

Conference theme: French Synergies / Synergies françaises: Réflexions, Rencontres, Réalisations**Intro:**

- The 2 crucial transition points in the retention of language learners are between Year 10 and 11 and between Year 12 and tertiary studies. How can we bridge the gap? (Parker 2003). British researchers Harnisch and Taylor-Murison note the wide acknowledgement that ‘too often points of transition become exit points’ in students’ educational journeys’ (2011). In today’s presentation I will demonstrate how I attempt to bridge the gap for students transitioning from HS into FY language studies at University of Sydney. My efforts are not always successful; university is an exciting but incredibly daunting place for FY students, and there is considerable room for improvement across the sector and at the University of Sydney. Some of my comments might appear as a criticism of the secondary sector; I hope you will take them in the spirit in which they are intended: as constructive feedback about the current state of play in my experience across the border in NSW. In recognizing that my comments may not fully apply to the South Australian secondary and tertiary sectors, I would like to think that there is some common ground that will be of interest and potential relevance to you today.
- 2008 Bradley Review of HE: indicated that the impact of higher ed can be transformative, but the road to success at uni is a rocky one. While some students thrive, others succumb to the significant roadblocks and don’t finish their degree.
- Thanks to recent policies put in place to encourage widening participation in HE and a subsequent rise in # of traditionally under-represented students attending university, more and more FY students arrive less prepared than their predecessors to deal with the demands of university: less academically prepared, less culturally prepared, less socially prepared, and less informed about what is expected of them. Attrition is a significant issue, occurring most commonly in first year. Whilst this is inevitable to a certain extent, the collective and collaborative efforts of our two sectors can help our FY students remain at university and maximize their potential.
- In keeping with the conference theme, I will begin with Réflexions (my own and those of others) on the transition experience generally and then with particular reference to languages. Then I’ll move on to Rencontres, in which I’ll identify some of the ways in which recent federal governments are attempting to meet the needs of languages education in Australia. Finally, in Réalisations, I will demonstrate how we at the University of Sydney are attempting to bridge the gap for Year 12 students entering university – in

general terms at a University and Faculty level, and specifically for languages students at a School and Departmental level in French and Francophone Studies.

- Just to give you some context, the Department of French and Francophone Studies is one of 12 departments and 3 area programs in the School of Languages and Cultures, which is one of the 5 schools that currently make up the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at University of Sydney

Réflexions

I'll start with some existing research about the transition experience generally:

Internationally:

- FY university students experience highs and lows in similar ways to immigrants setting foot in a new country. Jay Chaskes' 1996 analogy referred to American college students, but our Australian students are no different. The environment in which they find themselves is exciting but the challenges are numerous. Not only is the physical setting overwhelming for these FY students in terms of size and geographical layout; the bureaucracy, expectations and culture are vastly different from their secondary-school experience.
- The extent to which FY university students suffer culture shock depends in part on their school experience. Findings by Canadian researchers Brady and Allingham (2007) suggest that in helping students meet the academic requirements for university admission, high schools may inadvertently be hindering the transition process; for example, in the formation of close staff-student relationships that are generally not duplicated at university and in the tendency to overlook tasks requiring independent research and critical thinking skills.
- Students' capacity to transition well into university by acquiring the necessary skills is of course also dependent on their experience in FY. British research Peter Ovens et al (2011) indicates that a third of students struggle to learn independently **even after a year** at university, which suggests that the issue is not being adequately addressed at FY university level. Ovens notes a world-wide tendency for school students to be led by their teachers through an increasingly results-driven school system. He recommends that from the moment students enter the university system, academics treat them as independent scholars: "Their autonomy is the single biggest value that can be developed; academics should not view students as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge."

Nationally:

- QUT academics Sally Kift and Karen Nelson first articulated a transition pedagogy in 2005, and Kift has spent the last decade refining it in order to provide a framework that scaffolds and enhances the FY learning experience in higher education. She highlights the need for a whole-of-university and a “whole-of-student” approach (academic, social, pastoral), and has developed six FY curriculum principles that focus on what students have in common, rather than on how they differ (2015): transition (from previous learning experience); diversity (within the FY cohort – increasing with recent widening participation strategies); curriculum design (student-focused, with plenty of scaffolding); engagement (through active and collaborative learning activities), assessment (plenty of formative assessment and feedback/ opportunities to feed forward into subsequent assessment tasks); evaluation and monitoring (of student progression, with strategies for timely intervention should they be necessary).
- Scott Wright’s research published in 2010 is of particular interest given its local flavor: his analysis of data collected from 16 South Australian secondary schools highlights the relationship between choice and motivation. His findings indicate that school students need access to a diverse range of subjects in order to prepare them for university (and this might be in the form of off-campus or online subject access); the more they understand the nature of the subjects in which they intend to enroll at university, the more likely they will remain engaged upon arrival.
- The findings from another Adelaide-based study of FY university students and staff were published in 2013. Russell Brinkworth (UniSA) and Ben McCann (French Studies, Uni of Adelaide)’s project team focused on the expectations of commencing students from three perspectives: that of 18,000 commencing and continuing students; 250 FY university academics; and 230 HS teachers. The three-year time frame of the study enabled the team of researchers from all 3 Adelaide universities to incorporate the *actual* experiences of students post-transition. Outcomes of this project included the creation of five very useful Fact Sheets for new university students and staff of FY students, as well as for parents, HS staff and HS students.
 - Here you can see an extract from the Fact Sheet for School Staff; copies of this and the Fact Sheet for HS students are available at the end of the presentation, or via the website <http://fyhe.com.au/expectations/resources/>
 - Fact 1: There is a difference in difficulty and standard of work required

- Fact 2: FY students often have an unrealistic expectation of the amount of study required: 6-10 hours per subject per week
 - Fact 3: There are new skills to acquire: independent learning, research and referencing skills
 - Fact 4: University teaching staff have different job descriptions than their school counterparts; less time spent on teaching, less time to spend with students, less feedback given
 - Fact 5: Help is available, but students need to ask for it
- Two longitudinal studies about the FY experience in Australian universities have been conducted over the last two decades, tracking data from FY students across a number of universities Australia-wide at five year intervals (1994-2014). Both indicate encouraging trends, reporting an increasingly positive perception among FY students about the university experience. James, Krause and Jennings' 2009 students appeared more "organised, pragmatic and focussed" than those from earlier data collection points. In Baik, Naylor and Arkoudis' study, students from the 2014 cohort were on the whole clear about their reasons for going to university; had a strong sense of purpose and identity, were excited to be at university and were very satisfied with their course experience. These students thus demonstrated a better level of preparedness for the transition from school to university than their counterparts from previous studies. Baik et al put this down to the success on the part of both schools and universities to improve the links between the two sectors. However, they also noted the reduced levels of social engagement in the 2014 cohort. Some 30% expressed difficulties with motivation and coping with the demands of study at university. Students' mental health is an area of major concern at USyd and elsewhere; anxiety is a common diagnosis amongst the number of students registered with Disability Services, and requests for Special Consideration for assessment tasks are also on the rise. Work-life balance is just as difficult for university students as it is for us, as evidenced in the increasing trend over the last 20 years to put part-time work before studies. This is no doubt linked in part to the introduction of HECS in 2006 and progressively increasing university fees ever since; the vast majority of students have no choice but to work in order to cover the costs of attending an Australian university, which are acknowledged to be more expensive than those in other developed nations such as NZ, Canada, France and the UK (OECD, 2006). If students are working more, they are potentially spending less time on campus, they are less socially engaged in the university community, and find it hard to make friends.

Having mentioned some of the existing research about the general transition experience, I'll now talk about transition with specific relation to languages

Internationally (all UK):

- Busse and Walter's 2013 study focused on British language students' decreasing levels of motivation throughout their first year of university study. Their findings highlight the importance of **self-determination** and **self-efficacy** in a successful transition to university language learning, in order to cope with the demands placed on them by extensive reading in the foreign language, and high-level grammar and writing skills.
- Harnisch, Sargeant and Winter (2011) tackled the issue of declining tertiary enrolments in foreign language departments in the UK, concluding that improved **communication** between the secondary and tertiary sectors would facilitate the transition process, as would addressing the issue of ongoing foreign language study **much** earlier than in the upper-secondary sector, for example as students move into middle school (our Years 7-8) and then again at Year 10 into 11.

Nationally: (Very little discipline-specific Australian research has been published)

- In 2004 John West-Sooby (Uni of Adelaide) and Éric Bouvet (Flinders University) undertook a study across the 2 universities to determine the aspirations and attitudes of FY students over a 3-year period between 2000 and 2003. Across both universities and all cohorts, results from surveys conducted at the beginning of Semester 1 indicated high levels of enthusiasm; students chose to study French out of enjoyment and with the intention of using the language in their career and/or in their travels. However, a semester later, the picture was somewhat less rosy: students' enthusiasm for their studies in French had decreased, as had their expectations of personal achievement. We can presume from this change in thinking from Semester 1 to Semester 2 that students' expectations of university French prior to starting their studies were relatively inaccurate.
- In 2011, Matthew Absalom (University of Melbourne) observed the declining numbers of Australian university students undertaking study of a foreign language, citing structural impediments such as the lack of availability of certain languages, timetabling issues, the problematic wide range of diversity in student levels within a particular language class and a lack of intrinsic motivation.

To conclude this first section, the reflections of research scholars both in Australia and overseas outline some of the major factors at play in the transition experience for high school students as they move into university. Areas of concern across both sectors have been recognized and needs identified. In the next section, I'll present the Federal Government's view on Australian languages education: how have the current and previous government attempted to meet the needs of our students?

Rencontres

- At the beginning of the 21st century, John Hajek, professor of Italian and Linguistics at the University of Melbourne, made the positive observation that, with a shift to multilingualism evident across the Western world, Australian governments and businesses had shown foresight by recognizing this early (2001).
- In 2012, Julia Gillard's Federal Government released the *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper*, which expressed the target of 40% of all students learning a language throughout their school career, and of 12% of all Year 12 students departing with a qualification in a language by 2020. The White Paper also recommended that all Australian students be given the opportunity to become "Asia literate" by studying an Asian language from their first day at school.
- The current government's aims are similarly ambitious (and I quote former Federal Minister of Education Christopher Pyne's Opening Address at the Adelaide Language Festival in May, 2014): 40% of Year 12s studying a language by 2023; strengthening ties with Asia; supporting intercultural and economic partnerships by promoting language study and in doing so removing the monolingual mindset that persists in our country.
- The New Colombo plan, offering scholarships and internships to UG students to study in the Asia-Pacific region, is a federal Liberal government initiative announced in 2013 (\$100 million over 5 years) that is making a difference to our USyd students keen to learn a language and experience the culture in-country. The Endeavour Mobility Grants are a second government-funded initiative with similar aims to encourage Australian students to study abroad; for example, in January 2016, 15 of our FY French students received scholarships to participate in an intensive French language program at the University of Geneva, Switzerland.
- The pathway to achieving the targets mentioned by the current and previous governments is sustained language study. In 2015, the Turnbull/Abbott Government announced a \$10 million trial that aims to

boost language studies by having children in 40 pre-schools taught a second language (either Mandarin, French, Japanese, Indonesian or Arabic) via games and interactive apps. This is a start, but not enough.

- Language enrolments in Australian schools and universities remain significantly lower than those in many of their OECD counterparts, and continue to decline. Foreign-language prerequisites for entry into Australian universities have long been abandoned, and the application of bonus points for foreign-language study undertaken at secondary school is varied across Australian universities, as is the obligation to study a foreign language at school in Australia. Fewer languages are on offer in our universities: in 1997, for example, there were 66 languages offered across Australian universities, but by 2007 this number had decreased to 29, of which 7 are well represented, including French.
- Amidst all this doom and gloom, there are happily some positive notes. The need for a national university network became a reality in 2013 with the creation of the Languages and Cultures Network of Australian Universities (LCNAU). Initially funded by the Office of Learning and Teaching, it is now a growing association that offers vital support to the tertiary languages sector. Its aims are student-driven: to provide the most effective and rewarding learning experience for students; it acts as a lobby group for languages education, and interacts with the primary and secondary education sectors as well as with business and other stakeholders. Christopher Pyne publically acknowledged the potential of the LCNAU Network in May, 2014, describing it as “an exciting development in the revival of language education and research in this country”.

In sum, the overall state of language education in Australia was described by University of Melbourne researcher Joseph Lo Bianco in February this year as one of inertia, although some states (NSW and Vic) are beginning to move in the right direction in terms of their state educational policies (in Vukovic; 2016). The Office of Learning and Teaching, which has funded grants and fellowships that have encouraged inspiration, innovation, collaboration and engagement in learning and teaching across the HE sector in Australia, was tragically defunded in June, 2016, and whilst a replacement body has been promised by the Turnbull government, there is no news as yet. FY university students are of course among the beneficiaries of the OLT; For example, the success of Sally Kift’s transition pedagogy project was made possible through an OLT Fellowship, and the LCNAU was established with OLT funds. Thanks to seed-funding grants provided by the LCNAU in 2011, teams of academics across Australian universities have been able to undertake language-

specific research. I have been a fortunate beneficiary of one of these grants, details of which I will now outline in the final section of my address.

Which takes me to the final section, which I'll start with my story

Réalisations:

- After 12 years teaching French and PE in various high schools in South Australia, a strong desire to teach in the tertiary system led me to the realisation that a Ph.D. provided the only path to guaranteed job security in the university system. I thus embarked on what became a very drawn-out transition between the secondary and the tertiary sector (as several friends and colleagues present can attest!) that culminated in my being awarded a Ph.D. in French contemporary literature in 2009.
- I began my job in what is now the Department of French and Francophone Studies in the School of Languages and Cultures at USyd in January 2010.
- Like most of my colleagues at University of Sydney, my position involves both research and teaching. My research areas include French detective fiction and *roman/film noir*; Paris, with a focus on the *quartier* of Belleville; and transition in languages education from the secondary to the tertiary sector.
- What really inspires me about my job is the teaching side of it. In the last 6 years, I have coordinated first-year units in the Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced streams of French. I also teach senior units in Parisian *roman noir*, Diversity in the Francophone world and *Pédagogie du FLE*.
- I hold various administrative positions: this semester Acting Chair of Dept and Chair of SLC Pedagogy Committee since 2013

Upon arrival at USyd, I made contact with colleagues in the Faculty of Education and Social Work who were involved in teaching students training to become teachers of French. From this evolved several collaborative research projects in the area of transition in languages students, which involved colleagues and students from other universities and from NSW high schools.

1. The first project was a small-scale pilot study conducted with Dr Ruth Fielding in S2, 2011 – resulted in a presentation at the FYHE “New Horizons” Conference in Brisbane in July, 2012 and subsequent publication: “University Language Learners’ Perceptions of the Transition from School to University” http://fyhe.com.au/past_papers/papers12/FYHE%20Proceedings.pdf.

Our findings identified three common factors for smooth transition into tertiary language learning: positive previous language study experience; good teaching in Year 12; and possession of independent learning strategies.

We found that the majority of students who participated in our study experienced a less-than-straightforward transition, citing a number of contributing factors that confirm the findings of domestic and international research scholars that I have already mentioned. Language-specific issues included:

1. Diversity of language competency among the unit of study cohort.
2. Difference in student levels of self-confidence – either perceived or real, due to:
 - a) Previous experience e.g. exchange, family heritage;
 - b) Study of a related language;
 - c) Lack of previous experience e.g. with learning a scripted language such as Japanese or Chinese.

Recommendations:

The results from this pilot study identified the need for collaborative change through consultation between the secondary and tertiary sectors, to firstly better prepare students for the university language learning experience and also to scaffold their experience once in the university environment. There was an evident need to find some pedagogical common ground between the considerable support given to students at school level and the autonomy demanded of them at university level.

2. The second collaborative research project with which I have been involved is an LCNAU-funded study S1, *2012: Student pathways in languages education from school to university: attrition and retention*

This project involved academics from the University of Sydney and Macquarie University; FY languages students from USyd and HS students from 3 independent NSW schools. The project culminated in 2 articles, both of which were published in the same edition of the Australian journal of the AFMLTA, *Babel* in 2014.

Robyn Moloney and Lesley Harbon's article focused on the perception by NSW senior secondary students of their readiness for tertiary languages study. They found that, contrary to some of the previous research I have just outlined, the students felt somewhat **prepared** for tertiary language study, for three main reasons.

1. They had received general information about university from family, teachers and friends;
2. As a result of engagement in stimulating classroom experiences at school, they felt that they were on the way to becoming independent learners in possession of a degree of critical thinking skills.
3. These language students had begun to construct a "future self" for themselves in terms of their pathway to tertiary studies and a career, and as this "future self" involved language studies in some way, they were motivated to continue their language studies into adulthood.

Whilst the study was small and limited to independent schools in NSW, it has some potentially important ramifications for secondary teachers:

1. Moloney and Harbon suggest that secondary teachers consider the development of a student's identity as a confident language user in the early years of language learning. "The explicit building of positive 'self' through the regular recognition of small achievements and mastery at lower levels of language education may nurture this identity development earlier, supporting greater retention into senior secondary years, and thus ultimately into tertiary study." (Moloney and Harbon; 2014: 11).
2. Moloney and Harbon's findings reiterate the importance of the transition point between Year 10 and Year 11, suggesting that teachers help Year 10 students to look **forward** to longer-term language goals: "at this point in Year 10, advocacy for language study needs to include some aspirational goal setting, contact with influential role models, and the cultivation of student's future language-user identity" (11).

The article I published with my colleague Ruth Fielding focused on the FY languages students' perspective of the transition they were in the midst of making. 54% of students who participated rated their transition as smooth; 19% as bumpy, and 27% as neutral. Whilst this looks initially quite promising, it should be recognized that this cohort of Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced students of French had self-selected to a certain extent, in that by the time of data collection (towards the end of S1, 2012) those who were really struggling had already dropped out. The following implications for language learners and their teachers are nevertheless worthy of mention:

1. Diversity of language competency amongst students enrolled in the same unit of study.

Subject of regular discussion amongst language students and academics; previously been identified as a major potential difficulty for language students (Stott & Fielding, 2012, Absalom, 2011).

Possible strategies to ensure a more homogenous student cohort that I have put into practice include:

- Implementation of a rigorous placement test prior to enrolment for students who don't fit the norm; this might be because they have had time off from studying French or have come through a different system outside of NSW. This is initially a self-assessment and if necessary a subsequent assessment by an academic staff member; the USyd placement test is aligned with the levels of the Common European Framework of Languages, with which the language units in the Department of French and Francophone Studies are also aligned;
- Completion of a registration form by all students at the beginning of the semester outlining their previous experience in the language to ensure that they have been correctly placed;
- Inclusion of ice-breaking activities early on in the semester that allow students to **openly** acknowledge their own ability and past experience, and **understand** that of their classmates. [As an aside, I'll just mention a current project called "Flourishing in a second language" that received seed funding from the OLT in 2015 – colleagues from Flinders University and University of Sydney are trialling language learning activities in FY Italian Beginner-stream classes, that are aimed at improving students' psychological, social and emotional well-being; the project was conceived as a partial response to the rising numbers of university students with mental health issues]
- Students who self-identify at the time of enrolment, on the registration form or who are identified early as too advanced for a particular level are encouraged to **fast-track** to more challenging language levels; for example, in the case of the Advanced Junior French stream at USyd, incoming students who achieve 95%+ in Year 12 French, or whose results place them in the top band for both HSC Continuers and Extension are strongly encouraged to enroll in second-year language units rather than FY units.
 - Extension: this is a NSW half-subject for Year 12 students already studying a subject, who wish to undergo further study in that subject for the HSC. Extension is available in many other disciplines apart from languages: English, Maths, History
- Whilst we are attempting to achieve relative homogeneity within a cohort, students should also be encouraged to accept that some diversity is natural, according to individual strengths and

weaknesses. Acknowledging the inherent differences helps to lessen and in some cases *removes* the perception of disadvantage.

- Offering differentiated learning activities in line with student ability, and a choice of assessment tasks to take into account different learning styles, also has the potential to lessen the perception of unfairness and increase motivation. If students are offered a degree of choice in their assessment tasks and are assured that all assessment is criterion-based (on individual performance) rather than norm-referenced (compared to other students), the perception that they need to compete with and compare themselves to their peers may be lessened.
2. Our study also explored students' reasons for choosing to study a language at university level. Almost half the respondents stated personal career aspirations as a contributing factor; (this supports findings by West-Sooby and Bouvet [2004] and Absalom [2011]). Future research could explore which careers students are considering, and potentially offer specific programs of study to cater for common areas of interest, such as language for a career in teaching, business, translation, interpreting or diplomacy. This already happens in many universities. Current opportunities offered by the Department of French Studies at University of Sydney include Professional French for business purposes and *Pédagogie du FLE*. In August, 2016, a Careers in Languages Q&A Forum was held for USyd students, at which an alumni panel discussed the importance of languages in their chosen careers. Panel participants pointed to their exchange experience as being formative in their future self-identity as language users, both on a personal and professional level. Graduate qualities such as cross-cultural awareness and critical analysis were highlighted as part of the skill set profile of a languages graduate that proved extremely beneficial in the workplace.
 3. Results from the questionnaire administered to study participants highlighted differences in the language curriculum focus between the secondary and tertiary sectors. FY students found that tertiary language curricula tend to be more content-based, with a focus, for example on film, literature and culture, whereas participants related that the focus at school tends to be more on language skill acquisition (listening, speaking, reading and writing). There are several notable exceptions to this: 1. HSC Extension language students study some literature and culture in Year 12 and, through the nature and style of the Extension course, often start to develop some of the skills required for successful university study such as autonomous learning and analytical thinking. 2. Students who study a

language through the open high school (a distance learning model) also come to university well prepared to study independently. 3. Similarly, IB students have a broader Language B curriculum than HSC Continuers, and need to develop independent learning and critical thinking skills in order to succeed. I can vouch for this personally, both as an observer of FY French students who have studied IB French, and as a mother of an average IB student who somehow managed to juggle extensive non-school related screen activity with his IB studies, achieving entry into his degree program of choice and a remarkably smooth transition into university, despite an action-packed gap year. My understanding is that the IB program was created in part to facilitate the transition from school to university; whilst I haven't found concrete evidence of this, my own experience supports the tendency for IB students to transition well into university.

4. Finally, and crucially, our study reinforced the need to increase levels of communication between the secondary and tertiary sectors, regardless of the subject area under consideration; as other research has found (Harnisch et al., 2011).

The responsibility for this falls to educators in both sectors.

What can secondary teachers do to facilitate this transition?

1. Secondary teachers could distribute the Fact Sheets created by Brinkworth and McCann's FY Student Expectations and Experiences project, and thus make aspiring tertiary language students aware of expectations, standards, curriculum content, grading systems, teaching and learning structures, pace and styles common to the university sector; with this information on board, students would embark on their university language studies with increased levels of confidence.
2. Secondary teachers could encourage and model independent learning strategies, and incorporate a focus on the development of critical thinking and analysis.
3. HS teachers could keep abreast of university processes; this task no doubt falls in part to careers counsellors, but some up-to-date disciplinary knowledge would help students understand how a particular subject is taught in FY.

What can academics do to help their FY students? (I have incorporated here some of my own strategies, which are mostly more about common sense than innovation)

1. The responsibility falls on first-year language coordinators to make FY students aware of the need to be organized and develop time management skills.
2. Tertiary educators should also explicitly reinforce the differences students might experience in the detail of content and the speed with which it is covered, as well as offering tips on how to manage that increased content and pace.
3. We should understand the profile of the incoming FY student: their existing knowledge gained through the secondary language curriculum; their need for support and guidance, particularly in first semester (I send lots of emails to remind students of important deadlines; I ensure they have completed the 2 online modules specifically aimed at FY students: (1) to make the most out of the library; (2) to study with integrity and academic honesty).
4. We need to provide opportunities for 1 on 1 consultation to find out how our students are coping in French and across the board with their studies, and with juggling the demands of study, part-time work, social life and new-found independence.
5. We should provide opportunities for students to develop autonomous learning strategies (managing their time; avoiding procrastination; effective note-taking; efficient reading for different purposes; exam preparation; referencing; finding and analyzing sources), and direct them to existing resources in the university structure, such as libraries, student services and learning centres.
6. We should distribute the aforementioned Fact Sheets and incorporate the suggestions from Brinkworth and McCann's project into our teaching and curriculum.
7. We should provide opportunities to recognize these differences and learn how to manage them. This is often done through University and Faculty transition programs, but at a discipline-specific level, we can do more.

Forewarned is, in effect, forearmed. Here are 4 USyd initiatives to facilitate the transition experience for our students:

1. (SLC-wide initiative) Languages at Sydney: Go Global. This is based on UQ Taste of... (French; Spanish; Italian etc) on-campus program that offers interested Year 12 students the opportunity to discover how a particular language is taught at university.) We have opted for a School-wide approach, in that the event takes place for all languages on the same afternoon, with a plenary session introducing students to the SLC, including how to fit languages into degree programs, and exchange opportunities. Students then participate in language-specific tutorials run by FY language coordinators and involving current students. The target audience is Year 12 students and their teachers, and the event is timed to coincide with Orientation Week (always an exciting and colourful week full of activities). The success of the inaugural event and the support from the top has meant that this will now be run on an annual basis.
2. (SLC-wide initiative) Maintain contact with the individual language bodies – in my case NAFT community to keep HS French teachers up to date with the FY curriculum, and keep university colleagues up to date with what is happening in the secondary sector.
3. (Departmental initiative, with the potential for extension to other departments in the SLC) This year for the first time we are trialling a student ambassador program where volunteers return to their alma mater HS classrooms to speak to Year 11 and Year 12 students and teachers about what French is like at USyd). 15 French students are currently undergoing training to participate in this initiative.
4. (University-wide initiative) The online environment provides the perfect opportunity for a bridge into first-year university courses. This is an example of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) offered on the Coursera platform (100% online) that has been created by the Centre for English Teaching for new university students, called Academic Skills for University Success Specialization:

<http://sydney.edu.au/cet/moocs.html>

Conclusion: Réalisations à l'avenir

And so to my conclusion; what to make of all this? How do we ensure the ongoing success of our efforts to facilitate the transition from Year 12 into FY university for our languages students at University of Sydney? On an individual basis, I will continue to incorporate findings from transition scholars into my FY units of study, and as Chair of the SLC Pedagogy Committee, disseminate these findings to my colleagues in other departments. In many cases these colleagues already demonstrate innovative teaching practice that helps students settle in to FY language studies. The telling point is retention into second-year language studies. The challenge of persuading colleagues across the board to invest fully in our FY students is also considerable; if there are ample opportunities in the higher education sector for academics to continually improve their teaching skills and create networks with educationally-focused colleagues, many choose not to do so, prioritising their research projects over their teaching obligations.

Apart from consolidating the Languages at Sydney: Go Global and student ambassadors into schools projects that were inaugurated in 2016, in the future I would like to target the second crucial transition point in the retention of language learners: that of Year 10 into Year 11. I'm not sure exactly how this will happen; perhaps you can see opportunities for university languages educators to exert a positive influence on the school sector by helping **your** students, who will potentially become **our** students, to continue with their languages study into university. If so, I'd love to hear them! I certainly don't profess to have all the answers, but by taking every opportunity, such as the one provided by events like this FATFA/SAFTA conference, to share teaching and learning practices across our sectors, to question existing practice and be open to new ideas, we are giving our students every opportunity to remain engaged for life with their studies in French and other languages. I'd like to thank the FATFA/SAFTA committee for inviting me to make this address, to attend this wonderfully collegial event and for giving me another opportunity to come back to a city that will always be home. Thank you to SAFTA for funding my trip, and to Andrew McKenzie, Eric Bouvet and Colette Mrowa-Hopkins for facilitating transport and last-minute accommodation and presentation issues.

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