status. The traditional institutional identity based, as has often been the case in ex-polytechnics, on the perception of good teaching (Pratt, 1997) is now being replaced by a view that teaching and research should enjoy equal status and should penetrate each other:

...I struggled against this for years and years – I would say the best part of twenty years, probably from the point research became something we talked about, which would be the beginning of the seventies until the time we became a university, which I think was in 1992. It was extremely difficult and there was a clear-cut division between teaching and research, and many members of staff would insist that they did not do research, because they were teachers, they saw this difference. I fought against this and said that just because you are a better teacher and you don't do research doesn't ipso facto mean you are a better teacher than one who does research – which was often the attitude taken. ... I am very happy to believe, I think, that the differentiation is no longer present and it shouldn't be in a university.

At least in principle, the last comment seems to point towards a situation in which, in a new university like Greenbridge, teaching and research may enjoy more equal status. However, as has already been pointed out, the situation is more controversial. This is due partly to historical factors (that is to say Greenbridge being an ex-polytechnic, thus being traditionally devoted more to teaching than research), partly to contextual circumstances (like the number of students and the lack of funding) that put new universities in a more difficult position than the traditional ones.

To make matters more complex, a third kind of activity has come into the working life of many academics, making it more difficult to manage: administration. It is to this that we shall now turn, in the last part of this chapter dedicated to institutional identities.

The new ‘professionalisation’ of academic life and the pull towards administration

Most respondents in the three institutions recognise the existence of administrative (and, to a lesser extent, managerial) duties as part and parcel of their working life. The overwhelming feeling is one of disempowerment, as the increase in volume of administration (in terms of the bureaucratic demands relating, for instance, to course syllabus design, assessment and evaluation, but also course marketing, admissions, work placement and so on) may bring about unwanted changes into academic life (Henkel, 2000). Many academics see recent trends in the ‘professionalisation’ of academic life, in terms of the increase in the volume of administrative duties, as a process that is strongly linked to the pull towards accountability and evaluationism. The latter two phenomena that are eroding the traditional intellectual spaces accorded to academics (Bassnett, 2001).

This view is embraced by a French respondent at *Greenbridge* who negatively judges the recent trends towards the professionalisation of academic staff. For her such moves introduce a policing climate into academic life that is corrosive of the intellectual forces that universities should foster (Strathern, 2000):

...I think all attempts to professionalise academic life are complete and utter crap. I don't understand, it is keeping some people in a job. I am not sure who, I know who it keeps in a job here but obviously the directive is coming from somewhere and I find it very difficult to define where that is coming from. An academic is a

facilitator of knowledge, and someone who excites debate should be outside – it is the role of the intellectual to challenge the established view, to question. So they should be doing that, they should be questioning the knowledge of students in order to get them to do that. That is the way a society remains healthy... What the professionalisation of academics is doing is making people frightened to do those things because we are being policed constantly in how you deliver a class, what you do, and aims and objectives. I am not saying it is not useful to think about 'what is my aim in this class', 'do I think I have taught a good class', 'did I communicate what I wanted to', but that is replacing the whole job of the academic which is to inspire and facilitate. You can't police those things.

A negative meaning of professionalisation is also voiced by another French commentator at *Greenbridge*. The pull towards administration, according to her, leads, in fact to people's actual de-skilling, which represents a loss of professional status, not the acquisition of it:

[the pull towards administration]... is de-skilling... it's clericalisation, so we are being turned into clerks. And we're being turned into people whose professional judgement is not wanted. What is wanted is a responsiveness to the customer, so we are being turned into almost retailers... What is wanted is procedures, paperwork and listening to the punters, the clients, the students. And between those two, you have got a kind of pincer movement, what gets squeezed up and out is professional judgement and that's what goes on, and it's not professional... What is wanted is people who are good institutional people, do the right things without complaining, say the right things; be good party men... It is not what I understand as a professional teacher... in the sense that somebody is proud of their job and it's something that they want to do.

Increasingly, administrative duties are seen as having become an endemic part of academic life which takes its toll on people. Procedures and paperwork are becoming, in her view, substitutes for professional judgement. This is being thwarted in the academic world in favour of passive attitudes towards managerial and market forces. As a *Bluebridge* German commentator puts it:

...the volume of administration has increased... it just never goes away, it has now become part of the culture, if that is the right word, of universities and I am afraid it does take an enormous toll and it does get people frazzled.

What the interviewees are arguing here is that there are two meanings of the term professionalization: on the one hand, it is synonymous of professional judgement and academic freedom; on the other, it indicates the current process through which academics are becoming victims of increasing volumes of administrative tasks. These two different meaning of the word 'professionalization' are at logger-heads with each other, as it is argued that the latter impinges on and flattens the former.

This sense of hopelessness generated by increasing administrative workloads is totally shared by one of his colleagues at *Bluebridge*. She sees in this process the reason why some academics are now leaving the profession for a different one:

...I think [administration] does erode the pleasure of the job... I think it does make the job harder and I know – not in this department – acquaintances and friends who have actually left lecturing because of that. That is rather depressing, isn't it?

However, while still being very critical of the current managerial mood, a French lecturer at *Redbridge* manages to subvert the usual negative meanings attributed to administration and sees it as a valuable human exercise:

...administration is not just a paper pushing activity, it is a human activity, talking to people etc., so some of this is important and is very valuable.

Moreover, in the words of a hispanist at *Greenbridge*, doing administration is a necessary activity for all academics, if they want to be in control of the system and not allow the system to control them:

...you need to involve an academic in administration ...the experience of knowing what are the tricks inside and who are our enemies and our friends is very important.

Seen in this light, administration becomes a subversive activity that may help to keep in check those overwhelming forces that the current cultural and political climate is thrusting upon academia. Active knowledge of administration becomes here a critical weapon to be used against overpowering managerialism in academia.

Conclusions

In the course of this chapter, I have attempted to chart the way in which interviewees made sense of both the institutional structures within which they work and the main activities and roles they carry out. The following summary aims at bringing together the main issues that have emerged from the data.

The data indicate a variety of different structural arrangements within which the field of modern languages is embedded: the subject-departmental one (that is to say the different language-based departments at *Bluebridge*, like the French or the Italian one); the school one at *Redbridge*; and the field-departmental one at *Greenbridge* (that is modern languages forming just one department within a wider school of humanities). *Redbridge* changed from the subject-departmental structure to school level, while *Greenbridge* went

from the school structure to the field-departmental one. Both these aggregating moves meant a loss of identity for those working in languages in the two institutions.

The sense of identity loss does not seem to be fuelled so much by re-structuring moves in themselves but far more by the way these are carried out by management, especially when their reasons are not shared by the lecturing staff. In fact, both at Redbridge and Greenbridge people seem to lament the lack of genuine involvement in the re-structuring process. They reject its top-down nature along with the assumption that any merging should be done for purely financial considerations. Such considerations seem to go against the perceptions, wishes and ideologies of the academic staff who defend their own intellectual power and academic freedom. However, concurrently, the re-structuring process has begun to be perceived as useful by some Redbridge academics, in that it has been bringing together academics, across all language subjects, who would not traditionally have co-operated with each other.

More traditional departmental structures, like those at Bluebridge, do not seem to conflict with intra/inter-departmental co-operation. Not only do people appear to operate quite happily within their own departmental environments but are also supportive of interdisciplinary enterprises. This may suggest that the less invasive approach adopted by Bluebridge pays dividends in an institution where departments are historically and financially strong, and management relatively weak. It also seems to indicate that interdisciplinary co-operation can be achieved regardless of actual structural changes, whenever people feel empowered to work according to their own beliefs. The protective

departmental micro-environments act as safe havens that encourage academics to pursue creative projects within and without the institution (De Masi, 2003).

However, the data also seem to point out that such results may be more easily achieved in wealthier institutions (like Bluebridge, where most departments are financially viable) than in ones where there are financial problems (like Greenbridge and, partly, Redbridge). The case of Bluebridge clearly signals that academics can perceive the institution in which they work in positive terms, since their sense of agency is respected and they feel that they have enough space to pursue their interests in creative ways (Baudelot and Gollac, 2003).

In terms of academic activities, while, ideally, teaching seems to be considered to be central to the preoccupations of academics across the three universities, in reality research enjoys more kudos. Nevertheless, there are voices, in all three institutions, in favour of overcoming any possible status split between teaching and research, towards a situation in which equal importance is attributed to both activities. Finally, the trend towards increasing volumes of administrative duties being bestowed upon academics is generally criticised, since these duties are perceived as eroding into teaching and research.

Institutional changes have naturally also had an impact on the already variegated field structures of modern languages. With this consideration in mind, I now turn to the analysis of the data pertaining to field identities.

6 – The field domain: between modern languages as a whole and its language subjects

Introduction

Having identified the main parameters pertaining to institutional identities, the aim of this chapter and the next is to unravel the various sets of discourses defining the overall field of modern languages and its language subjects. As in the case of institutional identities, I therefore decided to order the data thematically, rather than by institution. Given the complexity of the disciplinary issues inherent in modern languages, I have organised the data in two chapters.

This chapter starts with an illustration of the field's overall aims and scope. I subsequently analyse the ways in which the different language subjects (French, German, Italian and Spanish) are constructed by the interviewees. The chapter as a whole, therefore, deals with the traditional disciplinary frameworks of modern languages and looks at some of the paradigmatic changes that are perceivable within each language subject. Fresher trends in the field are dealt with in the next chapter, where the question of interdisciplinarity and the dichotomy existing between language and content studies are tackled.

The aims, scope and status of modern languages

Studying the aims, scope and status of the overall field of modern languages means unpacking the perceptions academics have of wider social influences on it, especially in terms of the possible value and functions of the field for the students. It is, in fact, around

the ideas that lecturers have of their students' characteristics, requests and needs that views about the social and educational significance of the field are formed. In a sense, it is possible to say that, in constructing perceptions about students' identities, academics concurrently construct their own sense of professional value and purpose.

In all three institutions there is a general consensus about the multiple-purpose nature of the field. This nature is seen as a positive factor by most interviewees, as the study of languages is perceived as contributing to different domains, from the cultural to the cognitive and affective. Commenting on the skills and capabilities modern languages can afford its students, a *Redbridge* French specialist says:

...there is no doubt in my mind that a modern languages graduate has enormous advantages over a history graduate or an English graduate...because [modern languages graduates]... are flexible; their minds have been opened to a different linguistic system, a different cultural pattern. They have probably spent a year abroad, they have had to manage on their own, establish their identity as a foreigner in a country and operate within it; they have learnt an enormous amount of transferable skills as part of their language course and their culture course... How do you get this message across to the public at large who seems to think that you just open your head and pour in a bit of French, close it and that's it.

The quote above indicates a worry that the general public may not grasp the wider scope of modern languages, thus perceiving the field in rather simplistic terms. A germanist at *Redbridge* airs the same preoccupation:

[modern languages]...are not perceived to be an academic field, it is simply an ancillary field which you may or may not want to get. In an academic department we have always resisted that, we have said we are not just language teachers – we have more to offer.

In a different part of the interview, he ascribes the responsibility for this to the communicative methods that are currently in fashion in many modern languages

departments. He deems these methods to be responsible for the impoverishment of the field as a whole by reducing the main aim of language learning to the acquisition of simplistic utterances of a utilitarian nature (such as ordering coffee in a bar in Italy, for example). Although the interviewee's argument may simplify and flatten the complex nature of communicative methodologies (Richards and Rodgers, 1986), it points towards the current dangers of considering language learning simply in utilitarian and vocationalist terms, a fear that is shared by many commentators who have written on the nature and aims of modern languages today (see chapter 3). In the *Redbridge* germanist's own words:

...what destroyed everything was this communicative method which came up from the schools. The idea that the only purpose of language is phrase-book – so you can get your cup of coffee in Italy... There is a lot more to Italy than cups of coffee: although the coffee is good, you go to Italy for higher reasons. That has been totally overlooked in this approach.

Without making the communicative methods responsible for the possible *débauche* of the field, a germanist at *Bluebridge* expresses similar preoccupations about the reasons why students may want to choose a modern languages degree. While he finds a general interest in the overall culture of a place a good motive for studying a language, he is worried about students choosing a language degree for purely vocational purposes:

[students]...say 'I have been there' and I have found the place interesting'. You say 'in what way interesting' and they say interesting in terms of its fashion, I went to the cinema and saw this extraordinary film that I hardly understood, I was interested in the German news. I can live with that, that is somebody who has a lively sense of a particular functioning culture at the moment, and I would hope we could then say to that young person 'come and understand about these things with us'... Where I feel the problem is, if a young person says 'I want to write business letters and I want an introductory course in economics and business, then I would have to say we don't do that.

In a similar fashion, another German specialist at *Bluebridge* says:

...it is inadequate to do a degree where one just learns the language well... what matters is to have a critical awareness of the language but also of the culture and history so that the analysis of a critical text is not something that happens in a vacuum but something that can tell us important things politically and historically... so, while teaching a language, we teach critical and analytical skills to deal with any kind of culture.

According to her, the cultural import of modern languages is very essential for a country like England where she feels there is insensitivity to foreign languages and cultures:

...it is very important to speak other languages and England is a fairly barbaric place in that it is insensitive to other languages and cultures... and this would be good also in practical terms of business, politics, diplomacy and so on... learning a foreign language can do important things about critical skills and not living uncritically in a society, and not passively.

A hispanist at *Greenbridge* emphatically states the need for British people to learn languages in order to become truly citizens of an international order. She argues that the idea that many British people have that speaking English, the international language *par excellence*, is enough in today's world is unsatisfactory:

...in Europe British people have always thought that because everybody in Europe speaks English... they realised that, in order to do business, in order to get somebody to a restaurant after a meeting, unless you speak the native language, you are a loser... British people will eventually realise that the other European nationalities will think exactly the same as they think about the rest of Europe. You cannot speak anything except English, you are daft, you are ignorant.

In the view of a germanist at *Redbridge*, the study of modern languages not only helps to obtain knowledge of other cultures but also to understand one's own. This is achieved through a process of comparative reflection on both the foreign and the native cultures.

Learning a foreign language can therefore help in self-understanding in addition to facilitating an understanding of other cultures:

...you can never understand another culture truly without exploring it through its own language. Also the notion of understanding your own culture becomes an easier process, widening process, if you have a cultural model with which to compare it; in exploring another culture, you are always reflecting on your own.

Additionally, he believes that the tendency of British people to be monolingual because of the role of English as an international language is one of the main causes behind the current, perceived crisis of modern languages. This gives modern languages both a political and cultural mission in counteracting the hegemony of both the English language and American culture. In the words of the *Redbridge* germanist:

...we are there to move us into a mainstream or continental culture, because, without that, we will retreat not only into ourselves but we will retreat and turn our eyes over towards America. So, I think it is economic, it is political, it is cultural what we are doing... I think it is a losing battle largely due to the internationality of the English language and that is something we have to learn to live with.

According to an italianist at *Greenbridge*, beyond the impact of English on modern languages, the problems facing the field today result from two intertwined processes: on the one hand, the increasing demise of modern languages degrees; on the other, the transformation of the field into a vocational one, with a clear performative role:

...languages in BA all over Britain are really in decline. So the logical conclusion of that is that is probably a move for cutting down on the role of languages in academic institutions... The vocational component, I think there will be an increased amount of it, quite rightly, I think, it is an excellent thing. It seems a pity to me that the two things are split, they shouldn't be split at all, it seems to me, even in the most academic pursuit, there is a vocational identity and vice versa, of course.

A further factor contributing to the perceived state of crisis is the declining status of the teaching profession. Low status and bad pay do not attract the best linguists to the teaching profession. In turn, this militates against the good health and positive perception of the field. A germanist at *Bluebridge* argues that:

...teachers are badly paid and rated, and the best linguists do not go into school teaching, and, if people do not feel committed enough, they will have an influence on how the language is taught and the field perceived.

However, a German senior academic at *Bluebridge* believes that the current crisis affecting modern languages is only a temporary one. In fact, he thinks that it is typical of modern languages to alternate moments of public interest and success with ones of crisis. According to him, the field is endemically affected by a sense of precariousness:

...the whole position of modern languages in Britain is a strange and precarious one that fluctuates. There are phases when the country is in need to be much more aware of European cultures, it can't just simply rely on the domination of English; and there have been such times, such as when the Berlin Wall came down but that interest has now faded.

As the quotations above illustrate, current disciplinary changes are allegedly being determined by wider social and cultural forces.

As we have seen, academics perceive the overall field as being influenced both by current trends towards vocationalism and the weight of English as the international language of communication. Arguably, such perceptions have an effect on the way academics construct their own professional identity in terms of the value and function they attribute to their own work in relation to the wider society in which they operate. Counteracting the cultural power of English and assisting in helping in the understanding and

appreciation of other cultures are the top priorities of modern languages academics. Such priorities influence their professional sense of purpose.

However, in order to gain a much more detailed view of the field identities, it is important to go beyond the field at large. One has also to peruse its language subjects, given that, historically, these have been the poles around which the academic identities of modern languages scholars have traditionally been formed (Evans, 1988).

From the overall field to the different language subjects

As Evans (ibidem) reminds us, traditionally language subjects have played a bigger role in the identity formation of modern languages academics than the overall field. The study of language subjects typically included the learning of the language, mainly carried out through the translation of literary texts, and a knowledge of the major authors and historical periods of the culture in question. In this sense, one could talk of fairly defined and stable language subject identities. There used to be a clear set of perceived needs and expectations both on the part of staff and students.

However, today the situation has become more complex. First of all, as we shall see, language subjects, under the influence of market demands, have become more vocationalist in nature (that is to say they focus on the study of the foreign language specific work contexts, for specific purposes, like legal French, for instance,). Moreover, wider epistemological changes generated by postmodernism and the cultural studies movement have enlarged the study of foreign cultures well beyond the analysis of the

work of the canonical authors of a foreign literary tradition to embrace other forms of popular art (like form of fringe theatre and film, for instance). The resulting changes in the different language subjects are, therefore, the outcome of the re-thinking of their nature, scope and functions in contemporary British society.

It is arguable that the more diverse and complex language subject frameworks that we witness today reflect the less stable and more fluid disciplinary identities of modern languages lecturers. In the face of current socio-cultural changes, modern languages scholars have been made to question their own sense of purpose and function in contemporary society. With much powerfulness, social forces are re-shaping the fairly stable identities of modern languages academics by throwing into relief their traditional fairly stable expectations about their language subject and their work around it. Society seems to impress on to the field and its scholars a particularly strong imprint these days, subtracting agency from academics in the way they define their own subject (Morley, 2003) but also creating new possibilities and challenges (Barnett, 2003). It is to the shifts registered in the different language subjects (French, German, Italian and Spanish) that I now turn.

According to a French lecturer at *Redbridge*, French as a subject has widened its scope both within his department and outside it:

...I am within a French department and I feel perfectly happy because it is a department with a wide view on what French is about: we have an historian, we have a specialist in cinema studies, people with different theoretical backgrounds and they all fit quite nicely here.

The notion that French studies have become wider in their scope is confirmed by one of his colleagues. According to him, the subject has changed, though slowly, over the last few years. From being the study of the canon (by which is meant here the collection of those literary texts that are traditionally considered to be at the centre of a culture [Payne, 1996]), it has broadened out into areas like politics, history and other specialisms (Birkett and Kelly, 1992; Kelly, 2001). The role of both critical theory (as the interdisciplinary, epistemological project that aims at questioning the nature of the relationship between knowledge, ethics and power through [self] reflectivity on cultural artefacts [Payne, ibidem]) and the changing nature of A Levels (in terms of the decreasing focus these put on traditional literature in favour of other types of texts, like the press) have been pivotal in pushing out its boundaries. In the words of the French respondent at *Bluebridge*:

...French studies are in the process of changing and have been very slow to change, but have changed quite radically since I started having anything to do with them. Previously, it was language based with a strong literary component and, because of the change in A levels and the change in the education system, I think French studies are less linguistically oriented than they used to be and the literature field has broadened out: politics, history and institutions, so there has been a broadening of the scope of French studies. What has changed is critical theory, which has pushed French outwards and spread away from its original structure which I have maintained for many years is not intellectually justifiable, especially in French which sees itself at the heart of the European culture. And so, to restrict your scope only to French, if you are a French teacher, is not intellectually permissible.

Other lecturers in the other two institutions equally share the feeling that French studies have moved beyond their traditional boundaries. For instance, an informant at *Bluebridge* recognises that French has recently widened both in terms of its scope and aims. He also emphasises that the value of the subject lies in its ability to develop certain skills in students and expose them to a multicultural notion of French studies that goes beyond metropolitan France to include other French speaking countries. In addition, he points out

that the subject is traversed today by a host of thematic issues like race, gender and sexuality. This is accompanied by current development in critical theory. Like in the case of Redbridge, the complex nature of the subject in the outside world is reflected within the department:

... [the aim and value of French studies are]... to hone critical abilities and faculties at the level of the teaching students through a foreign language, and the structures implied in learning a foreign language... To acknowledge an appreciation of the cultural aspects of that language... be it in film, literature, newspapers, TV and radio, whatever... Obviously, French studies have developed quite recently which has taken some people to focus out of metropolitan France. So, Caribbean literature and Francophone African literatures and cultures are important. They are areas of increasing interest. Within Bluebridge I think we reflect all that... We also cover critical theory, or literary theory or cultural theory, or whatever one wants to call it, which again reflect the boom in that kind of area, which in many ways began in France but became more important in America and Britain. So I think we reflect what French studies nationally might be.

However, French is not the only subject that has undergone a process of transformation in recent years. Confirming what the recent literature on German studies points out (Burns, 1995; Kolinsky and van der Will, 1998), a germanist at Bluebridge illustrates the recent widening of the scope of the subject:

...the extra strands are in addition to the basic: literature from mediaeval to modern. From our point of view the extra strands are history – we have always wanted to do that properly and we now have a very strong history side; politics, we have also added cultural studies in the sense of one or two seminars that look at literature but as a part of a whole set of complex texts. A colleague does a course on 1968, on recording the revolt of that time through bits of film, journalism, novels etc. So history, politics, cultural studies, film...

According to another germanist at Redbridge, nowadays there is no real consensus about what German studies are. Their configuration depends on the balance that is reached between language learning and content studies in the different institutions, according to their aims and traditions of the latter:

...German studies, I suppose, is all aspects relating to the German language and culture in its historical context. It has got to be a very broad definition because there are all sorts of institutions that do all sorts of things. For some it is language based with a bit of culture to aid the language; and for some of us it is mainly culture with a bit of language. I think those are the two main strands for those who the language is the main aim and the culture is only a tool to aid the language learning process, and those institutions where language learning is done to give those people the skills to cope with the culture...

She continues by highlighting how German has developed over the years in her own department at Redbridge. The traditional German degree, strongly literary in nature and chronological in its approach, has been substituted by an emphasis on the contemporary and the interdisciplinary. She partially regrets this and favours an attitude that mingles tradition with innovation in curriculum design:

...I am very much a traditionalist about this in that one of the ways in which it has developed over the last few years is a kind of tendency to stop doing literary coverage... a lot of the institutions have dropped a lot of the earlier stuff in order to have time and space to do interdisciplinary things... I would say that I would want to see a balance in German studies between a more modern kind of pro-interdisciplinary approach of the subject which focuses essentially on the modern period and alongside that the possibility, for those that want it, to do the more traditional stuff.

In any case, beyond specific institutional arrangements, there is a sense that the very idea of a canon has been brought into dispute. According to another German respondent at Bluebridge, current shifts away from the traditional canon have been the result of both generational changes and the work of new social actors (women, homosexuals and so on) who have become increasingly central on the academic scene in challenging its traditional premises. Both younger academics and, especially, women have played a major part in the re-definition of German studies:

...I think that until very recently it has been a comparatively conservative and canonical field. Certainly, my old university was incredibly canonical and conservative – there was very much a sense of ‘this is important and this is the important stuff and these are the great thoughts of the 18th century and this is what we are to look up to’. Very uncritical in that respect and quite oppressive. I think there is still an older generation in the profession which is like that. Having said that, I think there has been a big change in recent years, partly because there has been a generational shift and more young people are coming into the profession. More women - that is something that has happened very strikingly in recent years and I think the nature of German studies is changing radically because it is no longer attractive or viable or, I think, intellectually satisfactory to do traditional language and literature courses anymore which is the kind of thing I did when I did my BA...That happens at some universities but increasingly that model is being replaced by cultural studies, which is of course something a lot broader: history, politics, film etc.

The idea that the new generations are playing a major role in re-shaping language subjects is shared by an italianist at *Greenbridge*. In his view, wider trends in British literary criticism have favoured fresher approaches to Italian studies as well (Forgacs and Lumley, 1996; Baranski and West, 2001). These have gone beyond the British Isles to influence, to an extent, the subject in Italy too:

...the new generation... have become much less provincial. Before, being an Italianist in England was purely an appendix of the way of studying text with the so called British literary criticism which didn't produce very much as far as Italian studies were concerned. But now, particularly with the influence of the younger English generation, it has become much more cosmopolitan and, I suspect, this is even accepted in Italy.

However, an italianist at *Bluebridge*, while recognising the widening of the canon of Italian studies, is more cautious about the centrifugal forces affecting them. These could be counteracted by some definable boundaries, which, in her mind, are an integral part of the knowledge of any italianist: an excellent command of the language; an understanding of the linguistic history of the country; and knowledge of canonical authors. She feels that any degree in Italian should contain all these aspects. This is

especially important today when students arrive at university less prepared in the basics of the subject than in the past. However, the modular degree structure, with the strong element of choice it introduces, is encouraging new trends at the expense of the more traditional canon:

...Italian studies at Bluebridge... have become far more inclusive of other fields such as history. So Italian history, cultural history, cinema, which I think for an undergraduate degree are probably a very good thing because they do provide a wider perspective of things Italian. At the same time I'm not convinced, given the kind of background our students have, which is already a very limited background... What I find difficult is striking a balance within a degree programme between that which ought to be and that which can be an extra option. ...I also think for Italian, the kind of history it has as a language, knowing the history is fundamental if you want to understand the culture. Dante of course, but Boccaccio, Macchiavelli – all these are part of what they should teach and are what our students should be reading and learning. This can contrast considerably with the kind of structure courses are being pushed into more and more. The fact that it is a modular structure that you can choose from.

A similar tension between tradition and innovation is also to be found in Spanish studies. This tension is embodied in the conflicting forces operating between the traditional offerings of the Spanish department and the need to change in response to two sets of factors: the wider epistemological shifts affecting the subject and the market demands made by students. First of all, there appears to be a clear broadening of the academic interest beyond the culture of peninsular Spain towards the cultures of Latin America. This is accompanied by an increasing emphasis on the culturalist approach which, as we have seen, tends to include artefacts that go beyond the literary to include film, theatre, the press and so on (Graham and Labanyi, 1995; Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, 2000). A Spanish specialist at *Greenbridge* emphasizes the latter trend. He also signals the more vocational nature of language studies:

...Spanish studies is very much wider than it was many years ago. At one time Spanish studies was language which was largely studied in literary mode, and Spanish literature and perhaps history of the Spanish language. Today... the Spanish language is much more geared to practicalities – a great deal of it is business students... The application of Spanish studies is very widespread now: to geography, history, social sciences, film studies etc.

At *Bluebridge*, the widening of the subject towards other disciplinary areas goes hand in hand with more traditional approaches, thus generating a situation of hybridity. This, along with an equal interest in both Spanish and Latin American studies, represents what the department has to offer:

...we are a quite traditional Spanish department; we are a department of Spanish and Latin American – this is important because we were established mainly to focus on Latin America. In the department we are half Spain and half Latin America. Spanish studies involve study of the Spanish language and we make no distinction between Spanish Spanish or Argentinian Spanish or Mexican Spanish; it is all Spanish, as far as we are concerned. We have teachers who are Mexican, Peruvian and British, the administrator's Columbian – you know we regard it as a great family. Now the culture of Spain and Spanish America in terms of literature and film, that is about as far as we go; it is mainly literature but we also have 4 or 5 film courses – Spanish film and Latin American film running at the moment... So we are fairly conservative in our approach, we tell students when they apply here that we are basically a conservative department.

Similarly, a hispanist at *Redbridge* emphasizes the fact that Spanish studies embrace the study of many diverse cultures today. According to her, the need to understand how these cultures work is at the very heart of contemporary Spanish studies:

...Spanish studies are obviously not peninsular Spain; there are so many other identities and languages – the whole of Latin America. Bringing to the attention of people that there is another world, there are other parameters, although we are all the same, there are specific cultural things to learn – I think it is important to promote this...

As we have seen, common to all subjects is, therefore, their tendency to broaden in different ways: thematically, geographically, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarily.

Such changes can be seen as the result of world-wide cultural shifts that point towards hybridism and, therefore, fuzzier disciplinary boundaries (Moran, 2002). Questions pertaining to interdisciplinarity and moves towards culturalist approaches in modern languages will be dealt with in more depth in the next chapter.

However, it is important to notice at this stage that changes in the field are also determined by the new student population inhabiting British universities today. According to many interviewees, students exercise a definite influence on the individual language subject's structures both in terms of the demands they make on departments in terms of curriculum design, and in terms of students' decreasing academic preparation, as they enter tertiary education. Informants are aware that both the overall field and the individual language subjects do not remain immune in face of wider social and educational forces, like the massification and marketization of higher education.

A germanist at *Redbridge* brings such issues to the surface. A more diverse intake has been altering the content of German studies and the way this is taught. Moreover, market pressures have meant the demise of German as the second most studied foreign language in favour of Spanish. Therefore, according to her, market forces have influenced the imbalance towards the 'new' at the expenses of more traditional German studies:

...the fashionable trend has been toward 20th century, everything has to be contemporary and relevant – whatever that means... Students, generally – especially from state schools – have far less background generally in history, theology, the sort of things they used to get in a traditional grammar school. They don't get that background and they are not attuned to that historical side of scholarship...[Consequently, the move has been towards] contemporary studies, area studies, bits of geography, civilization and that kind of thing.

A French colleague at *Bluebridge* shares these thoughts. In his view, standards have dropped dramatically, thus re-defining what is taught and the way it is taught:

...I think by far the most striking difference is a lowering of linguistic competence. The general skills particularly in terms of written French now of average entrants to university is shockingly low compared to what it was not that long ago, and that has ramifications for the teaching of language. It becomes very difficult when students have such basic inadequacies in their linguistic abilities.

The view of a germanist at *Bluebridge* is that market forces have pushed her subject to acquire a more vocational feel, in the sense that students request language tuition that is of immediate, practical use in their future profession (like German for business, for instance), at the expense of the study of literary and historical aspect of a culture. This is a tendency that, as we have seen in chapter 2, is typical of the overall field of modern languages:

...I think in the past there was this idea that any degree would give you this rigorous intellectual training and it didn't really matter whether you studied classics or engineering or something more vocational. But I think that students now are expecting some element of vocational training although this department is probably the one on which students don't seem to have these demands.... So in general I think, yes, students, because they are paying for it, they are expecting much more of a vocational training and they want to see the link between their studies and what they will do later, even if this link is completely untenable or not practical. But I think that, yes, they are expecting more vocational training.

A hispanist at *Bluebridge* confirms the pull towards vocationalism. This is embodied in the request for more practical, communicative language tuition. He also signals a change in focus from literary to film studies, as part of the process generated by market forces:

...to be honest with you, the biggest change that we have already started to notice but will really happen in the future is that the student will be a consumer and will have a very direct affect on what we offer. I will be frank with you: I

think they are going to demand more film, more of the type of stuff that they do at A-level, less literature. I think they will demand more language, or possibly about the same or a different way of teaching language. I think that will change the profile perhaps.

According to a French commentator at *Greenbridge*, the move towards vocationalism and instrumentalism changes the nature of the overall field of modern languages. It makes its cultural content shallower and emphasises its service role, while, at the same time endangering its very existence:

[students]...do not want to study modern languages, they want to study something that will get them a job, and if they are forward-thinking enough they will study a language that will increase their employability... This boosts the service provision... So you will gradually see people doing other degrees as a major and a minor in a language. But then the field changes radically because they then only do the language component, they don't do the area studies.

However, a French lecturer at *Bluebridge* sees a positive side in the present situation. Phenomena like the massification and marketization of higher education are pushing French studies to re-invent themselves in creative ways, at least within his department:

...I think with regard to the canon, I think we are fortunate within the department - on the question of canon anyway, this is the way... although we do have the traditional type of person here we also have a lot of people whose spontaneous reaction is to think, not necessarily against, but to think through the canon in a creative way, or actually to bin the canon altogether. So I think insofar as there is a pressure of that kind we are responding from within.

A *Bluebridge* German colleague of his expresses similar views in relation to his subject. Given that this is not a language in great demand today, it has had to be especially mindful of students' requests in an attempt to try and keep its numbers:

...I have to be honest and say to you that [there is a] sense of a different market out there. Insofar as there is one it is a market that is less for conventional literature and more modern studies with literature as part of other things... I think it is re-shaping

it in the sense that it is impinging quite sharply on our ability to recruit students. And given that all universities are under pressure to make sure that their student numbers are adequate and tolerable and tally with the places the university has at its disposal, there is a great pressure on subjects such as modern languages, such as German, where you can't be certain of your student catchment area. You have to be mindful of what the young people coming to you might want.

For an italianist at *Greenbridge*, responding to the market is a duty, not simply a necessity. Academics would not be in their posts, if it were not for those students who decide to choose their specific subject. After all, it is the market that guarantees the existence of certain subjects and fields within a certain institution:

...well, I am not really a pro-market character but one has to accept that we are here because there is a market for Italian. We haven't created a market for Italian, we are here because somebody employed us because somebody else wanted to do Italian.

The consideration that consumer demand has an important effect on the life of a given field/subject is strengthened by the fact that market forces are reconfiguring the relative status enjoyed by each individual language subject. As I have said, Spanish has recently challenged the traditional supremacy of French. In the words of a French specialist at *Redbridge*:

... now French is declining in Britain as I understand it... I think I'm right in saying that there are now more GCSE entries for Spanish than for French and that will of course feed through the system. So French is on the decline, though we have had it very good for a very long time, you know we have been the envy of others.

Another French respondent at *Bluebridge* confirms the increasing importance of Spanish studies at the expense of French. This phenomenon is altering the traditional status and power structure within modern languages that used to see French as the most studied foreign language in Britain:

...I think French in the past – as a language, and I speak as somebody who is an amateur hispanist with a hispanist background – to some extent has been very imperialistic in the past and has perhaps enjoyed for too long pre-eminence as the foreign language that is taught in this country. It has changed over time with Spanish very much growing – I think there are very sound pedagogical reasons why that might be the case. Spanish at an earlier stage is easier to learn than French, that ceases to be the case further on I think. There are other factors such as the fact that a lot more people speak Spanish in the world than do French.

German also appears to be suffering at the hands of Spanish. In the eyes of a germanist at Redbridge, this is due to the relative difficulty presented by the German language in relation to Spanish:

...there is a serious problem in all English-speaking countries. German is perceived as a difficult language in the same way as Latin because of the inflexions and so on.

However, the current demise of German studies may be determined by factors that go beyond the complexity of the language. Some of these are related to the way in which German culture is generally perceived in British society. As another German lecturer at Redbridge puts it:

...German studies are becoming ever more marginalised; German is taught ever less in schools, German departments all over the place are shutting down or being squeezed, German as a single honours subject is taught less and less often, so it is a question we are increasingly asking ourselves. I think if I answer the question negatively, in that what does German suffer from in this country? It is simply the reputation of being a difficult language; everybody thinks Spanish is easier so why bother with the horrors of German? So you get the difficulty of the language and then you get an awful lot of cultural baggage about what Germany means to the British. So I think our role continually is trying to break down prejudices which are still at large in society about what German-speaking countries are and what German culture means – it's just a constant battle.

However, in the eyes of a hispanist at Bluebridge, the growing importance of Spanish cannot simply be explained either in terms of its assumed linguistic simplicity or the

increasing importance of Spain and Latin America as major tourist destinations. Its success is to be related to a widespread interest in multiculturalism in contemporary British society. Spanish studies seem to respond well to this need:

...I think that England is extremely multi-cultural, I think that we are seeing – certainly in Spanish, an enormous growth in interest in this subject. It's fuelled by a variety of things and we are essentially responding to that need which has emerged, it could be as simple as people going to Spain on their holidays or going to Cuba on their holidays. I think there are a variety of factors and we are responding to that need, so I think I would answer it in those terms: producing high-quality graduates, responding to the needs of multi-culturalism and also responding to those needs which have a more pragmatic role, people wanting to know about the Spanish culture. I think that is different to what is happening in French, I think there numbers are going down... We have got tons of students, we can't deal with them all.

The current interest in multiculturalism is being translated not only in changes in the status balance among different language subjects but also in the pull towards interdisciplinarity. Both as a result of market forces and wider epistemological changes, the field of modern languages is undergoing pressures that are orienting it towards more co-operation and harmonisation of the different language subjects around common issues and themes. Moreover, such forces also aim at changing the priorities and approaches inherent to the study of individual language subjects along lines that are typical of cultural studies.

As I have indicated, such field changes are indicative of how modern languages academics have had to let go of the fairly stable field identities of the past by questioning the role of the field (and, ultimately, their own) within contemporary society. The result has often been hybrid identity configurations in which the 'old' and the 'new' intermingle giving rise to more complex and fluid identity configurations.

Conclusions

In the course of this chapter, I have looked at the way the field identity of modern languages is constructed. From the discussion above, some general points can be offered.

First of all, looking at the field in its entirety, undergraduate courses are perceived to be in crisis as a result of the falling numbers of students enrolling for straight BAs in languages. Moreover, in terms of its nature, aims and function, the field is conceived to be complex and in a state of fluid change. Its epistemological identity is seen as revolving around a host of language subjects. The latter are traversed, in turn, by a number of specialisms, such as literature, history and politics. The field core is identified in the study of the language. As importantly, the field identity is also perceived to be lying in the variety of educational aims it has and the functions it performs. Modern languages are thought to be particularly useful for a society, like the British one, that is oriented towards monolingualism, as a result of English being the language of international communication. Many modern languages academics see it as their duty to overcome the power of English in the attempt to make British people more sensitive to other languages and cultures.

Respondents argued that wider socio-cultural trends are contributing to change the configuration of the overall field. In the first instance, in a market-led environment, the pragmatic and performative aspects of language teaching/learning are being increasingly focused on at the expense of the study of cultural artefacts. Concurrently, in a mass university system, students' lower level of preparation in facing traditional academic tasks is seen as having serious effects on the way the field is taught.

Finally, market demands are altering the traditional power relationships between the different language subjects, with Spanish taking the traditional leading role that French and German had in the past. Inevitably, this affects the sense of field identity scholars belonging to different language subjects have of themselves, with the French and German academics registering the deepest sense of crisis in terms of the current situation and possible developments of their subject of specialisation.

However, it is recognized that current trends are also having some beneficial effects on the field as a whole, as it is making scholars re-think it in novel, creative ways. As I have already indicated, it is arguable in this sense that the field identity of modern languages academics, once firmly embedded in the study of the language through literary translations and the study of the literary canons, has become more complex and fluid. Newer interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary frameworks are in general commented on positively by the respondents in the three institutions, as these new configurations are perceived to open new spaces in and for the language subjects.

All scholars in the three institutions perused are equally aware of the current socio-cultural influences on their field and of their relative advantages and disadvantages. However, the data seem to suggest that Bluebridge academics are clearer (and certainly more vociferous) about the necessity to set boundaries against changes dictated by purely market considerations than in the other two institutions. At Bluebridge, field developments are thought to be acceptable when they are deemed to be compatible with the subject traditions and are the result of genuine academic debate rather than the

passive acceptance of market demands. This could signal that Bluebridge academics construct their field identities more strongly around language subjects than in the other two institutions. Arguably, the departmental organization at Bluebridge of each language subject may indeed assist in setting firmer field boundaries than in the other two institutions where language subject identities have more obviously been altered by the mergers. At Greenbridge and, to a lesser extent at Redbridge, academics have had to abandon some of the power attached to individual language subjects and are now in search of new epistemological configurations.

Having analyzed how the respondents construct the field and its different language subject, I now turn my attention to a more focused analysis of current trends in modern languages towards interdisciplinarity and cultural studies. Such an analysis will assist in completing our perusal of field identities.

7 – The field domain: new aggregations and an old faultline

Introduction

In the last chapter, I looked at the aims, scope, state and status of the field of modern languages as a whole, and at the different language subjects that constitute it. In this chapter I intend to consider current changes in the field towards more interdisciplinary venues, the most important of which is represented by cultural studies. The alleged purposes and scope of interdisciplinarity precedes this. In the second part of the chapter, I shall deal with what has been traditionally considered to be the major fault line in the field identity of modern languages: the split between language learning and content studies.

Dealing with these issues is a useful way of indicating and assessing both the overall current state of and the possible changes to the field.

Interdisciplinarity: a contested notion

In the last chapter I indicated how there are trends, in the three institutions perused, within the four individual language subjects, towards interdisciplinary venues. I am now going to deal with such trends in some detail.

According to a French specialist at *Greenbridge*, interdisciplinarity is the mark of current changes in the nature and organisation of knowledge, where boundaries between

disciplines are becoming increasingly less defined (Messer-Davidow, Shumway and Sylvan, 1993; Peters, 1999; Becher and Trowler, 2001; Moran, 2002):

...if you are doing research you're led to come across so many other fields. It's a cultural shift across the university, not this university alone – far from it but the system, the whole educational cultural thing, everything is becoming more diverse – less sharply defined.

However, some commentators regard the term 'interdisciplinarity' as redundant. According to an Italian lecturer also at *Greenbridge*, any academic endeavour can be interdisciplinary by default, provided it is approached with a clear focus and a certain balance:

...I think everything is interdisciplinary. I cannot conceive of something which is not interdisciplinary. Of course, this is not what you wanted, it is a matter of balance and focus. I studied economics and I am still interested in economic aspects, then history but history with an anthropological slant, and I am interested in philosophy and how ideas develop. So, of course, it is interdisciplinary, any serious approach which has anything to do with our reality... the whole reality of life is interdisciplinary.

Similarly, a French specialist at *Redbridge* emphasises the artificiality of the term. French studies have been interdisciplinary by tradition:

...the guidelines put out by the French panel for the RAE assessment have a nice sentence at the beginning which says 'we regard French as characterised by a high degree of interdisciplinarity'... For example if I am doing 18th century then I am doing history as well as literature.

The distinction between interdisciplinarity as academic practice and as a result of institutional policies aiming at merging departments is drawn by a number of respondents. The latter invariably praise the virtues of interdisciplinary projects, while, at the same time,

they are critical of the concept when this is abused for the reasons that have little to do with the furthering of knowledge.

This is highlighted by a French specialist at *Bluebridge*. He sees the tendency towards interdisciplinarity as the result of managerial decisions. In his view, the new interdisciplinary trends represent a significant shift from earlier times when intellectual curiosity was the hallmark of interdisciplinarity. Although he does not think that there should necessarily be a conflict between managerial and academic interests, he sounds words of caution towards any form of interdisciplinarity that is accomplished simply to bring departments together, without any real intellectual consideration being taken into account:

...interdisciplinarity has gone through a number of evolutions... when I first started latching onto the idea it was something that came from within; something which allowed me to develop thinking about literature or thinking about the fictional text at large precisely as a form of thought, of engaging philosophically in general issues of culture. I think there is a danger at the moment that interdisciplinarity is a way of bringing departments together which is a good idea, but I think the movement behind interdisciplinarity institutionally may be more to do with management than to do with intellectual content. I don't mean to say there is necessarily a conflict between management and intellect but nevertheless sometimes a dialogue between the two isn't what it might be.

An Italianist, also at *Bluebridge*, airs similar worries. According to her, institutionally driven interdisciplinary endeavours run the risk of creating the misguided links and synergies. In the case of her own institution, she feels that new aggregations are being sought after in order to get rid of maverick departments, like the Italian one. She considers this an agenda that can, in the end, be detrimental for the institution itself:

...I think that the college likes to promote itself as very much as an interdisciplinary institution. The faculty of Arts and Humanities is being driven

and we are being encouraged more and more to establish interdisciplinary connections, run courses jointly. I think that there are lots of very interesting aspects of interdisciplinary work, but I think that Bluebridge is going about it the wrong way. One way it is wanting to promote interdisciplinary activities is by trying to create an institute of languages or a school of languages... some of us have more in common with the department of English than we have with the department of Spanish or with the department of history of art, it so depends on the kinds of interests that members of staff have. I find it difficult to understand exactly what they mean by that. It seems to me that what they are trying to do is make sure that there are no maverick departments and I'm afraid Italian is very much a maverick department.

As the last two quotes indicate, interdisciplinarity is perceived by some interviewees as a word that, rather than referring to intellectual processes and synergies, is the embodiment of managerial values. However, in spite of all these cautionary comments, a number of commentators at *Bluebridge* see interdisciplinarity as being well practised in their institution. For instance, a French respondent gives a concrete example of good interdisciplinary practice by commenting on the MA in comparative literature. This brings together people from different language departments and beyond:

...I think here [interdisciplinarity] does happen in very obvious, concrete and exciting ways. I think there are many ways in which that works at Bluebridge... It encompasses courses, both lectures and text-based seminars, which bring together either theme-led or formally comparable works from France, Britain, North America, Latin America and most of the major cultures of Europe. And it is taught in an interdisciplinary manner as well, in as much as the teaching team comes from the whole kind of gamut of departments within faculties and not just language departments, also Hebrew-Jewish studies, School of Library and Archive Studies etc.

Interdisciplinary endeavours are also part and parcel of academic life at *Redbridge*. As a French lecturer says, interdisciplinarity reaches outside languages to include philosophy, film studies and so on:

...I think if there is interdisciplinarity, it is not necessarily with other languages. It can be interdisciplinarity with people from different areas; cinema studies, art,

sculpture, philosophy. I am into psychology, so it is across fields but not necessarily within the languages.

A Redbridge Spanish colleague of his admits that the re-structuring of the departments into a school of languages has facilitated interdisciplinarity among the different language departments, thus illustrating the fact that institutional pressures can bring intellectual benefits to academics:

[the restructuring move]...has allowed us to work with other members of staff from the other ex-departments. For instance, I just met a member from French who is an expert in film, and we decided to put a course together between the two of us just doing visual analysis completely regardless of nationalities.

At Greenbridge the launch of a new Bachelor of Arts degree is seen by some respondents as the only genuine attempt at carrying out some kind of interdisciplinary project by bringing together various subjects and specialisms. This is illustrated by a Spanish specialist:

...the new degree... is going to be interdisciplinary. For instance, at the moment, in the Spanish department the lecturers who are dealing with language and content, because they are having the same groups, they are trying to embrace several fields in one. In the old traditional BA we were divided: literature in one corner, Spain in another corner, Latin America in another corner – there was no attempt whatsoever to integrate the different studies.

However, the overall feeling is that the re-structuring moves have not created a sense of a common intellectual goal among the academic staff. As in the case of Redbridge, it is felt that, if some form of interdisciplinarity has emerged, this has been prompted by pragmatic reasons. The aim is to survive in difficult circumstances by pulling knowledge and expertise together. As a Greenbridge French lecturer puts it:

...I think we do interact with each other to a certain degree because we have no choice. If we don't, we won't survive, I'm not entirely sure that interdisciplinarity in the French section is necessarily driven by an ideology – that it is the right thing to do, but by a pragmatic look at the situation and if we don't associate with one another and look at one another's traditions of intellectual or academic history then, simply, it doesn't look like there will be much left of us.

According to another *Greenbridge* Spanish lecturer, interdisciplinarity is dependent on the opportunities people are given to create links and commonality not just within individual language sections, but across languages. This element is missing at *Greenbridge* where people act as if they had little common purpose:

...the problem with interdisciplinarity is that you have to build a team, you have to build relations with a number of people to talk about what perspective you have and how you do this and that. In this institution with so many atoms here and there pursuing their own ends it is just impossible to find any kind of authentic reflexive attitude or exchange of ideas – it very seldom happens.

However, interdisciplinarity cannot be separated from disciplinarity (Di Napoli, Polezzi and King, 2001). If both human and institutional factors are important ingredients in the pursuit of interdisciplinarity, this can only be achieved through a strong sense of disciplinarity. In fact, it is only through a good knowledge of the aims and scope of one's own field that interdisciplinary projects can acquire solidity. This is explained by a French commentator at *Bluebridge*:

...interdisciplinarity, the phrase and what I take it to mean, implies the ways in which fields and formations can form each other and change each other through interaction. You can't have interaction with two different bodies if you don't have two bodies to start with. Equally the kind of knowledge base that I think one needs in order to engage in specialism in other areas has to be fairly acute, so you do need a field home in order to engage with other fields.

In a similar vein, a *Bluebridge* germanist in the same institution says:

...I think what I would say is as long as we are aware that there are those two [disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity], as if it were, face us and they have to be held in debate that we must exist in the field of force between them... If there is a serious scholarly literature then it is within a particular field and one has to steep oneself in that. Equally, however, I think now – and it is part of the opportunities of the now – because there is a broader framework for debate about language and literature; a broader sense that literature is part of culture, history and politics, that constantly one is looking to hear one's own insights bouncing off other versions of the field.

To sum up, the idea of interdisciplinarity features highly as a value in the field identities of the academics in the three institutions. The data suggest that respondents see in it a major tool for advancing research and teaching in new directions. However, it is generally recognised that the need and pull for interdisciplinarity must be the result of genuine academic interests rather than the outcome of managerial moves to favour mergers. Nevertheless, in the case of Redbridge, there is a recognition that the managerial merger has encouraged more co-operation than ever before among languages, even if in the past it was practised between individual languages and other departments, like linguistics or art history.

What distinguishes the three institutions is the degree to which interdisciplinarity is actually practised. At Bluebridge, interdisciplinarity is considered to be part and parcel of people's field identity. In general, lecturers are engaged in exciting interdepartmental (and, often) cross-institutional interdisciplinary projects, both in terms of teaching and research. At Redbridge, interdisciplinarity appears to be traditionally practised within field research, with some of it reaching out into other departments (only recently language ones). It is, therefore, an integral part of the academics' identity, even if not to the extent of Bluebridge. Finally, at Greenbridge, while the recognition of the value of

interdisciplinarity is widespread among the staff, it is something that people would like to see encouraged more in their institution than it actually is at the moment. Interdisciplinarity is not yet a strong element in people's academic identity, even if it has started materialising in some forms of co-operation among the different languages on the new bachelor degree. However, there is a sense that interdisciplinarity is being experimented with out of necessity, given the current crisis of individual language subjects. A coherent approach to interdisciplinarity is still to be actualised. Like in the case of Redbridge, given the recent occurrence of the merger, it may take some time before some beneficial effects of the merger, in terms of real interdisciplinary projects, take place. Overall, at Greenbridge interdisciplinarity still remains an ideal to be pursued rather than a practice that is firmly embedded among the academic staff, even if, as I say, there are signs of change in this sense. The lack of a strong research profile in this institution may, however, make the process slower than at Redbridge where there is a tradition of research co-operation between languages and other field areas.

The discussion on interdisciplinarity often brought the interviewees to discuss the boundaries between disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity. The interplay between these two modalities is at the very heart of any discussion concerning cultural studies. Struggling with boundaries, demolishing old ones and building new ones has been the main feature of this relatively recent academic field. In an intellectual climate where boundaries become fuzzier and there is a distinct demand for fresher approaches to the study of national cultures, looking at the cultural studies model has become a necessity for language people. However, the field is fraught with intricacies that touch at the epistemological heart of modern languages. If one wants to get a sense of where this may

be going in the future, it is necessary to discuss, however briefly, its relation to cultural studies.

The culturalist import in modern languages

The term 'cultural studies' emerges in a substantial number of interviews. The impact of this relatively new field formation on modern languages is generally recognized. However, the meanings, aims and scope attributed to it vary consistently. They go from a perception of it as a ragbag of different subjects, methodologies and approaches mostly concentrating on 'popular culture' and contemporary artefacts, to its recognition as a multi-layered field with a coherent and stable core. While in the case of the 'ragbag' approach the focus is on multidisciplinary, any attempt to conceive cultural studies in a principled way is more interdisciplinary in nature, as it is based on the recognition of the need for a coherent interaction among different fields, methods and approaches in the study of a culture in all its facets (Baranski and West, 2001; Di Napoli, Polezzi and King: 2001; Macey, 2001).

Most definitions of cultural studies given by respondents emphasise its multidisciplinary nature. At the same time, some interviewees fail to attribute any coherence to the field. This is the case of a German lecturer at *Redbridge*. In describing the current shift in modern languages, she sees the traditional degree in German as moving towards a multidisciplinary framework. She personally favours a model that lies in between the kind of German degree traditionally taught at her institution and the more recent

culturalist approaches. She points towards a notion of modern languages as a field that is currently being caught between tradition and innovation:

...there is space within that newly conceived German studies for the more traditional kind of degree because I would be very sorry to see that kind of 'I know everything about German literature from year 1', that would be lost, so I would say that I would want to see a balance in German studies between a more modern kind of pro-interdisciplinary approach of the subject which focuses essentially on the modern period and alongside that the possibility, for those that want it, to do the more traditional.

The perception of cultural studies as an 'add-on' element to more traditional ways of looking at the study of cultural artefacts is also implied in the comments made by a germanist at *Bluebridge*. He mentions cultural studies separately from history, politics, literature and film studies:

...the extra strands are in addition to the basic: literature from mediaeval to modern. From our point of view, the extra strands are history – we have always wanted to do that properly and we now have a very strong history side and politics. We have also added cultural studies in the sense of one or two seminars that look at literature but as a part of a whole set of complex texts. So history, politics, cultural studies, film we teach in two separate year courses with great interest.

In the quote the interviewee sees cultural studies as a sub-specialism, on a par with history and politics. He does not recognise cultural studies as a methodological approach to the study of cultural artefacts. However, later in the interview, he emphasises the value of cultural studies in the opportunities it affords academics to widen the study of a culture beyond its literary production. Thanks to its multi and interdisciplinary nature, culture can be analysed thematically. This is achieved through an approach in which the interpretations given of a cultural phenomenon by a particular field bounce off interpretations coming from other field angles. However, while recognising the positive aspects of such an exercise, he insists that any study of contemporary cultural artefacts

must necessarily be accompanied by historical analyses that enable people to trace the necessary lineages of certain cultural phenomena. In this sense, he feels that both disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity must be present in any serious culturalist approaches:

...cultural studies are an attempt to say firstly there is a primacy of concern in matters cultural, that is to say in artefacts that men and women have made as part of the complex set-up of the significances of their lives. Traditionally, within the humanities department of the older and more established universities, literature has had a pride of place and above all grand literature that by tradition held to be of quality... In other words, cultural studies seem to me a broader framework of the definition of signification of literature, of whatever the primary phenomenon is that one is concerned with and what it invites one to do is consider one's, as it were, particular specialism as part of a more complex corporation of significations and I think that can be valuable. The danger is – alright it goes back to your interdisciplinarity – that we may know a little bit about all sorts of things. We have a kind of synchronic sense of what happens in 1857 or something like that, but have no sense of the particular lineages, perhaps we can try and do both.

A hispanist at *Bluebridge*, while recognising the success of cultural studies, takes a partial view of it as the perusal of popular cultural artefacts:

...we are not heavily into cultural studies; cultural studies are very fashionable and booming. I suppose we have a conservative view of cultural studies, that is to say, popular film and serious film but mainly serious film. We teach the literary canon rather than teaching the very popular literary of comic books, which has its place in cultural studies.

The sense of a lack of coherence of cultural studies and the worry that it can be carried out in an amateurish way is emphasised by a French lecturer at *Greenbridge*. She is particularly worried that cultural studies may be perceived as a patchwork of approaches with no coherent thread running through them:

...I am very pro the cultural studies approach. The danger, as we know, is that it becomes a rag-bag of all different kinds of approaches. So I think there has to be some limits around a field, around the object it analyses and the way it analyses it. So there has to be some definition of what history looks at and how it does it, what sociology looks at and how it does it. I think the potential problem with cultural

studies is that it is perceived by people who don't understand what it is trying to do, people think it is just cherry picking and a bit of whatever.

This fear is confirmed by a germanist at *Bluebridge* who explains that the real problem with cultural studies lies in the dilettantism of some of the people who adopt them. The consequence of this is a loss of the disciplinary integrity of cultural studies. She therefore feels the need to assert the epistemological value of cultural studies as a serious field enterprise per se, with its own rigorous methods and approaches:

...in a strict sense I think cultural studies are a discipline... and have their own theory and involve very different methodologies that I don't really know very much about. I do know that some people say it is not as easy as it sounds.

A hispanist at *Redbridge* recognises the core nature of cultural studies as lying in its strong emphasis on theory. She believes that this can often be disadvantageous, as the theory tends to recoil on itself to produce more theory. This generates a serious detachment from the object of the analysis itself. The latter tends to be subordinated to a number of theoretical layers that obliterate the ability of a cultural artefact to 'speak' for itself. However, on the positive side, she recognises that cultural studies, with its multi and interdisciplinary approaches, generate complex analyses of a given cultural phenomenon, as this is looked at from different field angles. This, in her opinion, constitutes the real strength of cultural studies:

...I have a lot of reservations about the use of theory for the sake of theory. I don't like this. What I do like about cultural studies is the interdisciplinarity, the fact that you can study a painting from different points of view, you can do anthropological studies, sociological studies, psychoanalytical studies, different philosophical things that can converge into it. That is the temptation for me to become part of cultural studies. What I don't like is when people study the theory of the theory of the theory etc... Then for me that becomes very difficult because of my background of dealing with concrete objects. I do like looking at a painting or a piece of sculpture or an architectural thing and what does it mean, what does it

*signify? Depart from the object to the theory rather than the theory to the object.
This is what I am trying to do.*

Taken cumulatively, the comments made by the interviewees on cultural studies give an impression that modern languages are moving towards more multi and interdisciplinary patterns. This, as we have seen, can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. In fact, on the one hand, it guarantees, within any language subject, a multi and/or interdisciplinary approach to the study of cultural products. However, at the same time, if cultural studies are taken to mean the study of one or more cultures only through the medium of English and not any foreign language, this can detract status from the field of modern languages. Such a move could mean a major shift of the typical modern languages degree towards a more general humanities pattern that would *de facto* imply a substantial change for modern languages. It would also represent the deepening of the traditional split between language teaching (which may increasingly acquire a vocational slant) and content studies. As we know from the literature on modern languages in higher education, this represents a possibility today (Di Napoli, Polezzi and King, 2001).

In looking at the data, it is clear how cultural studies are not yet firmly anchored in the field identity of the three institutions perused. However, it is emerging as a force that is changing the way in which academics look at the field of modern languages and their specific language subject of specialisation. The emergence of the culturalist approach to modern languages is running in parallel with the traditional centrality of literary studies. This generates hybrid field identities but with different nuances in the three institutions. At Bluebridge there appears to be, at least in some departments, a clear perception of the aims and scope of cultural studies, even if, as often happens, these are not applied (yet) in

their entirety. There is still a tendency to mix traditional literary studies with more culturalist approaches. However, there is a sense, in quantitative terms, that there is a high number of academics at Bluebridge for whom cultural studies are becoming more central in their academic identity, in terms of the ways in which they conceive of and practice their approaches to the study of cultural artefacts.

The same considerations can be made for Redbridge, even if there is a critical awareness that the heavy adoption of cultural theories in the study of cultural artefacts may, in some cases, be detrimental in that such a theoretical layer may actually interfere with the study of the cultural products, in that the theory itself may become the focus rather than the cultural artefact to be studied. One can say that cultural studies are present in the field identity of Redbridge academics. However, this awareness is accompanied by a critical (and somewhat sceptic) stand towards the risks of a full-hearted approach of cultural studies in modern languages. Moreover, there is a sense that the adoption of cultural studies should go in parallel with the study of the canon, the loss of which is perceived to be negative.

As for Greenbridge, it appears that, overall, there is still uncertainty about the nature, aims and scope of cultural studies. A form of mild culturalist approach is taken on the new degree in modern languages in which different cultural aspects (not just literary ones) of different foreign cultures are presented to the students. This is an indication that the culturalist import is becoming more central in the field identity of Greenbridge

academics, even if the debate appears to be at a less advanced stage than at the other two universities.

Having analysed issues concerning interdisciplinarity and cultural studies, I now turn to the perusal of a major split in modern languages: the one between language teaching and content studies. In different ways, this division has traditionally characterised the world of modern languages as much as the division between teaching and research that was analysed in the previous chapter.

The faultline between language and content studies

As I have already noted previously, issues concerning the relationship between language teaching and content studies are paramount for modern languages academics. I have already illustrated, for instance, how content is considered to be important in maintaining the field dimension of modern languages against tides that tend to transform it into a vocational field through language teaching only¹. Conversely, the language dimension is conceived as essential in keeping alive the distinction between a culturalist approach to modern languages (which requires that the study of artistic products of a foreign culture through the medium of the foreign language) and cultural studies *tout court* (in which cultural artefacts can be studied in translation, through the medium of English). In the background there are both general epistemological changes and market forces that influence certain institutional responses in the way language and content are taught. The division between language and content courses is particularly identifiable, in institutional terms, in the different arrangements between BA courses and the teaching that goes on in

language centres and institution-wide language programmes. And yet, within the field of modern languages, debates continue to abound about possible ways of harmonising the two strands.

From the data, one can evince that the language component is generally perceived as being the most important aspect of the field. This is clear in the words of a *Bluebridge* Italian lecturer. According to her, the primacy of language lies in the fact that it constitutes the fundamental gateway into a given culture:

...language teaching in this department has the same importance given to the other courses. Students are very much aware of that – they are told so right from the start. How is that done? It is done by very carefully trying to preserve or create an open channel of communication between the language classes and the content classes. Very simply this degree aims at producing students, italianists, that to us means from the start knowledge of the language is fundamental. You cannot become an italianist, if you don't have that, you can not understand the culture of this country without having the language at your fingertips.

Also at *Bluebridge*, a French specialist expresses comparable thoughts about the interconnectedness between language and content teaching. Language is *the* way into culture:

...within Bluebridge I think... the teaching of the language is seen as important. We teach the language, I suppose, in a sense pedagogically so that it gives the students a genuine way into looking in more depth at the culture rather than translation ... we teach language, and we teach language in a way that it is not a discrete entity. It reflects and is representative of, whilst also constituting, a changing cultural manifestation.

Similarly, a *Bluebridge* germanist believes that language teaching can be fruitfully linked to the study of culture. The link is represented by the reflective mode that can be adopted in language tuition. During their language classes, students are invited to reflect on the

cultural import of language. In his view, the cultural weight of a language cannot be reached through a kind of language teaching that is of a communicative nature:

...one tries... to be mindful that we must be making links to our students, that if we are looking at a word in a translation class, it matters that this comes up in a speech by Bismarck, things like that... What we have always tried to insist on... is that when we teach German – and we must do it, we mustn't farm them out to the language centre – it is done in a quite particular way, it has to do with what might sound a bit pompous, one might call... reflectivity. We are inviting the students, of course, to learn the language but to reflect on it, this language and language as such.

Although the study of language and that of culture may be thought of as being equal in status, the reality may be somewhat other. For instance, a French lecturer at *Redbridge*, while recognising that language learning is deemed to constitute the spinal chord of modern languages in his institution, feels that it carries a smaller weight than the study of cultural artefacts. This contributes to the marginalisation of language learning:

...within the French BA degree we have kept a linguistic core, where students must progress from one level to the other and where the language options are obligatory and that gives a skeleton to the course that people are taking. Nevertheless, in purely numerical terms, in terms of weight that is a small part of the syllabus and I think for those reasons, also because some of the languages have full-time and part time members of staff, and for those reasons I would say that language teaching is marginalised.

Similarly, a colleague of his at *Redbridge*, while confirming that language teaching is considered to be important in his institution, believes that language teachers enjoy less status than people who teach cultural content. This lack of status is palpable, to an extent, in terms of working conditions and emoluments but not in terms of the importance that is usually attributed to language teaching:

...there certainly isn't that kind of negative attitude with the language teaching side, which I find quite rewarding because I still do a language proficiency course

in Year 1 – and I quite like doing that in fact. I know it is quite different in other places that I have been where the language teachers were really not appreciated and language teaching was considered a waste of time. So not everybody teaches languages but I have never heard anybody say anything negative about language teaching... But I would say that the two 'lectrices' that we have do only language teaching and are, in fact, not treated very fairly. They are part-time and they don't have an office, they don't have a place to do anything and we have constraints of space and money and everything of course, but they are not treated too well.

An Italian commentator at *Greenbridge* sees the shift in status between the study of language and that of culture as a function of the changing historical circumstances typical of his own institution. When it was a polytechnic, *Greenbridge* used to dedicate its efforts almost exclusively to the promotion of language teaching. Only later on, when it acquired university status, more emphasis was given to cultural content. Today the institution finds it hard to strike a balance between the two strands. This is a reflection of the uncertain institutional identity that 'post-92' universities still suffer from:

...we started many years ago, before we were a university, as a fundamental institution that provided language competence so the content was secondary: the content was language itself. The object was to offer the opportunity to young people to come out of our institution with good competence of a language, ability to use the language in a rather sophisticated context but adaptable to contemporary society and expectations...Then at the end of the 80s and early 90s things changed because we also wanted to ape the traditional universities – this is the big issue, without the resources of the big universities. Hence I think for the last ten years or so we have really fallen between two stools. I think we are no longer the clear-minded language orientated, vocational place. Nor can we compete with research and things with universities. So I think we are no longer flesh or meat, as the Italians say, I am afraid this is our condition.

However, a French lecturer at *Greenbridge* perceives the reality of the split between the teaching of language and that of cultural content in a much sharper way. She sees this in terms of status differentials. Such differentials, in her view, can only be damaging in that

it could lead to 'tribal' segmentations within the institutions that would work against the necessary co-operation among different academics:

...without those language teachers the others couldn't do what they are doing...(it is) by virtue of [language teachers that content lecturers] acquire some kind of status, do you see what I mean? They can't do without, well in my case without us in some ways, and I think they are well aware of that, in a way that is not reciprocal because you could very well do – I wouldn't want to, I think it would be diabolical – but you could, if you wanted to, say we are just going to teach the skills of language interaction.

The status split existing in both Redgridge and Greenbridge is also present at *Bluebridge*. An Italian lecturer states that language teaching is something people do not like doing. It is an activity that carries little status. However, he feels that there is a need for good language tuition. This should be rewarded in terms of career progression. Nevertheless, he sees this as a difficult aim to achieve, given that the whole system is geared towards research on content:

...it is clear that the people who do mainly or only language teaching are the pariahs of this hierarchy. Everybody also feels this is rather unfair and people who are in language departments feel that should not be the case, but it is the case and I don't see any signs of it changing in a hurry... So really what one needs to do is build in a system of linking good performance and language teaching for promotion, I would support that. But at the moment it hasn't happened.

In a similar fashion, another italianist at *Bluebridge* declares his dissatisfaction towards language teaching in his institution. He feels that this is done in an amateurish way and is badly organised. In his view, the department should tap into the vast array of knowledge of language pedagogy in order to respond to the need for good language tuition felt by many students. The co-ordination of language teaching should also been reviewed. Its current piecemeal nature leads to patchy practice. This puts students off their language classes, while they widely appreciate the content ones:

...I came with no specific knowledge on how to teach a language, never taught it – my linguistic skills have nothing to do with this. And all of sudden I had to do this. Moreover, there was a course in the department which divides the students so that you know the hours, an hour of conversation, an hour of grammar, I don't know very much because there is no real strong coordination. And then there is translation and cross-translation which is to say from Italian-English and English Italian, and do essays in Italian about whatever. I was responsible for some classes for the essays, for the translation from English-Italian – I was, still am, not happy with that. There I do not see it as belonging to me...I mean we teach every week, but see the same students every two weeks – and so you don't really build a relationship with the students, so I am not so happy about that and there is the evidence from the immediate feedback from the students, they are less happy about those courses also.

A Bluebridge German respondent has a similar opinion on the issue of language teaching. She feels that language teaching at Bluebridge needs updating in terms of methods and approaches. This is especially important today, when the students' language competence, upon entering college, is lower than in the past. This poses new challenges for the academic staff and these challenges need to be addressed:

...we are fairly old-fashioned in the type of language teaching we do here. I suppose according to the ethos – you know, if it is not broken don't fix it, it still sort of works. Having said that there are all sorts of things that language teachers do that we don't really do... I know I should learn a lot more about language teaching and I think there is an awful lot to learn about it because I didn't really expect to have to do proper language teaching.

In order to respond to the need for better and more co-ordinated language teaching, the German department at Bluebridge has appointed a language teaching specialist. The Bluebridge germanist sees in this a new institutional awareness of the importance of language pedagogy. She perceives that it is her role to inject novel, communicative ways of teaching the German language:

...I think that my appointment as a lecturer in German language is a recognition that more attention has to be given to language teaching. I think in the past it has been seen as something that has to be done but something that lecturers will do on

the side in addition to their other commitments. And which the lector will do and the PhD students will do, so I think it has suffered in terms of status in the past... I am not saying that I am going to bring about fundamental changes. But I think the attitude that we have to co-ordinate the language teaching – having said that I think in terms of standards and commitment I think that the standard of language teaching is very high here. It is just it has not been consciously recognised before... Here it is still quite traditional, a lot of time and attention is devoted to translation – literary translation mainly, into both in and out of English and German. It is not so much focussing on immediate pragmatic communicative skills, so I think it is much more geared to helping students to understand the texts they read in literature and in history and much more to give them this rigorous grammatical background which I think in other areas of language teaching people have moved away from now there is much more the communicative approach.

A germanist at Redbridge believes that her department is aware of the needs in language teaching. She thinks that, should another appointment be made in German, this would be for a language teaching specialist. The appointee would be charged with supporting teaching and research in language pedagogy:

...if we ever get another appointment, the likelihood is that it would be an appointment tied up with applied linguistics department in some way, shape or form. I mean it is an area that we don't have covered in the department which in the future we would like to have covered, I think in that way somebody who combined language teaching that fed into their own research would be perceived as a very interesting appointment.

These kinds of moves testify to a willingness to bridge old fault lines between language and content with a view to achieving a more dialectical exchange between them. It is a way of turning the variety typical of the language world from a disadvantage into a clear advantage.

Overall, language learning plays, at least on the ideal level, an important role in the field identity of respondents in the three universities. Most interviewees recognize the centrality of language learning for students of modern languages. At Greenbridge,

language learning has traditionally had priority in the preoccupation of academics, in line with the more vocational mission of the university. However, more recently, with the institution acquiring university status in 1992, content has acquired more centrality in the life of academic staff, as a consequence of the recognized role of research into content, in line with the priorities of pre-92 universities. In this sense, it is possible to say that language learning and content studies both play a role in the field identity of Greenbridge academics. However, content seems to enjoy more kudos than language learning these days, due to the status of content research in the RAE.

This status differential can be identified in the two other institutions. Both at Redbridge and Bluebridge, while people recognize the importance of language learning in their field identity, there is a concurrent admission that language learning does not enjoy the same kudos as content studies. Nevertheless, there are signs that the situation is changing, as the recent appointment of a language learning specialist at Bluebridge testifies. It is possible in this sense to argue that, across the three institutions, there are efforts towards bridging the faultline between language learning and content studies. This is indicative of likely changes in terms of the field identity of modern languages academics towards more varied and balanced identity forms between language learning and content studies. The current governmental emphasis on the importance of teaching through the creation of the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE) and the creation of subject centres may contribute to ease up, with time, the status differentials between teaching and research, which is typical not just of modern languages but of the British university system in general.

Conclusions

As we have seen, one of the most important shifts, in terms of the field identities in modern languages, is some form of reconfiguration of the field around cultural studies. Respondents conceive these in different ways. Some perceive the culturalist trends simply in terms of multidisciplinary, that is to say the enrichment of the curriculum through the addition of historical, political and variously artistic dimensions in addition to the traditional literary ones. Others give cultural studies full field status. Such status hinges on the consistent and coherent way of looking at a wide variety of cultural artefacts from several multi and interdisciplinary angles. The aim is to investigate culture in all its manifestations beyond the study of its literary canon.

The discussion on cultural studies has also led to a more in-depth discussion of the nature and function of interdisciplinarity. Across the three institutions, at one end of the spectrum, we find a minimalist definition of interdisciplinarity as an element that is naturally entrenched in any academic enterprise. At the other end, interdisciplinarity is perceived as a more conscious effort to bring fields and people together around a given academic project. The ways in which this happens is deemed to be paramount. In fact, there is a general rejection, on the part of the interviewees, of any interdisciplinary enterprise that is imposed onto academics by management. At times, this is seen as a way of getting rid of certain departments and keeping more 'undisciplined' ones in check. Interdisciplinarity is also perceived as a way of framing academic work within boundaries that are imposed onto the field by outside agencies, as happens in the case of the Research Assessment Exercise. Conversely, forms of interdisciplinarity that stem

directly from the intellectual needs of academics in their pursuit of new knowledge are warmly welcomed by lecturers.

The trends I have just indicated point towards a possible conflict between managerial values and those of the lecturing staff. However, it is arguable that such value conflict has had positive outcomes in some cases. This is evident in the positive feelings some respondents have expressed towards some interdisciplinary projects that were initiated by management and ended up cementing useful synergies among academics.

The only area where synergies still do not seem to be forthcoming is the one pertaining to the language/content dichotomy. Across the three institutions, in spite of the fact that most respondents recognize, at least in principle, the vital importance of language teaching in modern languages, there is a general feeling that only content studies carry status and lead to career prospects.

Overall, the field identities of modern languages can be seen as very fluid ones that favour synergetic moves. As we have seen in the previous chapter, new field configurations are reflected in and/or more actively encouraged by certain institutional changes. These, often in response to market demands, impose new patterns onto the field. Not only are these demands pushing towards interdisciplinarity and performativity but they are also upsetting the relative status balance between the different language subjects. Up to very recently, French was the most popular language but has now been superseded by Spanish.

In order to survive in university environments where student numbers count more than ever before, French, German and Italian are under pressure to respond to students' needs and requests. Such pressures can have a negative impact on the field of modern languages, as they may push it towards changes that are often the result of managerial decisions rather than the product of genuine academic interest and decisions. However, positively, as we have seen in the case of Redbridge, top-down change can also eventually bear some good outcomes by favouring the co-operation among academic groups that never co-operated with each other before. As Barnett (2003) argues, there may indeed be virtue in some of those changes that are normally considered to be negative.

Having seen the ways in which institutional and field identities are constructed, I shall now turn to the manner in which such structural configurations impact on the interviewees' sense of self.

8 - The self domain: the route to modern languages and the relevance of the field for the self

Introduction

Having investigated both the institutional and disciplinary domains, the aim of this and the next chapter is to peruse the self dimension. To this dimension I have dedicated two chapters in order to illustrate and clarify, as tidily as possible, the ways in which individual academics make sense of their self, firstly, in relation to institutional structures and, secondly, with regards to field configurations. I have attempted to mirror, in the perusal of the self, the distinction I made, in terms of identities, between institutional and field ones. In other words, I am going to examine both the manner in which individuals position themselves within institutional structures and field patterns according to their value and belief systems, and their personal professional trajectories (Harré and van Lagenhove, 1999).

This kind of analysis touches on the issue of identification, that is to say the elements individuals identify with in building their sense of self. This is an important area to investigate, as it allows for an understanding of how academics relate to their profession and work environment, especially at times of change and evolution for both the disciplinary field and the British higher education system at large. Of course, as Albert (1998) points out, the whole exercise is fraught with ambiguity. Identification is notoriously difficult to 'pin down', as people do not often strongly identify with one single factor but, in different degrees, with a whole series of elements (Martuccelli,

2002). The process of identification is a relative one in that it permits to capture only tendencies in an academic's sense of self, as s/he determines those institutional and field elements that are most important in the construction of his/her own self.

Looking at the development of this chapter in more detail, I first wish to expose the historical route(s) through which people arrived at choosing modern languages as their field of election. Subsequently, I illustrate how lecturers identify (or not) more specifically with the field in constructing their sense of self.

The route to languages

Analysing the route to the field is important, if one wishes to understand the sense of cognitive and emotional attachment to the field itself. Such a journey constitutes the hidden, historical dimension that supports any current sense of institutional and/or disciplinary allegiance any academic may have (Lahire, 2002). In line with the meso nature of this work, I do not aim at investigating any individual's historical route in detail. Rather, I wish to bring to the surface the variety of general patterns that emerges as one attempts to obtain a bird's eye view of the data. These patterns are further discussed in chapter 9, when they are juxtaposed with a more detailed analysis of the institutional and field cultures of the three universities under perusal.

The route to choosing modern languages and/or, more specifically, a given language subject (French, German and so on) as an academic career, follows different paths. While for some British interviewees it was the direct consequence of success in the field of

languages at school and/or university, for others the journey is much more complex and implies travelling in and out of other disciplinary fields. As for non-British natives, languages often represent the default entry point into academia and the home base from which, in many cases, people develop their academic interests in more specialist areas like literary criticism, art history and the like. As Evans (1988) had already pointed out, such variety of trajectories helps to explain the diffuse and fuzzy nature of the field.

As I have said, for the British-born lecturers one of the most common entry points to the field is to be found in the success they obtained in the study of languages during their school and/or university time. Thus, a Spanish lecturer at *Bluebridge* states:

...I got interested in Spanish when I was at school, I was good at French and then, when I was about 15, I started doing Spanish. I started getting interested in Spanish culture and literature and decided to study Spanish at university.

Often a positive school experience in learning languages was paramount in the choice. As a German interviewee at *Bluebridge* puts it:

...I was quite good at French and I liked foreign languages so I took German and then, I suppose this is what you have heard before, we had an inspiring German teacher. Therefore, when I first went to Germany at the age of fifteen, I don't think my German was all that good but it wasn't bad because of this inspirational teacher.

In some other cases, rather than a teacher or a lecturer, a family member played a key role in the individual's choice and instilled a sense of love and respect for languages, often at a relatively early stage of an individual's life. Thus, in the case of another German lecturer at *Bluebridge*:

...I think my interest in German initially stemmed from my father who did quite a lot of business in Germany.

Similarly, a tradition of multilingualism in the family of origin may become the basis of some individuals' interest in languages. This is what happened to a French lecturer at Bluebridge:

...I suppose I have been interested in languages since a very early age. My parents were multinational, my mother is Dutch and my father spent a lot of time working abroad and was tri-lingual in French, Spanish and English, so the language environment has always been very important to my sense of self. As a result of that I think I became quite good at it at school and moved on from there.

With time, individuals generate a more focused interest in a given language subject. This often has something to do with a strong sense of intellectual curiosity and passion a person may develop towards the language and culture of their choice. Thus, the same person quoted above spells out that her interest in German stemmed out of a challenge the language represented for her and that she was determined to win:

...I chose to study German because I found it very difficult structurally and grammatically. It was a challenge and I thought if I could beat it, if I could get to grips with it then I would have achieved something.

However, in some other cases, a general interest in languages did not find a subject-specific outlet immediately. For example, a respondent at Bluebridge, before finding his disciplinary home in Spanish studies, had unsuccessfully chosen French as his subject. In any case, languages were always his main object of academic interest:

...I think it was really my interest in languages, I was always interested in French and Spanish and initially wanted to do a doctorate in French but that didn't work out. I was then encouraged to do a doctorate in Spanish American Literature... which I very much enjoyed, got published and offered a job and it went from there really.

More complexly, a small number of respondents arrived at modern languages after having meandered through other disciplinary areas. The encounter with other disciplines has consequently coloured their current position in languages. Their sense of belonging to the overall field dovetails, in most cases, with a feeling of affiliation with the other disciplinary areas within which they have operated.

Occasionally, their meeting with a specific language subject may have been fortuitous. This is the case of an italianist at Bluebridge. For him, the choice of Italian was almost casual. However, eventually, it fruitfully intertwined with his politics and academic interests in cultural studies, thus solidifying into a complex career pattern:

...I did my first degree in English language and literature at Oxford in the early 70s... As a result of that, I went back to Oxford and finished my degree and then I started doing post-graduate work involving Italian but not exclusively. Then I did my PhD on the Italian subject of left-wing literary criticism and got my first teaching job... in 1978 and ever since then, with the exception of two years, 77 and 79, when I worked in a media department, I have worked in Italian. At [...] it was an exciting place to be: there was a good encounter between disciplines, they didn't really believe in having disciplinary boundaries. The beginning was an interest in cultural studies... So I have never really belonged just in modern languages.

As for the non-British respondents, modern languages often represented the default choice upon their arrival in Britain. It was within the large modern languages home that they eventually managed to realise more specific academic pursuits. This is the case of a Spanish respondent at Redbridge:

...when I came to this country in 1985 I didn't speak any English at all, I was working by teaching Spanish and Italian. Then I met someone who worked here at Redbridge in the Spanish department and they told me that they needed someone to teach part-time beginners Spanish.... Speaking honestly, I didn't want it because I didn't want to teach language only – I wanted to teach something connected with it like art history, and they said eventually I could do that.

Similarly, another italianist at Bluebridge found in her general interest in literary studies the bridge between her initial commitment to English and German literatures as a student in Italy with her academic pursuits as an italianist, when she came in the United Kingdom:

...I did not start as an italianist, I started as a scholar of English and German literature... How Italian became my academic home is that I knew I did not want to stay in Italy when I graduated, I knew that wanted to do some research in literature - English and Italian. So I came to Britain and I did an MPhil at Oxford and that MPhil was in English and Italian literature... I did a doctorate at Oxford and then I was appointed at Cambridge for three years... if you like, my career as an italianist actually starts with Bluebridge.

In one example, the allegiance to a specific language subject definitely comes second to the intellectual and affective link an individual may feel towards a different discipline. For instance, this is the case of another Italian lecturer who started intertwining his specific interest in linguistics with Italian studies only upon his arrival at *Bluebridge*. Thus, within the broader remit of the Italian department in which he works, he is attempting to develop links between himself as a linguist and the rest of the Italian department:

...it is very hard for me to say whether I am an italianist or not, because I didn't know what an italianist was before joining the department and I am still forming my ideas about it...I started as a computer scientist, I was interested in language but I had no idea that I would become a linguist, a theoretical linguist or a cognitive linguist. So I am learning what it means to be an italianist... It was surprising for me what a variety of skills and knowledge you find in this Italian department... It is true that there is not such a big overlap in notions in specific knowledge. I'm discovering, at least in my Italian department, there might be an overlap in the way we value research, the way we do it.

In this case, there was a double journey before the respondent finally arrived at modern languages: from computer science to linguistics to, finally, working in an Italian department. It is interesting to note, though, how the lecturer attempts to build bridges with his new disciplinary environment by emphasising the seriousness with which all the different members of the department take research. In this way, intellectual ties are gradually built over time. These bind the respondent to the community to which he now feels he increasingly belongs.

Conversely, there are also cases of dedicated language specialists who, while still strongly belonging to a specific language department, have been building new homes in more interdisciplinary enterprises. This applies, for instance, to a French lecturer at *Bluebridge*. He strongly believes in interdisciplinary work and dedicates some of his time to this:

...there should be fruitful interaction between disciplines ...I think there are many ways in which that works at Bluebridge, to give the most obvious example which is pertinent to my working life is my work in comparative literature... It encompasses courses, both lectures and text-based seminars, which bring together either theme led or formally comparable works from France, Britain, North America, Latin America and most of the major cultures of Europe. And it is taught interdisciplinarily as well.

The latter quote shows that, rather than always being a point of arrival, languages can also be a point of departure towards other academic enterprises. It also illustrates how modern languages can accommodate a variety of interests and goals. As we know, such diversity is at the heart of the fuzzy nature of the discipline.

Finally, in a couple of cases, studying languages was the result of a strong desire to travel and move away from home. In the words of a French specialist at Greenbridge:

...if you want an honest answer, I wanted to get away from Ireland. I became interested in history fairly late in my academic career – I didn't want to do Irish or British history. I was studying French and France to me represented a form of liberation.

Thus, the route to languages can take a number of shapes and forms which are often bearers of a great sense of both intellectual and emotional engagement. Be it for family or academic interest and motivation, a desire to move away from one's own culture or to return to it (through its study) out of necessity, people have found in modern languages a home. Within this home, different academics have managed to pursue their specific epistemological interests, thus adding variety and breadth to the discipline. Modern languages 'homes' are increasingly becoming more varied in their shape and configuration. This may also help to clarify how the degree of allegiance to modern languages varies greatly across the spectrum, going, as we shall see later in the chapter, from the field at large in a few cases, to specific language subjects, or remaining attached to other intellectual homes (like literary criticism, linguistics or history, to make a few examples).

For the time being, having examined the variety of journeys people have made towards modern languages (or, more precisely specific language subjects), I now wish to turn to discussing the different positioning people take within this world in building their sense of self. In other words, I shall try to examine what field factors, within the very fuzzy world of modern languages, contribute to an individual's sense of his/her self.

The role of the field in the self

The discipline features highly in the sense of self of many academics. However, disentangling the centrality of the discipline for individuals' sense of self from other factors is an arduous exercise. Again, I attempt to capture tendencies more than details.

Starting with *Redbridge*, the overall field of modern languages does not seem to be at the heart of people's preoccupations. In fact, commitment to the field is only explicitly mentioned by a lecturer in French. In mentioning what is most important to her, she says:

*... it is the discipline...Otherwise, I would just be an employee, wouldn't I?
...I belong to a school of languages, linguistics and culture, I also run a self-access
centre which deals with videos in all these languages. I do speak a bit of Spanish
and German and would understand Italian, if necessary, so I am a linguist and don't
view myself as exclusively French.*

Thus, while French gives her a major role and a home within the university, her belonging to a wider school of languages within which she has worked in different capacities, in addition to being a linguist, make modern languages the wider context in which she places her self.

However, disciplinary selves can be even more complex. For instance, another *Redbridge* lecturer in French feels equal allegiance to both French and linguistics. Nevertheless, being a specialist in language acquisition, he feels that his epistemological centre lies more here than in languages, especially in research terms. When it comes to French, he tries to distance himself from France by saying that he is Belgian, thus the bearer and promoter of a different culture from that of traditional metropolitan France. His national

identity, therefore, plays an important role in precisely placing the respondent within his language-subject:

... I would call myself as being specialised in French/applied linguistics... The funny thing is I profile myself within the department as 'the Belgian', the only Belgian so I am something unique – there are no other Belgians. When I introduce myself to students I say 'Je suis le Belge du département' and that is something no-one else can say. I quite like being unique... Lots of great artists have written in French or sung are not French, so I try to remind them that Magritte is a Belgian artist. I quite enjoy my proficiency class using Belgian songs and stuff.

Nevertheless, neither national identity nor the overall field of modern languages play a major part in the only other non-British national interviewed. A Spanish specialist, she plays an important administrative role in the Spanish department at *Redbridge*. Nevertheless, her sense of allegiance does not really lie either with modern languages or Spanish. It is her specialism (art history) that is central to her sense of self:

...in terms of language I do feel myself in the centre, in terms of cultural courses I don't put myself in the centre, I put myself in the margins... my training was Italian and Spanish art history. Because I became part of this department, I developed my art history background into a more kind of visual culture studies, which is great; I have been relating with different people and opening up boundaries.

Thus, her sense of self is difficult to pinpoint, as it is anchored to two disciplinary areas, that is to say Spanish and art history. This kind of multidisciplinary configuration applies, in different degrees and with different combinations (medieval history, Latin and French, for instance, or German and classic studies), to most of the other interviewees. What changes is the priority that each individual gives to each discipline with which they feel they have affiliation. Thus, in the case of a German lecturer at *Redbridge*, German comes first but jointly with literature and film studies. She feels that her attachment to the latter

two disciplinary areas makes her closer to people specialising in these domains than to other germanists in her department:

... I see myself as a germanist first and foremost, but then I specialise in the post-war period and above all in the novel and in film. I would imagine I have a lot more in common with colleagues in other departments than I do with colleagues who are mediaevalists. No, I have no problem with crossing boundaries, or opening German up to other influences or anything like that.

As one can see, all the quotes stress the implicit multidisciplinary nature of modern languages. It is important to note that at Redbridge the overall field of modern languages is not even mentioned as being central to people's self. It is more the different language subjects (French, German and so on) and their sub-specialisations (literary criticism, film studies and so on) that tend to mould people's sense of self. This signals that, at Redbridge, in spite of the merger, people still anchor their sense of self into individual language subjects rather than the field as a whole. In this sense, it can be said that the school structure does not yet act as an identification point for the academic staff, as lecturers remain psychologically attached to the traditional individual language subjects and departmental allegiances.

Nor are things much different at *Bluebridge*. Here a declared sense of affiliation with modern languages is explicitly made only by a couple of members of staff in the German department. One lecturer gives a complex picture which shows how sophisticated epistemological identification can be. In this picture, the overall field comes, in any case, after German:

... obviously in terms of any kind of primary allegiance I feel I am more a German person because that is the stuff that I teach, it is the stuff that I write on, it is the stuff

that I sometimes write in and lecture in. ... but I do have a sense that as soon as we look into the context of German and as it were those disciplines outside German that are party to common concerns, then clearly the first port of call is modern foreign languages. Then it would be English, they don't have to teach English but it is the literary thing, then it is the historical and social subjects – history, sociology, anthropology and politics. So I suppose there is a sense of circles radiating outwards. So I think of myself as a germanist but, by extension, a modern linguist, by extension a language and literature scholar and by extension a language and literature history society scholar.

This quote is particularly interesting as it illustrates the complexity of the epistemological self of modern languages academics. Positioning within definite disciplinary and institutional boundaries in absolute terms is a difficult task and, therefore, the concentric configuration given by the germanist above is arguably closer to 'reality'. However, identification with individual language subjects rather than the overall field is patent in all cases at Bluebridge. The importance of language subjects signals that at Bluebridge the field of modern languages is internally arranged around criteria of strong classification (in Bernstein's terms [1996]) in that boundaries between subjects are clear and distinct.

However, while declaring a strong allegiance towards individual language subjects and departments, many respondents link their own language subject to other language subjects and/or other disciplines (beyond modern languages) with which they are actively engaged in multi and interdisciplinary projects within and without the university. This signals that, at Bluebridge, a loose classification of the field of modern languages (to use Bernstein's terms [ibidem]) co-habits with a strong one, thus making the overall disciplinary configuration highly complex. One example of this is given by a Spanish lecturer. While firmly based in the Spanish department, he enjoys working on the comparative literature MA:

...you can be an island if you want, I feel I firmly belong in the Spanish department but I am becoming more involved with the comparative literature programme which is highly interdisciplinary. The way it is structured is that the students will be doing a theory course and a translation course, so we will each be teaching and we obviously need to get together on those terms. This is important for me.

As we can see, the respondent conceives his sense of self is formed concurrently around both Spanish and the interdisciplinary projects in which he takes part. This confirms how at Bluebridge the different language departments as such act as homes that give people an important sense of security and ownership of their professional life, interests and needs. Departments nurture people's sense of disciplinary affiliation and, at the same time, provide a sufficient sense of security to encourage academics to branch out into interdisciplinary pursuits. This makes Bluebridge academics' epistemological sense of self open.

This cannot be said of Greenbridge. The sense of openness that one registers at Bluebridge and, to a lesser extent, at Redbridge, is detectable here only in the case of those members of staff who have had active involvement in interdisciplinary projects. Thus, in the case of a lecturer in French at *Greenbridge*, an interdisciplinary centre that deals with postcolonialism is at the heart of both her disciplinary and institutional sense of self:

...at the moment my sense of identity – if I was to say what do I do here – because I am so disgusted with the institution the only place my true loyalty lies is the Centre... I would abandon everything here apart from the Centre, because I think it is the only thing for me and my identity means something and has the possibility of producing something and is real.

In an environment that (as we have seen in chapter 5) is fragmented and embattled, and where no real intra and inter-departmental research takes place, little islands (like the centre of which the respondent is the director) become central to the sense of self of some academics. Arguably, such spaces form the intellectual homes for people who have lost their main anchorage points in the restructuring move. When people do not find such anchorage points within the university, they either engage in research pursuits with the wider communities beyond the institution or disengage altogether. However, at Greenbridge there is none of the intra and interdepartmental fruitful links that one finds especially at Bluebridge. Initiatives remain, overall, at the individual level. These indeed contribute to bringing good results to Greenbridge (for instance, the high research ratings in Italian). However, there is no real sense of a common purpose, either in teaching or research activities, among modern languages lecturers. It seems that where new institutional (and disciplinary) identities are not supported by either a history of cross-departmental initiatives or by the active involvement of management in helping to build new bridges and synergies, atomization ensues. This is the difference between Redbridge and Greenbridge. In the former its cross-departmental tradition has helped in bridging the identity gaps created by the merger. In the latter, a history of territorialism and lack of real co-operation among the different language sections has aggravated the sense of identity crisis following the merger.

The merger generated a sense of widespread fragmentation that neither the overall field nor any of the individual language subjects have yet managed to overcome. In all the interviews carried out at *Greenbridge*, only in the case of a lecturer in French do modern

languages feature at the centre of anybody's sense of the self. When asked what, epistemologically, she considers central to her self, she replies:

...the field [of modern languages] more than the subject [French], yes.

According to her, such affiliation is borne out of her not being, historically, a French specialist but in becoming one by default when she came to England. The fact that she did her postgraduate studies in applied linguistics reinforced her interest in language(s) in general rather than French specifically. The fact that the university declined to submit her research under French reinforced her sense of alienation from the subject:

... I did an MA in Linguistics and I did some research in the School, in the field which was based in the School of Languages and I did get a good MA and when it came to the RAE and any publications, I submitted a number of items and I wasn't included in the [French] RAE. I felt very crushed by that.

Thus, personal trajectories mixed with wider factors (the RAE process) and local ones (the merger with the loss of much of their identity on the part of each language section) have contributed in some cases to a sense of identity crisis from the life of the language-subjects and the sections that represent them.

This, of course, is not always true. On a couple of occasions in French and Spanish, the language-subject is mentioned as being central to the sense of self people have. However, if one looks carefully, the identification factor is represented more by the local community revolving around the subject than the subject itself. This is the case of a Spanish specialist at *Greenbridge* who makes Spanish the centre of her self. However,

this is more because of biographical reasons and her personal attachment to the section than any real sense of epistemological allegiance:

... I might feel more attached to the Spanish department.

Thus, in comparison with the other two universities, a sense of a community based on the relevance of the field (or any of its language-subjects) is lacking at Greenbridge. However, this does not mean that there is no disciplinary allegiance. Clearly an overall structure called ‘department of modern languages’ exists and both research and teaching activities related to the different language subjects are carried out daily. However, as I said before, the field and its different language-subjects do not appear to be as explicitly holding the academics’ self together as in the other two institutions, particularly Bluebridge. The reasons behind this hypothesis are examined in the last part of the thesis.

Conclusions

In the course of this chapter, I have, first of all, looked at the varied ways in which academics have built their sense of self in relation to the disciplinary field. The heterogeneity of paths to modern languages that are suggested by the data helps in explaining both the complexity of the constituencies making up the field and the various sense of allegiance academics develop towards it.

As I have illustrated, the self finds different field realisations in the three universities perused. While identification with the overall field of modern languages does not feature highly, in various degrees, in any of the three institutions, attachment to specific language

subjects does, with Bluebridge registering a very strong sense of subject-specific allegiance. Arguably, this is the result of traditions that have favoured a powerful departmental sense of affiliation.

Moreover, if one looks both at the interviews and the profiling documents, there is a sense that, at Bluebridge, specialisms (like literary criticism, film studies and so on) feature highly in people's sense of self. However, this does not at all interfere with positive attitudes towards multi and interdisciplinary research (among different language subjects – and this, arguably, may indirectly indicate the importance of modern languages as a whole for the academics' self). Strong research profiles legitimate departmental singularities, reinforcing the importance of individual language subjects through the institutional support given by the departmental structure. Both convergence (towards individual language subjects and specialisms) and divergence (in terms of multi/interdisciplinary ventures among language subjects and other disciplinary areas) characterise the respondents' field self with equal strength.

On the other hand, at Greenbridge, weaker research profiles and traditions, along with the identity crisis generated by a merger, have made the sense of allegiance to the discipline, in general, and to specific language subjects, more specifically, a less strong one. The sense of self, in relation to the field, is generally weaker at Greenbridge than at the other two institutions and does not seem to be sufficiently strong to give academics a sense of continuity and purpose at times of turmoil and change. Moreover, allegiance to specialisms is not as high as in the other two universities. Evident here too is a weak

sense of interdisciplinarity. The overall configuration of the field self at Greenbridge seems to be fairly fragmented and not forward-looking.

As for Redbridge, the situation is fluid. Here the subject-related commitment still remains strong, in line with the departmental traditions of the university. As we know, these were discontinued, to an extent, by the merger of individual language departments into an overall school of languages. However, while the sense of allegiance to individual language subjects continues to be strong, this is being tempered by an increasing interest in co-operation among the different languages and beyond, in both teaching and research pursuits. In other words, the merger, while initially damaging the sense of self people had nurtured over time, is now seemingly acting as a factor, albeit still weak, that encourages a new type of self that is no longer based on individual language subjects but on the co-operation among these. This is in addition to other forms of research and teaching collaboration that, in the past, each individual language department had traditionally established with other departments (like linguistics, arts and so on). The result is a shifting sense of self that is orienting itself, albeit slowly, towards convergence and co-operation between languages. At the same time, though, in a similar fashion to Bluebridge, there is a strong sense of allegiance both to individual language subjects and specialisms.

Having now analysed the nuances typical of the self in disciplinary terms, I wish to turn to another important dimension in terms of the self: the institutional factor. This, as is already apparent from the arguments made above, carries great weight in the way

academics develop their sense of self, and ultimately their academic identity, today. For this reason, it is important to investigate how academics identify (or not) with institutional factors, structures and arrangements in the three institutions.

9 - The self domain: institutional forces, academic voice and the projected self

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to peruse the sense of self that academics develop within the institutional structures and discourses in which they operate.

Firstly, I look at the points of aggregation (or not) that people establish in relation to such structures and discourses. This is followed by an analysis of the sense of ‘voice’ (by which I mean here the sense people have of their felt ability to have a say in institutional and disciplinary matters in order to change these) individual academics feel they may or may not have within these structures. Finally, I examine the way lecturers see their possible future developments in the light of their points of departure and the route they have gone through in terms of their careers.

Building a sense of self around institutional factors: the overall university, the local units and the students

As we know, the institutional element is very wide in scope and covers the whole spectrum, from the university in general to its individual local units (departments and sections), to the roles academics play in their professional life. It also includes the ‘students’ category, as this is deemed to be important in determining the institutional (and disciplinary) arrangements different universities make. In dealing with the institutional

components of academics' sense of self, I therefore detail the level at which the feeling of engagement (or disengagement) occurs.

In analysing the data relative to *Redbridge*, out of the seven people interviewed, only a lecturer in French mentions the wider institutional framework, in terms of the whole set of ideals and practices, his university embodies. His allegiance goes in fact towards the university at large and the typical urban values it strives to represent:

...the institution is this city, the university and the city, which is important to what I am. My college says University of Redbridge, which says federalism, it says urban, big city, all that kind of stuff. I think living in a big city is probably more fundamental.

Conversely, at *Bluebridge* more than one academic makes direct reference to the university and its value system as being central to their sense of self. This is the case of an italianist who currently covers a managerial position:

...I am an employee of Bluebridge, this is a fact that I am on their payroll, and obviously when I came in here I wanted to come in as head of department so I would have a commitment to making changes which would fit in more or less with what the college expects me to do... And I like that history of tolerance and diversity and multiculturalism, so I identify with a good bit of the radical tradition here. And that fits in with what I like doing which is in taking people from a diverse range of backgrounds and trying to even out the balance of advantaged and disadvantaged.

This intense sense of commitment is shared by a *Bluebridge* germanist who covered many managerial roles within the university in the past. The university is central to his preoccupations:

...I have been here some time so it is a bit difficult to abstract my professional life from the institution. I suppose that I would say while I would claim to have been a fairly committed member of the institution of Bluebridge; to have been head of

department for many years and I am not it at the moment, fortunately; to have been Dean of the Arts Faculty; to have been on countless committees; to be public orator and all sorts of things. I do, I think, quite a lot for the college.

In the last two cases, it may be arguable that the managerial positions fulfilled and/or long-standing service act as elements of anchorage to the institution at large.

However, far from being important only for older and managerial staff, the wider institution features highly in the sense of self of the younger lecturing staff. This is highlighted by a *Bluebridge* French lecturer:

...in terms of my profession... I suppose Bluebridge would probably come first actually. It is a kind of a false hierarchy I think, if I was explaining to someone I would say yes I am a lecturer in French at Bluebridge – they are inter-related...

Later on in the interview, he adds that he feels supported by the university, in general, and the department, more specifically. Both structures are strong and yet supple enough to be supportive of members of the academic staff, even if an individual should level criticism against them:

...that is not to say that I don't think they could be more supportive, but I do feel supported. I think the acid test for me is the institution and the department supports you to the extent that you can tell them they are not being supportive and not be derided for doing that. Also an institution and a profession allows for contestation, where one can be opposed to the institution in quite striking ways and the institution will continue to support you in that opposition...

This highlights the fact that, overall, staff feel supported and protected by the university, regardless of any critical attitude that they may nourish towards it. Indeed, when sifting the data, one can read a fair amount of criticism being made by *Bluebridge* academics towards their own institution, especially in terms of the managerial intentions to promote

a merger among all the language departments. However, it is essential to note how Bluebridge academics mention the wider university context in their interviews much more and in more positive terms than their colleagues in the other two institutions.

At Greenbridge the feeling of detachment from the wider institution is remarkable. Apart from a couple of very senior members of staff, respondents tend to attach their loyalties mainly to their language sections and rarely to the wider university. Departmental loyalties feature somewhat high in people's preoccupations. However, whenever the wider institution is directly mentioned, this is done mostly in negative terms. As by way of example, a French senior lecturer at *Greenbridge* puts her feelings towards the university in a rather strong language:

...it's primarily the way the institution just spits on its staff, and then you have got the government. That is what makes what should be my dream job into a nightmare. But my dream job is here; it is teaching translating to people who want to be translators.

What we see here is a clear statement about the university and the government acting as demotivating factors for higher education staff today, as they impinge on the academics' set of beliefs and sense of professional self. She supports the view that state control encroaches on universities, thus threatening people's sense of academic freedom (Russell, 1993; Menand, 1996). Seen from this angle, the university seems to have a negative impact on its staff.

The fact that *Greenbridge* as an institution does not have any centrality in the sense of self of its academics is confirmed by a Spanish senior academic:

[my identity is]... certainly not the institution... When I am here, I am here, but, as soon as I am not here, I can forget the names of the people who are here... I do not forget the names of the people who are my colleagues and friends, but I can easily forget the whole institution when I am on holiday; I do not think twice about this institution.

This quote highlights a distinction between the institution as a community of peers, with which she identifies, and the overall sense of it as a disembodied entity which carries no meaning for her. This is confirmed by a senior lecturer in French at *Greenbridge*. She arrives at theorising the false distinction between the institution as a community of people one relates to, and the distant, administrative and managerial body from which she feels estranged. The two are difficult to disentangle:

...the values of the institution are... harder to pin down but in the same way that I would argue that the church is simply the people within it, the institution is the people within it.. So there is no one picture of the university, I would say that's the point. Unless you look at the people, then you have a very different picture going on.

However, a hispanist, also at *Greenbridge*, insists on such a distinction:

...I am quite happy here: I like the students, I like the place where I am, I like some of my colleagues... So my only bitterness... is the institution, the administration of the institution is dictatorial.

This points out that the institution, as an organizational unit, does not enjoy, overall, staff's support at *Greenbridge*. Nevertheless, its local human embodiment (in terms of departmental colleagues and students) has much more significance for the academics' sense of self.

Still, the institutional dimension plays a role in individual academics' sense of self, when it is linked to the student population it aims at serving. Students feature especially high in

academics' preoccupations. The fact that the university has always attempted to educate people from more disadvantaged backgrounds is seen by many members of the staff as important. As an Italianist at *Greenbridge* puts it:

...one way or another... [the university] tries to – at a certain level – integrate different kinds of social and economic backgrounds... because students belong to minorities... I like this job exactly for that, not because I belong to a specific institution as such. Nevertheless one has to say that Greenbridge or all polytechnics have been invented for this sort of reason, it gives you some sort of vague identity.

Thus, the social mission that the university embraces and its daily application in terms of the students' welfare are considered to be central to people's sense of institutional self. This is built here at the faultline between the 'ideal' and the 'real'. The two intermingle. The theme of care for students is given special importance in most interviews at *Greenbridge*. In the words of a French lecturer:

...the students are the reason why I am here and the teaching... my first duty is to the students and to teaching them well and to doing all related work in a way that helps them.

Redbridge respondents show a similar concern for their students. Across all language subjects, the sense of self is constructed around a concrete feeling of responsibility for the students. As a German lecturer puts it:

...with our student profile we get a lot of people from disadvantaged backgrounds who didn't get to study first time round for whatever reason. People come to us sometimes to improve their career prospects. We offer a kind of pastoral service when things are going wrong elsewhere in their life; we have a social function as well, particularly in this college and it is a very important one.

Thus, the awareness of having a role in contributing to the change and evolution of the students' cognitive and emotional life becomes a strong element in the very construction

of the respondents' self. In other words, assisting students in understanding, instilling in them a critical mind, a proclivity towards scepticism, tolerance of the past are some of the functions Redbridge academics feel they have to fulfil with respect to their students. The feeling of having a social mission, therefore, acts as a powerful anchorage point for the academics' sense of self.

Some care for students is expressed also at Bluebridge. However, the sense of social function is not so explicitly and strongly formulated by most respondents. Nevertheless, some of them state that they perceive as their responsibility *helping students to see things for themselves, to foster curiosity* and the like. A couple of academics see in this a clear political project linked to the positive changes that they feel education should bring. In spite of this, the sense of centrality of the care for students at Bluebridge does not emerge as clearly as it does at Greenbridge and Redbridge. This may certainly not signify a lack of concern for the students, but perhaps these are not so central to Bluebridge academics' sense of self, at least consciously.

More than the general idea of the university or its students, more local factors play a major role in the self construction of academics. At *Redbridge*, the data suggests a tension, particularly felt in the French department, between the old departmental structure and the new school-wide one. Thus, a French specialist, who was an active promoter of the merger, states:

...I found myself gradually distancing myself from my original department because of my administrative roles, and recently we changed... into a school which incorporates the modern languages and linguistics... So now I regard myself as a member of the school and not of the department.

It is arguable that his distancing from the department as the main source of his self may be the result of two intertwining factors. On the one hand, as I have already pointed out, his active role in building the school-wide structures. This managerial role gave him a chance to make wider structures more central to his concerns. The distancing process was also helped by another important background element. His being a medievalist with a strong interdisciplinary and multicultural leaning encouraged him to overcome any sense of exclusive affiliation with French, while still maintaining a special relation with it. As he points out:

...certainly in my published work I feel happy talking about mediaeval Spanish or Italian when it crosses with what I am saying but I am a French specialist and I also do Latin which I teach, mediaeval Latin.

Disciplinary variety is also appreciated by another French senior lecturer at *Redbridge*. However, she values variety within the boundaries of the French department, the identity of which she defends with somewhat belligerent language against the merger. She sees the latter as a step towards a wider structure (already in existence) that will eventually threaten the cultural import of the department by lowering it to the status of a language service provider:

...we fight that tooth and nail and so far we've been successful in that, but I know in the country in general there is more and more of the feeling that there is an instrumental approach to languages and you do languages not because of the culture but because of the language itself as an instrument and if possible you do language and something else. That is death to language departments – that reduces us all simply to schools of teaching languages.

The last quotation makes us aware of the respondent's embattled sense of allegiance in favour of old institutional structures against the new ones. The boundaries of the old, in

which she takes so much pride, are defended against mounting structural rearrangements. In her view, these are threatening the very fabric of her subject specialism by reducing the cultural import of French in an attempt to give it a purely vocational flavour.

Judging from all the quotations above, the French case is exemplary of diverging ways at Redbridge of building one's sense of self around institutional frameworks. As we have seen, while one French academic constructs this around ideal and traditional configurations that are redolent of a successful past and a strong departmental identity, one other welcomes the sense of fresh opportunities a less strong departmental structure can bring. Arguably, lecturers with multi and interdisciplinary backgrounds (and/or who play or have played a managerial role) show a more open vision of things that is based on the interdisciplinary co-operation among the different languages departments and beyond. Individuals' training and background can therefore constitute good pointers towards an understanding of different types of self people build around different kinds of institutional arrangements.

Similarly, staff belonging to smaller departments show a less strong sense of belonging towards their department and demonstrate goodwill in re-fashioning their sense of self around the new structures. Thus, a lecturer in German at *Redbridge* says:

...we are now in a school, we are no longer the department of German, we are the School of Language, Linguistics and Culture, and that has opened up the possibility of interaction with the other language departments in that, it used to be the case that you never saw anybody from outside your department. No, I have no problem with crossing of boundaries or opening German up to other influences or anything like that...

This quote highlights the willingness of smaller (and, in the case of German, less financially viable) departments to lower possible defensive boundaries and let their sense of academic allegiance change more fluidly. This may be the result of necessity, as the lack of merging could have meant, at least in the case of German, the relative demise of the subject at Redbridge.

As for *Bluebridge*, this has always traditionally been based on the power of individual departments. However, perhaps surprisingly, mention of the centrality of the department is often implied rather than explicitly stated. The exception is represented by those academics covering managerial roles in the Italian, German and Spanish departments. These scholars, possibly because of their institutional role, mention the department as being important for their sense of self. Apart from them, interestingly, only one German lecturer cites the department as being fundamental to her self. She agrees that this may be the case because she is a new member of staff in her department:

... I have just joined this department. So I would say the department, I feel a part of the department. Not so much the institution because I don't really have a clear perception of what it means at the moment.

In this case it is arguable that, being new to the university, the local environment of the department is much more present in the respondent's mind, as she finds it difficult to grasp the wider culture of the university. Interestingly, the silence around the department may be a signal of it being taken for granted in a culture that is strongly department-oriented. It is as if the department acted as a background force in their unconscious

minds. It is also worth noting that, while being attached to strong departmental structures, Bluebridge academics are involved, more than at Redbridge and certainly much more than at Greenbridge, in interdisciplinary projects and structures that propel them forward, well beyond their local realities. One may speculate about the reasons for this. I discuss these in chapter 10.

As in the case of Redbridge, the departmental structure (under the denomination of 'section') features more explicitly again in the Greenbridge interviews. The similarity also extends to the sense of loss that the historically strongest and more successful department at Greenbridge, the French one, shares with its counterpart at Redbridge. As indicated in chapter 5, the departure of the head of section, coupled with the merger and the decline in student numbers, seriously dented the sense of confidence usually felt in the French department. This is reflected in the words of a French lecturer at *Greenbridge*. She emphasises the pragmatic reasons behind her current attachment to the department that are devoid of any emotional or ideal content:

...in pragmatic terms I think the French section has to be my anchor because in practical and pragmatic terms this is what protects my job. I wouldn't have a job, if I wasn't part of the French section.

Having now dealt with the role the overall university, its local units and the students play in people's sense of self, I now turn to the analysis of the part academic activities (teaching, research and administration) have in the respondents' self.

Building the sense of self around institutional factors: teaching, research and administration

Starting with *Redbridge*, the sense of self is strongly derived, in the case of a German lecturer, from both teaching and research. However, in terms of her teaching role, she feels close to her own institution. Conversely, in terms of research she builds her sense of self around the subject and the wider community supporting it:

...I derive my sense of identity in equal measure from the institution and the subject but the institution relates more to my identity as a teacher and the subject to my identity as a researcher...

This is a unique case in all data recorded in the sense that the respondent *explicitly* makes a clear distinction between her role as a teacher, which keeps her anchored to the local institutional realities, and that of researcher, which propels her into a wider global community of scholars. This distinction is built on the faultline between the ‘local’ (represented by teaching) and the ‘cosmopolitan’ (represented by the research into her subject). This is an important difference. Such a distinction may signal important identification points in people’s sense of self within and without the local contexts in which they operate (Trowler, 2002).

Most of the other *Redbridge* academics point out that a balance between teaching and research is desirable, even if they tend to put a slightly heavier emphasis on the latter. In fact, only in the case of a lecturer in French and linguistics at *Redbridge* is research definitely identified as the core of his self. Research is perceived as disjointed from teaching and as the real means to promotion:

...well, it is not completely fair but sometimes, if you want to grow, you grow more thinking about theories and you need a lot of concentration and at that point teaching can be a nuisance; it just distracts you from what you are trying to do. If you are to be promoted, it will depend more on the theories than the quality of your teaching.

Conversely, teaching is nominated as the most important activity in only one case at Redbridge. This is in line with the respondent's historical profile, as she trained as a teacher and has always considered that to be central to her sense of self:

...I am not really a very typical academic in that my aim in life is not to spend it in libraries doing a lot of research, I much prefer interaction, teaching, dealing with students... I did a teacher training course in England, I then spent 4 years in Ghana teaching French in a secondary school.

As for administration, this is not always seen as negative. In two out of the three cases where administration is explicitly mentioned, this is not necessarily seen as a bad thing but as a needed and valuable activity. In the words of a French specialist:

...administration is not just a paper pushing activity, it is a human activity talking to people etc., so some of that is important and is very valuable.

This quote is interesting in that it signals the human import of administration. When this element is present at the front of an individual's consciousness, a more positive response may be had. In any case, administration does not feature highly in people's sense of self at Redbridge (or, if it does, it does so in a negative sense).

As for Bluebridge the general picture, except for one case in which the respondent sees research as absolutely central to his sense of self, overall, there is a tendency to give

almost equal weighting to both research and teaching. Thus, for an Italian lecturer, teaching is important as one can get useful feedback for one's research:

...the teaching – not the first year – when I get to the slightly more complex courses, I find, I'm quite honest on this, quite invaluable how the students come up on problems that I didn't think about or I get used to and don't think about anymore or don't think about everyday, but on the other hand teaching is the only place these things come up. The assumptions will never come up because the other researchers share the same assumptions with you.

Teaching is seen here as a kind of laboratory for the discussion and refinement of research findings.

According to a German lecturer, also at *Bluebridge*, the link between teaching and research has a clear ethical nature, as any justification for doing research is to mediate the findings to the students. However, she feels that she should do more research, not least because she thinks of research as being central to her sense of self. Nevertheless, research is often put aside because of other activities she has to carry out in her professional life:

...the justification for doing research is that you teach as well, I think it is an important ethical justification if you like for doing research is that you will then go on and mediate your research to students. So I think that teaching is necessaryI do value the idea that you teach in tandem and that one informs the other. So in theory I would like to say 50/50. Having said that I think I do like researching more, but maybe that is because I don't get to do enough of it and I always feel I have to put it on a back-burner and to one side...I think my natural inclination is more towards research but having said that I really like the idea and identity of somebody who does both and in which one informs the other.

While teaching and research enjoy the respect of academics, the same cannot be said of administration. There is a clear sense that administration is considered to be a nuisance. It is thought to be extraneous to academic life, a burden that is demotivating for academics

but has to be carried out of necessity. In the words of another German lecturer who had been recently employed by *Bluebridge* at the time of the interview:

... the fact that so much time, even for probationers – new lecturers are known as probationers – for the first three years you are supposed to be given a very light load to enable you to get used to university life. But because departments are chronically under funded with not enough staff, even probationers are given administrative tasks and I accept that, I am not complaining at all, but it does seem that the administrative burden – be it year abroad tutor, academic tutor, admissions tutor it is an extremely difficult burden.

Administration is seen here as the inevitable result of under funding. This means the academic staff have to carry the burden of administrative tasks. Again, like at *Redbridge*, the role of administrator is perceived to be negatively central to the academics' self. They see in it a top-down imposition and a hindrance to the flourishing of the researching and teaching roles that they consider central to their sense of self.

At *Greenbridge*, overall, administration has the same negative connotation as in the other two universities. In the words of a French respondent:

... I don't see myself as an administrator, I don't enjoy doing it and I resent the amount of it we have to do. I think that it is extremely worrying and bad practice that promotion in a university such as ours seems to depend on administration rather than anything else. It is extremely damaging for the whole culture.

Apart from highlighting how negatively administration features in her sense of self, the respondent criticises current trends at *Greenbridge* to encourage career moves made on administrative and managerial merits. She believes that this is changing *Greenbridge* academic culture altogether.

In general terms, like in the other two universities, teaching and research feature highly at Greenbridge in terms of people's sense of self. The role of teacher, however, appears to be more central than any other activity in the preoccupations of *Greenbridge* academics. Thus, a lecturer in Spanish simply says:

...my identity, if there is one, is teaching.

Interestingly, in a vein similar to that of some colleagues in the other two universities, while giving more weight to teaching, the respondent links teaching to research. Thus, he makes the following reflection:

...I do not see (teaching and research) as separate. I see it as a support to my teaching.

It is interesting to note how, at Greenbridge, even those who are regarded as researchers within the institution put teaching at the centre of their self. Without mentioning the term 'teaching', a *Greenbridge* senior lecturer in French who is heavily involved in doing research believes that the main function of academics is to instigate debate and facilitate knowledge among students. In this she sees the role of the academic as mainly being that of an intellectual:

...an academic is a facilitator of knowledge and someone who excites debate, should be outside – it is the role of the intellectual to challenge the established view, to question. So they should be doing that, they should be questioning the knowledge of students in order to get them to do that. That is the way a society remains healthy.

This quote explicitly injects a political dimension into the image of the academic, in the sense that s/he has a responsibility, through his/her teaching, to push society to reflect

critically on itself. For this reason, teaching is definitely at the core of the respondent's beliefs and values.

In conclusion, it is arguable that the data points towards similar and yet different configurations of the self around institutional issues in the three universities perused. These configurations reflect both current debates in higher education at large (the overall tension between academic and managerial values, for instance) and the traditional history of each university (which is reflected, for example, in the different weight given to teaching and research). Further analysis of these issues will be the object of the two concluding chapters.

What is now left to do in order to complete our bird's eye view of the self dimension is to look at the perception academics have of their ability (or inability) to make an impact in their institutional and disciplinary environments (what I call 'voice') and, consequently, the way they project themselves into the future. These are important areas to analyse in order to see how, in general terms, the three domains I deal with in this thesis (the institutional, the disciplinary and the personal) align (or not) in making the academic selves agentic and forward-looking or, on the contrary, inward-looking and non - projective.

Voice and the possible projection of the self

The sense of 'voice' seems to be clearly linked to possible managerial roles that people may have covered in their career. This is the opinion of a French respondent at *Redbridge*

who had a major role in the merger. He believes that voice is most explicitly linked to administrative and managerial roles:

...if you were a dean, then you have more of a voice. I think I used to help the French department have a voice... If I had a voice, this would be for my subject and it would be for my school. Quite frankly, I think I am the only member of the French department who doesn't recognise the existence of the French department.

It is interesting to note how the interviewee's support for the French department has later changed into a voice of dissent, once he has actively contributed to the merger. This signals how voice changes not only in volume but also in tone, as an individual's role changes over time. The harmony of the past can later be perceived as stridency in the present, as an individual positions him/herself differently within the institutional and disciplinary structures.

A germanist argues that the repositioning of institutional structures requires time for one's voice to be heard. Time factors are paramount:

...at college level, our voice is only expected to be heard by our representatives, of course it very much depends on the strength of the voice. I would say at the moment, and we are at the beginning of a new structure, the mechanisms for communication for the school and the rest of the college are not really satisfactorily in place, so yes, I would say there is some difficulty to make one's voice heard in the college as a whole, yes.

By looking at the overall data for *Redbridge*, the impression is that, at the institutional level, there is some kind of lack or loss of voice, as a result of the merger. However, if one looks at the way people project themselves into the future, there is a general wish to research more into their language subject(s), create research co-operation with other bodies and improve the quality of the work relationship within the new institutional

structures. Thus, a French specialist wishes to contribute to building new bridges within the school:

... I would like to see a much better atmosphere, the atmosphere is pretty poisonous at the moment and I would work to do that, could do it, because I know who to talk to. I seem to get on very well with everybody face to face and I feel sure I could establish links and build bridges and bring us together.

In this sense, one may argue that, while the general atmosphere is still one of resentment towards the merger, there is an awareness of time factors playing an important role in improving the situation. Moreover, there is some kind of optimism in the willingness not only to work to improve relationships among departments and people, but also to carry on pursuing the activities that are central to one's sense of professional self.

The same can be said of Bluebridge but with the caveat that the staff's sense of voice is much greater than at Redbridge. The data seems to indicate that in most cases people do feel they have a sense of agency *vis à vis* the institution. Academics in the various departments think that their views are generally valued. Thus, a *Bluebridge* French lecturer says:

...it may be naivety, it may be a false sense of my own importance but I feel that I do have a voice... I think as well one does have a voice because one is newish to the French department, I think equally I offer different perspectives than the obvious traditional perspectives and approaches within this department but I am not the only one doing that, there are a lot of people in the department actually doing that.

This feeling is shared by other relatively new and younger members of staff. This is the case of a German lecturer who makes interesting distinctions in terms of the concept of 'voice'. She believes that this is a relative concept whose volume and tone change in

different contexts. Thus, she feels that she is certainly heard within the German department, while she is not sure whether this also happens at the level of the wider structure. She also reflects on the origins of her voice. Being an Oxford graduate has helped in giving authority to her voice (and plays an important role in her overall sense of self). She also thinks that her voice gains strength through her membership of a specific German association in which she plays an active role:

...being a small department, it is comparatively easy to get heard because there aren't that many voices. I like coming here because people were always very respectful right from the start, they would listen to me because I thought I would be new and they wouldn't listen to me but they did and I thought that was nice. I certainly have a voice through an association because I have been so active with that organisation... people identify me with that.

This quote helps in identifying possible different sources of 'voice' within and beyond one's own institution.

Nevertheless, voice may exhaust itself, as the agentic force of one's role diminishes with time. This is highlighted by a French respondent at *Bluebridge* who believes that, comparatively, he has less voice now than he had when he started his managerial role in the department:

...I haven't felt this way necessarily very much about my whole time here, on the contrary indeed when I first took over as head of department there was so much work to do in this particular department if you wanted to get the work done you automatically felt you had a voice. But that work is more or less behind me now and your question is more about whether I have a voice in the institution at large.

Generally speaking, the overall feeling among the *Bluebridge* academics is that they have a sense of voice in their university. One can argue that this is due to the relatively weaker management systems at *Bluebridge*. In positive terms, this results in a certain harmony

between the institution and its academic constituencies. This feeling of harmony also appears among the projected wishes that people express in relation to the improvement and welfare of the departments and the language-subjects they are representatives of. Thus, in the case of a French lecturer:

...I would like to think of myself as a participant in the department and in the discipline, and I want to continue to see the discipline grow and change in interesting, exciting avenues.

Similarly, a Spanish interviewee at *Bluebridge* wishes to give his department new features that can contribute to its improvement:

...I would like the department to expand, I would like the department to have more features. We have more students than we can handle – so I think there is a case for expansion.

In conclusion, the overall sense one gets from the *Bluebridge* data is that lines of communication are open between management and academic staff. This creates a synergetic dialogue within the institution that appears to favour both the institution and the field.

The same cannot be said of *Greenbridge*. Here, the sense is one of lack of voice. This is well illustrated by the comments of a French lecturer:

[my voice]... got fainter and fainter... I perceive the tide as being too strong... well, outside the institution in the world of translation I still have something of a voice, some satisfaction, relief, because the world outside takes you seriously... you are worth engaging with. Inside you are not to be listened to, you are not worth engaging with the respondent's perception here is one of impossibility to have a voice against a background of institutional forces that tend to ignore individuals' thoughts and dent people's sense of agency. Such a situation often results in the closing off of the relationship between the institution and

its academic communities. In this specific case, any form of valid dialogue can only be had with outside agencies where the individual finds a sense of respect and satisfaction.

A colleague of hers, also at *Greenbridge*, confirms these negative feelings towards the institution but widens the contextual reasons behind her lack of voice. In fact, while admitting that her university does not engage in dialogue with its academics, she believes that this is not just typical of the institution in which she works. She thinks that it is part and parcel of wider cultural and political trends that emanate from the government:

...we have no voice... I think that this goes right up to government policy... You can't really have a voice out there either. You certainly don't have a voice in this institution...

However, having a voice does not have the same importance for everybody. For instance, a long-standing member of staff in the Spanish section is not worried about his own voice. Nevertheless, he feels that it is necessary for the institution to give voice to those younger members of staff who have the energy and willingness to change things. Only by doing this can an institution have a future:

[voice is for]...people who are 40-45, who want to change things – it is like politicians, when you have a country with young politicians it is a good sign. You have countries like Italy or France where they are decrepit, it is a bad thing. The same with the Church; when you have a Pope who is 75 years old it is bad for the Church. When you have people like Clinton, who is young and can go and have sex it is good, he has a future – I don't see the future, I have 3-4 more years here. My future is my past as well, so the changes should be for somebody who is going to stay here and teach in a different way. I think it is essential to give the voice to them.

Thus, contrary to what happens at *Bluebridge*, at *Greenbridge* one registers the fact that the younger members of staff are not listened to adequately. This has the effect of deflating individual academics' sense of self.

The perceived lack of voice often translates itself into questioning the possibility of an academic career and generates a feeling of despondency towards current institutional policies. This is the case of a French lecturer at *Greenbridge*:

...I am seriously considering whether I am a career academic or not, because I thought I was... What has happened is that I will instinctively refuse or question or criticise any policy decision that is put before me, it has almost become an automatic response...Because there is so much mistrust, it is the way these things have been delivered and it is the way they have been implemented. There has not been enough negotiation; there is a feeling of powerlessness. Even if you challenge, you are not heard.

In more than one case, though, while there is a sense of disengagement with the institution, many academics still show a strong engagement with their work. This is expressed as the wish to be able to contribute to the improvement of the situation, even if there is a sense of the difficulty of the task at hand. As another *Greenbridge* French lecturer puts it:

...I would like to make my teaching more interesting... I would like to have more time to do that and I wondered whether that is something positive which could be initiated, in other words there must be other people in this institution who are more similar to me, than to X, Y or Z.

As the quote suggests, amidst what is felt to be a negative environment at *Greenbridge*, some people have not yet lost their sense of purpose but lament the lack of anchorage points. This arguably results in a type of self that is much more fragile than in the other two institutions, especially *Bluebridge*. *Greenbridge* registers the weakest sense of self, while *Bluebridge* records the strongest. I shall discuss these different configurations of the self in the next chapter.

Conclusions

In the course of this chapter, I have examined the various points of anchorage that the academics have developed across the three institutions examined. I have also shown how, in the three universities, people have a different sense of voice within their working environment.

A tripartite configuration has emerged, in which different elements seem to be variously important for the academics involved. At one end of the spectrum, we find Bluebridge. Here people, while being critical of the institution in many ways, do find in it, both in its wider sense and, more specifically, in its departments, important points of anchorage. The latter permit the flourishing of a sense of self that is in dialogue with the university structures surrounding it. Institutional and field identities seem to support, overall, the selves of Bluebridge academics.

At the other end of the spectrum, we find the case of Greenbridge where the respondents' sense of self appears to be disengaged from the structures in which it operates. Once old structures were substituted by new ones, people found themselves increasingly disempowered. This created a hiatus between the languages academic community and the university at large. If people still engage, it is because of a strong respect for the students and for the educational ideals that the university has traditionally encouraged. However, even this ideal dimension risks being damaged, if individuals do not manage to find the necessary support for their wishes, needs and projects.

As for Redbridge, it stands in the middle point between the other two universities. While suffering from some of the fragmentation that Greenbridge shows, under the influence of institutional structuring, people seem to have started engaging in dialogues among themselves and with outside structures in developing a new sense of self in which change is perceived not necessarily in a negative way but as a step forward towards new challenges.

This chapter closes the third part of the work. In the next and last part, I shall bring together the different strands of the empirical research with the literature discussed in the first and second parts of this thesis in order to reach some theoretical conclusions about the whole work.

***PART 4 – REFLECTING ON IDENTITIES AND
SELVES***

10 - Modern Languages: Which identities? Which selves?

Introduction

This chapter opens the fourth and last part of this thesis. As such, it aims at bringing together the different strands that have emerged in the course of the empirical research and aligning these with the issues raised in the first and second part of this work. It also points towards the final chapter in which conclusions are drawn in terms of the ways in which this research has addressed current questions about the notion of academic identity and in raising new ones for the future.

The tripartite research model illustrated in chapter 3 constitutes the main guideline for the discussion. I refer to this model in putting forward arguments on the ways in which institutional and field identities intersect with the sense of self academics have of themselves. After this, I shall reflect on those institutional and field identities as they have been constructed by the respondents. The concluding section attempts to bring together all the different strands that have emerged in the course of the chapter.

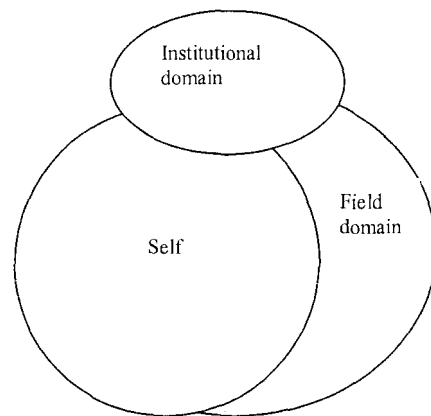
Different institutions, different configurations of the self, different academic identities

The tripartite research model devised in chapter 3 was conceived in order to function as a basic framework that would allow a simple grounding for the empirical data. Now that the data has been systematised, it is possible to use it to illustrate the similarities and differences among the identity and self configurations in the three universities perused.

As I have already suggested, in taking a bird's eye view of the data, it is possible to argue that each of the three universities presents a different arrangement of the academic identity with regards to the relationship between the different domains: the institutional, the field and the self. Given the centrality of the self domain, I start by examining this domain before I attempt to make the necessary connections and distinctions among the different institutional and field identities that have emerged in the course of the empirical research.

Thus, if one looks at the self, as one goes from Bluebridge to Redbridge and on to Greenbridge, one notices a progressive shrinking of the self in relation to the institutional forces that surround it. Bluebridge figures at one end of the scale. Here, as we saw from the data, the self is firmly anchored in the local departmental structures, in terms of affiliation and activities, while, at the same time, it finds its realisation in projects of an interdisciplinary, interdepartmental and inter-institutional nature (and beyond). In other words, at Bluebridge, the identification of academics with both one's own institution and the field (especially in terms of one's subject language) appears to be stronger than in the other two universities.

By making reference to the model I drew in chapter 3, I would argue that the following formulation best represents the situation at Bluebridge:

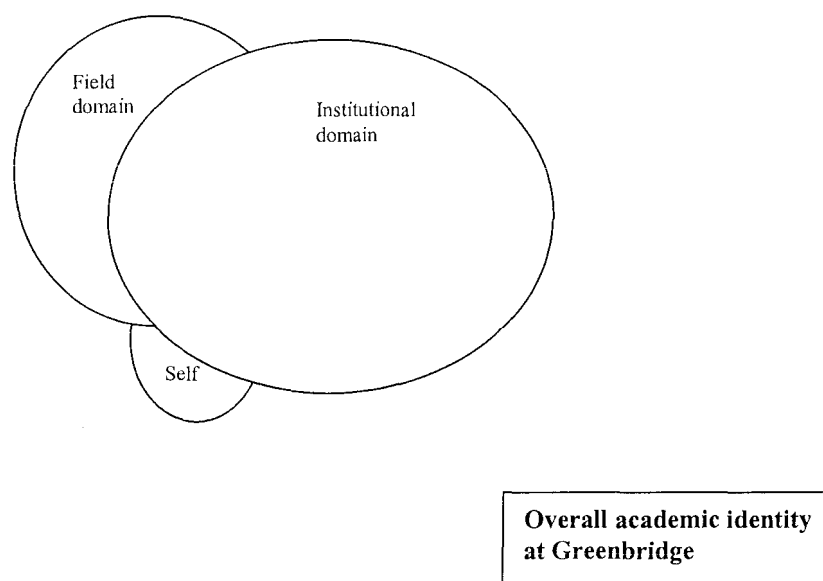


**Overall academic identity
at Bluebridge**

The impression is one in which both the self and the overall field domain are larger than the institutional one. Self and field domains tend to overlap to a great extent, thus signalling the centrality of the field for the academics' sense of self. The field plays an important part in the respondents' priorities. The impression one gets from the data is that the academic staff are firmly in control of both the aims and scope of the field. One finds in the Bluebridge data an alignment between individuals' selves and field structures, in the sense that the self mostly overlaps with the overall field dimension (especially in terms of the language subject to which it belongs and that it continues to nourish). As for the institutional domain, this is considerably smaller in comparison with the other two domains. It appears that Bluebridge academics have managed to preserve their sense of agency against institutional forces that were pushing for possible changes. This is probably mainly due to the fact that, in the face of the possibility of a merger of the language departments into a school of language, academics have succeeded in foregrounding their priorities and discourses as built around traditional departmental life

and academic roles (that is to say teaching and research, even if there appears to have been a quantitative growth in terms of administrative duties in this university too). Arguably, the overall academic identity at Bluebridge is the result of a particular institutional configuration that is characterised by a relatively weak management and strong subject cultures embedded in the different language departments. I shall come back to this later in the chapter.

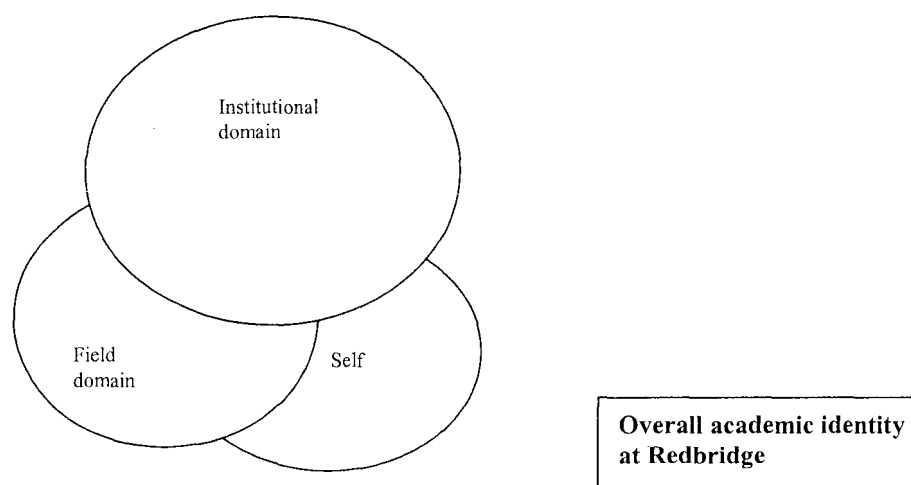
At Greenbridge, things are markedly different. Here, the impression is one of definite fragmentation of the self. This also appears to be the smallest component in the overall sense of academic identity. Contrary to what happens at Bluebridge, changes seem to have had a major impact on people's sense of self. This appears to have increasingly shrunk under the institutional pressures which were caused by the merger between languages and other departments (like sociology, psychology and so on). On its part, the field, while still supporting the self of some individuals, no longer seems to be enough to create cohesion.



As we can see, the self is almost eclipsed by institutional forces. Links between the self and the overall field (and its language subjects) are obviously still important. However, they are overshadowed by the sense of confusion and lack of direction that the merger has brought about. Institutional forces are also having an impact on the overall field in that they have subtracted status from it through the merger. From having a whole school dedicated to them, modern languages were reduced to a department among others in an overall school of humanities. This process subtracted much decisional and financial autonomy from the modern languages academic staff. Moreover, while academics still have control over their own language subject, institutional forces are pushing towards more vocational language offerings. The realization of these may indeed re-shape the field at Greenbridge in terms of its aims and scope, regardless of the wishes of the academic staff for whom, as we know, the cultural import in the study of modern

languages is paramount. Finally, the push towards more co-operation among language sections could result in a further loss of power of the individual language subjects, as more multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary projects may be called for, at least in principle. This would be welcomed by the staff, at least in principle. However, a lack of initiative, on the part of the management, to support and promote these has caused resentment and frustration among the academic staff, with the consequent sense of confusion on the future of languages at Greenbridge.

As for Redbridge, the overall sense of academic identity seems to be positioned in the middle point between the one at Bluebridge and that at Greenbridge. With the latter it shares some sense of loss of direction as a result of a difficult transition from a departmental to a school structure. However, its tradition in terms of research acts as a support for a great part of the academic staff, slowly encouraging them to establish new synergies within and beyond the new structures. Openings towards possibilities of collaboration, in both teaching and research, seem to be forthcoming. Academics seem to have started to re-gain control over the definition and development of the field. The situation at Redbridge can be visually represented in this way:



The self appears here to be both ‘bigger’ and more agentic than at Greenbridge. While institutional factors still loom large over both the overall field and the self, there is certainly a gradual shift towards a more balanced configuration among the three domains that is similar to that of Bluebridge. However, one must add at this point that time factors may play a role in the different configurations between Redbridge and Greenbridge. Given that at Greenbridge the merger is more recent than at Redbridge, it is arguable that there has not been enough time for Greenbridge academics to realise (yet) any beneficial effect beyond the controversies brought about by the merger.

In looking at the three institutions analysed, we have thus identified three different configurations for the academic identity, as this realizes itself in relation to the interplay between identities and selves. Having illustrated these, I now wish to turn to some possible explanations that lie behind them.

Supporting and fragmenting forces

The picture sketched so far highlights the contours of complex patterns. It is now important to analyse the main factors contributing to such configurations.

First of all, as I indicated in chapter 4, all three institutions had to face, in different degrees, initiatives and discourses relating to merging and change. However, while these have materialised, in both Redbridge and Greenbridge, in concrete re-structuring moves, at Bluebridge they remained at the stage of 'discussion'. They never became reality. Many consultations were apparently had but, given that the departments had scored highly in the Research Assessment Exercise, the risk of disturbing existing structures was perhaps too high for change to be forced through by management. The departmental structure at Bluebridge remained unaltered, thus fulfilling both the wishes and needs of the academic staff. Therefore, selves continued to have a relatively strong sense of agency within the university.

As I previously stated, things went differently both at Redbridge and Greenbridge. At Redbridge, in spite of the opposition from some staff in the big and successful French department, the various departments were merged into a single school which also included applied linguistics. Since then departments have maintained only a nominal autonomy, while, effectively, they have financially and administratively merged into an overarching school structure. This has meant the loss of financial autonomy and status on the part of each department. However, while smaller departments, faced with the

possibility of closure, more willingly accepted the merger, the largest (French), fiercely opposed any change. Thus, traditional status and financial power played an important role in the oppositional attitude on the part of some of the French staff at Redbridge. I say some because two academics traditionally engaged in interdisciplinary work (one with linguistics, the other with medieval studies) indicated with their words much more flexibility towards and support for the structural shifts. It therefore seems that, beyond the force of financial threats (as in the case of the German department), the merger was facilitated by those lecturers who had traditionally been involved in interdisciplinary teaching and research projects.

However, time factors seem to be playing a major part in changing academics' attitudes at Redbridge. After the merger between the languages departments and linguistics, as time went by, increasingly more staff started realising beneficial effects, in terms of teaching and research academic synergies, derived from the merger. There are signs that, with time, the acute divisiveness caused by the structural moves might be overcome in favour of more intra and interdepartmental co-operation. As I have already illustrated, the strong research tradition of Redbridge especially acts as a supporting factor in any synergetic move. Increasingly, the academic staff look towards possible projects within and without their university. Thus, academics' selves seem to be finding fresher identification points around which they can organise themselves. This shows how institutional mergers can both assist in creative disciplinary developments and enhance the academics' sense of self. It can therefore be argued that the relationship between institutional and field identities, and the self depends on the delicate balance between

these three domains in the interplay between different sets of actors (academics, managers and policy-makers) within specific local cultures (Trowler, 2002).

At Greenbridge, while co-operation among all the language sections was never very strong, taken together, they constituted a successful academic community for many years. The merger divided what once was a community and forced languages into a subordinate role in relation to other financially more successful and viable departments (like psychology, for instance). Concurrently, according to many interviewees, no real efforts were made, on the part of the management, to encourage the synergies that had been promised prior to the merger. This left modern languages in limbo. This situation was worsened by the continuous market crisis in terms of demand for languages. Confusion and retrenchment among the language staff became common phenomena. This contributed to the progressive shrinking of the selves of those working within the department, in terms of an increasingly felt loss, among academics, of their original status, voice and feelings of belonging.

On the basis of my arguments so far, it can be hypothesised that the possibility for academics to develop an agentic self depends, in many ways, on the ability and opportunities they are given to have their values and voices heard by management. This is, of course, much more easily accomplished in those universities that have a more viable financial situation. Arguably, financial factors play an important part in determining the structural organisation of a university and/or department. The more financially sound a university and/or department is, the more possible it is for it to resist

unwanted changes, like mergers. Similarly, a solid research tradition (like at Bluebridge and, to a lesser extent, at Redbridge) tends to empower academics with a sense of strong agency in resisting change. Therefore, one can say that financial viability and a strong research profile act as cementing support at times of change and help staff having a more active role and a stronger voice in making their reasons heard in favour of or against change. Where such conditions are relatively weaker or altogether absent, academic selves are destined to fragment and shrink at times of crisis, as is the case at Greenbridge. Here academics' sense of agency was easily eroded at a moment of lowering market demand for languages, against a background of rather weak intra and interdepartmental forces.

Conversely, at Bluebridge, departmental 'closure' paradoxically acted as a strong cementing factor in the vindication of academics' voice with regards to top-down changes. Oddly enough, departmental traditional 'territorialism' (Damrosch, 1995; Becher and Trowler, 2001) works positively at Bluebridge in that it provides a safe psychological home for people to launch freely into those interdisciplinary and inter-institutional forms of co-operation which are the result of academic interest and choice. The latter are in any case actively encouraged by the university, in line with its excellent reputation for both disciplinary and interdisciplinary research. Also, both weaker management forces and managerial decisions not to risk changing the departmental structures that had been successful both in terms of teaching and research acted as factors opposing any merger. The result is a more positive alignment between the institution, the

field and the sense of self in the construction of an overall academic identity at Bluebridge.

This leads to reflections on the nature and conditions of change and their impact on selves. However, before dealing with this in the concluding section of this chapter, I wish to recap those institutional and field identities that the three university seem to share (or not) and that make the living matter of the world of modern languages in the British higher educational system.

Which institutional identities?

So far I have addressed questions regarding the self in the three universities examined. The analysis has highlighted how, in each of these, a different kind of self emerges, according to the type of supporting forces (or lack of them) in each institution. As I illustrated in chapters six and seven, differences, as well as similarities, can also be identified in terms of institutional and disciplinary identities in the three universities. It is to these I now wish to turn.

Firstly, in terms of institutional identities, a whole gamut of nuances is detectable among the three universities. *In primis*, there are institutional aspects of which academics in three universities are similarly critical. These aspects concern, above everything else, top-down innovation, as indicated in the discussions concerning the mergers, and the new ‘professionalization’ of the academics in a strictly bureaucratic sense. In relation to the latter, as we know, interviewees have, in most cases, expressed strong reservations

against the growing number of administrative duties they have to perform in their daily working life. These are perceived as detracting time and energy from what academics perceive they do best, that is to say teaching, researching and taking care of students (Marginson, 2000; Newton, 2000). In this sense, academics interpret the new 'professionalisation' as disempowerment rather than empowerment, a loss of one's sense of agency in managing one's academic life, a shrinking of one's self. Such a situation is perceived as being the result of at least three main factors: the continuous under funding of higher education on the part of the government; the current evaluationist climate (Bassnett, 2001) and the widening participation policies. These factors have cumulatively made academics shoulder an increasing number of administrative tasks. In turn, this caused a feeling of despondency among academics towards emerging discourses about professionalization, and a willingness to re-assert the importance of traditional academic roles, that is to say teaching and research.

The climate of widening participation has brought more than ever to the fore the importance of another institutional dimension, that is to say students. When this dimension is constructed in ideal terms, academics identify strongly with mission statements that, invariably, indicate a pledge to serving all students. However, when these are perceived in more 'realistic' terms, comments tend to be of a rather critical nature, especially in relation to perceived decline in students' academic standards. Across the three institutions there is a feeling that, as a larger and more diversified body of learners enter the university, a number of them lack the minimum requisites, particularly in terms of language skills, to meet traditional academic expectations. As language skills allegedly

become increasingly poorer, it makes academics re-think traditional syllabuses, especially for first year students. The latter are deemed to be increasingly unable to tackle academic texts, particularly those of a literary nature, in the target language. This influences the organisation of syllabuses in the different language subjects where the reading of literary classics may at times be delayed until the second year of study, when the students have done enough remedial language classes to tackle them. As we can see, both endogenous and exogenous institutional factors have an impact on field identities.

Both institutional and field identities are built around the important pole running between the 'ideal' and the 'real'. This is particularly evident when one considers issues regarding the two main academic activities: teaching and research. As I previously pointed out, while teaching is considered to be ideally at the heart of academic life in all the three universities examined, very often, in reality, research has more importance in terms of projected wishes for people. Of course, this is more evident at Bluebridge and, to a less extent, at Redbridge because of the excellent research tradition typical of these two institutions. Conversely, teaching seems to be more at the heart of Greenbridge academics' pursuits, in comparison with the two other institutions.

The distinction between the 'ideal' and the 'real' also traverses the category 'teaching' itself, in terms of the contentious differences between language and content teaching. While almost all respondents in the three universities seem to agree, at an ideal level, on the importance of language teaching, at Redbridge and Bluebridge there is a perception that the most coveted kind of teaching is that linked to content studies.

However, at Greenbridge, in line with the profile of its academic staff, there is more of an interest in language teaching and applied language studies. The importance of language teaching is actually enshrined, at institutional level, in the way in which both language programmes (the bachelor degree in languages and the institution-wide language programme) enjoy, at least nominally, equal status as part of the undergraduate provision. However, in real terms more status is still generally ascribed to content teaching than language teaching. Thus, the institution-wide language programme, which is entirely dedicated to language teaching, enjoys less status than the BA programme. Here, the high status ascribed to research in content studies still transfers to those academics working within this field.

Status differences are even more evident at Bluebridge where the language centre has operated, so far, as a distinctive unit, totally separate from the BA. Some links, as we know, are in place in terms of some of the language centre part-time teachers contributing to a quota of the BA language teaching. Concurrently, BA lecturers oversee the assessment procedures of the language centre. However, unlike Greenbridge, Bluebridge has not integrated the centre within the undergraduate provision. Nevertheless, as the data suggest, some stronger forms of co-operation between the BA and the language centre are being sought at present. This may arguably signal a willingness, on the part of the university, to attribute more status to the centre than in the past. After all, as I say, while undergraduate programmes carry with them the status that is traditionally attributed to research into content studies, institution-wide language programmes allegedly respond to

market demands for more (vocational) language teaching and are consequently fast acquiring financial power.

As for Redbridge, as we know, there is no kind of ‘languages for all’ programme and, therefore, comparisons of the kind made in the case of Greenbridge and Bluebridge are not possible. However, the status of language teaching may be increased in the future, if, as a German respondent stated, the plans to employ language teaching specialists materialize.

As one can see, it is difficult to disentangle institutional from field identities. However, having so far discussed the institutional dimension in terms of the various organisational units in which the field is organised across the three universities, the impact students have on the field and the different roles academics play in their working life, I wish now to turn to a more detailed analysis of the field dimension in all its facets.

Which field identities?

The data on field identities seems to suggest that, while there are similar configurations across the three universities, each of these also embody different frameworks.

In the first instance, it must be highlighted that the importance of modern languages as a whole is still downplayed in relation to the individual language subjects across the three institutions. However, as we saw in chapters six and seven, most interviewees are clear about the field’s general value, aims and scope. There is widespread consensus about the

cultural and formative value of language studies. This is seen as essential for a culture, like the British one, that many of the interviewees perceive to be monolingual and monocultural at heart, as a result of English being the language of international communication. Languages are thought to be the key to break the kind of cultural isolationism from which British culture allegedly suffers. The value of studying languages is also detected in the multiskilling possibilities this affords students in helping them acquire higher, transferable skills, especially those relating to communication, synthesis and analysis (King, 2000).

However, beyond aims and scope, what is mildly at variance, across the three universities, is the sense of identification with the overall field. Greenbridge seems to have lost its traditional allegiance to the overall field that characterised this institution when there was a dedicated school of languages. The memory of this allegiance is still vivid among the academic staff. The school acted as a pole of identification for academics, perhaps more than any language subject/section, at least in terms of shared values and sense of purpose. Even if the school no longer exists, its pull is still felt among its academics and arguably favours a strong association with the overall field. However, the recent merger seems to have dented such association, as lecturers lost their point of reference in the school of languages. The new department does not seem to command as strong a sense of allegiance and identification as the old school. This translates itself into a fairly low identification with the overall field.

At Redbridge, as I have already pointed out, a more general identification with the overall field is possible for those who have been engaged in multi and interdisciplinarity. It is academics with a wider interdisciplinary outlook and training that have been supportive of the merger, while still remaining critical of the purely financial reasons that had dictated it more than any academic consideration. However, with time, the merger is slowly creating new research and teaching synergies among language departments. This may result, in the end, in a consciously stronger sense of allegiance to the overall field, as this is institutionally supported by the new school of languages and linguistics.

Finally, at Bluebridge, there seems to be an overall lack of *conscious* identification with the whole field, as people tend to identify much more with the individual language subjects. However, it is arguable that an *implicit* strong identification with modern languages at large can be found in the many interdepartmental forms of collaboration that scholars carry out, both in terms of teaching and research.

However, in general terms, more than the overall field itself, it is the individual language subjects around which academics build their disciplinary homes. The changing nature of these is clearly perceived by almost all interviewees. The first shift that is highlighted is the relative status differential of each language subject in relation to the others. Against the general background of the strongly perceived decline in the numbers of applicants for modern languages degrees, French appears to have been most damaged, along with German, while Spanish seems to be gaining status, as the most popular choice among undergraduates. This trend is thought to be occurring in all three institutions.

Beyond the overall field and the individual language subjects, many respondents find their sense of identification in the specialism(s) they cultivate (like literary criticism, linguistics, art history, for instance) and the wider academic communities that represent such specialisms. These specific poles of identification can at times be powerful, especially in the case of Redbridge and Bluebridge, where research specialisation is stronger than at Greenbridge.

It is worth mentioning at this point that modern languages are increasingly being studied with other fields. Linguistics or business studies are two examples. Negatively, this may signal the loss of status of full languages degrees in favour of combined ones, under market pressures. Positively, it has brought modern languages into dialogue with other disciplinary communities that were once alien to one another. This has the potential for interesting synergies, if the links are fostered in coherent and consistent ways through funded projects, as in the case of Bluebridge. At Redbridge, there have traditionally been links between language subjects and other disciplines. However, synergies among language subjects have now started to be forthcoming. In this sense, one can argue that there have been possible benefits deriving from the merger. Conversely, the merger may be perceived as a threat to the status of languages. This is the case of Greenbridge. Here the merger is most recent and such synergies were not (yet) so forthcoming at the time of the empirical research.

In terms of language teaching/learning, across the three institutions, there is strong opposition against any force that aims at reducing modern languages to practical function

and a service status. The use of languages as a mere tool for instrumental purposes is criticised, even by those who adhere, in a general sense, to the communicative methodology in which, as we know, the pragmatic use of language is highlighted. Although the question of language teaching methodology was never really dealt with in the interviews, the impression one gets from the data is that, in the three universities, it still mostly revolves around the grammar-translation method, with the additional use of oral tasks. There is a general feeling that the approach to language pedagogy is still largely piecemeal. There is also a growing perception of the importance of approaching language teaching and learning in more innovative and coherent ways. The value that is increasingly being given to a variety of language tasks well beyond the usual literary translation, along with the increasing number of links between the BA programmes and the language centres or institution-wide language programmes (where communicative methodologies are generally adopted) are signs of a changing mood in terms of the growing importance of language teaching/learning.

What is arguably absent in all three institutions, though, is a clear articulation of possible ways in which the hiatus between language teaching and content studies could be overcome. The study of language as a repository of cultural attitudes and values is not often explicitly emphasised in the interviews, even by those with stronger ‘culturalist’ leanings. Of course, there is an implicit recognition of this. However, a fresher view of the perusal of language as a complex web of cultural meanings as a possible ‘object’ of study that brings together language and content studies is rarely acknowledged. Arguably, the study of language is still seen as a necessary and yet ancillary tool to read

documents (of a literary, historical, philosophical or sociological nature) that are key to a certain culture. It acts as a bridge with content studies but is not fully integrated with it. Even when language is studied in its cultural articulations, this is still done in language classes, especially translation ones. Language as bearer of culture is not yet the object of inquiry in content classes. Language and content studies are still kept fairly separated.

However, the traditional balance between language and content studies is arguably changing. The situation at the moment is fluid and is far from being clear. As I have pointed out, Redbridge and Bluebridge have started becoming more aware of both the importance of language pedagogy and of the research that is carried out in this area. Concurrently, Greenbridge, since 1992, has been increasingly giving emphasis to content-based research, even if this is not (yet) as developed as in the other two universities. As I say, such moves are altering the traditional configuration between teaching and research, on the one hand, and language and content studies, on the other, slowly filling the status gap between language and content studies.

Moreover, there are now new structures around which the identity of modern languages is slowly being built, like the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE) and the national Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies at Southampton University. These aim, in effect, at breaking down traditional institutional and disciplinary boundaries, thus facilitating more co-operations among the different disciplinary constituencies around interest areas. However, as the empirical data indicate,

there are not yet many positive signs of academics giving much weight to these new national structures.

Moving on to content studies, the data suggest that, first of all, the individual language subjects are, overall, changing both in their internal composition and in their relationship with each other and other disciplines. There is general consensus in the three universities that in all the language subjects there is a tendency to both enlarge and reach beyond the traditional literary canon to include popular literature, film studies, women's studies and so on, all of which tend to be multidisciplinary in nature. New specialisms are being imported into and adapted by modern languages.

However, arguably, multidisciplinary has not yet been cogently transformed into interdisciplinarity in equal measure in the three institutions. If by interdisciplinarity one means the *integration* rather than the *juxtaposition* of two or more disciplines (Moran, 2002), there are different patterns emerging in the three institutions. At Bluebridge, we have a configuration that comes closer to the definition of interdisciplinarity as 'integration' given by Moran (2002). Here staff are engaged in the kinds of research and teaching that bring together, in different programmes and through different projects, not only synergetic relationships between language departments but also between these and other disciplines and institutions. Thematic, interdisciplinary work seems to be the rule at Bluebridge rather than the exception and is definitely innovative and forward looking.

As for Redbridge, as we know, interdisciplinary projects have often tended to involve co-operation with other disciplinary areas (like history, art history, classics and linguistics) than with and among other language subjects. This has apparently been the result of informal networks established among academics who share similar research interests across disciplines. Joint research ventures among language subjects has often been perceived as a managerial imposition and a plot to 'sweeten the pill' of a merger that, allegedly, was being done for purely financial reasons. However, as I have pointed out, there are signs that the situation is changing fast, as some people are realising the possible value of being part of an overarching school structure, as the new co-operation between French and Spanish shows.

The situation is rather different at Greenbridge. Although, obviously, interdisciplinary work is carried out by individual academics (psychology and Italian, for instance, or French and colonial studies), the overall mood within the department of modern languages is one of lack of any interdisciplinary synergies and direction. The impression one gets from the data is one of fragmentation and isolation, against the wider perception of an unfulfilled promise of interdisciplinary co-operation. Interdisciplinarity is, therefore, here an empty word that lacks meaning in the present circumstances. However, in spite of this, some timid coming together of different language subjects on joint projects has started appearing in the form of the new undergraduate studies. These contain a strand that is commonly taught by specialists belonging to different language subjects for all language undergraduates, irrespective of their language(s) of specialisation (examples of such sessions include Italian contemporary theatre, the

Spanish Civil War and so on). However, it is arguable that this kind of arrangement is more multidisciplinary than interdisciplinary as, while exposing students to important cultural aspects of each culture from different angles (literary, historical and so on), often it does not attempt a proper thematic integration of these (as it could be in a possible framework that would deal with issues of 'war', 'love', 'gender' across different cultures and in different historical periods)ⁱ. According to Moran's (2002) scheme, Greenbridge carries forward projects that are inspired more by the juxtaposition rather than the integration of different disciplines.

In spite of this, it is apparent from the data that, across the three different universities, there are some moves towards culturalist approaches in modern languages. This can be detected in a number of initiatives like, for instance, the thematic courses in contemporary German culture at Bluebridge and the multi and interdisciplinary approach to the study of art history in the Spanish department at Redbridge. However, these are often mixed with more traditional teaching and research arrangements that are based on the study of the traditional literary canon. In this sense, modern languages can be considered in a fluid state of change in which the 'traditional' mixes with the 'new'. What is at variance in the three universities is the degree to which the different approaches to the study of culture are tackled, with Bluebridge presenting the clearest signs of adherence to a culturist approach and Greenbridge the faintest ones.

As for interculturalist trends (in terms of the study of the cognitive and affective factors that derive from the encounters between people of different cultures [Bhabba, 1990;

McBride and Seago, 2000]), these are not explicitly foregrounded in any of the three universities under examination. However, some of the interdisciplinary trends registered both at Bluebridge and, to a lesser extent, at Redbridge point in this direction. Intercultural frameworks are used only in a course on 'interculture' in the institution-wide programme at Greenbridge. However, this is an isolated phenomenon, the implementation of which has been made possible only through the fortuitous presence of a couple of interculturalists on that programme.

Similarly, at Redbridge, current research being undertaken by a linguist in the French department on the understanding and perceptions of 'emotions' across different cultures does fit the intercultural remit. However, again, this seems to be an isolated case, even if it is arguable that, with the spreading of the interculturalist agenda across the UK thanks to associations like International Association for Languages and Intercultural Communication (IALIC) and its links with the national Subject Centre for Languages and Linguistics at Southampton University, research and teaching of this kind may become indeed part of the future of modern languages (Killick, Parry and Phipps, 1999).

Conclusions

This chapter has been a synoptic attempt at a final, general reflection on the empirical data gathered in the course of the research. The institutional and field identities of modern languages that emerge from the data make a complex pattern in which fresher, synergetic moves overlap with more traditional frameworks. Changes are mainly being engendered by market, globalising and evaluative forces that are definitely pushing for

major shifts in the field and its institutional arrangements. New epistemological paradigms are being created (Phipps, 2001).

At the time the empirical research took place (at the beginning of 2000), some institutions seemed to be managing change (both in terms of institutional and field re-structuring) better than others. As I have argued, this depends on the ways in which academics engage in the process. It is at this junction that the notion of self is especially useful. Change appears to happen more positively where selves are respected and academics' voices are heard. It is only from the vigorous engagement of the self with both institutional and disciplinary discourses that both institutions and the field eventually benefit. This is the story of Bluebridge where, against what may appear to be a 'conservative' institutional background based on the traditional power of departments, hidden but effective disciplinary changes are actually happening. What appears to be isolationism and resistance are in fact powerful levers for positive, bottom-up change. As I have argued, by feeling a sense of belonging and agency within their departments, and by entering in a critical dialogue with the institution, selves flourish and are, therefore, able to engage in projects with colleagues within their own department, the wider university and other external institutions.

Conversely, selves tend to shrink in those environments where top-down change takes place, as I have indicated in the case of the mergers that took place both at Redbridge and Greenbridge. In both these institutions, selves have tended to shrink in the face of shifts which most academics perceive to be contrary to their own values, beliefs and traditions.

Of course, with time, as people get used to the new structural arrangements, new synergies and a fresher sense of balance can be found. However, as we have seen, this relies, in the first instance, on time, as changes need time to be absorbed. As importantly, though, it depends on a series of other factors that relate to the institutional habits, financial feasibility, managerial attitudes and the willingness of staff to look for new solutions.

In those institutions, like Redbridge, which are relatively healthy in financial terms and where staff are empowered by strong traditions of collaborative research and teaching (even if not among language departments), new synergies can be found with time. Conversely, in those environments which suffer more from financial crises and do not have a strong tradition of co-operation, fragmentation deepens and translates itself into the progressive shrinking of the self. This, as we know, is the case of Greenbridge, where nobody seems to be benefiting from the merger - neither the institution, nor the field, nor, more importantly, the academic staff.

It is for this reason that the notion of self, along with those of institutional and disciplinary identities that nurture it, should be taken into due consideration by management, when considering change. Change is at times indeed unavoidable, necessary and not automatically negative. In the case of our research, change is pushing, in some cases for new, creative synergies. However, for it to be really effective it needs to take into account the belief and value systems of the people working within a given institution and enter into dialogue with them.

The notion of change and its relationship with notions of academic identities are the topics of the next and concluding chapter.

Conclusions - Change: Which identities? Which selves?

Introduction

The main purpose of these conclusions is to re-explore the notion of academic identity in the light of the thoughts matured in the course of the whole of this thesis. This will allow me to do two things: first of all, in line with the aims outlined in the introduction, to take some of the conclusions reached about modern languages a step further into the realm of higher education in general; secondly and as importantly, to generate overall reflections on this piece of work in an attempt to indicate both its possible strengths, in terms of advancement of knowledge, and possible shortcomings. This will be followed by suggestions on possible future lines of research on the topic of academic identities. The chapter ends with a number of reflections on what I feel I have learnt from the research.

The general tone of these conclusions is, therefore, reflective. It is also mildly normative in terms of general recommendations with regards to the importance of academic identities for issues relating to change in higher education.

Identities and selves

In the course of this thesis and in line with the theoretical assumptions discussed in chapter 3, I tried to structure this piece of work around a complex concept of academic identity. In fact, on the basis of the model proposed by Välimaa (1998), the nuances of constructivist-realism (Delanty, 1997) and Archer's (2000) work, I arrived at the formulation of a simple theoretical model that would allow the analysis of the world of modern languages at the meso-level.

This model implied, above everything else, the importance of the personal dimension in any kind of research around academic identities. Without denying the ‘objective’ existence of structures, I based the empirical research on the assumption that these become ‘live’ only through the interpretations that human beings give to them (Archer, *ibidem*; Dubar 1997, 2000; Bodei, 2002; Martuccelli, 2002). To these cognitive webs of meanings I gave the names of institutional and field identities.

As Martuccelli (*ibidem*) puts it, structures present to human forces *une malléabilité résistante* (a ‘resistant malleability’). This means that structures are not totally rigid but supple enough to change in relation to human input, as has been illustrated in several parts of the empirical research. I therefore deemed it essential to determine the kind of relationships that structures establish with human subjects. I was interested in analysing the meanings individuals weave in their relationships with the structures by which they are surrounded.

Moreover, instead of talking of ‘academic identity’ *tout court*, as has usually been done in the literature on the topic (Martin, 1999; Taylor, 1999; Henkel, 2000; Kogan, Bauer, Bleiklie and Henkel, 2000), I preferred making a distinction between institutional identity, field identity and self. This was an *a priori* configuration that I devised on the basis of my readings on (academic) identity and consequently applied in both in the process of data gathering and analysis. As I have already pointed out, this configuration acted as a heuristic device that assisted me in making sense of the intricacies that are typical of the field of modern languages. It helped me to generate questions that were vital in both obtaining and ordering the empirical data. In turn, the empirical research facilitated the refinement of the model, especially in terms of

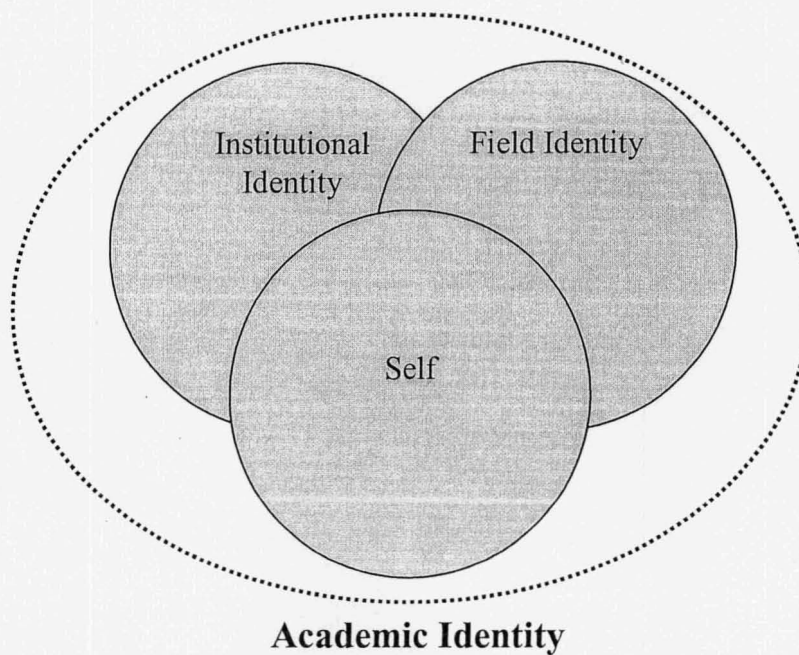
determining the elements constituting each domain (institutional identity, field identity and self) of the model itself (for instance, as we know, teaching, research and administration are considered to be elements of the institutional domain, while the category 'interdisciplinarity' pertains to the field domain). The empirical work also pointed towards different configurations of the model for each of the three universities perused, as illustrated in chapter 10.

In the research model proposed, 'identities' indicate the acts of sense-making and interpretations that individuals give of those institutional and disciplinary structures in which they work (Weick, 1995; Wenger, 1998). It is from this sense-making process that institutions and disciplines derive their life and 'substance'. Identities concern, in a sense, the cognitive side of things, as they embody the cognitive meanings academics give to the institutional and disciplinary frameworks in which they work. It is around the delicate and shifting balance among these sets of meanings that such frameworks acquire their 'consistency'. As Trowler (2002) puts it, these sets of meaning represent the local filters through which historical traditions and current practices are interpreted. Thus, identities help in understanding the meaning-layered tissues of which institutions and disciplines are made, as they are constantly re-interpreted in specific working contexts over time by academics.

The notion of self, on the other hand, points towards the more deeply affective dimension of institutional and disciplinary life. It represents the identification and positioning processes academics realise within institutional and field structures through the filters of their personal history, value systems and projected wishes. The self can be considered to be the repository of the deepest forces underlying those

structures that I have called institutional and field identities. The self can be considered the more hidden aspect of institutional and disciplinary life. It continuously engages with the practices and histories of which institutions and disciplines are made.

It is at the interface between institutional and disciplinary identities, and the self that the overall notion of academic identity lies. This must be understood as the overall construct that derives from the interactions between cognitive sets of meanings (as they are embodied in both the institutional and field identities) and affective factors (represented by the self). As we saw in chapter 3, the overall model of academic identity can thus be represented:



The type of relationship between individuals and structures is determined by the specific socio-historical circumstances in which such a relationship takes place. In the past, this was fairly loose, with academics operating within a society that did not intervene directly in determining what academic responsibilities and practices should

be. The concept of 'academic freedom' summarized this situation (Russell, 1993). Academics were left free to determine their own agenda. More recently, as we know, things have changed dramatically. Society has started impinging heavily on academic life. Policy makers, in their attempt to make the university increasingly responsible for the social and economic welfare of society, have begun intruding into the realm of academic freedom, by defining, for instance, what 'quality' is and determining, to an extent, the aims and scope of the disciplines (Morley, 2003).

This has resulted in major modifications of the self on to which severe limitations have been imposed, both in terms of status and direction. While being asked to become more responsible towards governments and society, the self has lost some of its power. Feelings of disorientation have ensued (Barnett, 2000 and 2003; Delanty, 2001; Henkel, 2000). The overall sense of academic identity has, therefore, changed over the last ten years or so. As we have seen in the course of this thesis, there is a sense that, in the three universities examined, institutional structures are increasingly shaping the sense of self that lecturers have of themselves nowadays, altering their overall sense of academic identity.

The categories 'identities' and 'self' intertwine in the overall construct of academic identity. Such categories were separated in the course of this thesis simply for research purposes, as a means to understanding, in the first instance, how institutional and disciplinary structures are interpreted and constructed by academics and, as importantly, the extent to which these structures interact with academics' affective life. The advantage of the 'identity-self configuration' I have adopted is, *in primis*, in the fact that it allows for finer distinctions within the category 'identity', giving it

much more depth at the analytical level. The distinction between ‘identity’ and ‘self’ (which, as I say, ultimately indicates the existence and interplay between cognitive constructs, in the case of institutional and field identities, and affective forces, in the case of the self) brings the benefit of enriching the scope of the investigation at both the meso and micro-level. It permits a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between the cognitive meanings accorded to structures and the affective forces underlying these.

The quality and nature of this relationship are vital. The more interactive and reciprocal this is the healthier and more forward-looking an institution and a discipline may become. It is for this reason that the notion of self, along with those of institutional and disciplinary identities that the self contributes to creation of, should be taken into due consideration by management, when considering change. In other words, change cannot be imposed but needs to be adapted and owned by the local groups in the midst of which it takes place. Local cultures should always be taken into consideration in any discussion revolving around change.

What change?

In the course of this thesis, I have tried to emphasise the fact that the emotional side of things, as it is represented by the self, is too important to be ignored. Change is not always negative. In the case studies analysed in this piece of work, change has been pushing, in some cases, for new, creative synergies (Barnett, 2003). However, for change to be really effective, it needs to take into account all the domains that constitute the academic identity of staff, including their self. It is important to enter into dialogue with the histories, value systems and projected wishes of the people

working within a given institution and/or discipline. Change through critical, dialogic mediation between different constituencies (academics, local managers and, ultimately, policy makers) may be the best formula. Such a process should give due consideration to the strengths of the academics concerned, with respect granted, as far as possible, to their beliefs, values and needs (Marginson, 2000).

In a context of top-down changes typical of a climate of evaluationism and interventionism in higher education on the part of the government (Bassnett, 2001), I believe that this is an important lesson to learn. Institutions and disciplines have to be investigated in their most intimate components and these must be duly considered for any change to be fruitful and successful. Affective elements, especially the sense of allegiance academics may have towards institutions and disciplines, must be carefully understood before any proposal for change is conceived and tabled (Dawson, 1994; Alvesson, 2002; Martin, 2002; Trowler, 2002). This may be a very difficult task indeed, given the consistent tribalism and individualism which are typical of academic life (Becher and Trowler, 2001).

However, as I indicated in the empirical part of the research, beyond such fragmentation, there are affective forces and allegiances that rotate around the attitudes which academics have towards their own institution, their discipline and the wider aims and scope of (higher) education. There is also a set of general educational values and beliefs that go beyond any institutional and disciplinary affiliation. These consist in the emancipating and liberating force of education, along with the interest in the refinement of knowledge through teaching and research. Around both local and cosmopolitan factors, people invest highly in their professional life. Careless

interference with such beliefs and values may produce damage to the intellectual and affective tissue that binds institutions and disciplines together. Beliefs and values traverse and interconnect individuals within institutional and disciplinary structures, and they therefore have to be taken seriously into account, if the disengagement and closure of the self are to be avoided as the result of top-down decision making processes. Any disconnection of the self from the structures in which it operates may indeed prevent any change from taking roots within university life beyond superficial acceptance (Taylor, 1999).

One needs to find as harmonious a relationship as possible between top-down approaches to change and bottom-up ones. As Barnett (2003) puts it it is necessary, on the one hand, to find a balance between the *internal/external* dimensions (in terms of the universities' own interests and agenda, and the outside social pressures to which they are exposed today); and, on the other, between the *individual/collective* ones (in terms of the staff's needs, interests and values). It is in this delicate balancing act that the university finds its greatest challenge today. Overcoming any form of unidirectionality is the real issue facing the Western university today, in what Barnett (2000) calls a *supercomplex world*, that is a world in which old frames of reference do not hold true anymore in the face of epochal changes like, first and foremost, the globalisation and massification of higher education.

In light of this, I would like to suggest at this stage that a kind of dialogic change is the most desirable one. The basic principle of dialogism as indicated by thinkers like Bakhtin (1996 and 1998), Bohm (1996), Buber (1993) Gadamer (1975), and Lévinas (2002), and advocated by Barnett (2000) for higher education, resides in the ability

different entities have to engage continuously in reciprocal understanding through dialogue. One should aim at creating a common, shared space of understanding and experience. However, for it to be successful, this process requires both a willingness and repeated efforts to engage and comprehend other parties' positions, intentions and beliefs. Additionally, time is needed for comprehension and alignment between different viewpoints to be reached. Quick fixes are not usually welcome, as they do not engage people in the kind of dialogue that requires the necessary time for change to be understood and digested. Slow movement along time, rather than sudden change, is at the heart of dialogism. This allows for homes (though temporary ones) to be built through engagement and participation. Such a process brings with itself a relative sense of belonging and security that is essential for creating a type of academic life that is mature for and open to novelty (Heller, 1999).

This dialogic process is particularly important within academia. This is because academics are arguably people who are, on the one hand, prone to engage with ideas but are also readily upset by imposition on their perceived freedom (Russell, 1993; Damrosch, 1996; Menand, 1996). Dialogic change may assist in reaching a kind of university that, rather than being based on defensive attitudes and self-protecting myths (like that of academic freedom, for instance) (Barnett, 2000 and 2003), is in fact one accepting of complexity and diversity as indispensable ingredients for growth (Wenger, 1998). Strife is a normal part of change. Negotiation that leads to the empowerment of academics' self should be at the heart of any process of change. The latter can only be effective if it is the result of reciprocal understanding and alignment between structures and the subjects operating within them.

Of course, total consensus cannot ever be achieved. As Barnett (2003) reminds us, universities are made up of many:

...sub-communities (that) are complexes, susceptible of manifold allegiances. (p. 103)

Moreover, negotiation is costly and time-consuming, and is, therefore, often (partially) abandoned in favour of speedier and more cost-effective top-down changes. However, this does not mean that efforts should not be made in the direction of dialogue and negotiation, if collective empowerment is to become a reality. Such a process can only benefit all parties involved: the institution, the discipline, the individuals working for and within these. A flourishing sense of self can only have desirable effects on both the institutions and disciplines. It is for this reason that the principle of dialogue must be protected and sought after all the time. It is a challenge that managers have to embrace in their attempts to create as harmonious academic environments as possible in a supercomplex world (Barnett, 2000).

Bauman (2002) theorises that feelings of security are important, if dialogue is to be pursued:

...to engage in... dialogue, we all need to feel secure, have our dignity recognized and our ways of life respected, looked upon seriously, with the attention they deserve. Above all, we need to feel that we are all given an equal chance in life and an equal possibility to enjoy the fruits of our shared achievement. (p. 16)

Turning back to our empirical findings, the case of Bluebridge is illustrative of the beneficial effects of managerial understanding of the wishes and desires of the academic staff in relation to a possible merger of the languages departments into an overall school of languages. At Bluebridge, the preparedness of management to

‘back off’ in the face of opposition to top-down change, absorb criticism and still be able to encourage disciplinary and interdisciplinary projects produced beneficial effects at all levels. Departments continue to exist as homes that give the necessary psychological security to academics for them to engage in forward-looking projects. As Wolton (2003) theorises in talking about globalisation, psychological security and respect for people’s beliefs, values and traditions are the hallmarks of successful and creative change.

As we have seen, dialogical change in modern languages is certainly fraught with difficulties in the British higher education system today. This is because several factors (like the territoriality of the departmental structures, the difficulties currently being encountered by modern languages at national level and the shifts being experienced by the higher education sector in Britain) generally militate against it. However, it is arguable that at Bluebridge there is a community of practice that, in all its diversity and tensions, has found some form of allegiance towards the university as a whole. Institutional and field identities can find here their growth in a kind of self that is engaged enough to find the enthusiasm and strength to support forward-looking change. Behind the apparently ‘traditional’ departmental structure, at Bluebridge, there is a form of tacit dialogic engagement between academics and managers. This transforms change into (tacitly agreed) innovation. Conversely, in the case of Redbridge and, especially, Greenbridge, the sense of loss of the ‘traditional’ often became resistance to change itself. It implied a closure of academic selves, with ensuing feelings of lack of direction and disengagement.

This research ultimately indicates that the self side deserves deeper understanding and further investigation than has traditionally been the case until now. In the first instance, this would assist in comprehending the best ways in which academic communities intimately function (or not). It can also help in putting to the test the idea that synergies between thoughts, feelings and action through dialogue among different constituencies (academics, local management and policy-makers) are necessary pre-conditions for a more harmonious kind of change instead of top-down sweeping action.

Top-down change revolves around globalising forces which push towards the devaluation of traditional forces in favour of what Bauman (2000) calls *liquid modernity*. This phrase marks the contemporary condition, especially typical of Western societies, of a kind of existence that is disengaged and unattached. Giddens (1991) calls this phenomenon the *disembedding of traditions*. Because of this phenomenon, individuals find it increasingly difficult to make sense of their lives and form bonds of solidarity in an ever-shifting and fast changing world. There seems to be neither time nor space for a deep understanding of change. This results in those feelings of confusion and disengagement that many social commentators have detected in our contemporary Western societies (Chomsky, 1999; Cohen, 1999; Sennett, 1999; Frank, 2000; Reich, 2001). Understanding and counteracting the nature and scope of those wider forces that affect us today is not only an ethical challenge (Bauman, 2000 and 2002). It is also a political act in that it would require the struggle for a possible re-appropriation of people's voice in any discussion and implementation of change (Baumeister, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Walker, 2001; Sparti, 2003).

I wish to point out at this stage that I am not advocating a simple return to a mythical past. One must not forget that this was often based on privilege and other forms of abusive power (Bauman, *ibidem*). As I say, change is indeed necessary and often unavoidable. Moreover, it can indeed be positive. Forces like globalisation and managerialism bring with themselves new possibilities and synergies that were unthinkable until a few years ago (Barnett, 2003).

Nevertheless, in my view, it is important that such changes do not just uproot the 'old' but enter into a dialogue with it because so much emotional energy has been invested in traditions. In other words, one has to start where people are. This inevitably gives people a sense of purpose and belonging. Change must be processed in a critical manner. Dialogue among different constituencies (that is to say academics, managers, governmental agencies and the public) is arguably one of the best ways in which this can be achieved. It should therefore be pursued as far as possible. In this way, change may become a truly democratic endeavour in which selves are both actively engaged in forming the life of the structures in which they operate.

The present thesis has tried, in very general terms, to address the question of change through the perusal of a specific academic discipline in its realisation within three different British universities. The results confirm the need for a kind of dialogical change in which a need to re-root the uprooted (Bauman, 2000 and 2002) is recognised.

Having completed the argumentative part of the thesis, I now wish to evaluate the whole work in order to ascertain its strengths and weaknesses, and point towards further research on academic identities.

Academic identities and selves: reflections and ways forward

In casting a critical eye over the present thesis, strengths and weaknesses can equally be found.

As I have indicated in the first two chapter of this thesis, it is my belief that the originality of this work lies (in comparison with Evans' [1988], for instance), first of all, in the empirical research that was explicitly carried out around the concept of academic identity within a specific academic field (modern languages). This kind of empirical work allows for a deeper understanding of disciplinary areas and of the academic life that revolves around them. Moreover, it can importantly assist in comprehending the ways in which disciplinary fields evolve at a moment in time, like the present one, when concepts of knowledge are shifting (Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons, 2001). Finally, it can help in understanding how academics 'feel' in relation to such changes as these take shape in their working environments. An awareness of this should be at the basis of any change, if one does not want to run the risk of creating increasingly disaffected staff who might hinder change altogether.

In order to deepen such awareness, I attempted to make a distinction between the way in which people make sense and construct institutional and field identities, on the one hand, and the way in which they position and measure themselves in relation to these (what I have called the 'self'). Such distinction permits an understanding of the

interpenetration between historically formed institutional and disciplinary practices, and the human forces represented by the academics working within these. At the same time, the distinction acts as a methodological device that leads to fruitful investigation of distinctive areas of analysis before these are brought into comparison. As I have argued, it helps in making sense of both the cognitive and affective layers making up institutions and disciplines.

However, the proposed model does not cover all research possibilities that the category 'self' can afford. In adopting such a model, I only dealt with some of these (mainly in terms of academics' historical paths to the discipline, their sense of identification with their professional roles, and their projected wishes). However, given the meso-level dimension of this research and the limitations of space of the present work, I deemed this to be sufficient for its scope and purpose. Nevertheless, further research needs to be done at the level of the self, first of all by means of inclusion of those factors that were left out in this piece of work.

In the first instance, the category of gender needs to be taken into account. In fact, this is central to an individual's sense of self. Gender often determines the position individuals have within university structures and influences the way in which people perceive themselves within these (Wyn, Acker and Richards, 2000). However, in spite of its importance, this category was never really addressed, as it deserved some special attention that would go beyond the immediate scope of this piece of research. Nevertheless, in any future research on academic identity, it would be helpful to pursue such a category in some detail, given its central importance in the process of academics' self-perception and positioning.

Coming to modern languages more specifically, questions relating to academics' cultural belonging were not especially tackled either, in spite of the fact that this category occasionally emerged in the interviews. Again, in any future research relating to identities in modern languages, this category will need special attention. This is because, in the first instance, an academic's cultural belonging does influence his/her vision of the discipline. For instance, native Italian or French teachers may give special importance to the study of grammar in the organisation of language syllabuses in comparison with their British counterparts for whom more pragmatic uses of language may carry more weight. Likewise, an Algerian French lecturer may have a different vision of the nature and scope of the French canon and may, therefore, help to explode and enlarge it.

Moreover, an academic's cultural affiliation might also influence the way s/he may perceive him/herself in relation to the institutional structures in which s/he operates. For example, a British academic may have a different sense of affiliation towards his/her own language department than a native of the culture that the department represents. Questions of cultural identity and allegiance may play an important role in the way people identify with their language subject and department. These are only two examples of the significance cultural belonging may have for the study of the self. It is for this reason that such a category may indeed be in need of further investigation, especially in the exploration of the world of modern languages.

Similarly, in any future work dealing with modern languages identities, it might be useful not to restrict oneself to the four most studied languages perused in this thesis. Arguably, the scope should be widened to other languages. This would assist in

gauging how the discipline is 'lived' and practised by other academic communities that are often 'marginalised' but contribute in important ways to its life. Comparative studies between more and less studied languages would be an important addition to this thesis. Importantly, it would contribute to an understanding of power relationships and differentials among different language subject communities. This would help in comprehending how such power structures operate in enhancing or silencing certain 'voices' within the overall field. For instance, it would be worth investigating how the power of French and Spanish departments is perceived by traditionally less powerful ones such as Russian and Japanese, in terms of relative lack of institutional and disciplinary power. This is definitely a task to undertake, if one wants to understand the complexities and nuances that characterise the institutional and disciplinary identities of modern languages.

Additionally, further work needs to be done on those who work in 'languages for all' units, like language-centres and institution-wide language programmes. It is arguable that the institutional and disciplinary identities constructed by these academics might contrast, to a significant extent, with those of their colleagues working at 'specialist' level. This is because these centres and programmes are often institutionally separate from the specialist programmes. Moreover, as we know, 'languages for all' offerings mainly deal with language teaching and learning of a 'performative' nature, as they help a wide variety of students to use the language of their choice in pragmatic contexts and for specific purposes. For this reason, the work carried out by these lecturers is often perceived as 'service'. Finally, their publications (in terms of materials production) are not usually considered as research within the RAE parameters. It is, therefore, arguable that the portrait of institutional and disciplinary

identities ‘languages for all’ academics (often part-timers) would give might be considerably different from those of their colleagues working at ‘specialist’ level. Concurrently, their sense of ‘self’ might also differ from that of their counterparts teaching on BA and postgraduate courses, given their respective differences in terms of perceived status, especially in terms of research. In the light of these considerations, a comparative study between the different cohorts of academics would be welcome in order to give a much more complete picture of the world of modern languages.

As I indicated in chapter four, the reason behind choosing to study only those working on specialist courses lay in the consideration that this particular group has traditionally been at the centre of modern languages and has affected (and has been affected by) more than anybody else the changes in institutional and disciplinary patterns. It was my conviction that, by gauging the state and status of ‘specialist’ lecturers, I could have more of a sense of the shifts in modern languages, particularly because the scope of their teaching goes beyond language teaching to include content studies. The limited space of the present work, along with the fact that one out of the three institutions lacked ‘languages for all’ offerings, was also a factor that convinced me that I should limit myself to the ‘specialist’ groups. Nevertheless, I deem it a matter of importance to study the identities and selves of ‘languages for all’ lecturers in any future research project dealing with the world of modern languages.

Beyond questions of scope and inclusiveness, research relating to academic identities and selves may require a different approach to the empirical data from the one I used in the course of this research. In my attempt to aim at the meso-level in order to gain a

bird's eye view of the world of modern languages, I structured my empirical research around a single interview with each academic. These encounters allowed me to make some generalisations about the academic identities and selves. However, I was not able to investigate any of the issues raised by any of the interviewees through further interviews. Any in-depth analysis would have required specific case studies, each organised around a number of interviews with every respondent. This would have allowed for a much more nuanced understanding of the meanings generated by the respondents (Lahire, 1998 and 2002). A different approach to data gathering, based on a battery of interviews (both individual and group ones) with the same respondent(s), and possible observations of aspects of their academic life, would have been needed.

In the conception of this project, such a method had been thought of as a desirable addition to the kind of analysis carried out in this thesis. It would have helped in qualifying the means and ways by which academic identities and selves are constructed. However, this approach was later discarded as unviable in the face of opposition, on the part of some of the possible research subjects, to any further participation in this project for fear of disclosure. As I indicated in chapter four, ethical issues had a strong influence on the structuring of this work. The wish to protect the interviewees' own (and the institution's) anonymity, along with preoccupations about the amount of time that this kind of study would have required of possible candidates, acted as strong deterrents to pursuing this line of research.

However, I recognise that it is almost axiomatic that any study pertaining to (academic) identities and selves should avail itself of an in-depth perusal of the meanings produced by respondents (Lahire, *ibidem*; de Singly, 2001; Kaufmann, 2001). If one considers the distinction made by Dubar (2000) between *la forme*

biographique pour autrui (the biography one constructs for others) and *la forme biographique pour soi* (the biography one constructs for oneself), in the course of this thesis, I especially dealt with the former and partially tackled the analysis of the latter. I have only uncovered the surface of those deep-seated sets of values and beliefs that constitute the most intimate part of anybody's biography.

Nevertheless, through batteries of interviews with the same respondents (within and without their work environment in order to obtain different levels of [in]formality in the responses given) one should be able to go beyond *la forme biographique pour autrui* towards the *forme biographique pour soi*. This would imply a deeper analysis of the self. A perusal of the latter would allow an understanding of those deeper, affective elements that tacitly inform institutional and disciplinary life. This is important if one wants to understand the *cultural undergrowth* of academic life (Trowler, 2002), that is those intricate frameworks of values, beliefs and attitudes that daily inform academics' actions and responses. It can also assist in making sense of the professional and, more generally, life trajectories of academics. Ultimately, analysing these can help to unravel the human dimensions hidden behind historical changes in education. This type of analysis would give a much more refined picture of how the self is continuously constructed and de-constructed through the dialogue academics have with themselves in relation to the structures in which they are embedded. Work of this kind would be a useful addition to and elaboration on this thesis.

These reflections complete the argumentative part of this thesis. As a last task, I now wish to reflect, however briefly, on the impact of this work on my own sense of self, both as an ex-modern languages academic and as an individual.

Learning through this research

As I illustrated in the introduction to this thesis, the initial impulse to research academic identities in modern languages was born out of personal reasons. Having worked in the field at different levels for many years (before starting to work in a department of education), I had, in person, witnessed many of the changes that I have illustrated in the course of this thesis: the growth (in the first part of the nineties) and then the perceived sense of crisis (in the second part of that decade and at the beginning of the current one) of languages degrees; the concurrent growth of language centres and institution-wide language programmes; the increasing emphasis on the more performative aspects of language teaching and learning through the adoption of the communicative methodology; and, finally, the paradigmatic shifts from discrete traditional fields, like literature and history, towards culturalist and interculturalist trends.

Carrying out this piece of research made me realise, in the first place, how the changes which I had been experimenting with in my own local settings were generalisable, in different degrees, to other settings. Getting to know, somewhat intimately, the life of other departments through my colleagues' narrative helped me to comprehend the nuances and possibilities that the discipline can afford in different institutional settings. This generated in me a sense of opening to new venues and directions in modern languages that I had never been able to touch first hand before. I realised how much, to use Phipps' (2001) metaphor, modern languages is a sort of 'busy foundries' whose work deserves being increasingly uncovered and shared.

Secondly, through the reflective exercise on the empirical data, I increasingly came to realise the deeper meanings of words like 'change', 'tradition' and 'professionalism'. I learnt to understand how subtle each of them can be, depending on the angle from which they are defined. From a managerial viewpoint, such words often acquire a modernist, evolutionist and teleological nature, as if professionalism constituted the tool through which tradition can be superseded through change of a bureaucratic kind (Newton, 2000; Shore and Wright, 2000). Tradition and change are usually seen as antithetic terms. However, in the course of the research, I came to realise how this is not necessarily the case. In fact, tradition and change can nurture each other continuously, if one wishes change to be really effective through being in dialogue with tradition. The latter, in fact, brings with it those experiences and expertise that have been accumulated over time and of which change cannot do without, given the intellectual and emotional energies that were invested into tradition. As I say, tradition and change intermingle all the time.

A process of principled, facilitated disembedding and re-construction of practices through dialogue would benefit the institutions, the disciplines and the people working within and for these. Such a process would assist people in making sense of change by linking it to the traditions underlying it. In this way, tradition and change would be brought together into a creative dialogue. Of course, as I have already said, time frameworks and pressures from external agencies (in terms of government and policy makers) can make this process difficult to realise. However, the dialogic principle should remain present in the minds of all parties, when dealing with change.

As for 'professionalism', rather than being a means to or a sign of a type of change of a sterile bureaucratic nature (in terms of an academic's ability to carry out an increasing number of administrative duties), it can be positively conceived as the ability of bringing about change through continuous dialogue with both one's peers and institutional and disciplinary traditions (Walker, 2001). In this way, professionalism can become an empowering concept, as it places the ability to operate through continuous dialogue at its centre. If thought of as a dialogic process of reflection on tradition and innovation, professionalism comes to represent an empowering tool by means of which academics can come to see themselves as agents of change rather than victims of it. Of course, this may be seen as an 'idealistic' way of looking at dialogue. However, beyond the necessity for the conscious effort to create opportunities for equal and fair dialogue, I have learnt in the course of this study that it is necessary to take emotional engagement into due account in any process of change.

I have also learnt that time is an important factor in any process of change, as understanding, reflection and dialogue require time. It is important that academics start claiming back time to do all these things against any modernist agenda that conceives change as a quick, top-down fix. Academics must make sure that managers and policy makers become aware of such issues by principled resistance, if necessary. Additionally, further research on change in higher education of the kind conducted in this work and by Trowler (1998 and 2002) should be carried out and publicised to managers and policy-makers. This may help these constituencies to understand how change is perceived at grass-roots level and the importance of taking this into account when pushing for innovation.

Personally, I have carried the results of my research into my working life, especially in discussions of policies relating to change in which I am routinely involved as a lecturer in education. Likewise, I also try bringing the lessons learnt into my academic staff development activities, in an attempt to increasingly engage people's sense of self in their own teaching and professional life in general, and make them see how giving due importance to the self is important in any educational enterprise.

However, perhaps the most valuable experience I have drawn from this project was exactly the excitement of entering into dialogue with colleagues. This was a challenging and rewarding intellectual experience. Even more importantly, it was an affective one too. It was valuable to see how much people are in need of exchanging ideas and feelings with a sympathetic colleague. Interviewing people and listening to their ideas, frustrations, beliefs and hopes certainly was the greatest pleasure of the whole project. It gave me a sense of purpose and, I daresay, duty in finishing this research in order to pay homage to the generosity demonstrated by my respondents. At the risk of exaggerating, the experience has definitely contributed to the opening of my own self, both at an intellectual and, especially, at an emotional level. The sense of dedication to education that all colleagues showed throughout the research, in spite of the perceived difficulties which the field of modern languages is facing at the moment, was most moving. It is, therefore, to my colleagues' high sense of commitment that I ultimately wish to dedicate this work.

NOTES

Introduction

ⁱ I define the term ‘content’ in chapter 1.

ⁱⁱ For a discussion of the reasons why I prefer calling modern languages a ‘field’ rather than a ‘discipline’, I refer the reader to chapter 1.

Chapter 1

ⁱ I have decided to adopt the term of ‘languages for all’ (Kelly and Jones, 2003) to indicate those programmes of studies for people studying languages as a subsidiary option rather than the ‘languages for non-specialists’, as the latter seems to be more (negatively) value-laden than the former.

ⁱⁱ The usefulness and limitations of IT in language teaching-learning are the object of discussion in modern languages currently. While recognising the advantages brought in by IT in terms of assisting students in becoming more independent learners, the limitations of technology (like the lack of real interactivity on the part of the web, for instance) and the need for teacher training in IT-related language teaching are often highlighted in the debates (see special supplement of *Liaison* [issue 5, June 2002], the newsletter of the Languages and Linguistics and Area Studies Subject Centre).

ⁱⁱⁱ I have chosen to use the term ‘content studies’ over the one of ‘area studies’, the ambiguity of which (along that of European studies) has been stressed by Richard Ellis in a 2002 event organised by the Languages and Linguistics and Area Studies Subject Centre. In *Liaison* (issue 5, June 2002, p. 4), Ellis is reported as highlighting the ambiguity of such terminology along with the need for more vigorous debate to discuss the meanings of such terms.

^{iv} Recently, debates have emerged about the use of information technology to help implement ‘critical pedagogy’. Apart from several articles that hint at this in Chambers’ book (2001), this is discussed with specific reference to the domain of modern languages in *Liaison* (ibidem). Here, several examples of the fruitful use of IT in the teaching of content studies are highlighted, like the employment of specific web sites dedicated to specific authors, like Apollinaire.

^v There are an increasing number of publications that are dedicated to cultural studies within the modern languages general framework. Among these I shall mention here Burns (1995), Forbes and Kelly (1995), Graham and Labanyi (1995), Forgacs and Lumley (1996), Kelly and Shepherd (1998), Kolinsky and van der Will (1998), Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas (2000) and Baranski and West (2001).

^{vi} There are currently many debates about how to term this growing academic field. Overall, people tend to use the terms ‘intercultural’ and ‘cross-cultural’ interchangeably (and in addition to terms like ‘inter/cross-cultural competence’ which stress the original impetus given to such studies by business where, over the last two decades or so, much importance has been given to ‘softer skills’ like ‘responsible management’, that is a kind of management that is understating of cultural differences in business dealings (see Hofstede, [1980] and Brislin and Cushner, [1995], for instance). The business-ridden intercultural agenda has been challenged, in the late nineties, by a critical and more stringently ethical preoccupation with a kind of intercultural studies that goes beyond the business behaviouristic and performative concerns toward a hermeneutics of intercultural encounters. The conferences on cross-cultural capability inaugurated by Leeds Metropolitan University in 1996 have played an important instrumental part in this shift). This growing field finds its embodiment in England mainly in two associations: *SIETAR* (Society for Intercultural Research, Education, Training and Research, in the main more business-oriented) and *IALIC* (International Association for Languages and Intercultural Communication, characterised by strong critical and theoretical preoccupations) whose journal *Language and Intercultural Communication* has become a forum for theoretical debates about the nature, aims and scope of the new disciplinary formation.

^{vii} See <http://www.hero.ac.uk/rae/>

^{viii} It must be remembered, though, that CILT has extended its interest into higher education and content studies only at the end of the nineties. The subject centre in Southampton is only one of the of 24 subject centres based in higher education institutions throughout the UK (in addition to a single Generic Centre). It was funded by the four HE funding bodies in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). The centres aim to promote high quality learning and teaching through the development and transfer of good practices in all subject disciplines, and to provide a 'one-stop shop' of learning and teaching resources and information for the HE community.

Chapter 2

ⁱ <http://www.hesa.ac.uk/>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.ucas.ac.uk/>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/langs/ucas_langs_stats_2002.rtf (Robey, D., 20 March 2002).

^{iv} http://www.ucml.org.uk/members/UCML_mapping_survey.rtf (2001)

^v <http://www.uclm.org.uk/members/c4.htm> (29/07/2002).

^{vi} According to Research Assessment Exercise regulations, the publication of language teaching materials can be conceived of as 'research' only if they are accompanied by the concurrent publication of the theoretical assumptions underpinning the materials production (see <http://www.rae.ac.uk/>).

^{vii} See DTI documents (1994a, 1994b and 1994c).

^{viii} See Tony Tysome' article 'Green Paper: sour notes mar chorus of approval' (THES, 15 February 2002).

^{ix} More in-depth treatment of certain cultural elements can be found in those 'languages for all' courses that are designed for a given audience or purpose (like German for Business, for instance, where the economic and political structure of the country may be studied in some details).

^x According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), defining the communicative method with exactness is a difficult task as there are many versions of it. However, the main characteristics of the 'communicative method' are a view of language as system of expression of meaning and a methodology that fosters communication between parties through carefully constructed, contextualised tasks based around information gaps activities, accompanied by vocabulary and grammar learning exercises.

^{xi} According to Richards, Platt and Weber (1985), a function is *the purpose for which an utterance or unit of language is used. In language teaching, language functions are often described as categories of behaviour; e.g. requests, apologies, complaints, offers, compliments.* (p. 113).

^{xii} Interestingly, though, as Kelly (THES, 29 March 2002) reminds us: *this is... a booming area, but ironically participants are often foreign students adding to their existing linguistic repertoire – Chinese students learning Japanese, for example.*

Chapter 3

ⁱ My translation : '...*sintesi ... tra normatività sociale e intenzionalità soggettiva, tra attore sociale e imperativi sistemici.*'

Chapter 4

ⁱ However one tried to keep the different institutions anonymous, it is possible that these may be recognisable, as background information about them is given. This could have been avoided only at the cost of deleting some paramount contextual contours that would have made the data and the conclusion either useless or too 'flat'.

ⁱⁱ General information about the three institutions has been gathered from their respective literature and websites.

ⁱⁱⁱ Information about FC funding and research grants is taken from the Higher Education Financial Yearbook, 2002.

^{iv} Information about research scores have been taken from the HERO website: <http://www.hero.ac.uk/rae/index.htm>

^v Information about the Teaching Assessment Exercise for 1995/96 is taken from the QAA website: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/revreps/reviewreports.htm>

Chapter 5

ⁱ Given the complexity of institutional structures, in the course of this chapter I shall deal only with those structures that are of immediate relevance to the people interviewed, that is to say departments and schools of languages. It is on these that interviewees expressed most of their thoughts. However, interviewees' views on larger institutional settings (for instance, the university in which they operate) are taken into account in chapter 8, when people talk about the elements that are most salient in the making of their self. Considerations and reflections on wider institutional settings are also made in the last part of the thesis. In that part, I try to bring together all the threads that will have emerged in the course of the analysis of the empirical data.

ⁱⁱ In order to aid readability, I italicise – that is to say flag – the names of the different institutions, when I deem it to be important.

ⁱⁱⁱ At Redbridge, people did not comment at all on teaching as such, as their remarks were all about language teaching. It is for this reason that no Redbridge voice is quoted in relation to this sub-theme.

Chapter 7

ⁱ It may be argued here that, even teaching language implies automatically the teaching of the culture, if one accepts some extreme versions of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Kramsch, 1998). Nevertheless, as I have argued in chapter 2, certain forms of the functional approach to language teaching/learning can lead to a diet of linguistic acts to be learnt and used in given communicative contexts, without any real cultural input being taken care of.

Chapter 10

ⁱ There are, of course, some notable exceptions to this, like in the case of Italian courses on the concept of childhood in contemporary Italian literature.

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APPENDIX 1

Redbridge

Total number of interviewees = 7

French = 4

German = 2

Spanish = 1

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Job Title</i>	<i>Years of service (between)</i>	<i>Academic Qualifications</i>	<i>Professional Qualifications</i>	<i>Number of ins. taught in</i>
Male	British	Professor	16-20	PhD	No	3
Male	British	Professor	11-15	PhD	No	3
Male	British	Reader	21+	PhD	Yes	1
Male	European	Senior Lecturer	6-10	PhD	Yes	4
Female	British	Senior Lecturer	21+	MA	Yes	2
Female	British	Lecturer	6-10	PhD	No	1
Female	British	Lecturer	1-5	PhD	No	1

Bluebridge

Total number of interviewees = 10

French = 2

German = 3

Italian = 3

Spanish = 2

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Job Title</i>	<i>Years of service (between)</i>	<i>Academic Qualifications</i>	<i>Professional Qualifications</i>	<i>Number of ins. taught in</i>
Male	British	Professor	21+	PhD	No	4
Male	British	Professor	6-10	PhD	No	3
Male	British	Professor	1-5	PhD	No	3
Male	British	Reader	1-5	PhD	No	2
Male	British	Senior Lecturer	21+	PhD	No	1
Female	European	Senior Lecturer	6-10	PhD	No	2
Female	British	Lecturer	1-5	PhD	Yes	4
Female	British	Lecturer	1-5	PhD	No	4
Male	European	Lecturer	1-5	PhD	No	3
Male	British	Lecturer	1-5	PhD	No	1

Greenbridge

Total number of interviewees = 12

French = 6

Italian = 2

Spanish = 4

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Job Title</i>	<i>Years of service (between)</i>	<i>Academic Qualifications</i>	<i>Professional Qualifications</i>	<i>Number of ins. taught in</i>
Male	British	Professor	21+	PhD	No	4
Male	European	Professor	21+	PhD	No	2
Male	European	Professor	16-20	BA	No	5 (or more)
Female	British	Reader	1-5	PhD	No	4
Male	European	Senior Lecturer	21+	PhD	No	3
Female	British	Senior Lecturer	6-10	PhD	Yes	3
Female	European	Senior Lecturer	21+	MA	No	2
Female	European	Senior Lecturer	21+	MA	No	1
Female	European	Senior Lecturer	11-15	MA	Yes	5 (or more)
Female	European	Senior Lecturer	11-15	MA	Yes	5 (or more)
Female	British	Senior Lecturer	11-15	MA	Yes	5
Male	Other	Senior Lecturer	6-10	MA	Yes	5

APPENDIX 2

London, January 2001

Dear Colleague,

Ref: PhD Research Project on Modern Languages

I am writing with reference to the project above that I am currently carrying out at the Institute of Education, under the supervision of Professor Ron Barnett. Thank you for having agreed to help.

The project is about defining the epistemological and professional identities of those working full-time in French, Spanish, Italian and German in three London institutions. The empirical part requires my interviewing people like you for an hour and a half maximum about their academic life and epistemological 'positioning'. The interviews will be taped.

Prior to the interview I would appreciate it very much if you could fill in the attached profiling document. The information required is of a 'factual' order. Its purpose is to allow the interviewing process to go faster and have a better focus.

I realise that you, like a lot of other academics, are under great pressure and that therefore this might be perceived as yet another 'nuisance' but I genuinely believe that the outcome of the research will be of interest to all people working in languages. The interviews will be carried out between January and February 2001. Once I have received your completed profiling document, I shall contact you to make an appointment for the interview.

May I finally reassure you that all the information you give will be totally confidential. Moreover, I will make sure you obtain the transcript of your interview before I undertake any analysis of it. In this way you will be able to tell me if any information is incorrect and/or you simply want it out.

I would be extremely grateful if I could receive the completed profiling document by Monday, 25 January 2001. Please send it back to me either electronically () or via normal mail ().

With many thanks and best wishes,

Roberto Di Napoli

INTERVIEW

INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY

If we take role to mean the interface between an institution and an individual, what is your institutional role within your Department/Section?

Do you have roles beyond the Department/Section? What are these?

What are the activities that you carry out within your role(s) in your Department/Section?

TEACHING

How much of your time do you dedicate to teaching each week? Is this your main activity, overall?

Are teaching duties evenly distributed among staff or are there differences? How are these differences established (seniority, age, expertise, centrally and so on)?

Would you say that in your institutions career advancement is linked to teaching at all?

RESEARCH

Does your institution/department/section encourage research? How?

Is there a research ethos as such? Is it explicit or tacit? What are its parameters?

Is there a strong research identity?

Is there pressure to publish?

How much time do you dedicate to research each week, typically?

Is career advancement made possible through research?

Do you feel supported in your research by the institution?

MANAGEMENT

Do you feel that your institution/department/section has become much more enterprise-based recently? In what sense?

How much time do you spend managing compared to other activities each week?

Are enterprise values overriding academic ones? In what sense?

ADMINISTRATION

How much administration do you generally do in a week?

Are you resentful of this? Or do you enjoy it? Why? Why not?

Has this had an impact on your other roles as a teacher and researcher? In what sense?

To what extent?

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Does your institution/department/section encourage other activities beyond teaching, research and administration?

Do you do any? Which are they?

How much time do you dedicate to these activities, typically, in a week?
 Do you publish regularly?
 In what journals do you publish?
 Are these the journals that you usually also read? If not? What do you read typically?
 Is your publishing usually related to your teaching and research?
 Do you consider publishing as one of your duties?
 Do you feel you publish within the remit of your own field? Or do you stray outside it?
 Do you belong to any professional associations?
 Is this beneficial to you as a French/German/Italian/Spanish specialist? In what sense?
 To what extent?
 To how many conferences do you go typically in one academic year?
 Which are these? Are they mainly related to your subject?
 Do you actively contribute with papers to these conferences?
 Have you ever organised conferences? Have they been related to your subject?
 Do you do any consultancy work? Is this mainly related to your subject?
 To what extent do you feel this benefits your academic identity?

FIELD IDENTITY

Do you consider ML to be a discipline? Why/why not?
 What are the aims, scope and functions of ML in the British society today?
 Do you subscribe to the view that ML is a field in crisis?
 How long have you cultivated your subject for?
 Do you feel you are a 'French' specialist? A ML one? An historian? Or what?
 Did you study the subject at university level?
 If not, which one was it? How and when did the link with your language subject happen?
 Where did you study?
 What was the model of French/German/Italian/Spanish Studies you were educated and trained in?
 Do you have a perception that the field of modern languages has changed in the course of your educational and academic career? Are French/German/Italian/Spanish Studies the same as when you went to university? In what ways have they changed?
 Has your educational career been typically British? Or has the other culture influenced it? In what ways? To what extent?
 Has your academic career always linked to your subject?
 Have there been more progressions or ruptures, in the sense of disaffiliations from your subject?
 What were/are the main causes of these changes? Personal interests? Career moves? Personal reasons?
 How would you define the purposes and scope of your subject in relation to the new student population? In what sense can French/German/Italian/Spanish Studies contribute to their growth, both personally and professionally?
 Do you think your department/section is receptive to these changes? To what extent? And in what sense?
 Are you receptive to these? In what sense?
 To what extent do you feel in harmony or in conflict with such changes? In what sense?

How would you like to see, ideally, your subject change in the future?
Do you feel you can personally contribute to this? In what way?
To what extent would you subscribe to the idea that language is related to skills and content to product?
Do you think that the teaching of language and content are being more harmonised today in your department/section than before? In what sense? To what extent?

SELF

What was your journey towards ML? Did you arrive there by chance or did you cultivated this interest of yours since a very early age?
What do you think were the factors made you interested in ML/your subject?
Do you identify strongly with your department/section/institution, or do you find your sense of belonging elsewhere (overall field and so on)? Why? Why not?
Academic careers are built on reputations. Around what do you try to construct yours, that is around which activities/roles?
Has how your sense of academic self changed over time? Are you satisfied with its current configuration?
Do you think you have a voice in your subject/department/section/ institution/ elsewhere?
How would you like to see the field/institution in the future? Do you think that you can actively contribute to any change? Or do you think that the change is going to be top-down?
Finally, do you consider yourself more an academic, a professional, or an intellectual? Or all of them? Which of these best describes your perception of yourself?
What do you see yourself doing in the future, professionally?

PROFILING DOCUMENT

In order to focus the interview on questions that require elaboration on your part, I have decided to leave the 'factual' side of the interview to the following profiling document. All your details will be safely stored and guaranteed full confidentiality. Please answer the questions below as fully as you possibly can (use any extra sheet of paper, if you wish to expand on any of these):

SECTION A - GENERAL INFORMATION

1) NAME and SURNAME:

2) AGE:

3) NATIONALITY:

4) JOB TITLE:

5) YEARS IN SERVICE IN CURRENT INSTITUTION:

6) EDUCATION (please indicate the institution and the year in which you took any of your degrees and the subject(s) of specialisation. For dissertations and theses, please give title as well):

BA (or equivalent):

MA (or equivalent):

PhD (or equivalent):

Post-doctoral:

7) PREVIOUS WORK EXPERIENCE (please chronologically indicate name of institutions, job titles and span of time [from which year to which year] you stayed in each position):

SECTION B - CURRENT ACTIVITIES

8) Number the following activities in ascending order, indicating with 1 the activity that takes most of your time, on average, and 7 the one that takes the least of it - also add any other activity not mentioned. For those activities that do not apply in your case, please write N/A next to them):

TEACHING (including face to face, preparation, evaluation, supervision):

RESEARCH:

ADMINISTRATION:

MANAGING:

CONSULTANCY:

CONFERENCE ORGANISING:

NETWORKING:

OTHER:

9) Do you teach (please tick as appropriate):

- a) only at undergraduate level
- b) only at post-graduate level
- c) a mixture of undergraduate and post-graduate

In case your answer is C, please indicate in which percentage:

- Undergraduate
- Post-graduate

10) In terms of teaching, do you teach (please tick as appropriate):

- d) only language
- e) only content (Literature, History and so on)
- f) a mixture of both

In case your answer is C, could you give a rough percentage for each activity:

- Language
- Content

11) Give titles of the courses you teach this academic year (2000/01):

12) Do you co-operate with any of your colleagues in your department to the teaching of any course, in terms of delivery (team-teaching), but also planning and evaluating? (tick as appropriate):

- Yes
- No

In case your answer is Yes, please indicate on what course(s) you co-operate and briefly indicate the reason(s) why and how this co-operation was established:

13) Do you teach in any other department, including and beyond the languages ones, in your institution?

- Yes
- No

In case your answer is Yes, indicate the name of the department, the course on which you teach, and what role you have on it (simply teaching, planning, evaluating and so on)

14) Indicate your past research interests and how these were funded:

15) Indicate your current research interests and how these are funded:

16) Do you co-operate with any of your colleagues in your department to any research project? (tick as appropriate):

- Yes
- No

In case your answer is Yes, please indicate the type and title of research project
the
reason(s) why and how this co-operation was established:

17) Do you co-operate with any of your colleagues outside your department to any research project? (tick as appropriate):

- Yes
- No

In case your answer is Yes, please indicate the type and title of research project the reason(s) why and how this co-operation was established:

18) Which are the typical outlets of your publications? Mention type (article in journal, book and so on), year, title and publisher for any of your publication over the last two years:

19) What are the publications related to your field/subject that you usually read? Give titles:

20) Do you have any academic responsibility beyond your department at present (for instance, Head of Research):

- Yes
- No

If the answer is 'Yes', which are they?

21) Are administrative duties part and parcel of your current job? Tick as appropriate:

- Yes
- No

If the answer is 'yes', which are they in the course of the academic year? Does any of them go beyond your immediate department (in the case, for instance, of exam officer (please indicate with a tick any of these):

22) Do you have any managerial role in your job (if by management one means the management of people or teams of people, like Head of Department)? Tick as appropriate:

- Yes
- No

If the answer is 'yes', which are these activities?

23) Are you engaged in any consultancy work at present? If so indicate name of organisation, your role is in it and time you have been doing this work for:

24) What are the conferences you have attended over the last two years? Give at least two examples:

25) Have you ever organised a conference? If so, give year, title and location:

26) Do you belong to any professional organisation related to your field/language subject?

- Yes
- No

If the answer is 'Yes', please give name of organisation(s), your role in it, and number of years you have been a member of them:

27) Do you belong to any professional organisation not strictly related to your field/language subject, but that you have an active interest in for professional reasons?

- Yes
- No

If the answer is 'Yes', please give name of organisation(s), your role in them, and number of years you have been a member of them (if applicable):

Please fill in the space below with any other information you consider of relevance for your academic/professional profile:

Please return the profiling document to:

E-mail: (_____)

Home address:

Thank you for you time and patience!

Roberto Di Napoli

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

STAGES: briefing; interview proper; de-briefing.

BRIEFING

Title: *Modern Languages: Which identities? Which selves?*

Aim of research: *How is the discipline of Modern Languages constructed and interpreted by the lecturing staff? What are the institutional, disciplinary and personal/ontological identities of these? How wide is the interface between the ongoing interpretations of the discipline given by the lecturers and the disciplinary and institutional structures? How does change take place? Is it top-down or bottom-up?*

Type of research: qualitative; meaning-based.

Practicalities:

- use of tape-recorder;
- semi-structured interview; brief questions with possible guidance from interviewer;
- timing: 30-60 minutes.;
- personalised interview;
- anonymous;
- possibility to see the interview before is analysed.

INTERVIEW

- Personal history in relation to the field/language subject:
 - interest in field/language subject;
 - personal affiliation with field/language subject in time/space.
- Definition of the field/language subject of specialization, also within institution:
 - Personal view of evolution of field and subject: past, present and future;
 - key defining parameters of field and subject; personal definition/role/aim(s) of subject vs. departmental ones (departmental culture) and institutional one (globalisation - make sense to talk about national culture still? - greater performativity; interdisciplinarity; change in sts. population);
 - Departmental culture - personal definition (person, task, power, role/bureaucratic); language/content, teaching/research

dichotomies: do they exist in personal situation? In department?
Does this generate differential power/status structures? Who defines the subject?;

- personal affiliations;
- definition of self as 'French' specialist? A ML one? Or other? Personal position within subject? Just 'French'? Or closer to other disciplines/subjects?;
- notion of subject/discipline restrictive today? Why? Why not?

- From subject to discipline

- personal definition of ML (role, aims, purpose, scope);
- place of ML within institution (service role or a more academic one?).
- place and role of language subject within ML; personal impression of co-operative projects with other (language) subjects;

- Roles, activities and personal 'voice'

- Impact of institutional factors on personal vision of subject;
- personal educational values? Purpose? Matching institutional ones?
- personal perceived roles beyond job title (educationalist, employee, professional, intellectual, somebody with a social function, other);
- roles reflected in activities? Which activities? Personal (happy identification with these?)
- source of self: discipline/subject/department/institution;
- source of identity: teaching/research/administration/management/networking;
- belief in actively contributing to the shaping and direction of subject/discipline;
- sense of worth/satisfaction? Sense of lack of worth/dissatisfaction?
- personal voice? Assisted/hindered by institution? Compensatory strategies?
- personal strategies to make 'voice' heard?
- compensatory strategies?
- personal future vis a vis that of the subject/discipline

DEBRIEFING

- Summing up main points;
- Asking if anything needs adding;
- More information on purpose of research;
- Feed-back on interview.

