

## Forum Insights

### THE IoTs LANGUAGES NETWORK [www.languagesinireland.ie](http://www.languagesinireland.ie)

The network is an initiative by IoT language lecturers and has been in existence since 2006.

The network is inclusive of all languages taught in the IoTs French, German, Spanish, Italian, Irish, English rather than being an association for one specific language. Our primary focus is language learning and teaching within the IoT sector but we promote language in all domains primary, post-primary, university sector, industry and commerce.

Established at a time when student uptake of Modern Languages within the IoTs was in decline, the network was initially known as the IoTs Language Policy & Planning Network. Our focus was to promote the importance of language planning within the sector, formulating language policy, and promoting the importance of providing language learning opportunity to IoT students. In this initial phase of the network, IoT language lecturers collaborated to promote the value of languages in education and campaigned to maintain languages on the subject spectrum offered to learners.

The relevance of the network has been dependent not only on lecturer participation but also creating new dialogue and adopting a pro-active, collaborative and inclusive approach involving all stakeholders. Network participants are cognisant of the necessity to refer also to the expertise of non-linguists in order to widen the discussion and generate motivation for initiatives within languages in the IoT sector. As our activities evolved, we renamed in 2008 to the IoTs Languages Strategy Network to more accurately reflect our emerging focus.

With the emergence of One Voice for Languages (OVFL) in 2011 as an umbrella group and a unified voice for various language networks and associations raising awareness of language matters at government level, we recently renamed as the IoTs Languages Network. We remain a unique forum providing IoT language lecturers with opportunities to exchange ideas and expertise, and share new learning not just in the area of language policy and planning, but also teaching and learning, current research, and good practice models.

#### **Mission Statement: One Voice for Languages**

<http://www.onevoiceforlanguages.com/>

What we believe: languages are essential, valuable and exciting  
What we want: language issues to be raised at the highest levels of government and to be brought to the consciousness of the country as a whole  
What we will do: act as a rallying point and a powerful voice for all interested in language issues.

Background: Towards the end of 2011, largely at the instigation of the authors of the EU report Languages for Jobs, it was agreed to explore the establishment of an umbrella group which would promote the importance and benefits of language learning for Ireland. This group would represent all levels of the education system and all its partners, including parents' associations. It would also welcome representatives from industry, the arts, foreign embassies and cultural institutes.

One Voice for Languages - promoting the knowledge of other languages as an essential skill in 21st century Ireland

The One Voice for Languages Group aims to be a unified voice for various language networks and associations in Ireland. The group will be inclusive and will cooperate with various members from across Irish society as well as with experts in linguistics, thereby highlighting all aspects of language learning and teaching in a multilingual and multicultural context.

All members of the group One Voice for Languages firmly believe that it is both timely and appropriate that such a group be established and that it should seek to encourage a greater awareness of the critical importance of language learning not only in terms of increasing employment possibilities and meeting industry needs, but also its broader value in the spheres of education, the arts and in the context of supporting social cohesion and intercultural understanding.

One Voice for Languages – highlighting language needs across all sectors of society

Building on ample research evidence regarding the numerous benefits of language learning and as a response to repeated calls from high level industry leaders, employment specialists, advisory bodies and experienced linguists, the One Voice for Languages group intends to raise awareness at government level of the deficit in appropriate language skills and the important role the learning of other languages can play in the improvement of literacy levels. An appreciation at government level and among the wider public regarding the significant cognitive, social, developmental, cultural and linguistic enhancement that can be attained through the learning of additional languages will also be promoted.

One Voice for Languages – highlighting the exciting potential of language learning for our young people, for Ireland's economy and for Irish society.

The Ireland of today is indeed a rich tapestry of languages. The last census indicates that there are over 160 languages spoken by the new citizens of this country and both in the contexts of social cohesion and resource potential, it is imperative that we

harness this enormous linguistic wealth and foster awareness of the many benefits of learning languages and of acquiring additional communicative and intercultural skills. We hope to support the Irish government in capitalising on the significant varied language and cultural backgrounds of the new Irish population and to equip our young people with the language skills they need to fully integrate and assume their role in the global marketplace.

The past number of years has seen an acknowledgement of the need to improve and support the teaching and learning of the science, mathematics and engineering fields and this promotion targeted at education providers, industry and Irish society at large has yielded positive results. It is hoped that One Voice for Languages can begin the dialogue in ensuring that language learning may now also be accorded the same priority and commitment and that its diverse network of members can contribute to this debate which we believe is of fundamental importance to the educational and economic future of this country.

## Language Fair 2015 & CPD The Language Experience Abroad

### Saturday 6th of June 2015 - Dublin venue to be confirmed

There will be two events running in parallel – a Languages Fair and a Continuous Professional Development on “The Language Experience Abroad”. There is plenty of opportunity to participate in both activities, so please do consider getting involved, no matter how small a role you think you may be able to offer, it all helps! Just contact us if you are keen to:

- a) Take a stall/stand to showcase your language project e.g. using a poster/pull-up banner/video clip
- b) Display your example of Best Practice in language learning & teaching
- c) Present a paper on your Language Experience Abroad project/research
- d) Volunteer to assist the team organising the Languages Fair (contact [Nathalie.cazaux@itb.ie](mailto:Nathalie.cazaux@itb.ie))
- e) Volunteer to assist the team organising the ‘Language Experience Abroad’ CPD (contact [Juliette.pechenart@dcu.ie](mailto:Juliette.pechenart@dcu.ie) or [Kristin.brogan@staff.ittralee.ie](mailto:Kristin.brogan@staff.ittralee.ie))

## Production of a promotional video “Why learn languages?”

The video-/YouTube clip will include:

- IoT undergrads, including mature students across disciplines in the IoTs
- IoT Erasmus students currently attending college in Ireland
- IoT Mobility students currently abroad on study/work placement
- IoT Mobility returnees
- IoT graduates working in Ireland and who require their language skills
- IoT graduates who now live and work abroad using their languages.

If you would like to submit a clip on behalf of your IoT in answer to the question “**Why learn languages?**” please contact: Riana Walsh [riana.walsh@dittdublin.ie](mailto:riana.walsh@dittdublin.ie)