Languages and Policy:

Building Collaborations between Academics and Policymakers

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Acknowledgments

Summary and recommendations

This report was produced following a workshop at the Institute of Languages, Cultures and Societies on 18 October 2023 organized in collaboration with the Cross-Government Languages Group (formerly the Cross-Whitehall Languages Group). The Cross-Government Languages Group has as a strategic goal the provision of an up-to-date evidence-based case for change and of key information to support His Majesty's Government policy decisions. The report comes at a time when there are tremendous new opportunities to promote and facilitate collaboration with, on the one hand, the creation of an academic engagement subgroup of the Cross-Government Languages Group and, on the other hand, the increasing imperative for modern linguists to demonstrate the impact of their research in shaping policy and how society develops.

Section 1 of the report sets out the current situation regarding collaboration. In section 2 the breadth of research in languages, societies and cultures is presented, with many academics having expertise and research-informed evidence to offer across a wide range of key issues and government portfolios. Section 3 discusses the different ways of working of academics and civil servants and other obstacles to effective collaboration. Section 4 underlines the importance of the published Areas of Research Interest (ARIs) for understanding the main research questions facing government departments, while Section 5 presents some of the key ways to engage with the UK and devolved parliaments. Section 6 lists the funding opportunities and training available for academics wishing to embark on policy engagement with their research. Finally, Section 7 considers how the different sectors might come together to promote the value of languages more generally across society.

While the report presents the many challenges experienced by both academics and policymakers in engaging with each other, it also outlines the opportunities for engagement currently offered. Moreover, it makes recommendations as to how further engagement might be facilitated and improved to strengthen the use of languages in the evidence-informed policy system and to sustain relationships between academia and policy bodies. The recommendations are grouped below according to their target audience (the numbering relates to the ordering of the recommendations in the report itself).

Recommendations

General

3. **More shared spaces and channels for dialogue between languages researchers and policymakers should be created to help establish trusted partnerships: these might include workshops, 'speed dating' sessions, databases, etc.**

13. **Increased opportunities for movement between government, the civil service, academia and business should be created to enhance understanding and opportunities for engagement.**

17. **Representative bodies from all parts of the languages ecosystem should collaborate to produce and promote to wider society clear, aligned messages about the value of languages.**

For policymakers in government

1. Policymakers should be open to qualitative findings typical of Arts and Humanities research, which can provide a valuable counterpart to quantitative data; this requires a cultural shift away from viewing quantitative work as the only trusted research to inform policy decisions.

4. Government departments should provide greater clarity as to how the academic languages community can make contact with them, including signposting and publicizing as visibly as possible existing routes for both general enquiries and discussion of ARIs.

5. It would be useful for government departments to hold a database of expertise in languages so that institutional memory is preserved even if civil servants move to new roles.

11. Government departments, when reviewing their ARIs, should consider how the need for language-led research might be made explicit in their listings. Alternatively, they might produce more informal lists of research needs relating to languages with input from academic colleagues; these could then be circulated around the academic community.

14. Government departments etc. should consider whether they might be able to offer opportunities for internships and fellowships which would be suitable for researchers in languages.

For researchers and HE

2. Researchers should produce short, readable summaries and digests of their work in layperson's terms to make their work more accessible to policymakers who are likely to be working to tight time frames.

9. Language researchers should familiarize themselves with the ARIs as the primary route through which government departments and agencies communicate their research priorities in order to inform their policies and help close the evidence gap.

10. Researchers should think positively and creatively about how their research responds to some of the generic concepts listed in current ARIs; to be successful, their approach should also be pragmatic and realistic.

12. Researchers should apprise themselves of the different ways to engage with the UK and devolved parliaments and keep abreast of calls for evidence from select committees and other opportunities to shape policy.

6. Wherever possible, collaboration with other researchers and across government should be promoted, since this will facilitate collaboration between the two groups.

7. Academic institutions should give greater consideration to languages-led research when thinking about policy engagement and greater recognition to that engagement in processes such as appointments and promotions.

8. Universities might consider making more use of alumni of languages degrees who are working in the policy space to provide advice and expertise to academics.

15. Universities should facilitate secondments and other opportunities for linguists to spend time working with policymakers as part of their professional development.

For funding bodies and HE

16. Training opportunities should be offered to languages researchers at all stages in their academic careers, including at more senior levels, so that they are more skilled in policy engagement.

1. Background

1. This report was produced following a workshop at the Institute of Languages, Cultures and Societies on 18 October 2023 organized in collaboration with the Cross-Government Languages Group (formerly the Cross-Whitehall Languages Group). It therefore focuses mainly on Whitehall, although information about engaging with the different UK parliaments is also included. It is important to note, however, that there are many other stakeholders for policy engagement. A non-exhaustive list of stakeholders for policy engagement includes UK Government and departments; the devolved governments of Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland;[1] local government; the UK Parliament; the devolved parliaments; international bodies; UK public bodies; civil society organizations including faith-based groups and charities; professional and industry associations.[2]

2. The Cross-Government Languages Group has as a strategic goal the provision of an up-to-date evidence-based case for change and of key information to support His Majesty's Government policy decisions. It works with 15-20 stakeholders across government, thinking both about the provision of language skills within government and promoting the value of languages externally.

3. The report comes at a time when there is a tremendous new opportunity to promote and facilitate collaboration with the creation of an academic subgroup of the Cross-Government Languages Group. Whitehall is also appointing senior sponsors for languages in different departments and there is the possibility that these will be able to facilitate contact not only with the Cross-Government Languages Group, but also with the academic community.

4. The difficulties of collaboration to date are well known. On the one hand, there is a wealth of academic research and expertise on languages which could help inform and shape policy-making. A 2018 Institute for Government report on *How Government Can Work with Academia* noted that "Most policy officials feel they do not have time to engage with academics. When they do, they often struggle to find relevant research."[3] Transfer of research findings on language(s) is working reasonably well in the case of the Department for Education (DfE), but less well, or not at all, in the case of other ministries and departments. On the other hand, academics are producing research without a clear idea of how, or indeed whether, it might be useful for government. The need to show 'impact', for instance as part of the REF,[4] has increased the imperative on academics to engage with

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[1] Experience suggests that engagement with, for instance, the Scottish government is somewhat easier because of the smaller scale and closer and more transparent networks in the devolved governments. As the Institute for Government notes, local government is a complex landscape, but links also may be easier to develop here by virtue of proximity (Institute for Government, *How to Engage with Policy Makers: A Guide for Academics in the Arts and Humanities*, 2020 https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/ahrc-how-engage-policy-makers.pdf, p. 11).

[2] Further information about interacting with some of these can be found on the Bennett Institute website: https://www.bennettinstitute.cam.ac.uk/publications/groups/policy-resources/.

[3] Institute for Government, *How Government Can Work with Academia*, June 2018 https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/IfG_government_academia_June_2018.pdf, p. 3.

[4] https://www.ref.ac.uk/about-the-ref/what-is-the-ref/.

government and other stakeholders. Consequently, many researchers are producing research in the hope it will be useful without prior engagement with policymakers or having a clear understanding of how research can be relevant to policy. Where there is engagement, policymakers may be asked to produce testimonials to document evidence of the impact of their work on policy.

5. Currently linguists do not have the same routes into government as scientists who have, for instance, the network of Departmental Chief Scientific Advisers, as well as the Government Chief Scientific Adviser. There are also numerous scientific advisory committees and councils.

6. One of the key issues is uncertainty about channels of communication, and there is a need for greater transparency on both sides.

7. Another issue is that languages are 'everywhere and nowhere in government'. There is often nobody specifically tasked in a government department to think about the languages dimension of policy, yet languages are important for a whole range of key issues including innovation, trade and business; skills, including literacy; community and social cohesion; soft power; diplomacy, defence and national security; the delivery of public services; health and wellbeing; media and culture; social mobility and equality of opportunity.

8. It is striking how certain new policies are published without mention of the languages dimension, although languages are clearly relevant to the subject (e.g. the Export Strategy, the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill). For the languages dimension to be more comprehensively considered, policymakers might be asked to consider whether there is a languages dimension to their portfolio or policy. This could complement Equality Impact Assessments which public authorities often carry out prior to implementing policies as a way of facilitating and evidencing compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (The Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Impact Assessments (parliament.uk)).

9. One of the prime resources for identifying government research priorities are the Areas of Research Interest (ARIs) published by the different government departments. Currently, languages are only mentioned explicitly in a handful of cases (see Section 4), although some of the high-level concepts mentioned such as 'community cohesion', 'understanding soft power between others' and 'reducing inequalities' clearly have language dimensions to them. More details in the ARIs about how they relate to languages research could, on the one hand, help researchers to design – or better co-create – research projects in the light of government priorities and, on the other hand, enable policymakers to receive the research-informed evidence which would be invaluable to them. Ideally, collaboration should begin early on in the research cycle.

10. Much of the research on languages and cultures being conducted in UK universities is either conducted as part of the academic's research contract from their university or is funded by bodies such as the Arts and Humanities Research Council or the British Academy, and therefore does not need to be funded directly by government departments. While this picture of principal funding sources is shared with other academic disciplines where direct funding from government departments is unusual, it does mean that routes into government or other bodies need to be found for research-informed evidence from academics where policy-relevant.

11. Finally, many researchers in languages[5] are unaware of the current resources available to them to support policy engagement. This report is intended to help fill that gap, amongst other things.

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[5] Throughout this report 'languages' is used as a shorthand term to embrace all the different forms of research conducted by researchers in languages, literatures, cultures, societies, linguistics, etc.

12. Despite all the issues mentioned above, there are examples where collaboration is working well, as a number of the case studies included in this report illustrate.

Department for Education

DfE Languages Team and collaboration with academics

The DfE Languages policy team have had a really positive experience collaborating with academics. We worked together with Dr Arlene Holmes-Henderson on a report into the teaching of ancient languages in primary schools – the first time anything has been published by DfE on classics in more than 40 years! This helped us to develop and shape the DfE-funded £4m Latin Excellence Programme, with the aim to increase the teaching of Latin in more non-selective schools outside of the South East. The knowledge-exchange partnership with Dr Holmes-Henderson has allowed us to continually refine the policy and to make the most efficient use of tax-payers money for the programme.

Through this partnership, we have also been introduced to more academics, facilitated by a policy-academic exchange workshop at the University of Oxford. The DfE team are now working on a new partnership, using research to inform our language hubs policy, helping to increase the uptake of languages and quality of language teaching. Overall, it has been invaluable for us as civil servants to build a relationship with trusted academics that can support our policy decisions with expertise and advice.

The advice of the DfE Languages Team for best practice on collaboration between policymakers and academics is firstly to persevere. It can be challenging for each party to understand the ways of working of different organisations initially but through continued communication and exchanging of ideas this can be quickly overcome. We would recommend being focused on the area of research and being realistic on impact, however still looking for real-world outcomes.

2. Languages research

13. Modern Languages and Linguistics is a broad subject, as the definition offered for the REF 2021 Unit of Assessment with that name illustrates. It is said to include, but not be limited to: "literature and thought; cultural studies; theatre studies; film and media studies; visual cultures; language studies; translation and interpreting studies; political, social and historical studies; editorial scholarship, bibliography, textual criticism and theory and history of the book; philosophy and critical theory; world literature and comparative literature; literature in relation to the other arts; and applied, practice-based and pedagogical research, including translation and creative writing". The definition goes on to include "interdisciplinary research, including work on language and literature in relation to science, medicine and technology, digital humanities, or creative technologies".[6] Linguists are therefore able to provide both expertise and evidence across a range of key government portfolios.
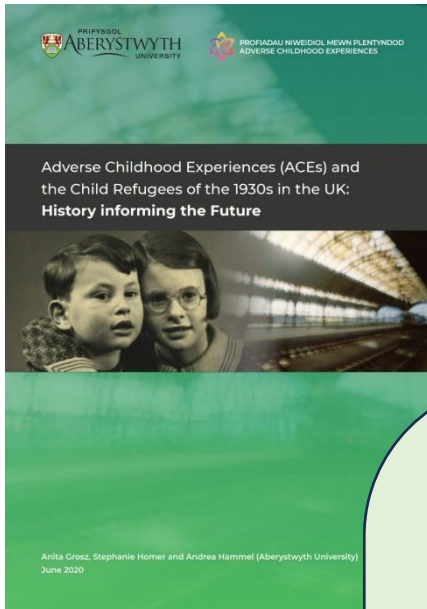
14. Whilst some parts of the discipline conduct quantitative research, notably linguistics, much of the research conducted by modern linguists is qualitative. For instance, research about the lived experience of individuals is a valuable counterpart to large quantitative datasets. There needs to be a cultural shift away from policymakers viewing empirical, objective and quantitative work as the only valuable and trusted research to inform policy decisions and a firmer understanding fostered of how to work with the qualitative findings typical of Arts and Humanities research.

15. Research is often published in longer formats including research articles and monographs which civil servants do not have time to read. The journal *Languages, Society and Policy* (https://www.lspjournal.com/), modelled on the highly successful *History and Policy* journal (https://www.historyandpolicy.org/), seeks to connect research in linguistics and languages, cultures and societies with policy and the public and, as such, is a useful outlet for researchers and resource for policymakers. However, more short, readable summaries of research findings and their potential policy relevance would be welcome; these might be hosted on the Languages Gateway or University Council For Languages (UCFL) website (see Appendix). Researchers might also make more use of blogs, podcasts and other forms to translate research into a more accessible format.

Recommendations

1. **Policymakers should be open to qualitative findings typical of Arts and Humanities research, which can provide a valuable counterpart to quantitative data; this requires a cultural shift away from viewing quantitative work as the only trusted research to inform policy decisions.**
2. **Researchers should produce short, readable summaries and digests of their work in layperson's terms to make their work more accessible to policymakers who are likely to be working to tight time frames.**

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[6] https://archive.ref.ac.uk/media/1450/ref-2019_02-panel-criteria-and-working-methods.pdf, p. 24. Linguists also submitted their work to other panels, notably to Area Studies.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the Child Refugees of the 1930s in the UK: **History informing the Future**

Anita Grosz, Stephanie Homer and Andrea Hammel (Aberystwyth University) June 2020

Refugees from National Socialism to the UK: Learning from the Past for the Future

Professor Andrea Hammel, Aberystwyth University

The project is rooted in Modern Languages and Comparative History research and has several strands and impacts (https://wp-research.aber.ac.uk/nsrefugeeswales/). Using intercultural exploration, its aim is to interrogate the narrative around refugees past and present and point to an improved future for refugee and resident communities all over the UK. One strand focused on historic refugees in Wales interrogating the idea that Welsh communities are homogenous, and that refugees' arriving is a new phenomenon. The exhibition 'Refugees from National Socialism in Wales: Learning from the past for the Future' was co-curated by present-day refugees and people who assist refugees today. This bilingual (Welsh/English) exhibition included works of art, artefacts and an especially commissioned exhibition film. It showed in Aberystwyth, the Senedd, the Houses of Parliament and Bangor reaching over 13,000 visitors of all ages and backgrounds.

Another strand of the project focused on the Adverse Childhood Experiences and Child Refugees of the 1930s across the UK and what can be learnt from a longitudinal study of their historic experiences for policy development for contemporary refugees and asylum seekers. Two reports were presented to the Welsh Government's Taskforce for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, and Community Cohesion Teams (2020, 2022). Learning outcomes include the importance of stability for child refugees, the need for thorough preparation of refugees and host communities, and the importance for child refugees to stay in touch with their originating culture, language and community.

3. Ways of working and engaging

16. It is important to stress that decisions are taken by Ministers not by civil servants, who implement those decisions. Moreover, ministerial decisions are based not just on research-informed evidence, but also on politics/ideology and questions of delivery, including the cost implications. As the Institute for Government makes clear, it is important to be aware of how research fits within the current political context and thinking on a particular issue.[7]

17. Civil servants provide impartial advice to Ministers and translate Ministerial directions into delivery. One of the difficulties of engaging is the high turnover in staff in government departments and weak institutional memory.[8] This can be frustrating for academics who have worked hard to build up contacts. A number of departments have databases of academic experts, but this is not universal. In the case of languages, there may not be any 'ownership' of the languages dimension.

18. For academics, engaging with government is time consuming. Early Career Researchers (ECRs) therefore frequently choose to produce another academic publication rather than doing policy work. Currently recognition of policy work (as opposed to producing academic outputs) in hiring and promotion criteria is uneven across the HE sectors. Moreover, with languages research the outcomes may be less tangible and quantifiable than is the case with the hard sciences,[9] and this needs to be taken into account.

19. Academics and civil servants also have different ways of working and different time scales. Civil servants may have to provide advice on a particular topic at very short notice, while academics' research projects may operate over a three to five years cycle, or even longer.

20. The need to produce impact case studies means that many researchers are seeking to engage more with external partners, including policymakers. It is not always obvious how to do this. Moreover, whilst greater policy engagement is clearly welcome, collaboration is also needed to avoid duplication of effort or mixed messaging. Similarly, greater collaboration across government would be welcome on topics which are cross-cutting, such as public service interpreting, the integration of refugees and asylum seekers, or levelling up.

Recommendations

3. **In general, more shared spaces and channels for dialogue between languages researchers and policymakers should be created to help establish trusted partnerships: these might include workshops, 'speed dating' sessions, databases, etc.**

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[7] Institute for Government, *How to Engage with Policy Makers: A Guide for Academics in the Arts and Humanities*, 2020 https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/ahrc-how-engage-policy-makers.pdf, p. 6.

[8] Institute for Government, *How Government Can Work with Academia*, June 2018 https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/IfG_government_academia_June_2018.pdf, p. 22.

[9] Interdisciplinary collaborations, including with STEM subjects, have often been highly impactful as, for instance, current work in the medical humanities or the projects funded under the AHRC's Open World Initiative demonstrate (https://www.modernlanguagesleadershipfellow.com/open-world-research-initiative/.

4. Government departments should provide greater clarity as to how the academic languages community can make contact with them, including signposting and publicizing as visibly as possible existing routes for both general enquiries and discussion of ARIs.
5. It would be useful for government departments to hold a database of expertise in languages so that institutional memory is preserved even if civil servants move to new roles.
6. Wherever possible, collaboration with other researchers and across government should be promoted, since this will in turn facilitate collaboration between the two groups.
7. Academic institutions should give greater consideration to languages-led research when thinking about policy engagement and greater recognition to that engagement in processes such as appointments and promotions.
8. Universities might consider making more use of alumni of languages degrees who are working in the policy space to provide advice and expertise to academics.

CONSIDER EATING DISORDERS IN MEN

Heike Bartel's work is rooted in her research on narratives of illness, health and recovery in German- and English-language literatures and cultures. At the heart of her work are first-hand narratives of those affected by illness, addiction and trauma and how their stories provide insights to challenge us to rethink concepts of health, recovery, care and related policies. Her research projects – that have been funded by the AHRC, MRC, BA, Welcome and Global Challenges Research Fund – are testimony to the power of languages and literatures to shape healthcare and address health inequalities by placing individual experiences of under-represented groups at their centre. Her collaborative and interdisciplinary research is rooted in German Studies, Comparative Literature and Health Humanities – disciplines that offer different perspectives on notions of culture, identity and politics and foster bridges between arts & humanities and science.

Together with patient experts and clinicians Bartel has designed award-winning NHS-accredited arts-based training for healthcare professionals and others. These tools have improved access to, and experiences of, healthcare services for three currently underserved groups: men and boys with eating disorders, women with experience of violence and sufferers of Long Covid.

Testimony to the impact of Bartel's patient-centred and arts-based approach is a measurable increase in knowledge of healthcare professionals. In addition, qualitative feedback for her projects speak to the impact of arts, languages and literatures in healthcare. One representative from the Royal College of GPs commented that the findings were 'so powerful and so different to the usual messages given to GPs', whilst for the patient it meant that they 'felt heard'.

Languages and literature addressing health inequalities

Professor Heike Bartel, University of Nottingham

4. Areas of Research Interest (ARIs)

21. ARIs give details about the main research questions facing government departments.[10] They are lists of questions or topics which government departments and agencies would welcome more research on in order to inform their policies and help close the evidence gap.[11] Anecdotal evidence suggests that many researchers in languages are unaware of the existence of ARIs.

22. The Government Office for Science and the Economic and Social Research Council have developed a new 'one-stop shop' to help navigate the listings of ARIs from different government departments.[12] It can be searched for particular areas of research interest and to discover the main research questions which are preoccupying government.

23. A search on 'language(s)' yields very few results.[13] However, it is clear that languages research has important things to say about some of the higher level concepts that are mentioned in a number of departments' listings including (i) the impact of arts, culture and heritage on levelling up and on wellbeing and pride in place; (ii) improving access to and experience of health services; (iii) understanding the impacts of different types of new arrivals on local communities; (iv) supporting refugees; (v) improving integration in communities and understanding the factors which make integration and cohesion mutually beneficial; (vi) strengthening the Union; (vii) increasing the UK's global impact; (viii) reducing inequality of participation in society, etc.

24. It would be useful for languages to be mentioned more specifically in ARIs, as they are, for instance, in the former Department for International Trade's ARI which seeks to understand how geography, culture and language are important for trade in services. As the 2018 Institute for Government report states, "Publishing ARIs should be just the start of the conversation. Departments also need to discuss their research interests with research councils and academics."[14]

Recommendations

9. **Language researchers should familiarize themselves with the ARIs as the primary route through which government departments and agencies communicate their research priorities in order to inform their policies and help close the evidence gap.**

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[10] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/areas-of-research-interest.

[11] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-one-stop-shop-to-find-the-topics-government-is-interested-in-researching.

[12] https://ari.org.uk/.

[13] In November 2023, just six results were obtained: two from the (then) Department for International Trade (dated 2020) on the importance of languages to trade in services and the impact of language barriers to trade; two from the Ministry of Justice (2020), one on natural language processing as an analytic and research method and the other on the impact of the language in pre-sentence reports on sentence length, type and consistency; one from the Department for Education (2018) about recruiting and retaining good teachers; and one from the Cabinet Office (2019) on the use of emergent information technologies including natural language processing. This gives the (false) impression that the government is not interested in languages.

[14] Institute for Government, *How Government Can Work with Academia*, June 2018 https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/IfG_government_academia_June_2018.pdf, p. 51.

10. Researchers should think positively and creatively about how their research responds to some of the generic concepts listed in current ARIs; to be successful, their approach should also be pragmatic and realistic.

11. Government departments, when reviewing their ARIs, should consider how the need for language-led research might be made explicit in their listings. Alternatively, they might produce more informal lists of research needs relating to languages with input from academic colleagues; these could then be circulated around the academic community.

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ECOSYSTEM FOR INTERACTIVE SPEECH TECHNOLOGIES

Gaelic speech recognition for media, education, research

Professor Will Lamb, University of Edinburgh

Out of the various language technologies that we could develop for Scottish Gaelic, automatic speech recognition (ASR) has the greatest potential to transform media, education, research and the lives of Gaelic speakers at large. By transcribing spoken language into text, Gaelic ASR will revolutionise the accessibility, comprehension, utilisation and learning of the language.

The ÈIST (Ecosystem for Interactive Speech Technologies) project, led by the University of Edinburgh and funded by the Scottish Government, aims to deliver a versatile ASR system for Scottish Gaelic. In particular, its goal is to provide accurate transcriptions of programming currently delivered by BBC ALBA. Partners include the University of Glasgow, Faclair na Gàidhlig (The Historical Dictionary of Gaelic), BBC ALBA, MG ALBA and Tobar an Dualchais / Kist o Riches. The research team includes two AI specialists and two Gaelic linguists, as well as one post-doctoral fellow and two Gaelic transcribers.

Although the project commenced only in April 2023, it has already had international impact through a strategic collaboration with the maker of ChatGPT, OpenAI. Concurrently, dialogues are underway within the government to forge partnerships with industry heavyweight Nvidia and expand our research on large language models.

More locally, the project will add over 10M words of data to the DASG project; provide Gaelic-medium school children with learning challenges with an online dictation app; and enable the BBC and Tobar an Dualchais / Kist o Riches to transcribe and index any spoken Gaelic content hosted by them. In future years, it is the intention to work with large IT companies such as OpenAI, Google, Amazon and Apple to ensure that speech technology for Gaelic is incorporated within consumer products. Towards this aim, we will make as much of our work as possible open-source and freely available.

5. Parliamentary engagement

25. **UK Parliament**: There are many opportunities for engagement with Parliament. A useful online set of resources and 'how to' guides can be found at: www.parliament.uk/research-impact.[15] Some of the key channels for policy engagement and impact are:

Select committees

Select committees are cross-party groups of Members of Parliament (MPs) or Lords (or both) charged by parliament with a specific role or with investigating a specific issue. They seek evidence from both experts and members of the general public and are a well-established pathway for giving expertise and advice (https://committees.parliament.uk/committees/). All submissions are published and usually cited in the committee's final report, giving visibility to submitted evidence. In the House of Commons there is a select committee related to each government department, as well as those that deal with cross-cutting issues such as women and equalities. The House of Lords select committees investigate specialist subjects, taking advantage of the Lords' expertise and the greater amount of time (compared to MPs) available to them. 'Permanent' House of Lords select committees include the Communications and Digital Committee and the Constitution Committee. Special Inquiry Committees in the Lords are set up to look at more specific issues such as, recently, Education for 11-16 Year Olds or Intergenerational Fairness and Provision. There are also a few joint committees. Select committees invite both written and oral evidence from witnesses and they may also employ subject specialists as advisers. In 2023 the Culture, Media and Sport Committee had an open call for evidence on 'Minority Languages' and is planning evidence sessions in spring 2024.

In preparing a submission, good evidence should be concise (no more than 3000 words), start with an executive summary, be well referenced, be written in plain English and make specific policy recommendations. Submissions from groups, research centres and organizations are welcomed as well as from individuals. Researching the membership of select committees may provide insights into MPs or Lords with interests relating to a particular research area.

Select committees can be followed on social media, or some have e-mail lists you can subscribe to. A list of open select committees can be found at https://committees.parliament.uk or in the Knowledge Exchange Unit's weekly bulletin (see below).

Libraries

The House of Commons and House of Lords both have libraries which provide impartial information and briefing services for MPs, Peers, their staff, committees, etc. The House of Commons Library has subject specialists producing briefings. They can be contacted at papers@parliament.uk, marked for the attention of the subject specialists: briefings should be a maximum of 250 words. An example is that produced for International Mother Language Day (24 February 2022; https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2022-0043/).

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[15] There is also the possibility of engaging with your constituency MP, if language-related issues are of interest to them, see https://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/contact-an-mp-or-lord/contact-your-mp/.

APPG on Modern Languages

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages (APPG ML) is a cross-party group of MPs and Peers with a common interest in language policy. The Chair is Dame Nia Griffith MP (Labour); the Vice Chair and founder is Baroness Coussins (Crossbench).

The APPG ML seeks to explore the benefits of learning and using languages throughout the UK; provide a parliamentary forum for information exchange and consultation on languages and linguists; and encourage and support policies and action improving the take-up of languages in schools, further and higher education, in the workplace and in the community. The Chartered Institute of Linguists acts as Secretariat, with financial support from the British Academy and the British Council (see https://www.ciol.org.uk/appgml).

The APPG meets approximately six times per year, and makes representations on language policy to official consultations and inquiries. The APPG's policy positions rely on data and scholarly research. It is always keen to hear from researchers whose work has policy implications. The Secretariat can be contacted directly via the website above, or via UCFL who have an advisory role to the APPG: contact@ucflangs.com.

Parliament Office of Science and Technology (POST)

POST publishes impartial, balanced and peer-reviewed briefings that make evidence research accessible to Parliament, offers training through the POST Fellowship and other schemes, and holds seminars and events for parliamentarians and the public, inter alia (www.post.parliament.uk; @POST_UK). When researching a POSTnote, staff engage with academic literature and consult academics directly. You can subscribe to POST alerts on the website.

UK Parliament Knowledge Exchange Unit

The Knowledge Exchange Unit acts as a first point of contact for any researcher wishing to work with or find out more about UK Parliament (https://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/research-impact-at-the-uk-parliament/knowledge-exchange-at-uk-parliament; @UKParl_Research; keu@parliament.uk). It offers online training, a weekly round-up email of latest opportunities for engagement (www.parliament.uk/keunews), and online resources, inter alia.

Parliamentary Thematic Research Leads

In 2024-2026 there will be eight Thematic Research Leads (TRLs) in Parliament including one on Arts and Humanities.[16] TRLs are mid-career researchers embedded three days a week in Parliament, whilst retaining their substantive academic post for the remaining time. The purpose of the TRL is to facilitate and enhance the use of research evidence and expertise in Parliament (in both the House of Commons and House of Lords) through effective knowledge exchange, collaboration and processes.

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[16] See
https://www.parliament.uk/trls/?utm_source=Knowledge+Exchange+Unit+%28KEU%29&utm_campaign=142d12723f-KEU_KnowledgeMob_WeeklySpecial_11%2F12%2F2023&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_e7485331af-142d12723f-104646940&mc_cid=142d12723f&mc_eid=8b08ab3d53.

26. There are also many possibilities for engagement with the devolved parliaments:

Scottish Parliament

Committees in the Scottish Parliament are small groups of Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs), from different political parties, who look at specific subjects such as health, education and justice. Committees of the Scottish Parliament hold the Scottish Government to account, run inquiries, examine bills and decide on amendments, and can introduce their own bills and consider petitions suggested by the public. A list of committees which are accepting evidence and views is available at https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/committee-call-for-views.

The in-house research service for the Scottish Parliament is called SPICe (Scottish Parliament Information Centre): you can follow their blogs and receive other information via https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/research-prepared-for-parliament/academic-engagement-opportunities.

Senedd/Welsh Parliament

Committees in the Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament equally consist of Members from different parties who scrutinize the expenditure and policies of the Welsh Government, hold Ministers to account, and examine proposed legislation.

Senedd Research is the in-house research service for Members of the Senedd and Senedd committees. Its members work closely with researchers from Wales and beyond to broaden, deepen, and diversify the evidence that's used to inform democratic debate. Current consultations can be viewed at https://senedd.wales/senedd-business/committees/consultations/.

There is a Knowledge Exchange section of the Senedd's website which gives information for academics on engaging, including Fellowships, and how to keep informed about ways to engage: https://research.senedd.wales/knowledge-exchange/. The Senedd has also published some of its own ARIs, looking for academics to respond: including one on Health Literacy: https://senedd.wales/senedd-business/areas-of-research-interest/.

Northern Ireland Assembly

When the Northern Ireland Assembly is sitting, there are committees of the Assembly which are groups of MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly) from different political parties who look at specific subjects such as health, education, justice and more. Committees hold the Northern Ireland Executive (the government) to account, hold inquiries, examine bills (proposed laws), decide on amendments and can introduce their own bills.

The Northern Ireland Assembly has the in-house Research and Information Service (RaISe) http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/research-and-information-service-raise/.

Recommendations

12. Researchers should apprise themselves of the different ways to engage with the UK and devolved parliaments and keep abreast of calls for evidence from select committees and other opportunities to shape policy.

6. Funding opportunities and training

27. The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) awards around £110 million of funding each year. Among its useful schemes are the:

- *UKRI Policy Fellowships*: these provide an opportunity for early and mid-career researchers to work with a government department, devolved administration or What Works Centre to co-design research with a view to informing policy on a priority area and improving knowledge exchange (https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/ukri-policy-fellowships-2023/)
- *Engaging with Government course*: three-day course delivered by the Institute for Government for researchers in the arts and humanities (https://www.ukri.org/events/engaging-with-government-2024/?utm_source=LinkedIn&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=Orlo)
- *UKRI Policy Internships*: these offer UKRI-funded doctoral students the opportunity to spend three months in one of a variety of policy hosts including central government, the devolved administrations and a number of public bodies.

The ESRC also runs similar schemes for those researchers whose field of research falls within that Research Council's remit.

28. The British Academy also has some funding schemes for policy work, notably:

- *Innovation Fellowships Schemes: Route B Policy-Led*: this scheme provides funding and support for early- and mid-career researchers in the humanities and social sciences to partner with different parts of central government to address challenges that require innovative approaches and solutions.

29. Apart from the Institute for Government course mentioned above, other training may be offered to PhD students through their Doctoral Training Partnerships or local arrangements. Training is also occasionally available to ECRs through the British Academy Early Career Network. Many universities have Impact Acceleration Accounts for arts and humanities: https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/our-main-funds-and-areas-of-support/browse-our-areas-of-investment-and-support/ukri-impact-acceleration-accounts/. POST (see above) offers internships for PhD students: https://post.parliament.uk/uk-research-and-innovation-policy-internships/. The School of Advanced Study (https://www.sas.ac.uk/) is working on developing more cross-humanities and disciplinary-specific policy-focused free training in the coming months.

30. The Centre for Science and Policy (see Appendix) offers Fellowships for policymakers which provides a bespoke programme of meetings with researchers to address a series of questions they elaborate.

Recommendations

13. In general, increased opportunities for movement between government, the civil service, academia and business should be created to enhance understanding and opportunities for engagement.

14. **Government departments etc. should consider whether they might be able to offer opportunities for internships and fellowships which would be suitable for researchers in languages.**
15. **Universities should facilitate secondments and other opportunities for linguists to spend time working with policymakers as part of their professional development.**
16. **Training opportunities should be offered to languages researchers at all stages in their academic careers, including at more senior levels, so that they are more skilled in policy engagement.**

7. Academics and policymakers collaborating to promote the value of languages

31. Currently, the value of languages is not always understood by wider society, and academics and policymakers therefore have a key role to play in promoting languages to the general public, to senior management teams in schools and universities, and to teachers, parents and students of all ages. Members of the Cross-Government Languages Group undertake a number of outreach activities such as the annual GCHQ National Language Competition. Most universities also engage in outreach and public engagement activities. However, there needs to be a concerted effort across all sectors to communicate clear, simple and aligned messages about the value of languages. These might include messages targeted at specific contexts where the particular value of languages to that community is emphasized (e.g. schools, business, NGOs, etc.). The Languages Gateway is a convenient site for hosting such communications.

Recommendations

17. Representative bodies from all parts of the languages ecosystem should collaborate to produce and promote to wider society clear, aligned messages about the value of languages.

Appendix: Other useful bodies and resources

Universities Policy Engagement **Network**

The Universities Policy Engagement Network (UPEN) was set up in 2018 by the University of Southampton with approximately ten other HEIs. It now has more than 100 UK university and policy members. The initial purpose of the network was to provide a 'one stop shop' through which UK government/parliament and the relevant bodies in the devolved nations could communicate their needs and opportunities with researchers. Opportunities include secondments, consultations and call for speakers. UPEN now plays a greater role in the earlier stages of policy making, such as in the formation of the governmental ARIs. You can sign up to the weekly UPEN update here, which collates opportunities, events and projects.

CSaP | centre for science and policy

The Centre for Science and Policy (CSaP) at the University of Cambridge works to improve the quality of public policy making through the more effective use of evidence and expertise. CSaP starts with the questions from policy professionals and fosters networks between policy and research based on mutual understanding, respect and trust. The experience and diversity of our unique network provides fresh perspectives, and helps research from all disciplines contribute more effectively to society. As a knowledge brokering organisation, CSaP organises Policy Fellowships for policy officials and policy workshops which are either commissioned by policy-making organisations, or researchers at the University of Cambridge and their collaborators. We reach beyond Cambridge in seeking experts for our Policy Fellows to meet as they pursue policy questions with academic input. For more information and contact details, please visit www.csap.cam.ac.uk.

The Languages Gateway is a 'one stop-shop for all things languages' in the UK, for all those interested in languages: learners, families, community groups, teachers, school leaders, academics, policymakers, subject associations.

Developed by leading language organisations and funded by the British Academy, the Gateway is for everyone to use and contribute to: building a collective sense of ownership and partnership across the public and private sphere. Its mission is to help increase language-learning across the UK by facilitating access to existing opportunities and information, by increasing awareness of them, and by fostering links between different sectors. It is designed to gather information together in one place, and then signpost visitors to content that is of interest to them. Content from (and for) researchers and policymakers is a priority for the site. Colleagues are encouraged to explore the site and use the 'contact us' page to suggest new content and improvements: https://www.thelanguagesgateway.uk/.

The University Council for Languages (UCFL) represents the views and opinions of scholars and professionals in modern languages and cognate disciplines to Government, the funding councils and other bodies at national levels. It collects and disseminates information about the state of study, research and teaching of modern languages and cognate disciplines in the UK. It provides a forum for debate on issues of concern to its members through meetings, working parties, discussions, conferences, seminars and publications and presents the case for languages in the media.

The Association for Language Learning (ALL; https://www.all-languages.org.uk/) is the UK's major subject association for those involved in the teaching of foreign languages at all levels. It exists to represent and support language teachers and is committed to their ongoing professional development. It works to support its members, providing them with opportunities to access local, regional and national training and networking events, as well as providing them with practitioner-focused and research-based publications in hard copy and online.

There are many case studies of linguists engaging with government in the REF 2021, *Impact Case Study Database* https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/impact. Linguists submitted primarily to either Panel 25 (Area Studies) or Panel 26 (Modern Languages and Linguistics). Case studies included informing policy for the revitalization and teaching of the UK's indigenous languages, impacting educational policy for the teaching of foreign languages, shaping policy on BSL and refugee integration in Scotland, advising the FCDO about different, often difficult, parts of the world, briefing Ambassadors, advising on election quality and scrutiny, and promoting greater cross-government collaboration on language matters. It should be noted, however, that impact case studies serve a specific purpose and that further mediation is required in translating the research for a wider audience.

Civil Service Languages Network

The Civil Service Languages Network (https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/civil-service-language-network) is a network for Civil Servants who can speak more than one language, would like to learn a new one or are interested in intercultural dialogue. From Arabic to Urdu, Bengali to Swedish and everything in between, the Civil Service Languages Network is made up of over 10,460 colleagues across 41 language groups, throughout government, the UK and overseas. The Network also provides support on special projects in government requiring solid language skills and intercultural knowledge.

Useful reading

ESRC Impact toolkit for economic and social sciences, 'How to Influence Policymakers'
https://www.ukri.org/councils/esrc/impact-toolkit-for-economic-and-social-sciences/how-to-influence-policymakers/ (last updated 27 January 2022)

Government Office for Science, *A Guide to Engaging with Government for Academics*, December 2011 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/engaging-with-government-guide-for-academics

Government Office for Science, *Engaging with Academics: How to Further Strengthen Open Policy-Making – A Guide for Policy Makers*, January 2013 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/engaging-with-academics-guide-for-policy-makers

Institute for Government, *How Academia Can Work with Government*, April 2019 https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publication/report/how-academia-can-work-government

Institute for Government, *How Government Can Work with Academia*, June 2018 https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/IfG_government_academia_June_2018.pdf

Institute for Government, *How to Engage with Policy Makers: A Guide for Academics in the Arts and Humanities*, 2020 https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/ahrc-how-engage-policy-makers.pdf