

Partnerships with the Open University Department of Languages

current experience and future opportunities



The Open University

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The Open University



- is the UK's largest university
- is the UK's only university dedicated to distance learning
- no previous qualification is required to study
- currently has 150,000 undergraduate and 30,000 graduate students, nearly all studying part-time
- more than 25,000 students live outside the UK



The OU Department of Languages



- founded in 1991; first course (French) in 1995
- now teaches French, German, Spanish, Italian, English, Welsh and Chinese
- French, German and Spanish from beginners' to degree level (BA in Modern Language Studies)
- nearly 9,000 languages students in 2009
- around 3,500 students on French courses: we are the UK's largest French department



How we deliver our courses



- traditional materials: books, CDs (audio), DVDs (video), DVD-ROM (interactive activities)
- online materials and tools: the course website is the hub; social software (forums, blogs, wikis) enable students to be more active in their learning, and to collaborate
- tuition is optional and blended: mix of face-to-face, telephone and online, both synchronous (teleconferencing) and asynchronous (using forums)



Our strengths



- experience of successful distance and online learning and teaching
- quality course materials tailored for distance learning in 6 languages and in English for academic purposes
- scientific expertise of the Open Languages Research group on online interaction
- systems for large scale delivery of programmes



Challenges



- react faster to new demand
- develop new courses and curriculum areas



Why collaborate?



- 'Expand global reach' and 'work in partnerships' are two of the OU's strategic priorities
- In the area of languages in the UK, the Worton report urges collaboration and partnerships between departments of languages in the UK, and for French studies it makes sense to extend this to cross-channel collaboration



Current partners in France



- Université de Caen: hosts our residential schools; we share the teaching
- Université de Franche-Comté (LASELDI): The Tridem project investigated online student exchanges to practise intercultural and language skills
- Ecole Normale Supérieure LSH (ICAR), Université de Grenoble III (LIDIL): research partnerships on telecollaboration for language learning



Models for future collaboration: sharing content (1)



- existing project: **Netzwerk Deutsch**
OU German courses reversioned and used by traditional universities to start a German ab initio programme

<http://www.netzwerkdeutsch.ac.uk/>

➔ the OU could collaborate with traditional universities to develop *ab initio* French programmes at degree level in the UK, or in English for academic purposes in France



Models for future collaboration: sharing content (2)



- We could develop new distance courses based on materials created by traditional institutions

➔ potential areas: translation studies and other language areas with a vocational bias, postgraduate courses



Models for collaboration: transfer of expertise (1)



- existing project with the **University of Catalonia**: exchange of expertise on distance teaching and on tutor training: joint research and teaching projects
- ➔ the OU could collaborate with French providers of distance education (CNED and others) to share expertise



Models for collaboration: transfer of expertise (2)



- existing DOTS project with the **European Centre for Modern Languages**: collaborative investigation of tutor training needs for online teaching and joint creation of shared resources
- <http://dots.ecml.at/>
- ➔ the OU could be part of other large international teaching and research collaborative projects on distance and online language learning





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