

Institution: University of Huddersfield		
Unit of Assessment: 26 Modern Languages and Linguistics		
Title of case study: Enriching Language Education for Teachers, Students and the Public Worldwide through <i>Babel: The Language Magazine</i>		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2003 – 2012		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Names: 1. Dan McIntyre 2. Lesley Jeffries	Roles: 1. Professor of English Language and Linguistics 2. Professor of English Language and Linguistics	Periods employed by submitting HEI: 1. August 2004 – present 2. September 1990 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 August 2013 – 31 December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Everyone uses language and, because of this, everyone has an opinion about language. But these opinions are often neither reliable nor evidence-based. This is because communication about language and linguistics has primarily been limited to the realm of academia and experts. This has left primary and secondary educators, students at all levels, and curious language users devoid of popular resources that demystify the discipline. In 2012, Dan McIntyre and Lesley Jeffries addressed this gap in the field by founding <i>Babel: The Language Magazine</i>. The first popular print magazine in the world to engage the public with research in linguistics, <i>Babel</i> has reached thousands of readers across six continents in 38 countries. Through <i>Babel</i>, McIntyre's and Jeffries' research has (i) improved the work of language teachers in 12 countries; (ii) helped students to develop their own knowledge through the provision of accessible material; (iii) built confidence and developed the professional profiles of 14 winners of the <i>Babel</i> Young Writer's Competition; (iv) empowered members of the public to discuss language from an evidence-based perspective; and (v) motivated at least 14 readers to take up formal study of linguistics.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The complexities of the study of language have traditionally limited communication in the field of linguistics to that of academia and experts. The narrowness of this communication excluded primary and secondary educators who teach language, students at all levels, writers, and interested members of the public from engaging with research in linguistics. McIntyre's and Jeffries' long-standing interest in the pedagogy of linguistics, and their significant research exploring how best to communicate complex language issues to beginners, ultimately gave rise to the first popular print magazine in the field, <i>Babel: The Language Magazine</i>, in 2012.</p> <p>Between 2000 and 2003, Jeffries conducted experiments with analogy in teaching general linguistics to first-year undergraduates, incorporating classroom-based play (e.g. having students use Lego to build representations of different grammatical models). Play as a technique was chosen for its accessibility and as a counterpoint to traditional pedagogic approaches. These experiments provided support for extending the pedagogic methods traditionally used in linguistics, and demonstrated that students were more receptive to complex ideas about language structure when they were introduced using these play techniques [3.1]. Due to their strong reputation in the field, in 2010 Jeffries and McIntyre were invited by the English Subject Centre (one of 24 national Subject Centres administered between 2000 and 2011 by the Higher Education Academy, now AdvanceHE) to edit a volume on teaching stylistics (the linguistic study of style in language). In a 2011 publication [3.2] resulting from this project, McIntyre and Jeffries investigated how meta-responses from readers about their interpretative processes when reading could be used to improve the teaching of such complex concepts as textual interpretation. The outcomes of this project indicated that abstract theoretical discussion is ineffective for preparing students to write well-formulated analyses of texts [3.2]. McIntyre and Jeffries surmised that providing students with accessible supplementary material of a non-traditional nature would offer a means of supporting them to develop academically [3.2]. The question then was how such supplementary material should be designed.</p> <p>In his chapter exploring the teaching of stylistics [3.3], McIntyre introduced a distinction between <i>pedagogical stylistics</i> and the <i>pedagogy of stylistics</i>. While the latter is concerned with improving</p>		

the teaching of stylistics specifically, the former is concerned with taking concepts from stylistics and using them to improve the teaching of other subjects and disciplines. For example, foregrounding theory (the cornerstone of stylistics) predicts that the elements of a text that will be attention-grabbing and memorable are those that in some way deviate from the norms of the standard language. By taking this notion and applying it to text production and teaching practice, it is possible to enhance the memorability and distinctiveness of the material being covered, regardless of the subject area. The value of foregrounding theory for text production was a topic that Jeffries had also explored in her 2007 chapter, 'What makes language into art?' [3.4]. This work was developed by Jeffries and McIntyre in their book, *Stylistics* [3.5]. McIntyre then further explored how best to introduce complex linguistic concepts by investigating optimal methods for the teaching of corpus linguistic analytical techniques [3.6]. This chapter also considered how to introduce the corpus methodology to students with no background in linguistics at all. Among the findings were that it is important to begin by asking very specific and non-face-threatening questions of students, as a means of building confidence. Only then will students feel assured enough to tackle the open-ended questions that are the drivers of original research. This approach, outlined in [3.6], has become a bedrock of the editorial process of producing *Babel*. Outputs [3.1–3.6], then, provide the theoretical pedagogical infrastructure for *Babel*, a magazine that aims to engage beginners and non-specialists in language study through accessible introductions to theory and research in linguistics. The key concepts to emerge from outputs [3.1–3.6] are (i) the importance of foregrounding as a means of directing readers' attention, (ii) the importance of structuring information to move from focused and specific to open-ended and wide-ranging, and (iii) the importance of beginners being provided with applied and practical material as opposed to theoretical and abstract information. These concepts underpin an ethos and editorial policy for the magazine that is aimed at making published material accessible and memorable. This policy can be seen in the magazine's author guidelines for regular features, in its visual design (developed by McIntyre and Jeffries alongside a professional designer), and in the fact that at least 20% of each issue is written by McIntyre and Jeffries (who have overall editorial control) and their assistant editors, drawing on their own research.

3. References to the research

Evidence of the quality of the research: All outputs were subject to anonymous peer review prior to acceptance. [3.2] and [3.3] are part of a volume commissioned by the English Subject Centre. [3.4] was contracted by the Open University.

[3.1] Jeffries, L. (2003) 'Analogy and multimodal exploration in the teaching of language theory', *Style* 37(1):67-84. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.5325/style.37.1.67.pdf>

[3.2] Short, M., McIntyre, D., Jeffries, L. and Bousfield, D. (2011) 'Processes of interpretation: using meta-analysis to inform pedagogic practice', in Jeffries, L. and McIntyre, D. (eds) *Teaching Stylistics*, pp. 69-94. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

<https://www.palgrave.com/gb/book/9780230235878> [can be supplied on request]

[3.3] McIntyre, D. (2011) 'The place of stylistics in the English curriculum', in Jeffries, L. and McIntyre, D. (eds) *Teaching Stylistics*, pp. 9-29. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

<https://www.palgrave.com/gb/book/9780230235878> [can be supplied on request]

[3.4] Jeffries, L. (2007) 'What makes English into art?', in Goodman, S., Graddol, D. and Lillis, T. (eds) *Redesigning English*, pp. 5-33. Abingdon: Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003060574-2> [can be supplied on request]

[3.5] Jeffries, L. and McIntyre, D. (2010) *Stylistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511762949> [can be supplied on request]

[3.6] McIntyre, D. (2012) 'Corpus stylistics in the classroom', in Burke, M., Csabi, S., Week, L. and Zerkowitz, J. (eds) *Current Trends in Pedagogical Stylistics*, pp. 113-25. London:

Continuum. <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/pedagogical-stylistics-9781441140104/> [can be supplied on request]

4. Details of the impact

Routes to impact Before *Babel*, there was no print publication written and edited by experts specifically for non-specialist readers. Since its inception, *Babel* has engaged with thousands of readers. It has subscribers in 38 countries across 6 continents, with the USA being the largest

market outside the UK [5.1]. As of December 2020, *Babel's* Twitter account (@Babelzine) had 12.1k followers, with 11k followers on Facebook (*Babel: The Language Magazine*). Of these followers, approximately 500 are regular subscribers, (400 individual subscriptions and 100 institutional subscriptions). *Babel's* practice of offering institutional subscriptions means that the total number of subscribers translates into a much higher readership; we estimate around 4,000 readers worldwide. Approximately 60% of our subscribers are based in the UK, 20% in Europe and 20% in the rest of the world. The *Babel* website (babelzine.co.uk) receives an average of 11k page views per 30-day period. After the UK, the countries most frequently represented by our site visitors are the USA, Hong Kong and China (ExactMetrics component, November 2020). In 2014, the broadcaster Stephen Fry tweeted: '*Can't recommend @Babelzine highly enough – if you love language you'll be blown away by Babel magazine: for pros & all language enthusiasts*' [5.2]. Professor Noam Chomsky, Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the most cited living linguist (h index: 183), has called *Babel* 'a most worthwhile enterprise' (email to the editors, November 2020; published in *Babel* November 2020) [5.2]. The regular features in *Babel* include, among others, (i) a Language Games column to incorporate play (taking inspiration from the research findings in [3.1]); (ii) a visually arresting pull-out poster to act as supplementary educational material, supported by a critical article and designed to foreground key information [3.3, 3.4, 3.5]; and (iii) articles introducing state-of-the-art research through the careful structuring of information [3.2, 3.6]. One long-running feature authored by McIntyre and Jeffries was 'The linguistics lexicon', an A-Z of linguistic terminology. In 2018, Cambridge University Press contracted the development of this feature into a popular book, *The Babel Lexicon of Language*, written by McIntyre and Jeffries with their Huddersfield colleagues Matt Evans, Hazel Price and Erica Gold. This will be published by CUP under the *Babel* name in February 2021, testament to the reach and significance of the *Babel* brand. *Babel* has (i) enriched the work of language teachers by providing accessible teaching material based on solid linguistic and pedagogic principles; (ii) helped students improve their own work by providing comprehensible introductions to complex topics; (iii) built confidence and developed the professional profiles of 14 winners of the *Babel* Young Writer's Competition since 2014; (iv) empowered members of the public to discuss language from an evidence-based perspective, and (v) motivated at least 14 people to take up formal study of linguistics.

Enriching language education worldwide A significant proportion (60%) of *Babel* readers work in education [5.1]. Many have contacted the team at Huddersfield to report how valuable *Babel* has been in their teaching, with emails, tweets and letters to the editors. The Sub-Warden of St. Columba's College, Ireland writes that *Babel* 'is excellent for stretching our most senior pupils' [5.3]. This is also noted by the Librarian at St George's International School, Switzerland who observes that: '*The range and quality of our students' research topics have improved and expanded as a result of their engagement with Babel*' [5.4]. Similarly, a university teacher in the Czech Republic says *Babel* 'often inspires [students] when choosing a topic for their Final Theses' [5.5]. This teacher saw two primary impacts on students, noting that *Babel* serves 'as inspiration for students' further schoolwork in Linguistics/Translation classes' and that students 'also read clear, concise, understandable and well-structured language, adoption of which is the second impact *Babel* has on them.' [5.6]. The Assistant Principal of Blackburn High School, Victoria, Australia, says 'I have used *Babel* regularly in my classroom, since its launch, because it is an accessible and reliable source of information about linguistics as well as English Language and its many varieties. [...] A wonderful engagement item has been the Language Games section in the magazine, we often use this to "hook" students in a lesson but also to reward them at the end of a busy week!' [5.6].

In the UK, *Babel* has been a significant benefit to A-level English Language teachers and students. Nick King, a teacher at King George V College, Southport said that *Babel* 'is one of the best things to happen in my subject in the 16 years I've been teaching it', going on to say '*Pull out posters are adorning my classroom walls and my students are getting to appreciate the subject in a new light with your accessible, engaging pieces [...] I felt I had to let you know what a great job you're doing and the kind of impact it's having on my scheme of work and in my classroom!*' (email to the editors, November 2013; published in *Babel* February 2014) [5.2]. Ms T. Lonsdale, Curriculum Leader for Modern Languages at Formby High School, Liverpool, said '*I'm using lots of examples etc. for my languages display board in school and you've inspired me to run a Language and*

Linguistics challenge club so thanks again for all the material' (email to the editors, October 2014; published in *Babel* November 2014) [5.2]. A-level teachers at Reepham High School, Norwich, report having used *Babel* articles to support particular schemes of work; for example, Dan McIntyre's article 'Read all about it! Discourse presentation in Early Modern English' was used to support teachers' work on language change [5.7]. An English teacher at Fulford High School in York writes of how *Babel* has enabled students to achieve higher marks in A-level English Language coursework: '*We have found that discussing Babel articles in class equips students with a more critically evaluative approach which enables them to conceptualise and apply learning rather than simply cite rather stale textbook examples. This has enabled students to access higher mark bands*' [5.7]. Similarly, the Subject Leader for A-Level English Language at the Sixth Form College, Farnborough, who oversees the work of around 200 English Language students per year, says of *Babel* that '*Our students benefit hugely from having the opportunity to learn about current research, not only academically, but also from seeing all that the subject of linguistics has to offer which, in turn, increases their motivation for the subject. In addition, our students use Babel magazine as their main reference point when researching their coursework topics. This is crucial in developing the students' independent research skills which will serve them well at university*' [5.7]. This is also stated by the Head of English at Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls: '*[Babel] has changed the way students prepare for their own independent language investigation' by enabling them 'to research independently and identify areas of interest outside the curriculum'*' [5.7]. This teacher also notes that *Babel* '*has developed teacher confidence in teaching aspects of language*' and that it is '*an incredibly useful teaching tool and resource for students of all ages*' [5.7].

Babel has also impacted positively on extra-curricular educational activities. For example, the United Kingdom Linguistics Olympiad (UKLO), which organises a national competition of around 4-5,000 school students to decide who competes in the International Linguistics Olympiad, lists *Babel* as a resource on its website [5.8] and *Babel* has supported UKLO by sponsoring and hosting the 2016 second round of the national competition, and by commissioning articles about it (e.g. 'Analysing the language of the stars', issue 24, August 2018). The UKLO Chair notes that following publication, '*the list of teachers registered with UKLO [...] showed a particularly sharp increase in the numbers: 75 in 2014 and 99 in 2019, compared with an average of 59*' [5.8]. The UKLO Chair writes: '*The support we receive from the academic community is an indication of the enthusiasm for outreach work to bridge the very regrettable gap between academic linguistics and schools. Professors Lesley Jeffries and Dan McIntyre and the Babel team share our goals and we see them as valuable partners in this enterprise*' [5.8]. *Babel*, then, has contributed to an increase in the profile of UKLO and to participation by teachers and students in the competition. It has also proved a useful resource for *The Fluent Show*, a leading podcast on language learning. *The Fluent Show* has 3000 monthly listeners, 1.4m downloads, is ranked 88 out of 250 Apple podcasts on this topic and has a rating of 4.7 out of 5 from 250 reviews. The presenter of *The Fluent Show* writes, '*Reading reports of cutting-edge research in a friendly, conversational tone and with the look of an interesting magazine has helped me understand more about how I can present scientific insights in an approachable way. This magazine connects the dots between academia and everyday life. It's a fabulous resource for language learners*' [5.9].

Building confidence and developing the professional profiles of young writers In 2014, McIntyre and Jeffries launched the *Babel* Young Writers' Competition, establishing a publishing platform for young aspiring authors. This was done in recognition of the importance of high-quality writing in the development of sophisticated analytical thought [3.2], and as a way of supporting the next generation of linguists. In 2015, the competition was expanded to include two different categories: (i) 16-18-year-old linguists, and (ii) undergraduate linguists. Since the competition was inaugurated, approximately 100 young writers have submitted entries. Of these, there have been 14 winners and each winning article was published in *Babel*. These articles are permanently available on the *Babel* website, creating a public profile for the young academics. The winners have all attested to the benefits of the competition. The 2015 undergraduate winner (UK) said entering the competition offered '*a good opportunity to practise writing for the general public, something I want to do more of in future. It also gave me some example work to show people [...] interested in linguistics [...] what it's about.*' [5.10] The 2018 undergraduate winner (Italy) said '*I have listed Babel's award as an achievement both in my curriculum vitae et studiorum and in*

application forms when applying for academic opportunities (i.e. Erasmus+ Traineeship scholarship). I think this definitely helped me develop as an academic and it allowed me to expand my knowledge of linguistics as well as to practise my English academic writing and communication skills.' [5.10] The 2019 winner of the 16-18-year-old category (USA) said '[it] gave me the confidence to further explore the intersection of linguistics and technology in my first year of university. I forged a good relationship with my Introduction to Linguistics professor (and shared with her my article!), and I also did a research internship related to natural language processing at Carnegie Mellon University's Human-Computer Interaction Institute in Summer 2020. I [...] listed this achievement when applying to that opportunity, other internships and even Japanese study-abroad programs.' [5.10] The 2019 undergraduate winner (UK) said '*I now have a bit more confidence in my own writing style [...] winning this competition definitely gave me the self-assurance to acknowledge that I am a good writer, and the confidence to actually upload more of my work [to my website].'* [5.10]. The winners of the 2015 and 2017 undergraduate category are now pursuing doctoral degrees in linguistics and cognitive neuroscience respectively, at the University of Pennsylvania and Carnegie Mellon University. The 2018 undergraduate winner went on to a Master's degree at Bologna University. The 2019 undergraduate winner is planning to do an MA in linguistics [5.10]. Many of the 16-18-year-old winners went on to study linguistics at university, at such institutions as Oxford, Cambridge and Pennsylvania. The 2019 16-18-year-old winner went on to study linguistics at Harvard University and has recently been involved in a project analysing the language used in tweets about COVID-19 [5.10].

Empowering the public and inspiring formal study of linguistics Readers and subscribers frequently tell us of the impact that *Babel* has had on them. 52 out of 99 respondents to a 2020 *Babel* survey agreed or strongly agreed that they are more confident in discussing linguistics and language topics with colleagues or friends as a result of reading *Babel* [5.1]. Vikki Myers said that *Babel* is '*a great magazine for anyone with even the slightest interest in language and invaluable for budding linguists like me*' (Facebook, public post, August 2016) [5.2]. Graham Guest, reported drawing on *Babel* in online discussions of language use, saying '*In my contribution to the discussion, I made reference to Issue 7 [2014] of Babel [on] older forms of English*' (email to the editors, May 2014; published in *Babel* August 2014) [5.2]. In some cases, readers have been inspired by *Babel* to take up formal study of linguistics. Josie Ryan said '*I'm studying linguistics at Bangor University thanks, partly, to Babel magazine*' (email to the editors, October 2014; published in *Babel* November 2014) [5.2], while Salvatore Fabiano reported that '*Babel [...] is one of the reasons why, after years of doubt, I finally enrolled in a university again to study language. And I'm so happy I did it!*' (Facebook, public post, 2018) [5.2]. And an anonymous survey respondent said, '*Thanks to you [...] 4 years ago I decided to follow my life-long interest in language and get a linguistics degree. I am nearly done with it now and even though I'm in a completely different career path [...] I am thinking of make [sic] a big change and pursue [sic] a career working on language maintenance and revitalization*' [5.1].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [5.1] Overview of subscriptions and results of a 2020 online survey of *Babel* readers.
- [5.2] Portfolio of Tweets, Facebook posts and emails, published in *Babel* (02/14 – 11/20).
- [5.3] Testimonial: Sub-Warden, St Columba's College, Dublin, Ireland.
- [5.4] Testimonial: Librarian, St George's International School, Montreux, Switzerland.
- [5.5] Testimonial: Assistant Professor, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Tomas Bata University, Zlín, Czech Republic.
- [5.6] Testimonial: Assistant Principal, Blackburn High School, Victoria, Australia.
- [5.7] Portfolio of testimonials from A-level English Language teachers: Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls, Elstree, UK; Fulford High School, York, UK; Sixth Form College, Farnborough, UK; Reepham High School, Norwich, UK.
- [5.8] Testimonial: Chair, United Kingdom Linguistics Olympiad.
- [5.9] Testimonial: Presenter, *The Fluent Show* podcast, UK.
- [5.10] Portfolio of feedback from Young Writers' Competition Winners, USA, UK and Italy.